



The Rank and File Catholic

(Connecting the teaching of the Church with the struggles of Labor)

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Thankfully Affording Catholic Schools

By: Todd Johnson

**Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 669
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Catholic schools, what a blessing they have been for my family. The academics are unsurpassed by competing public schools. They have and continue to prepare my children for the world outside our Catholic community. They offer academics, sports, and clubs that provide a well rounded and yet faith-based education. For my wife and me, there was not another alternative for our three children.

Growing up, Catholic schools were all I knew. I never considered them a choice but a way of life as a child of a strong Catholic family. Suddenly, as a parent preparing to enroll my children in school, it became a choice. Understandably, it was tempting to avoid the expense of tuition and enter the well performing public schools in my area. We quickly realized, however, they would not offer the faith/religious education that my wife and I had the opportunity to have growing up. Tradition, academics and faith-based instruction ultimately were the deciding factors for our children.

Certainly, we all want what is best for our children. We feel very fortunate that we can provide a Catholic education for our children in the midst of tuition increases and ever increasing demands on our family budget. As a 20 year member of the Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 669, we have been able to provide what we think is best for our children. What a huge blessing it has been not to have to choose between our needs and Catholic schools for our children. Being a member of Local 669 has afforded my family a respectable, not lavish lifestyle. It has allowed my wife and me to provide, in our opinion, the best education available for our children.

Being a member of a union offers many opportunities. It offers me a living wage for my family, benefits that cover health, dental and vision expenses for all of us. Without those opportunities, my family may have had to sacrifice Catholic schools. For example, last year was the first year one of us had more than \$2,000.00 in medical expenses. My health insurance pays 100% once that \$2,000.00 is met! If health insurance had not been one of the benefits of my union, my family would have suffered a devastating financial blow that could not have afforded Catholic schools.

In all fairness, it is not an argument of union versus non-union. It is an argument of what companies provide a living wage with benefits for their employees? What companies integrate employee respect into their day-to-day operations? Which companies are preparing and offering their employees extra opportunity to prepare for the kingdom of God? How grateful I am to have a job that offers those opportunities for my family and me!

From the Editor

By: Mike Roby IBEW LU 1701

Blessed Mother Parish, Owensboro, KY

Last week I overheard some friends of mine discussing politics. That is a common topic this time of year in the Presidential Primary year. As each one of them expressed an opinion of how they viewed the candidates and the condition of the country a topic came up that caught my attention. It was similar to discussions I have had with various workers that I have met on job sites in the past few months. Let me preface this with the reason why I was on the job sites having these discussions. I am the Membership Development Coordinator (Organizer) for my Local Union. The workers I am speaking with, both on and off of job sites are non-union electricians.

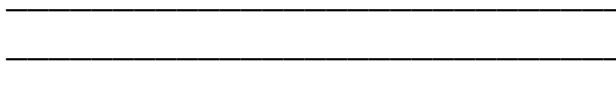
I used to be surprised at the number of them who would tell me that they were raised in a union household or had a grandfather or uncle who was a union man. They usually say something like, "I don't have anything against the union, but it isn't for me." If you are wondering where I am going with this, I'll get to my point. Why don't we as rank and file members of the union share our union values and our feelings for our union with our children? Why don't we impress on them that because of our union jobs, there is food on the table, clothes on their back. Because of courageous union men who came before us, they have Medical Insurance and that because we have union pensions we can have assurances of being able to retire in some degree of comfort. In addition, because we make a living wage, they will have the opportunity to, if they wish, pursue higher education, be it college or trade school. These are things that some of us did not have the opportunity for. We all want a better life for our children, but they need to know from us where that better life came from. Their teachers, guidance counselors, and employers are certainly not going to tell them. If we don't share this story, who is going to?

There is little doubt that the "middle class" of our society is under attack, and disappearing fast. There is also little doubt that the union members of this country are the last bastion of that "middle class". We have the obligation to teach our children our values and work ethic the same as we have the obligation to pass along to them our Catholic faith. These values are who we are, and how we live our lives and our children need to hear that, and then they will know who we are, and where they came from.

**WATCH FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE: The major expense we have in the publication of this newsletter is the cost of distribution! It would be helpful if we could e-mail it to as many as possible. If e-mail would work for you, please send your e-mail address to: dmgrief@bellsouth.net, **NOTE NEW EMAIL ADDRESS.** THANKS

Back issues of TRAFc may be found on Fr. Shonis's WEB page, www.thecatholicjourney.com under "THE RANK AND FILE CATHOLIC" Tab. TRAFc V4 N1 R12

Additional information may be found on the internet at:

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/labor.htm

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF KENTUCKY: www.ccky.org

The Catholic – Labor Network: www.catholiclabor.org

Catholic Social Teaching: www.osjspm.org

Initiatives; National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629. www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm

Social Encyclical Won't Be Ready for Summer

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 11, 2008 Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical on issues related to Catholic social teaching and globalization probably won't be ready before summer, according to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

The Pope's secretary of state told the ANSA news service Sunday during his visit to Azerbaijan that he doesn't think it will be published before the summer holidays as the Holy Father continues to work on it. He is "reflecting and revising," added the cardinal.

The Chaplain's Corner

By: Fr. Anthony Shonis

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Henderson, KY UNIONS, FAMILIES AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Unions, families and the Catholic Church is a marriage made in heaven. Families are the bread and butter of the union movement in this country and they are also the social foundation of the Church. This is a win-win issue for both union and the Catholic Church.

There is no substitute for the family no matter how families are reconfigured today through death and divorce as far as the Catholic Church sees it; families are basic to a healthy society.

From the very beginning of the modern Church's involvement in the lives of working men and women as in the encyclical "Rerum Novrum", the family was understood as the main beneficiary of a strong union movement. And no wonder, all our fundamental values are formed within the family all the way from the foods we like to the faith we profess. It is the moral and psychological underpinnings of our life.

The Chaplain's Corner continued:

Therefore a decent wage with healthcare is vital because it stabilizes the family and it is in a stable loving family that the faith is passed on to the next generation.

UPDATE ON POLICY REGARDING ETHICS IN CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

The policy on Ethics and Church Construction was well received by the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Owensboro; however, it hit a major roadblock when it was rejected by the Building Committee of the Diocese of Owensboro. Bishop McRaith then decided to take it to the Catholic Conference of Kentucky where the bishops discussed it and sent it to the Social Concerns Committee where it now remains. (I am still hoping that the bishops will pass this policy and use it as an opportunity to put some real teeth into their pastoral statement **Just Work** 9/7/07).

Fr. Anthony Shonis