

May 1st, 2020

Dear All,

First, an update on the Parish Office: Toni has elected to begin her maternity leave starting June 1, and is carrying on with "business as usual" until then. This is at her own request, and of course parental leave can be taken at any time during the first year of a newborn's life. She'll have twelve weeks in total, and I'm encouraging her to disconnect from the parish in every way possible during that time! For the rest of us, while she's away we can continue to use the ["office@stmarksberkeley.org"](mailto:office@stmarksberkeley.org) email address for all the usual things, since a team of volunteers will be handling that and other duties. I'll share more details when the time gets closer, but in the meantime, it's "business as usual" -- or as close as can be under the current shelter-in-place orders!

Second, this puts me in mind that today is "May Day," far and away the most common date around the world for observing "Labor Day," or "Workers Day." Especially at a time like the present, we are aware that, as one of the compline collects puts it, "our common life depends upon each other's toil." And yet while some work is considered "essential" to that end because it has to do with sustaining the basic elements of human life and society, we have to be wary of the corollaries -- that other work is somehow "inessential," and that workers are essential or nonessential based on their labor's ultimate utility.

Remember, creation itself is a non-essential work: God made the world not to fulfill a divine need but in the sheer overflow of divine love. Our own primary work as human beings is entirely independent of the value our economy does or does not place on our time or effort: rather it is to "be fruitful and multiply, to tend the earth," -- in short, to live into God's own overflow of love, undertaking the same acts of free creation as far as lies in our power -- by which unnecessary things come into being in order to participate in that love by which they were made.

What is the work before you today? How are you being called to acts of love and creativity? This is our essential work, totally inessential to any economy but God's. Today we give thanks for all those "on whose toil our common life depends," and we remember especially all whose utility is so often mistaken for their value. Let's also give thanks for all persons everywhere whose free, profoundly unnecessary acts of love create a common life more reflective of God's own life, a life more human for being more divine.

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Blake