

Remarks in Support of AFCSME vs. Janus: Fr. Clete Kiley

Solidarity is the great rallying cry of organized Labor. Solidarity is also one of the most important theological principles of the Catholic Faith. Because solidarity is at stake today the Catholic Bishops of the United States stand with AFCSME, with the Labor Movement and with the millions of union members across this country. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have filed an *amicus curiae* brief in the Janus case in support of AFCSME.

The brief draws upon more than 125 years of Church Doctrine that supports workers, upholds their right to form unions and to bargain collectively. As Pope Francis says, “There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that is not reborn every day in the peripheries”. Unions are a positive good for society in Catholic Doctrine. The Catholic Church has never distinguished between public and private sector unions. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have been clear in their opposition to right-to-work laws since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act. The Bishops believe the right of workers to organize is substantially weakened by “so called right-to-work laws”. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference reminds us “no U.S. bishop has ever expressed support for right-to-work laws.”

Make no mistake, brothers and sisters, what is at stake in the Janus case is whether or not we will have national right-to-work. And this begins with a phony and divisive distinction between public and private sector unions. We know they mean to get rid of all unions. WE are not fooled. Such a move, the Catholic Church fears, would irrevocably damage the capacity of workers to exercise their rights.

This Supreme Court case is, pure and simple, an attack on unions under the phony guise of free speech. The man who brought this lawsuit took a good union job, agreed to the union terms, and then sued on free

speech grounds because he did not like some political positions taken by his union. The Church might even agree with his objection. But we would also teach that as a union member, he has the right to push for reform in his union, in fact, he has an obligation to push for such reform. As Pope Francis says “a union needs to be reborn each day”. The solution to Mr. Janus’ gripe is not the wholesale destruction of our Labor Movement.

And so, we pray: **O God**, who has blessed working people with the gift of solidarity in the service of justice and equality, be with us today. Solidarity is our rallying cry. Solidarity is a true gift from you that makes the crooked ways straight, and levels the mountains of economic inequality.

Let us cherish this gift of solidarity now. Give us the fullness of this gift today, for we dearly need it to face the odds against us. **Solidarity** must prevail. **Solidarity** must take precedence over the rugged individualism that destroys the common good of our nation.

As Pope Francis says, O Lord: “**Solidarity**- this word strikes fear in the more developed world. It is almost a dirty word for them. But it is our word!” Rally the brothers and sisters now! Solidarity is our word. We are all in this together. **May our Solidarity move their hearts and open their minds. May it strike fear where it suits Your purpose, O Lord. Solidarity today. Solidarity next Tuesday at the Supreme Court. Solidarity forever! Amen.**