

Office for Peace & Justice {OPJ} Archdiocese of Chicago

Catholic Social Teaching and Job Security

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Catholic social teaching is very clear about the dignity of the worker ([Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church](#), #301) rights and exploitation of workers, (#158, 302, 321), and just wages (#301).

Recently [ARISE Chicago Worker Center](#) was in the news, fighting for the rights of 136 former employees of Rolf's Patisserie. Without warning and in clear violation of labor law, [this Chicago bakery](#) laid off all of its 136 workers, denying them severance pay, vacation days due, and issuing final checks that bounced.



As a Catholic parishioner in the Archdiocese of Chicago I was proud to know that not only could my heart could go out to Rolf's workers, but ARISE Chicago, partially funded by the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#), was standing with them, connecting them with attorneys and making sure their case wouldn't leave the public eye.

It is hard to imagine what these workers must be going through, emotionally, physically, psychologically and spiritually. I am comforted to know that the mission of ARISE is *faith, labor and action*. When blatant injustice occurs, many times action trumps faith and then leaves many casualties.

The story of King Saul and David from the Old Testament (Sam 17-18) helps me spiritually reflect on job security. As you may remember, King Saul believed his own job was on the line after David slew

the Philistine, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,” cried the women of Israel in ecstasy.

Jealousy and anger filled Saul’s heart. David was getting all the props and needed to be stopped!

A fascinating but obscure person in this story is Saul’s son Jonathan, who serves as a go-between between the recognition-deprived Saul and the vulnerable David. Drawing on personal and issue-based authority, Jonathon both protects David and convinces the king to change his mind and let David live.

As the Rolf Bakery saga continues to unfold, I have become increasingly impressed with ARISE Chicago, which like Jonathon, has been working on both sides of the isle, protecting the workers and their rights and at the same time trying to talk common sense with their former employer.

Jonathon represents, in my opinion, an excellent role-model for peace and justice leaders. Any faith-based fight for structural change must resist the traps of anger and resentment.

Like Jonathon, we are privileged to role-model being advocates for the vulnerable and speaking truth to authority.

Tom Howard is the Program Director for Justice Education in the Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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