

A pope for the common people

Solidarity will undergo a revival Sept. 22-27 when Pope Francis makes his first-ever visit to the United States. Economic justice will be a major part of his message. In Washington, D.C., he'll be the first pope to address a joint session of the United States Congress, and immediately after, he'll lunch with homeless, mentally ill, and immigrant clients of Catholic Charities. In New York, he'll speak to the United Nations General Assembly, and visit immigrant day laborers and Harlem schoolchildren. And in Philadelphia, he'll visit a prison, celebrate a public mass, and deliver a speech at the World Meeting of Families.

Since Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *On Capital and Labor*, popes have criticized capitalist exploitation and consumerism. But Francis, more than other recent popes, has kept a focus on economic morality.

"He's very critical of an unbridled capitalist system, a totally uncontrolled free market, because the results are inequity," says Father Chuck Lienert, Pas-



tor Emeritus at Portland's St. Andrew Catholic Church, and a member of the Faith Labor Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice. "He's really talking about what it means to be a Christian in a broad sense, and part of that is issues of social justice."

Lienert points to two documents in particular that outline the Pope's views: In *Evangelii*

Gaudium, he takes aim at trickle-down free-market ideology and the economy of exclusion and inequality; and in *Laudato Si*, he talks of the moral responsibility to deal with climate change, pollution, and waste and the evils of a throw-away culture.

"For the labor movement, Pope Francis's lessons of solidarity and inclusion are exactly

what we need," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka at a day-long meeting with Catholic bishops in June. "Part of the greatness of Pope Francis is that he sees everyone. And in seeing those who are excluded and suffering, he lifts all of us up so we can see and hear each other."

PORTLAND EVENTS

Watch the Pope's address to Congress

St. Andrew Catholic Church will hold a breakfast — open to all members of the public — at which attendees can watch Pope Francis address to Congress live. That's at 806 NE Alberta Ave., in the gym, Thursday, Sept. 24. Doors open at 5 a.m. The event starts at 6:30 and the address begins at 7 a.m. PST.

Response to the Address The Faith Labor Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice is sponsoring an Interfaith Blessing of Workers in response to the Pope's address to U.S. Congress. The hour-long event will include statements from clergy as well, and brief presentations about several local worker justice campaigns. That's at noon, Thursday, Sept. 24, at the First Christian Church of Portland, 1314 SW Park Ave.

NATIONAL

Walmart to reopen store that started strike wave

Walmart says it will soon reopen the five stores it closed simultaneously on April 13 for what it claimed were plumbing repairs that would take months to solve. In charges filed with the National Labor Relations Board, United Food and Commercial Workers and the union-backed group Our Walmart argue that the closures in Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas were simply cover for the real target — the store in Pico Rivera, California, where in 2012 workers waged the first strike against Walmart. The closures affected 2,200 workers nationwide, including 530 at the Pico Rivera store. On Sept. 10, the union filed new charges, saying Wal-Mart had no plans to offer jobs to former employees who were actively involved in the campaign for higher wages. During the closure, the union says, pro-union workers were told there were no positions available to transfer to at other stores.

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Neil McFarlane
TriMet General Manager

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