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The 'Catholic labor priest'?

Tom Gallagher | Aug. 22, 2012 NCR Today

A relic of a bygone era, the Catholic labor priest, appears to be making something of a comeback.

According to the Catholic newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco [1]:

"We're not coming at this out of thin air," said Father Richard Vega, the outgoing president of the National Federation of Priests' Councils in Chicago, helping to form a group of priests advocating for workers. "We are talking about what our principles have always been. From Leo XIII to Benedict XVI there is a consistency. There is no break."

Father Vega and Father J. Cletus Kiley, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago who is on leave while working as director of immigration policy for UNITE HERE, the hotel, restaurant and textile workers' union, in Washington, D.C., in May brought together about 30 priests from around the nation to talk about their common concerns for the plight of today's working class, particularly poor immigrants, many of whom are Catholic.

It's a movement so nascent it doesn't have a name ? call it labor priests or the priests' labor initiative ? and is housed at the National Federation of Priests' Councils in Chicago.

"So many of our immigrant workers are our own people and they don't know this history with labor," said Father Kiley. "When we sit down with them and share with them what the church has been teaching for the last century or more about their rights they have this look like the cavalry has just arrived. We say, 'Yes, you are on high moral ground.'"

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[1] http://www.catholic-sf.org/ns.php?newsid=1&id=60207