

## The plight of church workers in GIFs

Kate Childs Graham | May. 2, 2013 Young Voices

May 1 goes by many names. The Feast of St. Joseph. May Day. International Worker's Day. Labour Day. Whatever you call it, it is a day to celebrate workers and the labor movement.

Pope John Paul II called unions an "indispensable element of social life." Pope Benedict XVI hoped that "working conditions will respect always the dignity of the human person." On Wednesday, Pope Francis urged the unemployed "not to lose hope."

Needless to say, the Catholic church and its hierarchy have a long and proud tradition of standing with workers and the unions that protect these workers. But more often than not, that call for worker justice stops at the church door, and those working within the confines of the church itself suffer.

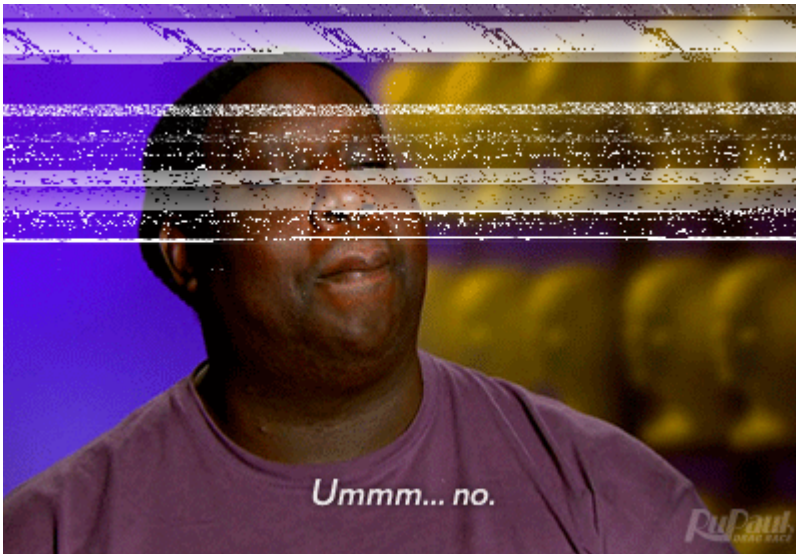
Or, as a friend on Facebook put it, "The Roman Catholic Church will never rest until every *other* institution on earth treats its workers with respect. That commitment is absolute."

In recent years, there have been a string of attacks on church workers in the United States.

When a Catholic school teacher in Columbus, Ohio, [listed her partner's name](#) [1] in her mother's obituary, the church said:



But the [students said](#) [2]:



When a Catholic teacher in Indiana wanted one of these:



And [used in vitro fertilization](#) [3] to get one, her school was like:



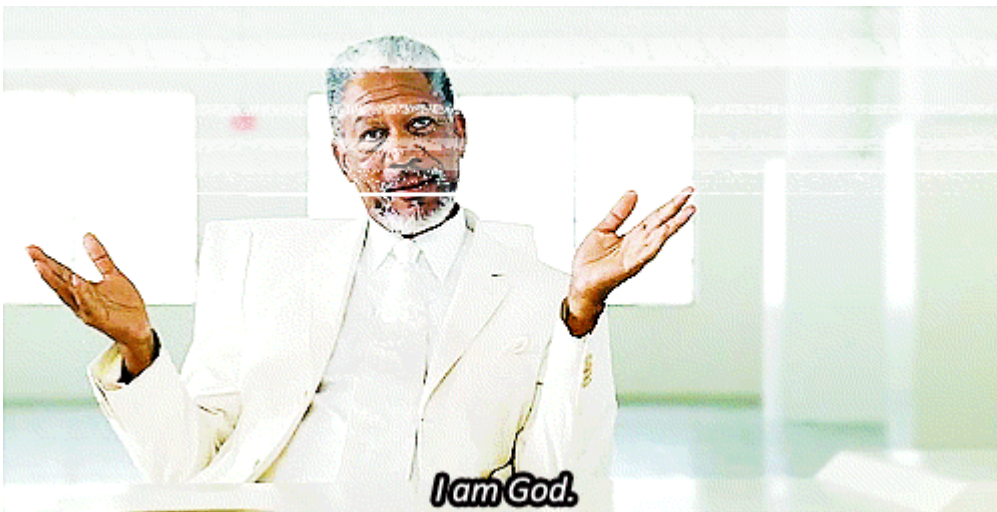
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Her friends said:



And she sued the diocese.

When [a parish worker in Wisconsin](#) [4] said God didn't necessarily have to look like this:



The diocese said:



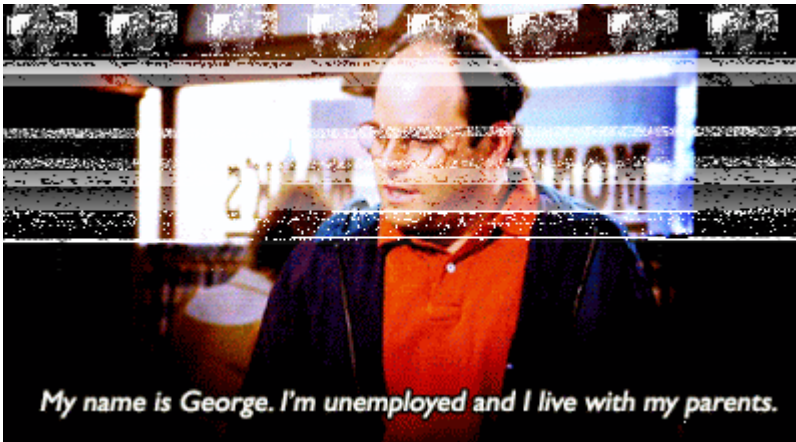
And her community was like:



Some church workers have to sign loyalty oaths. They have to solemnly swear that they will only do what the church hierarchy perceives as "good."



Many church workers who are fired [don't get unemployment benefits](#) [5], so they end up like this:



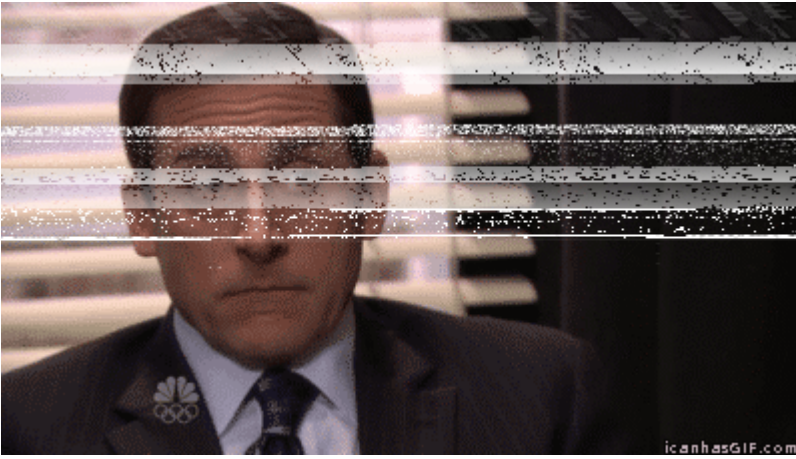
Seventy-five percent of parish workers aren't guaranteed protection under U.S. employment laws.



Many have seen [their pensions cut](#) [6].



Many have tried to organize unions, only to [face opposition from church officials](#) [7].



Yep, opposition from the same folks who so often defend other workers. But still, church workers are:



[Progressive Catholics](#) [8] across the country stand in solidarity with church workers.



And when at long last church workers get the justice they deserve, the people will say:

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[www.photobucket.com/P500](http://www.photobucket.com/P500)

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**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2013/04/16/petition-to-reinstate-fired-teacher.html>
- [2] <http://www.change.org/petitions/diocese-of-columbus-reinstate-faculty-member-carla-hale>
- [3] <http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/26/us/indiana-in-vitro-lawsuit>
- [4] <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/wisconsin-parish-worker-fired-feminist-views>
- [5] <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/fired-do-church-employees-get-unemployment-benefits>
- [6] <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/changes-diocesan-pension-plans-reflect-national-trend>
- [7] <http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2010/07/nurses-decry-multitude-sins-union-busting-catholic-hospitals>
- [8] <http://www.cta-usa.org>