

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent, March 1, 2023

Recommended readings: p. 66, "May 10, 1740," and pp. 72-81, "Sugar" (part one)

In chapter three, author Khalil Gibran Muhammad presents the history of the sugar industry in the United States, which was made possible using slave labor and which continues to have deadly impact in Black communities. "...if sugar is killing all of us, it is killing Black people faster. In the food deserts of many red-lined Black communities, where supermarkets are scarce, cheap, sugary processed foods fill the shelves of convenience stores and the bellies of Black shoppers. African Americans are overrepresented in the national figures on obesity; diabetes rates among Black men and women are nearly one and a half times those of white men and women. One of the great ironies of sugar's history in the United States is that the brutal work of the enslaved created an industry whose success in producing unhealthy food for mass consumption has taken its greatest toll on Black communities today."

It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops.
(2 Timothy 2:6)

The apostle Paul's words are just and should be obvious. Sadly, there are far too many people in this county who work more than forty hours a week but cannot provide for themselves or their families. Our legal system has always been used as the tool of our economic system to give the just rewards of hard labor to shareholders and executives. Injustice and oppression go beyond paychecks. What good is a paycheck if there is nowhere to buy quality food? Before we pray today, take out your phone and open your maps app. Search for your favorite chain grocery store. Notice the locations where you easily find that store, and where in your community you would have to travel miles to shop there. Which neighborhoods are lacking access to basic groceries at a fair market price in your city?

Prayer

O God, all that we need comes from you. You provide for us abundantly. Where your children lack the necessities of life, we find greed and injustice. Help us to become aware of the oppressive systems that rob our sisters and brothers of the just rewards of their labor. Give us hearts that recognize when we have enough and when our greed or apathy denies our neighbors the most basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. May our gratitude for your providential care remind us to share with those who struggle to provide for their own families; give us wisdom to understand and zeal to fight against systems that create poverty. Amen.