

Sí, se puede; Yes, we can

By Father Ty Hullinger

We may have heard the expression: “¡Sí, se puede!,” and wondered just what does it mean. In English, Sí, se puede means something similar to: “Yes, we can,” or “Yes, it is possible.” It is a powerful expression of solidarity, an affirmation of the goodness of the human spirit, and a belief in the power of people who come together to work for justice and human dignity.

From its early days in the 1960s and 1970s as the rallying cry of the United Farm Workers up to today, sí, se puede / yes, we can expresses the enduring hope of immigrant families who must fight hard every day to assert and protect their fundamental human right to safe working conditions, to receive a just and living wage, and for the right to organize and bargain collectively with their employers to secure these and other basic universal rights of workers.

Sí, se puede / yes, we can / yes, it is possible is not just a rallying cry but also a powerful expression of a very Catholic spirituality of solidarity, a belief that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to work together to transform unjust situations. It is the hopeful cry of a church that believes in the Gospel of the Jesus it preaches and teaches. Sí, se puede / Yes, we can is not an expression of complacency or apathy in the face of injustice. It is the energized cry of a church committed to the work of defending fundamental human rights of all people. It is a statement of solidarity, which is a deeply Catholic virtue.

Whenever I hear this expression of hope from the hearts of faithful believers, I think of the words spoken by our Lord in Luke, when, “filled with the power of the Spirit”

(Lk 4:14), Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth, unrolled the scroll of Isaiah and read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Lk 4:16-19). Hearing Jesus speak this way gives me the courage to believe that with God, ¡Si, se puede! Yes, we can!

Today, “sí, se puede” expresses for many faithful Catholic workers a profound spirituality of new hope. From low-wage workers in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor crying out for just and living wages to parish leaders in Frederick working to defend Maryland’s DREAM law, many Catholics are shouting “sí, se puede, in good faith and with hope for the future. How good it is for our Catholic ears to hear: ¡Si, se puede! And how good it is when Catholics say in solidarity: “Yes, we can!”

Father Ty Hullinger is pastor of St. Dominic | St. Anthony of Padua | Most Precious Blood.

Copyright (c) June 28, 2012 CatholicReview.org