

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



Worker Justice

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"It is essential that we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone...We were created with a vocation to work."

Pope Francis

On May 1, 1886 300,000 workers in 13,000 businesses across the United States went on strike demanding an 8-hour work day. A peaceful rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square spiraled into violence and culminated in the execution of the labor movement's most prominent leaders. This event is considered to be the beginning of **International Workers' Day** which is celebrated in many countries around the world on May 1st.

In 1955, Pope Pius XII named May 1st the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, continuing a long tradition of Church support for the dignity of labor. This month we commemorate both International Workers' Day and the anniversaries of three encyclicals that have much to say about the dignity of work and the rights of workers. In this issue of JPIC News we are invited to consider some global realities about work in light of Catholic Social Teaching and the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Source: USCCB

Global Facts and Figures on Work

- Global unemployment increased from 170 million in 2007 to nearly 202 million in 2012, of which about 75 million are young women and men.
- Nearly 2.2 billion people live below the US\$2 poverty line and that poverty eradication is only possible through stable and well-paid jobs.
- 470 million jobs are needed globally for new entrants to the labor market between 2016 and 2030.
- An estimated 150 million children worldwide are engaged in child labor.

Sources: United Nations, UNICEF

Reflection

What do you enjoy most about the work you do?
Do you think of your work primarily as a participation in God's on-going work of creation? If no, try viewing it this way.

How does your national economy focus on people vs. profit?
Or is it the other way around?



May
JPIC Days of Remembrance

May 1
Feast of St. Joseph the Worker
International Workers' Day

May 15
Anniversary of Papal Encyclicals
Rerum Novarum (1891)
Quadragesimo Anno (1931)
Mater et Magistra (1961)

May 22
International Day for Biological
Diversity

May 29
International Day of
United Nations Peacekeepers

Goals and Targets

- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms
- Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

Dignity of Work & Rights of Workers



"The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose...man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption." (The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis)

In the U.S. CEOs earn from 400 to 500 times the median salary for workers. For CEOs in the U.K., the ratio is 22; in France, it's 15. As for women, there is no country in the world where women earn more than men. According to the World Bank between 2011 and 2014, a woman earned \$76 for every \$100 that a man was paid. What do these disparities say about the values of the global economy? (Sources: World Bank and <http://work.chron.com/ceo-compensation-vs-world-15509.html>)



Workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. (Mater et Magistra, #71)

Consider the workers that make your clothing, pick your produce, manufacture your electronics, do your landscaping and serve you at restaurants. Many of these workers do not receive a living wage. In Mexico the minimum wage was just increased to 80 pesos/hr. (\$3.90 USD). In Peru the minimum wage is \$250 USD/mo. What is the minimum wage in your country? Does this wage allow people to live as you live?



It is shameful and inhuman to use people as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy. (Rerum Novarum #31)

"Every morning at 2 a.m., they heard a kick on the door and a threat: Get up or get beaten. For the next 16 hours, No. 31 and his wife stood in the factory that owned them with their aching hands in ice water. They ripped the guts, heads, tails and shells off shrimp bound for overseas markets. Pervasive human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers. An Associated Press investigation has found shrimp peeled by modern-day slaves is reaching the U.S., Europe and Asia." For those of us who enjoy eating seafood, this is shocking news.

Source: Associated Press: Margie Mason, Robin McDowell, Martha Mendoza and Esther Htusan (Investigative Report)

What We Can Do Together

- Advocate to raise the minimum wage. Find out if there a campaign to do this in your country?
- Support Fair Trade products. This insures that the persons who made these products get a fair wage and work under fair working conditions
- Learn more about trafficking and forced labor in the seafood industry.
- Write a thank you note on May 1st to people who serve you in ordinary ways: a grocer, barista, bus driver, waitress, hairdresser, doctor, etc.



Look for the Fair Trade label when you shop.



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