

Social Action Commission focus for March

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

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.

Quotes from our Catholic Tradition:

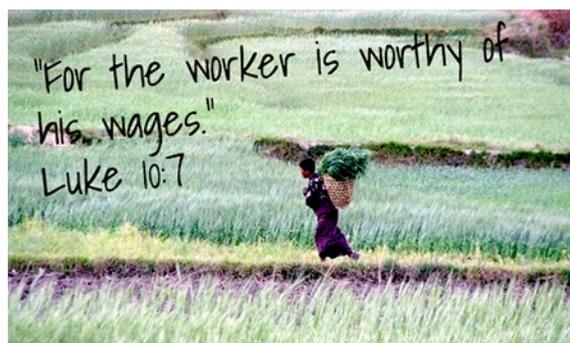
"Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. It follows that, in the reality of today's global society, it is essential that 'we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,' no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning. We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work." (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home [Laudato Si']*, nos. 127-28)

For more information: <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-dignity-of-work-and-the-rights-of-workers>

"Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded." (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel [Evangelii Gaudium]*, no. 204)

"In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or 'because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family'." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth [Caritas in Veritate]*, no. 63)

"All these rights, together with the need for the workers themselves to secure them, give rise to yet another right: the right of association, that is to form associations for the purpose of defending the vital interests of those employed in the various professions. These associations are called labor or trade unions." (St. John Paul II, *On Human Work [Laborem Exercens]*, no. 20)



What can we do?

Prayer for the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Lord God, Master of the Vineyard,
How wonderful that you have invited us
who labor by the sweat of our brow
to be workers in the vineyard
and assist your work
to shape the world around us.
As we seek to respond to this call,
make us attentive to those who seek work
but cannot find it.
Help us listen to the struggles of those
who work hard to provide for their families
but still have trouble making ends meet.
Open our eyes to the struggles of those exploited
and help us speak for just wages and safe conditions,
the freedom to organize, and time for renewal.
For work was made for humankind
and not humankind for work.
Let it not be a vehicle for exploitation
but a radiant expression of our human dignity.
Give all who labor listening hearts
that we may pause from our work
to receive your gift of rest.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit
that you might work through us to let your justice reign.
Amen.



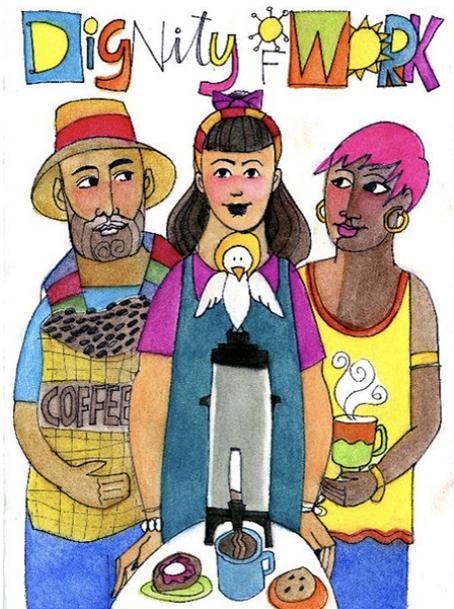
United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Secretariat of
Justice and Peace

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This prayer can be said as part of your daily prayer practice, with your family perhaps at meal time, or with any group you meet with during December.



Discussion Guide

A Discussion Guide is available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services. It Includes:

- Opening Prayer
- YouTube Video
- Scripture Passage for Reflection
- Sharing on Scripture
- Passages from Catholic Tradition for Reflection
- Discussion of Passages
- Call to Action
- Sending Forth

Discussion Guide can be found at: <https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/cst-101-rights-of-workers-discussion-guide-final.pdf>

Other resources can be found at: [crs.org/CST-101](https://www.crs.org/CST-101) or [usccb.org/cst](https://www.usccb.org/cst)

Video on The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

<https://youtu.be/txH7G1RkD8I?si=nwtr6euk4QeBtllq>

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers Solidarity Action:

- Support fair-wage businesses;
- Buy from companies that pay their employees well;
- Consciously avoid buying from companies known for unfair labor practices.

A Local Opportunity:

<https://workofourhands.org/>

The Work of Our Hands	Statement of Purpose The Work of Our Hands is a nonprofit, fair trade store, supported by volunteers, which markets gifts and crafts made by artisans from around the world.	Nonprofit		Member of the Fair Trade Federation
	36 years in Business		Supported by volunteers	Psalm 90:17
	Partners with Central College		Donated \$12,625 in 2022	