

Workers' Rights and the Unemployed

That all workers may receive respect and protection of their rights, and that the unemployed may receive the opportunity to contribute to the common good.

This month we are asked to consider the value of working in the world and that all may be able to participate in God's creation.



Syria is located along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and is considered one of the oldest civilizations in the world. During its long history it has been occupied and ruled by many empires including the Egyptians, the Romans and the Ottomans. It is a fertile area known for rich agriculture.

Syria is mentioned often in the Bible including the story of St. Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus, the current capital of Syria. The early Church became known as Christians for the first time at Antioch in Syria. Antioch also became a center for Christian learning playing a key role in the development of the central doctrines of the Church.

Eventually, Islam moved into Syria and Christians became reduced to a small, and often persecuted, minority faith.

Today, Syria is in the midst of a civil war and is being devastated on every level. It has affected the jobs and livelihood of over 12 million people. 80% live in poverty and many have become displaced in their own land. Christians are currently suffering greatly.



**Promoting Knowledge
of Faith**

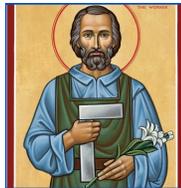
God's Word for Mission

"But Jesus answered them, 'My father is at work until now, so I am at work'" (John 5:17).

"Work is fundamental to the dignity of the person. Work, to use an image, anoints with dignity, fills with dignity, makes us similar to God who has worked and still works; who always acts" (Pope Francis).

"Work is a way of participating in God's creation....The basic rights of workers must be protected" (US Catholic Bishops).

A Saint for Mission: St Joseph the Worker



St. Joseph was a carpenter who was called by God to be husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. In a dream, an angel of God called him to leave Nazareth and flee to Egypt. There he provided for the Holy Family and introduced Jesus to his trade as a woodworker. When they returned to Nazareth, Jesus worked side-by-side in Joseph's carpentry shop until the time he left to pursue his ministry as a preacher and healer.

Joseph has long been an inspiration to fathers who provide for their family and to all those who labor. He has been held up as a model for the cause of promoting the dignity and the rights of workers. To foster deep devotion to Saint Joseph and promote the values of work, Pope Pius IX, in 1870, declared St. Joseph the patron of the universal Church and Pope Pius XII added the feast day, May 1, of St. Joseph the Worker in 1955. This mostly silent saint, who was called to watch over the Virgin Mary and Jesus, now cares for and watches over the Church and is a model for the dignity of human work.

Rights of Workers



Syrian Refugee Child at Work in Factory

The Catholic Social Principle of the Rights of Workers focuses on the importance of protecting the dignity and rights of workers since it is a form of participating in God's creation. Work must serve people rather than people serve work.

For many businesses and even countries, the rights of workers are second or even further down the list of priorities compared to making money and profits. The Church teaches that workers should not be exploited through low wages, unsafe working conditions or through the employment of the most vulnerable: teens and children. Their dignity must be protected.

Given the long and violent war in Syria, children have been victims and forced to flee homes and families. Many have sought refuge in Turkey where they are exploited and used for manual labor without access to schools or healthcare.

The children work long hours with very low wages and sometimes in very dangerous conditions. Many work 12 hour days, six days a week. They barely survive as many support themselves and their families.

This is an example of child exploitation that our Catholic Social Principle of Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers stands against.

Rights of Syrian Children in Turkey



Watch: **Syrian Children Working in Turkey**

Discussion regarding the rights of refugee children working in Turkey:

1. With 12 hour days, six days a week, how much does the child earn an hour when they bring home \$84.00 a week?
2. Would you say these young Syrian children in Turkey are treated with respect by their employers? Why or why not? Give examples.
3. With respect to family relationships, how can these Syrian workers be a positive example to children and youth in our country?
4. What are some ways that employers in Turkey might structure jobs to enhance worker dignity?
5. Can you think of ways that *you* can help these Syrian refugee workers?

Mission Petitions

- ✚ Let us pray that all workers may receive due respect and protections of their rights.
- ✚ Let us pray that all who are unemployed may find the right opportunity to work and contribute to the common good.
- ✚ Let us pray for an end to all those who are exploited and forced to work in harmful conditions.
- ✚ Let us pray that we may all fulfill God's call in our lives and share our gifts to build the common good in the Kingdom of God.

Loving God, I offer you the joys and sorrows and the ups and downs of this day. Help me to be the person you created me to be and live the faith that I profess in you. Lead me in your path and teach me your ways so that I might be a living reminder of your love and a witness to your Kingdom where you live and reign forever and ever.
Amen