

# Mission Intention

MAY

2020 - 2021

Education for  
Community Life

Country Focus: Japan

## Pope Francis' May Prayer Intention

Let us pray that those in charge of business will work with governments to design economic systems that protect all people from financial dangers.

Japan is a country made up of islands. Its four main islands and almost 4,000 smaller islands make Japan comparable to California in geographic size. Like California, Japan also experiences earthquakes regularly. Near three tectonic plates, there are more than 1,000 earthquakes in the country every year.

Despite being one of the world's most geologically unstable areas, more than 125 million people live in Japan. It is a world leader in manufacturing, trade, and finance. Japan has the world's third-largest economy, is a global source of credit, and is a major aid donor.

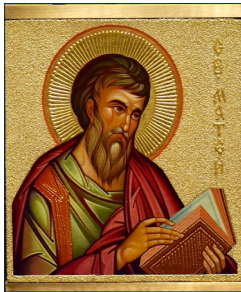
Christianity arrived in Japan more than 500 years ago, with Saint Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary. Today, there are about 500,000 Catholics in Japan, less than 0.5 percent of the country's population. The Church in Japan is hopeful that

evangelization efforts will continue to draw others to Christ. The Church runs many well-respected schools in Japan, and the Bible is one of the best-selling books in the country. The Japanese Church is also a leader in its country's social justice efforts. Let us continue to pray for the Church in Japan, that it may be a beacon of Christ for all, and that the country of Japan will use its economic influence to help protect and benefit all people.



## Saint Spotlight: Saint Matthew the Apostle

Even though one of the Gospels bears his name, Saint Matthew the Apostle was not an obvious choice to be one of the first 12 disciples of Jesus. As a tax collector in the town of Capernaum, Matthew would not have been seen as a righteous person. Tax collectors worked for the Roman Empire, and often collected money for themselves, in addition to the taxes they collected for the Romans. Because of this, the Jewish community typically considered tax collectors to be sinners, and would have been surprised at Jesus' choice to include a tax collector amongst his 12 Apostles. But in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus explains his decision, saying "For I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13).



Matthew the Apostle was sitting at his tax booth when Jesus called him (Matthew 9:9), and immediately left everything to follow him. When he was given the choice to continue in his current life, one that had a reputation for dishonesty, or follow Jesus, he chose Jesus. In doing so, he acknowledged his need to change his ways. Saint Matthew the Apostle's actions are a reminder to us of the need to follow Christ and put Him first in our lives.

Saint Matthew the Apostle is the patron saint of bankers, bookkeepers, accountants and tax collectors. Let us ask him to intercede on behalf of the Holy Father's May prayer intention, that he will help guide businesses and governments to design financial systems that benefit everyone. We remember Saint Matthew the Apostle each year on his feast day, September 21.

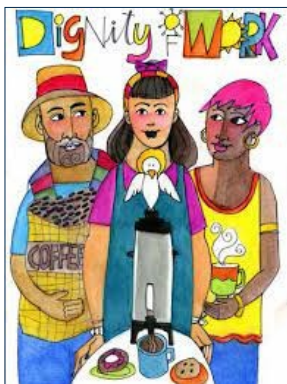
Promoting Knowledge  
of Faith

## God's Word for Mission

*"The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner"* (Pope Benedict XVI, Charity in Truth, no. 36).

*"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 income, and an integral promotion of the poor..."* (Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, no. 204)

# The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers



“The economy must serve people, not the other way around” ([United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)). The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, one of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching, tells us that work is directly related to human life and dignity. The ability to work and earn a fair wage allows people to care for their families, develop their talents, contribute to society and participate in God’s creation. Therefore, work, and the rights of workers, should be protected: all people should have the right to a job, just wages, safe working environments, and the ability to unionize.

As Pope Francis wrote in The Joy of the Gospel [Evangelii Gaudium], “...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

excluded” (no. 204). Governments and business owners have an obligation to create work opportunities and environments that provide all employees the ability to participate in and contribute to the economy.

Consumers also have an obligation to protect the dignity and rights of workers. Choosing to buy products that are sourced responsibly and sustainably, and buying fair trade products, are just two examples of how Catholics can help protect the dignity and rights of workers around the world.

In this month’s video, we will learn more about the Catholic social teaching theme of the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. As you watch the video, think about how this theme relates to this month’s prayer intention. Why do you think the Holy Father wants us to pray for economic systems that are fair for all?

## Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers: Click Here>>

1. How is the Catholic social teaching theme of the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers and this month’s prayer intention related?
2. How are the dignity and rights of workers related to a dignified human life?
3. How can you help protect the dignity and rights of workers in your life?
4. The video encourages us to think about the entire production process before making a purchase. Why is this important?



## Mission Petitions

- ✦ Let us pray for those who own and lead companies, that they will act in the best interests of their employees.
- ✦ Let us pray for those who have lost employment, that they may find work that is fulfilling and life-sustaining.
- ✦ Let us pray that all Catholics will strive to promote dignity and respect for all in the workplace.
- ✦ Let us pray for those who are struggling to survive, that their needs are recognized and provided for.

## Daily Offering

Dear God,  
Thank you for inviting us to be workers in your vineyard. Help us promote just wages and safe working environments, and support those who have trouble providing for their families. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we might assist you in shaping the world around us so that your justice reigns. Amen.