

# Catholic Social Teachings

## THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND RIGHTS OF WORKERS



### 11th Principle of Catholic Social Teaching

**“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.”**

*U.S. Catholic Bishops*

### Scriptural Reference

“What advantage has the worker from his or her toil? I have considered the task which God has appointed for humans to be busied about. God has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without humans ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done. I recognize that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life. For every human, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his or her labor is a gift of God” *Eccles. 3:9-13.*

### Homily Hints

“We must first of all recall a principle that has always been taught by the Church: the principle of the priority of labor over capital. This principle directly concerns the process of production: In this process labor is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause” *St. John Paul II.*

“It is the respect for the objective rights of the worker—every kind of worker: manual or intellectual, industrial or agricultural, etc.—that must constitute the adequate and fundamental criterion for shaping the whole economy, both on the level of the individual society and state and within the whole of the world economic policy and of the systems of international relationships that derive from it” *St. John Paul II.*

We must be capable of “evangelizing the world of work, the economy and politics which need a new generation of committed lay Christians who can seek competently and with moral rigor sustainable solutions of development” *Pope Benedict XVI.*

“Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal.... Workers, owners, employers, and unions should work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good” *U.S. Catholic Bishops.*

“Human labor has “the right to a just wage; the right to rest; the right ‘to a working environment ... which are not harmful to the workers’ physical health or to their moral integrity;’ the right that one’s personality in the workplace should be safeguarded ‘without suffering any affront to one’s conscience or personal dignity;’ the right to appropriate subsidies that are necessary for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families; the right to a pension and to insurance for old age, sickness, and in case of work-related accidents; the right to social security connected with maternity; the right to assemble and form associations” *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.*



## Prayer Intentions

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—*Let us pray to the Lord...*

That all who yearn to work: Fulfill the hopes of those who seek employment, just wages, and affordable health care—*Let us pray to the Lord...*

That the labor of farmers and all who work the land is blessed and prosperous—*Let us pray to the Lord...*

That labor and management strive to live according to the principle of solidarity—*Let us pray to the Lord...*

## Work of Mercy

### **Counsel the Doubtful**

Unemployment, underemployment, or undignified working conditions can easily result in doubts about one's self-worth and self-confidence.

## Learn

Read the column [Open to Life: St. John Bosco, Patron Saint of Laborers](#)

## Educate

Share the U.S. Bishops' 4-minute video on [The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers](#)

## Donate

The [Oregon Coalition to Stop Wage Theft](#) works to combat the crisis of wage theft in Oregon

## Bulletin Reflection

The Principle of Work is one of the five essential concerns of the Church's social doctrine: "The

person who keeps himself and his family with his work develops his dignity; work creates dignity" *Pope Francis*.

## 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.**

**Next Issue...**

**The Principle of Economic Life**