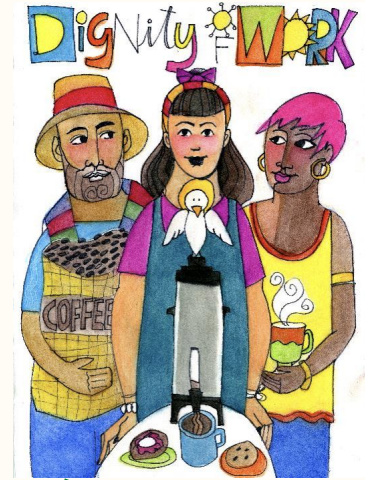


Catholic Social Teaching Faith, Justice and the Black Experience

The Dignity of Work and Workers Rights



Charlene Howard, MA
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

The Dignity of Work and The Rights of Workers

Overview

Dignity of Work

What is work?

Workers' Rights

*How is the dignity of work
and the person respected?*

Achievements & Challenges

*What realities align with
or are misaligned with
the principle?*

Dignity of Work: What is *work*?

Purpose

Calling



Vocation

PASSION

Overview

CST 101: The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

(Catholic Relief Services)



Dignity of Work: What is *work*?

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.

What the Scriptures tell us.

Genesis: (Ch 1 & 2) God creates for 7 days

After creating humanity, God gives humans the work of caring for creation.

(3:23) After sin enters the world humanity is charged to take on a more active role in creation.

Dignity of Work

Rerum Novarum, paragraph 20:

“...respect in **every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character**... working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman.”

**What
Church
teaching
tells us.**

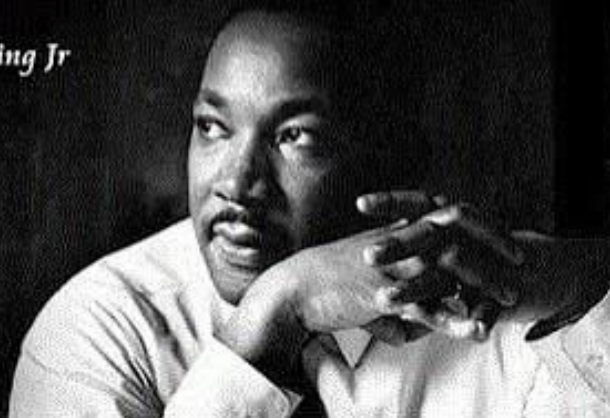
Humanitas Magnifica, paragraph 37:

“...the various kinds of job insecurity, fragmented career paths and automation must not be evaluated solely in terms of efficiency, but **in relation to the dignity of the worker**, the right to sufficient remuneration and the genuine possibility of participating in society.”

Dignity of Work

All labor that uplifts
humanity has **dignity**
and importance and
should be undertaken
with painstaking
excellence

Martin Luther King Jr



Dignity of Work

Catholic Social Justice Documents Addressing Labor

1. *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931 – just wages; intermediary associations in bridging societal gaps.
2. *Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971 – the human person, relationships, ... and the common good that is ... capable of guiding economic, political and cultural choices
3. *Gaudium Et Spes*, 1965 – a person is truly valued by **who** they are, not by **what** they do.
4. *Laborem Exercens*, 1981 – fair wages verifies the justness ... because they reveal whether the worker is treated as a person or ... a cost of production
5. *Economic Justice For All*, 1986 – it is through employment that most individuals and families meet their material needs, exercise their talents, and ... contribute to the larger community.
6. *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009 – here the entire human family must find the resources to live with dignity, through the help of nature itself — God's gift to his children — and through hard work and creativity

The Rights of Workers

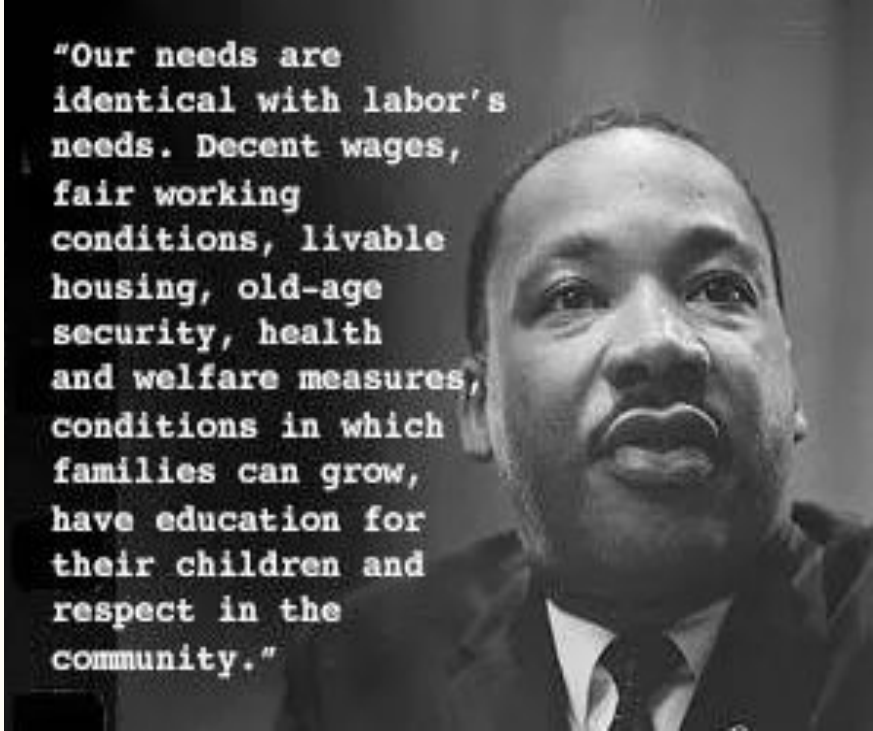
What the Scriptures tell us.

Matthew 20:1-16

All workers should be paid a just and living wage

James 5:1-6

Those who become rich by abusing their workers have sinned against God.



"Our needs are identical with labor's needs. Decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community."

The Rights of Workers

- Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether **it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.**
- Human dignity can be **realized and protected only in community.**
- All people have a **right to participate in the economic life** of society
- All members of society have a **special obligation to the poor and vulnerable.**
- Human rights are the **minimum** conditions for **life in community.**
- Society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the **moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights.**

**What Church
teaching tells us.**

***Economic
Justice
for All***
USCCB 1986

Historical Experience

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has helped form employee-owned companies
- Global networks like Catholic Charities and local dioceses provide job training, legal aid, and anti-poverty assistance.
- Support for unions
- Child labor laws
- Grassroots labor advocacy
- Catholic Worker Movement

Historical Experience

CHALLENGES

- Union representation is diminishing
- Deportation, detainment & terrorization of immigrant laborers
- AI and other emerging technologies replacing human workers
- Gender and racial wealth and advancement gaps continue
- Economic insecurity of the country
- \$7.25 federal minimum wage
- Living wages & benefits limitations in Catholic institutions and nonprofit organizations
- 'At will' employment status
- \$ cuts to education, transportation, health care
- Enslavement, human trafficking

Questions

1. What factors determine the dignity of work? (ie: type, outcomes, expertise, conditions, benefits, etc.) Is there work that is dignity neutral?
2. How are we as Catholics complicit in denying the dignity of work and rights of workers to other people? How do we uphold this principle?
3. We are human beings not human doings yet our sense of dignity and personal identity is tightly connected to the work we do. What are the pro's and con's of this reality?