



Open letter to workers and agents of pastoral workers
Message addressed to missionary disciples in the world of work.

Convened by the Department of Justice and Solidarity of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), in the section “Lay Builders of Society”, in the city of Santiago de Chile, from 26 to 30 July this year, we have found agents of pastoral from: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Venezuela, to participate in the seminar “the Pastoral of the World of Work in a globalized economy : Organization and perspectives”.

The aim of the seminar has been to support the Episcopal Conferences in the organization and strengthening of the Pastoral of workers in the labour world, so that the workers themselves will be the ones who live their vocation of missionary disciples in all areas of society where they develop their work in different working conditions, contributing in this way to bearable and sustainable development of our peoples.

Who are carriers of the good news of the work and, with the same feelings of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, are concerned with giving special attention to those who, for different reasons, find themselves to be dismissed and suffer by being excluded and unjustly violated in their dignity. We have been present in prayer and reflection to all the workers of Latin America and the Caribbean, as workers of the Kingdom, we unite with their struggles and difficulties, their joys and hopes.

Our words are of encouragement that we may continue to shake hands around those who animate us and unite us, Jesus Christ, the Carpenter of Nazareth, who walks with us on this continent of hope, and has given us the Virgin Mary as Mother and companion of path, she is present in the daily struggles of her children for the dignity of the human being and the consolidation of a more human, fraternal, just and solidarity society.

We share our joy and hope in finding multiple experiences of people and organizations committed to the evangelization of the working people on the

continent. Experiences that promote the dignity of people, strengthen their spirituality, values, and mysticism to carry out with dignity and efficiency their work in the search for their fulfillment and the development of the human community. These experiences promote the formation of new leadership, social dialogue, and concertation, the promotion of solidarity economy, the care of unemployed and unemployable, the organization of workers, the defense of their rights and the support to other organizations to achieve the welfare of all.

We feel our, the painful experiences of the excluded and the unjustly abused in the world of work. We are concerned about the alarming situations that cry out to heaven and are the cause of pain and sadness: the difficult living and working conditions of millions of brothers and sisters in Latin America and the Caribbean, social inequalities, the expansion of multiple forms of precarious employment in the continent, the seriousness of the sustained increase in unemployment in some of our countries, the growth of informality in the world of work, the persistence of forms of exploitation such as forced labour, trafficking in persons, Work of children not according to their age, threats in the permanence of labour due to ideological causes, the lack of social security and labour guarantees, such as precarious working conditions and the persistent employment discrimination of women and young people , who do not have access to decent work, and who suffer more unemployment.

All of the above is the result of the implementation for decades of social and economic systems that put their interest in capital and the market, exploiting and violating human dignity and the authentic sense and importance of the worker in his own personnel realization, in their contribution to the development of the peoples and to the gestation of an economy with a human face, that has as center the dignity of each person; but it is also the result of erratic public policies of some governments in the region in the economic and labor-areas, which have privileged populism and neopopulisms, which degrade the person by making it depend on government handouts, rather than of promoting decent and sustained work.

In the face of this painful situation, as missionary disciples, we affirm with our bishops that the “work guarantees the dignity and freedom of man, is probably the essential key of the whole Social question”. (DA 120).

We fully identify with Pope Benedict XVI who, in the Encyclical “Caritas in Veritate”, exhorts us to commit ourselves to the promotion of decent work understood as an expression of the essential dignity of every freely elected man and woman who It effectively associates workers, men, and women with the development of their community. That makes workers respected, avoiding discrimination, which allows them to meet the needs of families and to educate their children, without being forced to work. It makes it easier for workers to organize themselves freely and make their voices heard, leaving room to be properly reacquainted with their roots in the personal, family and spiritual spheres and ensures a dignified condition for workers who come to retirement. (CIV. 63)

Animated by the Spirit of Jesus, the Carpenter (cf. Mc 6.3), who dignified work and the worker, and recalls that work is not a mere appendix to life but “constitutes a fundamental dimension of the existence of man on the earth” (LE. 4), through which man and woman realize themselves as human beings. (9), we invite you to multiply the efforts to continue the evangelizing task in the complex world of work, in this way the Pastoral of Workers will have relevant and demanding importance in the ordinary life of the Episcopal Conferences and particular churches.

We are aware that the profound social changes that are affecting the world of work, allow from pastoral creativity, design and promote new proposals to make all people reach their full development and help to consolidate a world where the relevant rights and duties are lived at the service of the whole society. For this purpose we consider it opportune to share some proposals that must be addressed in haste and without delay, from all social structures:

- Promote the culture of the dignity of work and labor rights.
- To strengthen the spaces of formation, reflection, and knowledge of -the reality of the world and its impacts on the lives of workers,
- The Social Doctrine of the Church,
- Labor rights and duties.

- To promote effective processes of social dialogue that impact a change of living and working conditions.
- To promote new leadership, especially among young people and women, to elicit prophetic solidarity and the renewal of worker' organizations.

- Encourage spirituality and mysticism in the commitment to workers in the world of work.

- To multiply the processes and actions of solidarity, accompaniment, advising and support of the workers, so that they are not violated in their rights or persecuted for associating in defending their fair claims.

- To promote, from the pastoral work of workers in the world of labor, the care of creation as a space for the realization and contemplation of the work of God.

United to Jesus, the word that was made flesh and put its abode among us, in this capital city where the father Alberto Hurtado, the great Chilean saint, sanctified with his apostolate in the midst of the workers, we assumed the commitment to continue with the indefatigable work for the dignifying of work throughout this continent and with it of all the workers. We welcome the maternal protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, faithful defender of the youngest, the beloved of God.

Santiago, Chile, July 2010