

Catholic Social Teaching Regarding Work and Workers: Questions for Today and Tomorrow

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Introduction:

Pope Leo XIII, at the end of his Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, commits “the church and her ministers to always have solicitude for workers”. This solicitude has been evident for the past 128 years. This commitment to solicitude for workers has been enhanced through successor encyclicals over that time.

In this session we will consider the key Catholic principles regarding work and workers as they are lifted up in these encyclicals. Then we will consider how these principles are applying to the reality of work in the world today, and in Eastern Europe in particular. We will take a brief look into the future of work and how the nature of work is changing and how that might challenge our Catholic principles about work and workers in a new way. Finally, we will have an opportunity to consider ways to develop pastoral strategies going forward.

Pope Francis contributes a new voice and a new intensity to the rights of workers. In this he echoes what you here in Poland were so close to in the life and the teaching of Saint Pope John Paul II. One must see Pope Francis in this unbroken line of 128 years of papal social teaching on work and on the Church’s solicitude for workers. I might add that while I appreciate the term Catholic Social Teaching, I prefer to call it Catholic Social Doctrine. Using the word Doctrine gives a weight to our social teaching that is important for people to appreciate. When Catholic Social Teaching is seen as Doctrine, it is clear that we cannot relegate it to 2nd class status. And the observation and practice of Catholic Doctrine is not a buffet from which one freely picks and chooses.

Pope Leo XIII gave the admonition: Go to the Worker. Pope Francis puts this another way. He says we should “build a culture of encounter” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, # 20, and #24). By this he means we should go out to the peripheries, encounter those whom we meet, really encounter them, and then we should engage. Shortly we will see how these pontifical admonitions to go out can apply to the question of work and workers.

Last year while here we had the opportunity to pay a visit to the tomb of Blessed Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko. I found that a deeply moving pilgrimage visit. He was an ordinary parish priest who understood the call to “go the worker” and anticipated the call to “build a culture of encounter” with the workers. He did not always have great health, but he answered the call. In the end the

apostolic mandate “to go the workers” cost this good priest his life. He was brutally murdered for standing in solidarity with workers at the hand of political leaders *in odium fidei*. I would like to invoke the blessing of Fr. Jerzy on our reflection and discussion today.

With his intercession, let us do a brief review of Catholic Social Doctrine regarding work and workers.

Methodology: SEE, JUDGE, ACT:

All of our papers at this seminar reflect the methodology of Canon Joseph Cardijn: observe, judge, act. We see this methodology as a key element in the documents of Vatican II and in the more recent papal social encyclicals. Saint Pope John XXIII articulated this methodology clearly in *Mater et Magistra* #236 in 1961. Pope Francis was familiar with this methodology from his years in Latin America and in particular in the *Aparecida* document. (#19) He lifts up this methodology clearly in *Laudato Si* # 15.

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego, California , addressing the World Meeting of Popular Movements in California, framed this methodology succinctly: “seeing clearly the situation, judging with principles that foster the integral development of people, and acting in a way which implements these principles in the light of everyone’s situation.”

SEE:

In this workshop we are looking at the reality of work and its value and meaning to workers. So, first let us SEE how this concept and reality of work, its value and meaning have been passed on to us over millennia through our spiritual Tradition.

Work in the Bible:

The value of human work is handed down to us from the Scriptures and our Tradition.

First, in the Book of Genesis we get our first clues about the importance of work. Genesis 1:1-15 tells us that God is the primary worker; busy with creation. Genesis 1:31 tells us God sees His work. He declares it very good. God reviewed His work and took pleasure in it. Thus, work itself is of God, and it brings joy and pleasure. Genesis 1 and 2 relates how God creates human beings, male and female He creates them. He gives them a garden to work and cultivate. Their work is also understood as rendering worship to God. In Genesis 3, upon being expelled from the garden, Adam and Eve are given work again, but now it will be in a rough field, not a garden, and it will also bring difficulty, exhaustion, struggle. Work is still a reflection of God, but it will be done “by the sweat of their brow”.

Our first understanding of the essence of work, then, is that it is of God, and plays a significant role in the salvation history of humanity. Work is the reflection of the image and likeness of God. Work has a connection to the Divine. In Matthew 11:2 and John 3:19 work, or our deeds and activities, in fact, Christ’s deeds and activities, are seen as integral aspects of an existing or original order or economy initiated by the Creator. In John 5 and John 5:20 and John 6:28 the

works and activities of God and those of His people are seen as one integral activity that sustain the order of creation as God envisaged it. Work is an essential ingredient of our full integration as human beings. Can you imagine why Pope Francis expresses such sadness and worry for young people for whom there is no work?

Humans today must work in a field, not a garden. The place may be hostile, full of challenges, yet the work itself is still a reflection of the image and likeness of God Himself. Thus, work itself is a source of our dignity and joy. And that work that is worship remains the closest resemblance of the work in Paradise.

St. Paul tells us in Romans 8 “to make of our whole lives a worship”. That includes the “work of our hands” and “by the sweat of our brow”. These too are a way we give worship and honor to God. We still understand our sacred liturgy as the “*laos ergon*”, a work of the people. So work is understood from the earliest days as an activity that brings joy and pleasure, and renders worship to the Creator. In this the worker reflects the very image and likeness of God.

Secondly, we understand that work is a means by which we realize our full and integral humanity. Work must always have a connection to the human person, and to the full integral development of the human person.

So, you begin to see the value we Catholics place upon work can never be established by some economic factor alone, nor can such value be determined solely in a corporate board room. Work can never be a commodity. Labor’s value comes first from God Himself.

Work and those who shape the contours of human work must always keep this in mind. Work or work conditions that obscure the image of God must be challenged. Work or work situations that diminish rather than enhance the integral human development of the worker must be challenged. Work that degrades the environment must be challenged. Work and work conditions that exclude some from full participation in society must be challenged. Where there is no work, there is no dignity. The Church must challenge such a situation.

Key Papal Teaching:

Beginning with the promulgation of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the Church for more than 128 years has developed key themes related to work and workers and their rights. It has SEEN. Here is a brief summary of some of those key themes.

Rerum Novarum: Promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, it speaks of the conditions of workers, the rights of workers, especially of the right to form a union and to bargain collectively. It defines and calls for a living wage, as well as the human development of the worker. He recognizes the plight of families who must migrate to find work.

Quadragesimo Anno: Promulgated by Pope Pius XI in 1931. It warns of the dangers of “unrestricted free market capitalism” as the “poisoned spring” from which other “isms” emerge. He warns of an “erroneous autonomy” as a challenge to the common good. He challenges national-socialism and communism; introduces the theme of solidarity. He upholds the rights of

workers to form unions. He supports a significant role for government in the market to protect the common good.

Pacem in Terris: Promulgated by St. Pope John XXIII in 1963. “Good Pope John” speaks again of the common good as a key principle of Catholic Doctrine. He speaks of the role of government as a guarantor of fundamental human dignity. He recognizes the right of people to seek a better life, including the right to migrate. He speaks of care of the environment.

Populorum Progressio: Promulgated by St. Pope Paul VI in 1967. He warns of the impact of multi-national corporations and returns to the theme of “inhuman principles of individualism”. He affirms the right to migrate. He develops further the theme of solidarity. He sees social justice and care of the environment as connected issues.

Laborem Exercens: Promulgated by St. Pope John Paul II in 1981. He speaks of the dignity of work and of the worker with a rich personalist philosophy and a deep reading of the Scriptures. He affirms the primacy of the worker, and affirms the rights of workers including the right to form a union and bargain collectively and the right to migrate in search of a better life. He affirms the important role of unions.

Centesimus Annus: Promulgated by St. Pope John Paul II in 1991, in it the pope reviews issues of the economy, and speaks of the fall of communism. He warns of the inequalities and dangers inherent in neo-liberal free market capitalism. He affirms an important role for government to protect rights, including the right to private property and the rights of workers. He affirms the importance and value of unions and collective bargaining. He affirms the right to migrate. He articulates principle of solidarity and subsidiarity.

Caritas in veritate: Promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. He affirms again the importance of the Common Good. He warns about the threats of speculative financial dealings that damage society. He speaks of the global migration of people and affirms “every migrant is a human person”. Migration is prompted by many factors including economics. He warns about economic inequality and of a consumerist and utilitarian view of life. He affirms the role of government to protect the Common Good and to regulate markets. He affirms the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. He speaks of the renewed importance of unions to protect workers’ rights “now more than ever”.

Evangelii Gaudium: Promulgated by Pope Francis in 2013, the Holy Father declares the Church is on a mission and calls for a “culture of encounter”. “Go out, encounter, and engage”. Calls for social dialogue “to counter an economy of exclusion, an economy that kills”. He raises economic inequality and the exclusion of the poor to the level of a “life issue”. The document calls for inclusion of the poor, supporting the Common Good, recognizing the root causes of global migration and denounces the mistreatment of migrants. Calls for integral human development.

Lampedusa: Pope Francis’ first trip outside Rome is to Lampedusa in 2013. He warns of a “globalization of indifference”, especially in light of the plight of migrants.

Laudato Si: Promulgated by Pope Francis in 2015. He states “a sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism,

is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful”. He affirms the Labor is NOT a commodity. Work cannot be detached from the dignity and the humanity of the worker. When business treats work as a commodity, and the environment as collateral damage, this most affects the poor, and causes migration. The voice of workers is needed both inside and outside the work place.

Speech in Santa Cruz, Bolivia 2015: Pope Francis warns of a “global economic order that has imposed a mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature. He warns against the “unfettered pursuit of money”. He affirms the right of the poor and the excluded to organize.

Speech to Italian Labor Conference-2017: Labor unions have an essential role in promoting inclusion. “There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that is not reborn every day in the peripheries”. “Work without respect for the human person “becomes something inhuman”.

In summary: Work is a reflection of the activity of the Creator. The worker is a reflection of the image and likeness of God. This is where the Church says we find the essential value of all work, and the essential dignity of every worker. No arbitrary economic interest can make that determination. As such, workers have a right to full integral human development. They have a right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. They have a right to a living wage. They have a right to form unions, and to bargain collectively to preserve this dignity. They have a right to a safe work place. They have a right to migrate to seek a better life for themselves and for their families. They have a right to economic equality and inclusion. They have a right to a job. Together with unions, the government also has an important role to guarantee economic equality and inclusion, and to regulate markets in order to protect the common good. All workers are stake holders in a society, and the church supports the inclusion of all stakeholders in economic decisions, not just stockholders.

The ILO and Catholic Principles regarding Work and Workers:

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the International Labor Organization. In reflecting upon this important anniversary, the ILO General Secretary, the Honorable Guy Ryder, wrote “the link between social justice, peace, and the role of work was embedded in the International Labor Organization’s Constitution. The principle that ‘labour is not a commodity’ is at the heart of this relationship and it reflects the space occupied by the ILO at the intersection of the economics of market and the values of justice, fairness, dignity and respect”.

Mr. Ryder reflected upon the foundation of the ILO some 20 years after the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum*. He wrote “there are times of upheaval when it is essential to reflect on broad social and economic developments and the direction they are taking”. This was the case at the time of the founding of the ILO. He suggests it is a time now again to do such a reflection. He writes: “Today the challenge of combining social progress and economic efficiency- and environmental sustainability- is an integrated challenge and decent work is key to the response.” (*Caritatis in Veritate* Foundation Working Papers/Editorial-*Rethinking Labour*.)

For your further study I refer you all to a collection of articles on the theme: The Future of Work in Light of *Laudato Si* organized by the International Labor Organization and which you can access on-line. [<https://futureofwork-labourafterlaudatosi.net/documents/>]

I also refer you to *The Statement by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations: 100th Anniversary of the International Labor Organization* by His Excellency, Archbishop Bernardito Auza.

[<https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/5cb0ae1bdd6e4.php>]

Archbishop Auza, in his statement, offers us a concise framework for reflecting upon those principles of Catholic Social Doctrine that bridge the work of the Holy See, the ILO, and our own pastoral applications locally. Here is a summary Archbishop Auza's Catholic principles on work.

Catholic Principles on Work

- 1. Work is not a commodity:** This principle has been repeated in every social encyclical since *Rerum Novarum* thru *Centismus Annus* to *Caritas in veritate* to *Evangelium Gaudium* and *Laudato Si*. Our faith tradition affirms that work is a necessary component of human fulfillment. Work is meant to reaffirm every aspect of the human person, not only as a worker, but as a member of a family, and of a community. Work must be seen as a way toward integral human development. It can never be reduced to economic terms. It is not a commodity.
- 2. Decent Work is a fundamental need:** Decent work suggests work that not only respects the integral human development of the worker, but also provides a safe place within which to work and a living wage for supporting a family, for savings, with health care provisions. Decent work is work that enables the worker to participate fully in society. Pope Francis adds that decent work must also fully integrate ecological considerations. Pope Francis offers the terms: *techo*/roof, *tierra*/land, and *trabajo*/work as the essentials for integral human development.
- 3. Decent Work must be accessible for all:** This principle addresses the issue of fundamental human equality. In recent decades while the global free market economy has created jobs, it has not been able to check the exponential growth in wealth of a few. Income inequality is now at outrageous and non-sustainable levels. Globally only 1 in 4 persons has the protection of social security. It is estimated that 5.2 billion people have no social coverage.
- 4. Our societies can afford to provide basic social security:** In spite of messages of global scarcity, in fact, our societies, given the right priorities can provide a basic level of social security for all. There is enough to go around! In many nations today we hear messages of scarcity. These are meant to generate fear and anxiety.
- 5. Rights and benefits are not disposable:** The United Nations is promoting the Decent Work Agenda globally. This includes the fight to guarantee that the rights of workers are not diminished or treated as disposable. There has been an attempt in many places to eliminate workers' rights to bargain collectively, to form unions, to secure their pension when these and other rights get in the way of those whose only concern is for profits and

for stockholders. Here we return to reducing work to a commodity. A collective bargaining agreement is not a commercial relationship only. It is a covenant!

- 6. Human Labor forms a person's character and dignity:** The capacity to create new things, relations, expressions marks the vitality of a person. Work is where most people spend most of their time. It should be a place for personal growth, developing of talent, planning for the future. In this work is a reflection of the Creator Himself.

Now let us continue to SEE some aspects of work trends globally, as well as in Eastern Europe.

JUDGE:

As we do this, we begin to move toward the second aspect of our methodology: Judge. Holding our understanding of the value and meaning of work, and of the fundamental and integrated dignity of the human person, we begin to form judgment, discernment, on the realities we See before us.

Work Trends: Globally

The International Labor Organization published its **World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for 2019**. This report offers a global overview of work trends and also takes a deeper look at the questions of work in specific regions of the world. My remarks here are drawn from that report.

In her introduction to *Re-thinking Labour: Ethical Reflections on the Future of Work*, which is part of the ILO Report, Professor Anna Biondi Bird, of the ILO, writes these powerful words: “Some figures give the sense of the profound injustice underlying the contemporary world of work. At least 40 million people live in forms of modern slavery. 152 million children are caught in child labour. More than 15 million women and girls are trapped in forced marriages. Women continue to be paid, on average, 23% less than their male colleagues. While freedom of association and collective bargaining are of key importance as enabling rights, more than 50% of all workers in the world live in countries that have not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which enshrined these fundamental rights. Particularly affected are workers in old and new non-standard forms of employment (precarious jobs, informal economy, platform economy, rural areas). Many of these are women and young workers”.

The ILO report indicates the most serious issues in many countries are poor job quality, unemployment, and underutilization. Here is a brief review of 6 global trends:

- 1. The Gender Gap:** It is estimated that three in five of the 3.5 billion people in the global labor force are men. Progress in closing the gender gap has stalled in recent years. Women also tend to be more engaged in the informal economy. Women's wages are still often viewed as supplemental to a family wage and not a living wage in itself.
- 2. Decent work deficits are widespread:** Many workers find themselves having to take up unattractive jobs that tend to be informal and are characterized by low pay and with little

or no access to social protection and rights at work. In 2018, 360 million people were contributing family workers. But 1.1 billion people worked on their own account, often in subsistence activities. This is due to a lack of decent work opportunities. It is estimated some 700 million workers are living on less than \$3.20 (US) per day, and thus in moderate to extreme poverty. At the same time the incidence of working poverty has decreased in recent decades. This raises an important point. Some will say the free market economy reduces poverty. That is true. But this does not address the question about decent work. Our Catholic Social Doctrine demands we be vigilant here.

3. **Unemployment is widespread but trending down:** Globally it is estimated 172 million people are unemployed. This rate is expected to go down, which is good news. The question remains: will it be decent work?
4. **Underutilization:** It is estimated there are about 140 million people classified as underutilized. Women are more likely to work part-time. This may be for home care or other reasons. It may also be about available opportunities.
5. **Young Workers more likely to live in poverty:** The report indicates the problem of working poverty is severe among the young (ages 15-24). More than 1 in 3 young workers live in moderate to extreme poverty. Unemployment is a major problem for young people.
6. **Immigration is a global phenomenon:** Migration is at record numbers across the globe. It may be within nation states, or across national and international borders. Immigrants are on the move in search of a better life and economic opportunity or fleeing from natural disaster or as political situations as refugees. Migrants account for a disproportionate share of the labor force growth in many countries. The global economy accepts migration as a given and sees improved integration of immigrants as a way to bigger dividends. This can create tensions within nations when citizens and new immigrants are put in competition for work. These are situations where work can easily be reduced again to a commodity, where workers rights may be abused or even denied.

Work Trends in Eastern Europe:

The ILO report: **World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for 2019** also offers some important data on specific regions. For Eastern Europe here are some trends you will find of importance. They are also generally very positive. As you reflect, I would ask you to consider your own experience. Are these trends confirmed in your pastoral ministry?

1. **Economic Growth in Eastern Europe remains robust:** The report indicates that stronger economic activity in the Russian Federation is a factor in this. Employment is strong in Eastern Europe generally, although it is expected to shrink a bit. Part of this is a work force aging out. The unemployment rate is estimated to drop to fill this aging out gap. The unemployment rate is broad-based covering Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and the Russian Federation. It is estimated that it will drop from 5% to 4.8% in the coming year or two.

2. **The Informal Economy Remains a Factor:** The incidence of the informal economy in the total employment numbers remains relatively high for Eastern Europe compared to the rest of Europe. Many informal workers are actually salaried workers in the formal economy as well, but without social security protections. The informal economy is still a strong factor in Poland and the Russian Federation, not so much anymore in the Czech Republic.
3. **Extreme and Working Poverty have been virtually eradicated:** This is incredibly good news for the countries in Eastern Europe. It is reported that extreme and working poverty have virtually been eradicated in Eastern European countries.
4. **Threats for Temporary Workers:** There are challenges faced by temporary workers in each country. For example, the risk of working poverty is a daily threat for 20% of temporary workers in Hungary, and 10% of temporary workers in Poland and Slovakia.
5. **Immigration:** The countries of Eastern Europe are not immune to the challenges of immigration, both internal from country to city, and external, from other nations. In many Eastern European countries, migration helps offset a zero population or negative population growth in the native population, bringing needed workers into the work force. This presents its own challenges regarding integration. Pope John Paul II said this situation requires solidarity which “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and a far, but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say to the good of all and each individual, because we are all responsible for all”. (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* #38)

The Future of Work

We have just been discussing the concrete pastoral realities of workers and their work in our experiences. There are often challenges to keep the connection between work and the Divine, to ensure work respects the integral human development of the worker, and to ensure that work is not reduced to a commodity. Those challenges will become even stronger perhaps as we face the future and changing nature of work itself.

Over the past several years in preparation for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ILO, the ILO in collaboration with the Holy See’s Congregation for Integral Human Development and other organizations have initiated social dialogues across the world to look at the question of the Future of Work in light of *Laudato Si*. I refer you to the website of ILO to see the collection of these reports.

Among the developments emerging we see and must begin to judge:

1. Emerging job trends:

- a. **Digital equality:** Digital equality is a strong feature of the new economy. It hints at possibilities of working from home and the hours I would like to work. But it also suggests a 24/7 work cycle and loss of the “week-end” which the Labor Movement secured for workers globally. This poses a threat to any opportunity for “sabbath” time.

- b. Economic inequality: Globally, the middle class is shrinking. The ultra-wealthy have accelerated their gains. The poorest classes have made some gains. While digital equality suggests a level playing field, in fact, the inequalities are growing. This is described as an “explosive” social and political situation which is not sustainable.
 - c. STEM Education: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics are the preferred model for education. But this runs the risk of loss of important aspects of human integration, the arts, philosophy, and theology. STEM education emphasis fails to address facts about today’s young people: 50% are obese; many have chronic asthma, and many show signs of personal dysfunction. We need greater understanding of the Millennial generation.
 - d. For Young People, the work picture looks bleak. Even in Europe, US, Canada, Japan young people have seen the initiation of “no hour” contracts, that is, they are on call with no guaranteed number of work hours. In Asia and Africa, there just are not any jobs.
 - e. Labor laws: in too many countries, even with good labor laws, there is no longer enforcement; unions are corrupted or even suppressed by political situations.
 - f. Supply chain workers: Supply chain jobs tend to move from country to country in a constant search for cheaper labor, bigger tax breaks, fewer benefits, and/or suppressed labor rights.
2. **Migration:**
- a. Global migration: It is estimated there are some 240 million people on the move globally.
 - b. Jobs Keep Moving: One driver of migration is that jobs keep moving from place to place. Workers keep moving with these jobs. Major economies count on the fact that there will also be somebody coming along who will be willing to work for less.
 - c. Civil unrest, war, and natural disaster: There is a constant flow of refugees from perilous situations.
 - d. Unreported migration: Within China there is an estimated 269-293 million persons engaged in undocumented, unauthorized internal migration. These persons have no authorization to leave the countryside, have no work permits, no license for housing. They make a living on the street or wherever they can, and work in underground economies.
 - e. Fear of Pandemics: A significant concern about these millions of migrants is the potential for a new pandemic disease. In the 1980’s the SARS virus emerged from among just 100 million unauthorized internal immigrants in China. Today’s unauthorized internal migrant numbers are almost 3x’s that.
 - f. Fertility Rates: Some countries reflect a negative birth rate and rely more and more on new immigration.
3. The Robots: The robots are already here. They have been around for more than 75 years already. But there are new implications:

- a. Today we are seeing a coupling of robots with Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI has been a technical knowledge to date, based upon learning algorithms. But AI is on the cusp of being able to consider “context,” and make contextual considerations. This is as close to human knowledge as machines can get so far.
 - b. AI-Robot Risk to Jobs: In the US it is estimated in the next 10-15 years some 47% of all US jobs will be at risk to robots. This will be as true in all other advanced economies. This can only be slowed by societal intervention because the risk to social stability is simply too costly.
 - c. AI-Robot Job Sectors: AI-robotics can eliminate many lower skill/lower wage jobs. This is already happening in hotels and restaurants and food catering, elder care and more. Recently checking into a hotel, I was directed to kiosk, not a front desk person. Later at the hotel buffet a host seated me, and then pointed me to places where a machine would make my coffee, or a cocktail.
 - d. But AI-robotics can also eliminate higher skill/higher wage jobs from bricklayers, to factory jobs and manufacturing, and on to doctors and surgeons, lawyers and engineers. Robotic surgeries are on the increase eliminating the need for multiple surgeons spread out across a country. The automotive industry is already about 38% robotics.
 - e. Extraction industries are changing: In a short time there will be no people working underground in mines, only robots. Here we might consider the fate of coal miners. Robots are replacing them already. These robots will not emit environmentally hazardous wastes. Ore bodies are already being digitized, and their value is being monetized by bitcoin. Green technology is rapidly emerging.
 - f. Younger economies: Younger economies in an attempt to catch up will continue to use older extraction methods with serious damage to both workers and communities as well as to the environment.
4. The Environment: The environment is at a critical phase. Coastal flooding, stronger and stranger weather patterns are taking a toll already. In America, in the City of Miami, we note that coastal flooding is already a reality. But in addition, rising waters are also raising the water table in-land from the ocean. The highest land in Miami has also been its poorest immigrant neighborhood: called Little Haiti. You can imagine that real estate developers are already trying to see how to remove these poor immigrants from this now increasingly valuable land.

ACT:

How does the Church respond to so much social change? How do we “go to the worker” and initiate “a culture of encounter”? There seems to be so much at stake, so much shifting at the same time. The key direction for our time we can find in both *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si*. We must go out and begin to dialogue, but not just for the sake of conversation, we must dialogue for action. We are being called to practice new forms of solidarity. We must face new forms of discrimination, and many forms of economic and political corruption. In the face of

people's challenges and troubles the Church can do more than say to people, to workers, "sorry for your troubles". We can accompany. We can practice solidarity. We can teach solidarity. We can create opportunities for solidarity. We are told "every baptized person is to be a peacemaker and a witness to solidarity in a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter." (E.G. #180)

How do we approach dialogue with workers?

We recall the words of Pope Francis to the World Meeting of Popular Movements: "The future of humanity does not belong to the elites and the powerful but to the poor (in our case- the workers) and in their ability to organize." We remember a theme from the Aparecida document that every person is to be the agent of his or her own integral human development. So, actions that result from dialogue are not so much for the other person, as in solidarity with the other person.

We may use this format:

1. What is happening to you and or your co-workers in your work place?
2. What is a particularly hard challenge?
3. What would you like to see different?
4. What are YOU going to do about it?
5. What holds you back? What fears do you have about taking action?
6. What are you willing to risk?
7. Let's make a plan to organize

With whom do we dialogue about work and about workers?

Dialogue with workers; who face many challenges providing for families, and defending their rights and safety in the workplace.

Dialogue with immigrant workers, who have unique issues and concerns.

Dialogue with women workers whose wages and benefits are often less than their male counterparts.

Dialogue with Labor Union leaders: unions face many challenges today, but the Church affirms strongly unions are still the best vehicle for workers to protect their rights and to enable collective bargaining.

Dialogue with business leaders: we recommend the document *The Vocation of the Catholic Business Leader* from the Dicastery for Integral Human Development as a helpful tool in engaging business leaders.

Dialogue with pastors: training and effective approaches to meeting with workers.

Dialogue with faith leaders of other denominations and faith traditions: Working together all faith leaders make a strong moral case for the protection of workers and their rights.

Dialogue with community leaders and political leaders.

Dialogue with those who work for the Church itself.

I invite you now to work in groups to take up the question: when you return home what action plans for dialogue can you put into practice? With whom will you meet? How will you gather them?

Dialogue must lead to Action.