St. Joseph: The Patron Saint of Workers

In celebration of The Feast of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1st, the May monthly prayer will guide reflection on the marginalized and exploited workers, particularly migrant workers world wide.

Migration is a part of every culture in the ever emerging global society. People from all over the world travel great distances to find a better life for themselves and for their families. Many people even leave their native homeland to seek new opportunities in places foreign to them. People, especially women and children, demonstrate their resiliency to adverse situations of domestic violence, extreme poverty, political and economic instability and persecution by leaving what they know behind with hope in their hearts for change and new beginnings.

In the search for new employment prospects, thousands of migrant workers are eager to find work to support their family who migrated with them or to send money back home to other family members. Many feel the obligation to fulfill the role of primary breadwinner and are in the pursuit to successfully do so for the sake of their family’s well being. With the determination and their sights set on a new life, migrant workers face being exploited on their journey by those who are offering to help them cross borders or by employers who offer a chance for a living wage. More often, migrant workers face dehumanizing situations such as being trafficked, sweatshop labor, and degrading working conditions and feel powerless to have their voices heard. They are far from earning enough money to support themselves let alone support their families who are desperate to rise out of poverty.

Participate in a day of reflection in action and solidarity!

Take action by looking at the label on an item of clothing or a food product and see what company produced and in what part of the world.

Next, go to Clean Clothes Campaign (http://www.cleanclothes.org/) or (http://www.ethique-sur-etiquette.org/) in the Netherlands or CorpWatch (http://www.corpwatch.org/) in the United States and search for the company or country you found in the clothing or food item. You will find valuable educational resources relating to what you consume every day.
Then check out websites such as the Good Shepherd Handcrafting Justice website (www.handcraftingjustice.org) or other socially conscious and sweatshop free links such as Fair Trade Zone (http://www.fairtradezone.jhc-edca.org/index_espanol.htm) located in Nicaragua to continue your learning on workers’ rights initiatives.

Finally, you will have the knowledge to change not only how you as an individual can make a difference in the lives of migrant workers, but you will also unite with others who share a common view and impact change on our global society.