

May 1 – International Worker's Day

The world of work in the times of Coronavirus

- A bit of history:

Workers' Day is celebrated every May 1 to commemorate the "Haymarket Martyrs" a group of anarchist trade unionists who were executed in 1886 in the United States for claiming their labor rights.



The workers demanded an 8-hour work day, since they used to work from 12 to 16 hours a day. Under pressure, the President of the United States, Andrew Johnson signed a law that established the 8-hour work day. However, the business sector decided not to comply, so workers in the city of Chicago began a strike on May 1. A movement led by Albert Parsons brought together more than 80 thousand workers. It was described as "outrageous and disrespectful," and as a "delirium of lunatic little patriots". For those who criticized the movement, the request was "the same as asking to be paid a salary without fulfilling any time of work". The conflict spread to other cities and ended up stopping more than 400,000 workers in 5,000 simultaneous strikes. Both the government and the business sector believed that they were facing the beginning of an anarchist revolution. The McCormick factory in Chicago did not recognize the victory of the workers and on May 1 the police fired on the demonstrators at the doors of the company. In the following days, more workers died until the fourth day a bomb exploded against the police forces in an event known as "the Haymarket attack". On June 21, the trial of 31 workers accused of having been the alleged promoters of the conflict began. Two of them were sentenced to life imprisonment, one to 15 years of forced labor and five to death by hanging. These 8 people became the Martyrs of Chicago, and in their commemoration it was declared that May Day would be International Worker's Day.

The Church, through the papal encyclicals, promotes safeguarding the value of human labor and honors its commendable contribution to the economy, individuals and society.

○ CURRENT SITUATION:

The world economy against Coronavirus



The coronavirus pandemic has triggered an economic crisis that is growing like an avalanche, and its impact on the world of work.

As each day that passes more countries close their borders and declare quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus, **economic activity sinks**, companies in the hardest-hit sectors such as airlines, hotels and restaurants warn that they may fail. Many workers are losing their jobs and stock markets are still unstable.

Governments are applying restrictions on free movement on streets not seen since World War II and although the epicenter of the health crisis is in Europe, the United States has already declared a state of emergency and in Latin America the countries with the most infected people are following the same path.

Since it is not known for how long the pandemic can spread, it is difficult for the authorities to calculate how much money they can inject into the economies and what emergency measures they can put in place to mitigate the most immediate effects on people's incomes.

Globally, the COVID-19 crisis is projected to make 6.7 percent of work hours disappear in the second quarter of 2020, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.

The sectors most exposed to risk include hotel and restaurant services, manufacturing, retail, and business and administrative activities.

"Workers and businesses face catastrophe, both in developed and developing economies," said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

According to an ILO study dated March 18, 1.25 billion people work in sectors considered to be at high risk of suffering "drastic and devastating" increases in layoffs and decreases in wages and hours of work. Many of these people are

employed in low-paying, low-skilled jobs, where an unforeseen loss of income has devastating consequences.

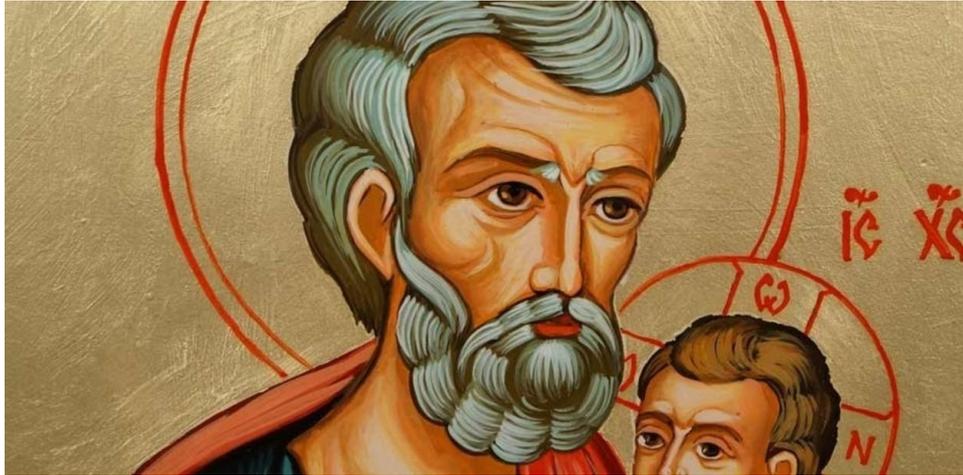
Globally, two billion people work in the informal sector (the majority in emerging and developing economies) and are at particular risk.

"It is necessary to adopt integrated and large-scale political measures; This is the greatest test for international cooperation in more than 75 years," said Guy Ryder. "If a country fails, then we all fail. We must look for solutions that help all segments of our global society, particularly the most vulnerable and those with the least possibilities to fend for themselves. "

Pope Francis in the Urbi et Orbi blessing on Easter Sunday, referring to the serious crisis we are going through, said: "I encourage those who have political responsibilities to actively work for the common good of citizens, providing the means and goods necessary to enable everyone to have a decent life. It is not a time of indifference, because the whole world is suffering and has to be united to face the pandemic." Likewise, he said: **"Considering the current circumstances, I ask for international sanctions on affected countries to be relaxed, as these prevent governments from offering adequate assistance to the people themselves; and the great needs of the moment are faced by all the countries - reducing and even forgiving the debt that weighs on the budgets of those poorer countries.** This is not the time for selfishness because the challenge we are facing unites us all and is no respecter of persons. "

We entrust Saint Joseph, adoptive father of Jesus and patron of workers, with this harsh reality that we are living. May he help us to overcome this difficult moment, through gestures of solidarity and the design of a more inclusive and just economy.





Joseph of Nazareth, carpenter and husband of the Virgin Mary, is the patron saint of workers has been celebrated since May 1, 1955, when it was instituted by Pope Pius XII before a group of workers gathered in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican

Prayer:

We turn to you, O blessed Saint Joseph, our protector on earth, as one who knows the value of work and the answer to our call. Through your Holy Wife, the Virgin Mother of God, and knowing the paternal love you had for our Lord Jesus, we ask you to assist us in our needs and strengthen us in our work.

By the promise to worthily carry out our daily tasks, deliver us from falling into the sin of greed and a corrupt heart. Be the solicitous guardian of our work, our defender and strength against injustice and error. We especially ask for those who have lost their source of employment, so that soon they get another opportunity.

We follow your example and seek your help. Help us in all our efforts, so that we can obtain with you eternal rest in Heaven. Amen.

Prayer prepared by Sr. Mónica B. Scavuzzo

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