UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES
COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
877 EDSA, West Triangle, Quezon City

HONORING GOD'S CO-CREATORS

(Pastoral Statement of the United Church of Christ for the Labor Day Celebration on this First of May year 2021)

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so, on the seventh day he rested from all his work." (Genesis 2:2, NiV)

The United Church of Christ honors the significant role of the working class plays in the shaping of the nation destiny. Together with other important sectors of society like the peasants, workers image society. When their dignity and worth are valued more than capital, it means that society is just and people enjoy the benefit of such justness.

One principle imbedded in the life and witness of the Church is its adherence to *"The fundamental values of love, justice, truth and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church" (*Article II, Section 5, UCCP Constitution). Thus, UCCP's solidarity with the vision and struggle of the Filipino workers.

Workers are God's co-creators to feed, cloth people and provide them with the things they use to enjoy what it means to be human loved and cared for by the Creation and make life relatively peaceful and just. What Paul said in his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 2 verse 10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do," applies or finds meaning and relevance to the workers throughout the world. They are not cog of machines but God's handiwork fulfilling God's purpose of seeing humanity live decently and in peace. Therefore, any government must look after their wellbeing, safety and security as human beings deserving highest recognition and protection.

Today and even in the past many years, our country observes Labor Day amidst a sobering reality of the plight of Filipino workers and worldwide. In fact, even before the pandemic, millions of workers and peasants submerge into the quagmire of poverty and hunger.

Records show an estimated 13,127 companies have discharged workers resulting to unemployment of 225,643. Meanwhile, 116,471 companies have to temporarily shut down operations or device flexible work. Added to this abject reality is the 600,000 OFWs who lost their jobs.

There are 10,000 cases of COVI9-19 infection each while half of these numbers are workers ages 20-49. This means majority of those vulnerable to Covid-19 contamination come from the labor force. IBON Foundation reports 5 million Filipinos are currently unemployed. Minimum salary of formal workers plunges from Php80 up to more than Php100. Prices of commodities rise as a result of inflation rate which is 4.7% at the end of February 2021.

Consistent with the Church's prophetic task of speaking out against all forms of evil impacting decent life and security of the people, we call on the President Duterte to heed the cries of the laborers and see their sorry plight. May his government protect the interest of workers more than the foreign and bureaucrat capitalists whose god is wealth.

Social amelioration is good especially when it sustains those who were not able to work on the longer period of lockdowns. But more than ever, Filipino people, especially the workers, need health, livelihood and rights particularly in this time of global pandemic.

We call on churches to pray for the workers locally and worldwide and extend possible support to the suffering workers in our respective community. We beseech faith communities to support also the demands of the poor for free and safe vaccines, and for the government to prioritize the welfare of the whole Filipino citizenry, not the satisfaction of greedy foreigners, by providing enough assistance to Filipino families for them to recover from the pitfalls of poverty worsened by the state's neglect during the pandemic.

We call on for our fellow faithfuls to echo the voice of the toiling majority. For the government leaders to come into their senses and resign from their office if not recover their failure of handling the pandemic. For them to provide the financial assistance of 10,000.00 pesos, and the 100.00 pesos daily wage subsidy. Give the need of 750.00 pesos National Minimum Wage. And to make the COVID-19 testing and vaccines free for all people. Let them listen to the cries of God's co-creators!

God in the creation story rested from work after seven days. We believe God wants us to understand that anybody who exert energy, time and skills, those who labor with their sweat and blood, deserve satisfactory rest. This rest should mean enjoying the fruits of labor and not otherwise. May God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven soon!

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01 May 2021

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