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THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS **International Labor Day Solidarity Statement** **01 May 2023**

An Ode to the Cry and Struggle for Decent Living Wages

Jesus Christ, our Savior, adept to the plight of people of his time,
Succinctly describes his generation's indifference to the good news,
Although the poor, deprived and oppressed await the dawning of radical change,
Yet unconvinced and uninspired to the tune of change---
Heralding the reign of God in justice and peace. He said,
"But to what will I compare this generation?
It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another:
'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'¹

In our contemporary generation, the Spirit of God causes us to inquire:
Why should the basic wages of laborers and employees
is pegged below subsistence level?

Isn't not the Php 570 daily wage is tantamount to slave wage?

Far from the subsistence level of estimated Php 1,100.

In contrast, the President of the Philippines is considered the highest paid government
official, with an annual salary of around Php 3.8 million.

Senators and Congressmen earn around Php 2.8 million annually, while Governors,
Mayors, and Councilors' salaries range from Php 120,000 to Php 540,000 per
year, depending on their location and position.²

Despite political and economic class distinctions,

the quality of life of the commoner or ordinary citizen is put into question.

They, in the echelons of political and economic power assume

that they represent their constituents' interests and advocate for their needs and
concerns. They do budget planning, and oversight of government agencies.

But where lies are their vested economic interests?

Where more monetary incentives and financial advantage accrue?

Favoring the top 1000 corporations that have raised their profit margins from Php 1.08

¹ Matthew 11: 16=17

² <https://philippinego.com>

trillion in 2012 to Php 1.82 trillion in 2021;³
While the top 40 rich families in the country
have favorably gained Php 2.0 trillion in 2012 to Php3.8 trillion in 2021.

We relive the Spirit of the Prophets of old who challenged the monarchies and the powerful people of their time, saying,

There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court
and detest the one who tells the truth.
You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.
Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them;
though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins.
There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes
and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. ⁴

It is time, an occasioned time to make amends and change;
The call of laborers, employees and all those who are paid below decent living wages
Should be acted now!

The wage increase of Php 750 across the board should be instituted without delay.
Wage discrimination across labor sectors should be stopped. Regional Wage Boards
should be dismantled as living standards across the country is the same and
these widen the wage gaps.⁵

Labor unions are the backbone of industries and corporations. Workers' demands that
include living wage, decent working conditions and the right to union and freedom
of association must be upheld and protected.

The Philippine economy should be on top priority as the nation is severely affected
by impending high inflation rates, unemployment, wars of aggression and climate
emergency; leaders ought to strategically plan and carry out economic programs
that will ensure economic sustainability and people's security.

We reiterate what was spoken to the Church people to support trade unions in 1970,
expounded in the General Assembly Statement on Social Concerns, and to provide
participation and leadership necessary to achieving the goals and freedom and
justice in society. More than ever, the Church must actively engage itself in the

³ Top 1000 corporations profit; <https://www.bworldonline.com/infographics/2023/01/03/496103/top-1000-corporations-in-the-philippines-comparison-of-sectoral-performance-in-2021/>

⁴ Amos 5: 10-12

⁵ Kilusang Mayo Uno Flyer for May 01, 2023 International Labor Day Celebration.

of bringing about social justice.⁶

We pray that this year's International Labor Day Commemoration will show forth God's intention for justice and peace for all the laborers and all workers around the world.+

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

01 May 2023



Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary



Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
North Luzon Jurisdictional Area



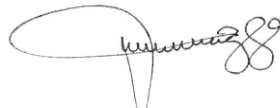
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⁶ UCCP Statements and Resolutions, 1948-1990; 1990, CEN UCCP, p. 84-85

Bishops Emeritus

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