



THE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF WORKERS



Our dignity is linked to our ability to work and provide for ourselves and our families. The Church believes that all people should be enabled to work, and in so doing, have a decent work environment and just pay for what they do. It is our right to join unions, and our duty to ensure all have decent conditions and a just wage.

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Everyone works in some way. Even in school we have our work to do.
- Our work should be something we take pride in, something which we do the best we can, using the gifts and talents God has given to us.
- This is the same when we get paid to work. Remember how we talked about human dignity. All people deserve to work in safe, healthy conditions.
- However, some people are forced to work long hours, in horrible conditions. Many people who make the clothes we wear can work in cramped factories, with no natural light, with few breaks, and for very little money. Or the people who grow cocoa beans which are made into chocolate can work in the fields in the sun for long periods each day, having to bend over and collect the cocoa, using dangerous knives.
- And sometimes the people working like this are your age – children who should be at school, but instead are forced to work to earn small amounts of money to help their families.
- How often do we think about where our clothes come from, how the ingredients in our food are grown, or how many people have been involved in producing them?



SCRIPTURE

Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?

Matthew 20:1-16

- Many people are not paid fairly for the work they do. They may only get a few pence for many hours work, which may mean the t-shirt we buy is cheaper for us, but the people who make it aren't being treated justly, and may struggle to have enough food to eat, or to send their children to school.
- The decisions we make about what we buy effects other people. It has an impact on them.
- The church supports initiatives like fairtrade, where people get a fair price for the things they produce, and the Living Wage, where people get paid properly for the work they do.
- When you're at home, or next time you're in the supermarket, keep an eye out for products which have a Fairtrade logo on them. Find out more about fairly traded goods on the internet.

ACTIVITY

Design a role play, or hot seat exercise, where children take on the roles of the workers. Or invite the children to write diary entries imagining what it would be like to be a worker who is low paid or mistreated. You can also use: picturemyworld.cafod.org.uk/fairtrade

For the times when we have taken for granted our food and clothing. Lord, we are sorry. R/

For the times when we have not said thank you. Lord, we are sorry. R/

For the times when we have not respected someone who is helping us. Lord, we are sorry. R/

Loving God, thank you for all the people who make the things I eat, drink, and wear. May all people treat one another fairly, and respect each other.

Amen.