



# ONE VOICE

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## Editorial

# Dignity of human work

The government claims that Philippine economy expanded in the first quarter of this year as it registered a 7.8 GDP growth. They further boasts that for the first time in decades our country is experiencing an economic rise that surpassed our neighboring countries of Thailand, Singapore and even China. However, whether or not this so-called economic growth can be felt by ordinary Filipinos, specifically the working class remains to be seen. The Catholic Church teaches that economic efficiency must always be accompanied by authentic human development. In other words, if economic activity is to have a moral character, it must be directed to all men and to all peoples (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CSDC), 332-3). However, for average Filipinos belonging in the working class this so called growth is like a parch of oasis in a Sahara desert... a mirage it could be there but is not.

An oasis that only the rich and the powerful could come in invited while the rest of us are left to die under the burning sun. How can there be growth amidst continued unemployment? How is it that those who have can have more while those who have nothing are robbed even more. We are in the midst of a situation when our labor force is experiencing the worst jobs destruction, unemployment is now at 7.1% in January 2013 from 6.8% in October 2012. St. Ambrose reminds us that through work, man share in in the divine art and wisdom—makes creation more beautiful. Through work, man summons the social and community energies and thereby increase the common good. And yet, widespread unemployment has

become a brutal instrument that forces workers to accept the sorry conditions of wages, job security and trade-union rights. The present reality contradicts Church teaching that work is a good belonging to all people and must be made available to all who are capable of engaging in it. Full employment therefore remains a mandatory objective for every economic system oriented towards justice and the common good. (CSDC, 288)



Photo by Macky Macaspac

Blessed John XXIII, in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* reiterates that work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life. And yet the Filipino workers demand for significant wage hike, job security, and the free exercise of their trade-union rights has fallen to deaf ears. In its three years in office, the Aquino government has continued to reject and has even attacked each of the said demands. The result of the breakfast dialogue of President Benigno Aquino III with some workers groups

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## CWS Objectives

The Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) aims to strengthen and sustain their linkages; and to make a commitment for:

1. A genuine and continuing dialogue between church people and workers
2. Solidarity with Filipino workers in addressing various issues and concerns.
3. Cooperation among workers and church people in order to come up with common responses that will actively support the rights of Filipino workers, especially the right to organize
4. Church people to be actively engaged in the efforts of workers to craft a pro-labor code and to assert laws and policies that would protect and guarantee labor rights, especially those that deal with just wages, decent working conditions, security of tenure, the right to a gainful employment, and other labor rights.

in this year's Labor Day clearly attest to this. The cry of the workers for genuine change has become more elusive.

In their struggle for survival, many

# Cardinal Tagle, 31 priests offer Labor Day mass

Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle and thirty one (31) priests from different parishes of the dioceses of Manila, Caloocan, Cubao, Imus and Cebu offered a mass for the workers during the commemoration of the Labor Day on May 1, 2013 at the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila. The mass was sponsored by the Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS), Church People's Promotion and Response (PCPR), National Clergy Discernment Group, Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene and the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU).

In his homily, Cardinal Tagle expressed his solidarity to the workers in calling for a wage increase as he urged company owners and investor to recognize and put human dignity above their interest for profit. He also gave tribute to the invaluable role of the workers in providing for the needs of the society and stressed "the primacy of labor over capital and profit."

His Eminence also emphasized that the financial growth of production should not be made at the expense of exploiting the workers. The cardinal also expressed concern over business trends of using various "classification" of workers that deny workers of their rights and expose them to more exploitation at their workplaces. "The church involvement in workers' concerns should



not be relegated as meddling since it is our mission in the midst of many changes that is happening in the world affecting labor" the cardinal added.

The people's prayers were read by workers and leaders from the Kilusang Mayo Uno, Migrante and Crispin B. Beltran Resource Center.

The mass was followed by a Solidarity Lunch outside the Basilica where marchers from labor groups and its supporters awaits before going to the Liwasang Bonifacio to celebrate Labor Day. ■

## CWS holds forum on labor

CWS holds forum on Labor

The Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) held a forum on Labor last April 19, 2013 at the Institute of Preaching Multi- Purpose Hall of the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City. The forum which was attended by 98 individual from the Catholic and Protestant churches and workers sector was part of the commemoration of the May One International Labor Day.

In his opening remarks, Fr. Quirico Pedregosa Jr., O.P., one of the conveners of CWS emphasized the value and importance of labor vis-à-vis the capital and reminded that the development of the society rest on the development of the conditions of the workers, thus the need to respond to the plight of the workers. He enjoined the participants in advancing

the aspiration of the workers and be involved in their struggle.

Mr. Elmer Labog, Chairperson of the Kilusang Mayo Uno and Co-Chairperson of the CWS discussed the history of the workers struggle and the importance/relevance of the May One Labor Day in the current situation of the workers. Mr. Labog called on the participants of the forum to strengthen the solidarity of the church people and workers to effectively respond towards various issues and concerns affecting the Filipino Workers.

On behalf of the church people, Sr. Emelina Villegas, ICM responded on the challenged posed by the workers by presenting the church social teachings which provided greater insights on the varied responses of the church to the ever changing signs of the times.

Following the discussions of Mr. Labog and Sr. Emelina was an open forum that highlighted the need for a painstaking organizing of the church people to effectively draw their support towards the workers' cause. The forum was enlivened by the cultural performances by Mr. Karl Ramirez who composed the theme song of the CWS, Linangan, People's Chorale and women group from the Kilusang Mayo Uno. ■

### Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS) CONVENORS

Most Rev. Jose S. Palma, D.D.  
Archbishop of Cebu/President of CBCP  
Most Rev. Broderick S. Pabillo, D.D.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Manila /Chairman of CBCP NASSA  
Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, D.D.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Jaro/Chairperson of CWS  
The Most Rev. Ephraim S. Fajutagana  
Obispo Maximo of Iglesia Filipina Independiente

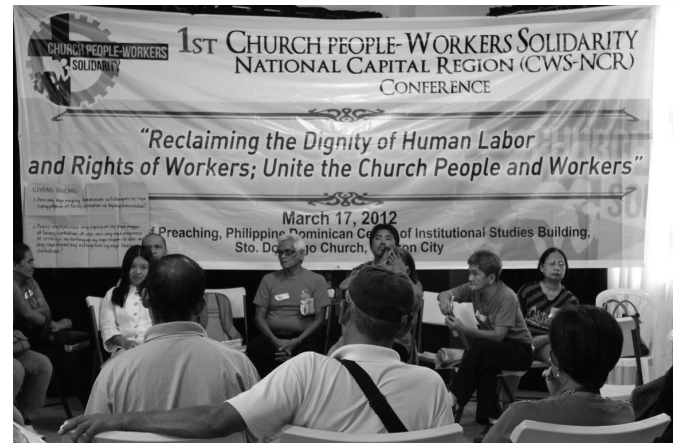
Fr. Quirico Pedregosa Jr., OP  
Rector of UST Central Seminary  
Mo. Mary John Mananzan, OSB  
Ms. Minnie Anne M. Calub  
National Council of Churches in the Philippines  
Fr. Jose P. Dizon  
Cavite Workers' Assistance Center  
Msgr. Rommel Kintanar, HP  
Visayas Clergy Discernment Group  
Msgr. Rey Manuel Monsanto, JCD, HP  
Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro

Ms. Ellen Alejandro  
Samahan ng Mga Manggagawa at Kristiyanong  
Pamayanan  
Ms. Alet Mariposque  
NXP Semi-Conductor Workers Union  
Mr. Casmero Mahilum  
Visayan Electric Company Employees Union  
Mr. Eleazar Abaja,  
Pinagbuklod na Lakas ng Manggagawa sa Plantasyon  
ng Agusan Plantation, Inc.  
Ms. Leonida Tundagui  
Cordillera Labor Center  
Mr. Dexter Datu  
International Wiring Systems Workers' Union  
Ms. Venus Culili  
Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research  
Ms. Daisy Arago  
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights  
Mr. Garry Martinez  
Migrante International  
Mr. Steve Ranjo  
Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor  
Nationwide

**Church People-Workers SOLIDARITY**  
Room 106, CICM Guest House Building  
No. 60, 14th Street, New Manila, Quezon City  
Telefax no. (02) 584-3190  
Mobile: 0949-07541417; 0946-4689826  
Email Address: churchfortheworkers@gmail.com

## CWS in 2012 revisited

### CWS-NCR launched



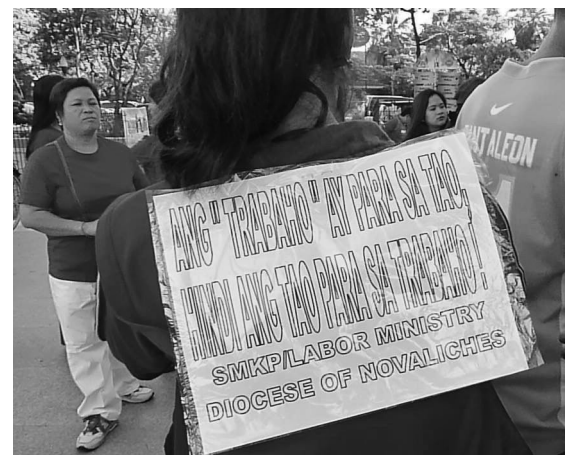
The Church People and Workers Solidarity – National Capital Region (CWS-NCR) was launched last March 17, 2012 at the Institute of Preaching, Philippine Dominican Center Institutional Studies, Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City.

The launching which was attended by twenty nine (29) church people and seventy nine (79) workers tackled topics on the global financial crisis and church social teachings. The highlights of the CWS conference in Cebu City and the CWS programs and services were also presented. Bishop Deogracias Iniguez Jr., D.D. delivered the opening remarks.

After the conference, the participants held candle lighting and offered prayers for Filipino workers and migrants workers who were victims of rights violation in front of the Sto. Domingo Church.

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### Fun Run to Highlight Workers' issue on Contractualization

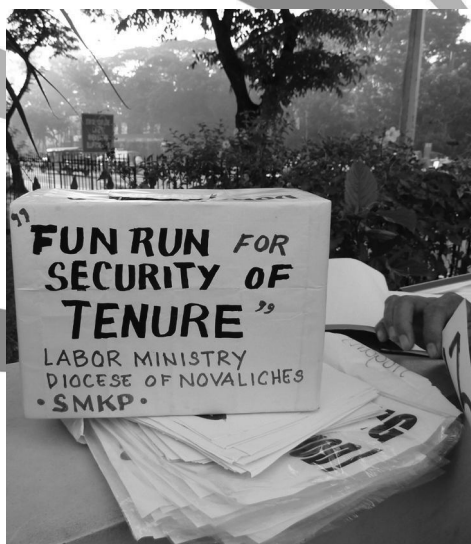


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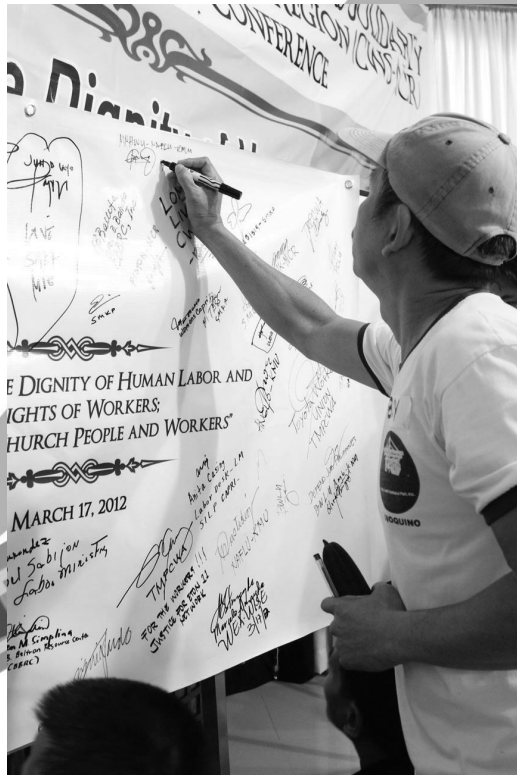
## CWS Formation in retrospect

Last September 14, 2011, the 30th anniversary of Blessed John Paul II's encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (LE, On Human Work) was celebrated with the launching of the Church People and Workers' Solidarity in Cebu City. The successful launch which was participated by more than 300 church people and workers from different parts of the country unified the participants to a commitment to work towards the full realization of the encyclical. The encyclical affirms the dignity of work based on the dignity of workers as co-creators with God. It supports their right to form associations and to defend their vital interests. It asserts that immigrant workers be treated with the same standards accorded to local citizens.

The formation of the Church People and Workers Solidarity originated from workshops held during the Second National Clergy Discernment (NCD) in March 2011. It was convened by the National Clergy Discernment Group (NCDG) to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II). One important part of the gathering was the holding of concurrent workshops, designed to help the clergy discuss the issues and propose plans of action in order to respond to the various faces of poverty. The workshop on "Marginalization of Workers" dealt with the workers' present plight and dehumanizing poverty, and formulated pastoral plans which call on church people to immerse



# CWS ACTIVITIES



themselves again in the lives of workers, and to be engaged actively in their concerns, thus the Church People and Workers Solidarity Conference.

The First Church People and Workers' Solidarity Conference in September 2011 was highlighted with the input on the church social teachings, workers' testimonies on their plight, workshops and exchanges of ideas and experiences. The conference was concluded with the signing of the Covenant Statement which declared to address four (4) priority concerns of Filipino workers - unjust wages, contractualization, the violation of the workers' right to organize, and the forced migration of Filipino workers. In tribute to the 30th anniversary of Pope John Paul's *Laborem Exercens* and to celebrate the success of the conference and announce the solidarity forged between the church and workers a march was held in streets of Cebu followed by a con celebrated mass of more than thirty (40) priests and bishops headed by Archbishop of Cebu Jose Palma, D.D. at the Metropolitan Cathedral, Cebu City.



The Solidarity have awakened and rekindled the flame of the true church of the poor, by singing in unison the music of the people who will not be slaves anymore - A song of Hope. ■





# CWS and IFI Forum commemorates 110th year of Union Obrera Democratica

The Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS) together with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) held a Church Forum on Labor last February 21, 2013 at the IFI Conference Center in commemoration of the 110th year anniversary of the Union Obrera Democratica Filipina (UOD), the first confederation of labor union in the Philippines that led the proclamation of the IFI. The forum was attended by 227 participants of religious people, lay leaders and members of the protestant and catholic churches, workers and labor advocates. The forum highlighted the historical significance of UOD and its relevance in the present situation of the country when workers are faced with multifarious problems and when church are called upon to respond to their plight.

The Most Rev. Ephraim Fajutagana, Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina



Independiente opened the forum and followed by an inspirational message of Bishop Dixie Taclobao from the Diocese of Central Philippines, Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

The Very Rev. Terry Revollido, Rector of the Aglipay Central Theological Seminary discussed the historical formation of the UOD and how the church identified with the plight and struggles of the workers and be in solidarity with them during the American colonial rule and up until today. Ms. Daisy Arago, Executive Director of the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights and one of the convenors

of the CWS extensively presented the current state of the workers' right to unionize. Ms. Arago stressed that for the workers and for the unions to thrive, they need support. She called on the participants to take on the challenge in being one with the workers in their struggle for protection of their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

A worker from Karnation shared his and his co-workers experience in building their union and how they struggled against the company management effort to bust their union. He vowed to continue their struggle in

the midst of sufferings and difficulties so as to leave a legacy to the next generations.

Sr. Emelina Villegas, ICM, convener of the Church People and Workers Solidarity in the National Capital Region (CWS-NCR) who shared the Church Social Teachings on Human Labor stressed that the church has the wealth and depth of teachings on the human dignity of work that needs to be shared and propagated from among the church people to see God in the life of men.

Fr. Gregorio Obejas, OSM and one of the convenors of the Religious Discernment Group discussed on the role and invaluable involvement of the church people in the workers' struggle.

The forum ended with the closing remarks by Rt. Rev. Joselito Cruz, IFI General Secretary. He enjoined all the participants of the forum to strengthen the unity of the church people and workers and quoted the Statement of the IFI Ministry which emphasized the Book of Isaiah 5:8 that condemns social injustices

The seminarians from St. Andrew Theological Seminary provided the cultural presentation and Rev. Ramil Aguilar served as facilitator of the forum. ■

## Dignity of human work

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workers submit themselves to the laws and discriminative conditions of other countries and open themselves to risks and vulnerabilities that come with living and working in strange territories. Often than not, they come back to the country faced with realities that the condition they've left has come even worse. Furthermore, the commodification of Labor has resulted to rampant abuse of the worker's rights. Labor has become "a commodity to be freely bought and sold on the market, its price determined by the law of supply and demand" (Centisimus Annus, 4). This prompted Blessed John XXIII to stress that "work... must be regarded not merely as a commodity, but as a specifically human activity (Mater et Magistra, 18).

Whether they opted to stay here or work abroad, all workers toil day by day and despite hardships are finding its ways to still of service not only to their families but to their compatriots and country as well.

Every worker in deed seeks not just something for a living but a channel that would validate the church social teaching of dignity in human work. Let it not be forgotten that genuine development springs from the condition when dignity of work is realized and respected. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that "all violations of the integrity of the human person... all offenses against human dignity, such as

subhuman living conditions... degrading working conditions where men/women are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons: all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization" (Gaudium et Spes, 27). ■

## CWS in 2012 revisited

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A Fun Run for Workers' Security of Tenure was conducted by the Samahan ng Manggagawa at Kristiyanong Pamayanan (SMKP) and Labor Ministry of the Diocese of Novaliches in cooperation with the Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) and Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) last April 14, 2012 at the Quezon City Memorial Circle. The event was attended by 72 individuals from the church, workers organizations and non-government organizations for labor.

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### Labor Day Mass in Quiapo Church

Bishop Deogracias Iniguez Jr., D.D. and twenty (20) clergies celebrated a mass in commemoration of the Labor Day at the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila on May 1, 2012. A pastoral statement issued by His Eminence Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle was read during the mass. The mass was followed by a solidarity lunch at the Plaza Miranda.

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### CWS School Supplies Giving

Last June 1 and 4, 2012, the Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) distributed school supplies to children of workers in areas of Antipolo City and Diocese of Novaliches, respectively. The distribution assisted by the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights and the Samahan ng Manggagawa at Kristiyanong Pamayanan benefitted 139 children. The school supplies were from donations solicited from the different religious congregations, network of CWS and Clergy and Religious Discernment Group, and ecumenical groups to help children of less fortunate worker families.

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### CWS Cavite launched

The Church People-Workers Solidarity in Cavite Province was launched last July 28, 2012 at Jesus Good Shepherd School, Palicol, Imus, Cavite. The activity was attended by more than one hundred seventy (170) participants from the church and labor groups.

The launching was opened by a Welcome Address & Rationale of Church People-Workers Solidarity of Rev. Fr. Engelbert Bagnas, Director, Imus Diocese Worker's Ministry. The Most Reverend Gerardo Alminaza, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Jaro, Iloilo and Chairperson of the CWS shared the Church Social Teachings of Human Work followed by workers' testimonies on Unjust wages, Right to Organize/form a union, Contractualization and Poverty. The inputs on The Protestant Church's Involvement /Testimony on Labor Movement were



provided by Rev. Luisito Saliendra of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and Rev. Fr. Ariel Pameroyan of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.

The input was followed by a workshop on the following topics/concerns: Covenant Statement/Resolution; Programs/services/activities and Resolutions in support of workers. The launching was concluded by the symbolical ceremony of solidarity.

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### Relief Distribution in Diocese of Novaliches

A relief distribution for 800 victims of Typhoon Habagat in areas of Gulod, Capri, Bagong Silang and North Fairview of the Diocese of Novaliches Quezon City was conducted by the Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) last August 18, 2012. The distribution was coupled with the discussion on the national situation to provide the beneficiaries a glimpse on the whys and wherefores of their situation as victims of natural calamities and manmade disasters.

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### Forum on Child Labor in Palm Industry

The center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) together with the Church People and Workers Solidarity (CWS) was held last October 4, 2012 at the Institute of Preaching, Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City. The forum which was attended by 80 individuals was also an occasion that launched the book entitled Children of the Sunshine Industry which was researched and published by the CTUHR.

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### Migrante Film Showing

The CWS actively attended and supported the screening of the film entitled Filipino Diaspora sponsored by Migrante Philippines last October 4 and October 28, 2012 at the Deemester Residence of the Socio Pastoral Apostolate of the Missionary Sisters Immaculate Heart of Mary (ICM). The film was shown to highlight the condition of migrant workers and the campaign for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers.

# The Dignity and Rights of Filipino Workers, Where To?

CWS statement, May 1, 2013 International Workers' Day

*“Sa tulong ng wastong pamamahala sa mga darating na taon, maiibsan din ang marami nating problema. Ang tadhanang Pilipino ay babalik sa tamang kalagayan, na sa bawat taon pabawas ng pabawas ang problemang Pinoy na nagsusumikap at may kasiguruhan sila na magiging uloy-tuloy na ang pagbuti ng kanilang sitwasyon.” (Pres. Pnoy)*

Pres. Nonoy Aquino, by stating that goal, has raised the hopes of our people, especially our poor Filipino workers. After almost three years under his presidency, on the eve of the celebration of Labor Day, on May 1, 2013, we, at the Church People—Workers Solidarity, prayerfully pause to examine the plight of our Filipino workers.

We are deeply saddened to recognize that the situation of our Filipino workers has gone worse under the Aquino regime. The dignity and rights of our workers are further undermined under his governance as evidenced by the following unfortunate developments:

1. The lack of employment has worsened. Despite the government's hype that the economy has grown, according to NSO's data, unemployment remains high at 2.89 million and underemployment at 7.93 million.

2. The gap between the minimum wage and the living wage has further increased. Aquino has continued to reject calls for a significant wage hike, such as the P125 across-the-board increase. The imposition of the Two-Tiered Wage System has meant a wage cut in CALABARZON sub-region and a wage freeze in other regions of the country.

3. President Aquino has kept the contractual-employment legal and more widespread through Department Order 18-A Series of 2011. Contractual workers receive much lower wages than what regular workers enjoy; they are grossly denied of benefits, of trade-union rights, and worst of all, of job security.

4. The Aquino regime has retained the repressive power of the DOLE Secretary to assume jurisdiction over strikes and labor disputes. Once the Secretary assumes jurisdiction over a labor dispute, workers are ordered to go back to work and failure to do so would mean retrenchment and even being slapped with criminal charges. Under the guise of restoring order, the military and the police can even be brought to the workplace. Before Holy Week, Aquino approved two laws: one that creates the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC) and another that mandates compulsory arbitration in labor disputes. As arbitration does not guarantee equitable and just agreements, both laws signal the worsening negation of trade-union rights.

5. With the continuing absence of decent-paying jobs in the country, more than 4,500 Filipinos leave home daily for better jobs and better opportunities abroad, at the price of staggering human and social costs to the workers and their families.

6. The increasing prices of basic goods and services over the past three years, plus the deteriorating social services being provided by the government, have exacerbated further the already worsening

situation of the poor workers. It is not a surprise that as the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reports the incidence of poverty in the country has remained “practically unchanged” compared to that in 2006 or 2009, standing high at 27.9 percent in the first semester of 2012.

In the face of such miserable plight of the Filipino workers, we, the convenors of the Church People—Workers Solidarity, in the cause of evangelical compassion and social justice, call on the Aquino government to safeguard and advance the dignity of labor and the rights of the Filipino workers. In particular, we call on the President and pertinent government departments and agencies to:

1. Fulfill the President's inaugural commitment to generate sufficient jobs in the country so as to undo the labor export policy of the government. (“Layunin nating paramihin ang trabaho dito sa ating bansa upang hindi na kailangan ang mangibang-bansa para makahanap ng trabaho.”)

2. Intensify the protection of the dignity and labor rights of OFW's. (“Ngunit habang ito ay hindi pa natin naaobot, inaatasan ko ang mga kawaning DFA, POEA at ng OWWA, at iba pang mga kinauukulang ahensya na mas lalo pang paigtingin ang pagtugon sa mga hinaing at pangangailangan ng ating overseas Filipino workers.”)

3. Repeal the legal status of the widespread contractual system of employment.

4. Decrease the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage.

5. Institute industrial and labor policies that safeguard the exercise of trade-union rights.

In the final analysis, the Filipino workers constitute one of the biggest sectors of the Philippine society. It is wishful thinking to achieve economic growth without generating sufficient and decent-paying jobs for the working force of the country, both in the urban and rural areas. In a sense, the true measure of genuine economic growth is the upgrade of the means and standard of living of the Filipino workers. Thus, it is crucial that for genuine progress, justice and peace to flourish in our land that the protection and promotion of the dignity of labor and rights of Filipino workers become a centerpiece policy of our government.

May Jesus, the Model and Sublime Worker, move the Aquino government and all people of good will to listen to the cries and just demands of our Filipino workers. ■