



WORLD MOVEMENT  
OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS  
BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER  
NOVEMBER 2017

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# CHURCH WORLD of WORK

Earth, housing  
and WORK



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NOVEMBER 2017

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of Christian Workers  
WMCW

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## EDITORIAL

### Between fears and hope...

Here in your hands or on your computer keyboard is a new way of accessing information. By wishing you “Happy Reading,” we want to allow you to move forward in hope.

Yes, true, there is no shortage of reasons to be afraid in a changing world! A “short trip across the globe” shows us that Brazil has been suffering from a resurgence of neoliberalism since the 2016 coup, but, as the activists say, “We are sad, but still living!”. In other words, we can still get back up, still hope. In the case of Mali, we can hope again when we see the action being taken on behalf of housekeepers (or domestic workers), who have seen their meager salary double in five years – from 11 to 23 euros per month! Hope still in Portugal where the LOC/MTC movement has brought together 250 activists for training on “how to free ourselves from fear”. Hope still when the ACO activists (of France) tell us about their journey, their overcoming and their deepening of Faith through their difficulties in dealing with Muslims. They show us the importance of “Living Together”, and especially “Fighting Together,” in order to build a Just and Peaceful World.

In order to overcome all of our fears and follow the Way of Hope, like the WMCW activists or sympathizers, we must certainly look at a few signposts:

- The “DIALOGUE” indicator: for dealing with the other, all others, who don’t look like us, who don’t think, eat or believe as we do, and knowing how to welcome them as brothers and sisters.
- The “DIGNITY” indicator: October 7th reminds us that man and woman must be central to every economy (whatever it may be) and that “WORK AND FAIR PAY” must be etched in Humanity’s heritage as inalienable rights.
- The “SOLIDARITY” indicator: May 1st repeatedly tells us that “we are fighters” and that our fight is in keeping

with the mission that Christ has entrusted to us – to build a better world with the strength of his Spirit.

- The “GENDER EQUALITY” indicator: March 8th reminds us of women’s fight to be fully recognised. They keep telling us that “without them, civilisation wouldn’t be possible”.
- The “CHRISTIAN FAITH” indicator: By turning to Christ, we see the cross –which always scares us– as a “chance for our salvation”. In the life of Christ, we can find reasons to Hope, in spite of everything, because we know that He has been victorious over all that breeds death, over all that is dying, over all that is dead.

As asserted in the final declaration of the WMCW’s general assembly (in Avila, Spain last July), “We want to be a SIGN OF HOPE AND DEMONSTRATE HOPE!”.

So “we will bring the Gospel closer to the world of work and be the voice of workers within the Church”, as pope Francis invites us.

Happy reading



Bernard Robert  
Chaplain of the WMCW

# Meeting Muslim believers

**Throughout this article we wish to stimulate thought on the encounter with Muslim believers and the discovery of Islam. We want to question this aspect of living together.**

**W**e chose above all to witness meetings with Muslims. Brigitte's testimony evokes a meeting in the workplace, Colette's picks up a meeting in a support association for undocumented workers, and Joelle and Jacques' is in the context of family life.

### Brigitte's testimony

Saoussen is from Tunisia. A Muslim, she has been in France for several years. She's a new colleague. Starting on the 13 November, we followed the news from different rooms. We had a dialogue and we agreed that those involved were extremists. She was shocked, like everyone else, about what happened. Right away, she told me about her fears of racism towards her after such events. There was some anxiety and embarrassment for certain people, over having to rub shoulders with Muslim colleagues. During a break, there was an exchange between atheists, Muslims and I, with me as a declared Catholic. Some of them asked questions about the Muslim and Catholic religions. In the end, everyone was satisfied with this exchange.

When there is a Muslim holiday, Saoussen brings some specialities to eat. She asked that we do the same. Atheist colleagues brought crepes for the feast of Candlemas. But what does it represent? It's the appearance of Jesus at the temple, but how do you explain it? For the New Year, I offered three Muslim colleagues an inter-religious calendar on which the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious festivals were marked. Fatouma and Saoussen were happy. "Your calendar is great, it lets me know all the Muslim holidays. I know when Ramadan will start and I've been able to request time off work!". We continue our dialogue, we explain Lent, and she asks if it is going well. I am convinced that we must have an inter-religious dialogue to build peace.

### Colette's testimony

68 undocumented workers on strike occupied the Creil work exchange, day and night, for 4 years. They were Muslims, and amongst them, two were Imams. As members of the ACO, and participants in the support committee, we witnessed their collective and regular prayer life and where they lived and slept. But the steps for their regularisation were the priority, and religion hardly came up. On Friday, they maintained a basic service to allow the greatest number to go to prayer at the mosque. At Ramadan, they received food, meals and money from the surrounding Muslim communities. They had nothing, since they had not worked for several months, and yet we were all invited to celebrate with them. On two occasions, I accompanied the delegates to meet the directors of the two mosques, to explain our struggle and ask for their support. The welcome was very warm. One of the strikers participated twice in the Christian-Muslim encounter group in Creil, and several

witnesses came to St. Joseph's Church when the Christian community screened the film "Welcome" for World Migrant Day.

In the first year, Ousmane, one of the undocumented workers, died of cancer. All the undocumented workers and the support committee were invited to a ceremony at a cousin's house. Everything was translated for us. The presence of the support committee was greatly appreciated by the family, who publicly thanked us. Despite his suffering, Ousmane had appreciated the moral help that had been given to him. It was very moving. They shared our grief at the death of a member of the support committee and were present at the Christian celebration, or outside it, and were very respectful of our religious approach. With some of them, these difficult events have sparked exchanges about our mutual faith, and about what prayer means.

## Joelle and Jacques' testimonies

Joelle and Jacques are retired parents of two children and 8 grandchildren. Their daughter, Céline, who received a Christian education in a Catholic family, has converted to Islam.

**Jacques:** During her visit to the Sorbonne, Céline wrote a dissertation on young girls who wore veils on estates. This discovery led her to move towards a conversion to Islam that gave meaning and a moral structure to her life.

Her husband, Ahmed, of Algerian descent, also deepened his belonging to Islam, a little like being born again for Christians. Gradually, they become fully-fledged Muslims, practicing their religion to the letter.

**Joelle:** Their conversion period was not easy for us. For me it was painful. They broke away little by little from our usual ways of life and relationships. Céline, at the time a student and group leader at an activity centre, gradually started wearing a veil, which made her lose her job. Later, when she was married, she became a stay-at-home mother. The couple made the choice to have a family with Muslim first names. Meals or family celebrations at home were held without alcohol or music.

Despite their different ways of life, for our family and for the family of Ahmed, the love of our children and grandchildren was stronger. We have made the choice to maintain good relations, and they have too. I can even say that the ties with our daughter have never been more important to us, as we are to her, her husband and our grandchildren.

They have had to make concessions and sacrifices, accept their differences, be witnesses to the contemptuous looks, the discrimination they face in the street, in shops and in everyday life.

**Jacques:** Despite these differences, we have discovered their faith, their respect for the five prayers per day, including for our grandchildren, and the sacrifices required during fasting at Ramadan. A sacrifice that not only concerns food, but also isolating oneself, having good thoughts and doing good for those around them.

We are witnesses to the faith in God that structures their lives and relationships, to the point of refusing the excess of materialism and the permissiveness of our society. Their convictions lead us to deepen our own Christian faith and to share our mutual religious convictions. My faith in the God of Jesus Christ is strengthened. It rests on the freedom that God gives us to be responsible for our actions in the light of the Gospel. It also questions the notions of right and wrong, and the place of religions on the estate.

**Joelle:** I am enjoying a wealth of experiences and my family is marked by two cultures and two religions. Christian-Muslim conversations and debates make my faith grow. I learned a lot from Céline and this allowed me to open myself up to the little ones and to the most disadvantaged, and I share what keeps us together today with Christophe, our son. I remain convinced that the love of Christ will let us live one day in a just and fraternal world.

Following these testimonies, we will try to shed some light.

### An integrated presence in society

The presence of Muslims in France stems mainly from the immigration of workers from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. It is a historical fact. Immigration has been going on for nearly a hundred years, and especially since the post-war period, to meet the needs for labor and then for family reunification. But nowadays, the presence of Mus-

lim believers means the presence of integrated French citizens.

### Meeting with Muslims opens us up to a faith and other religious practices

The practice of Muslims revolves around submission to God. It is to be permanently under the gaze of God. The Quran is the revelation made to Muhammad that men should submit to God. The Quran is Word. This leads to a vertical approach to God, an omniscient God. As part of the 5







pillars of the practice, ritual prayer is said in Arabic: “It is a prayer codified and programmed in time and space”. Another pillar, almsgiving (zakat), is associated with prayer and purification rites. Sadaqa, non-ritual alms, is the Quran’s invitation to help the poor. The Muslim faith is faith expressed in social space, and Muslims in general have no difficulty speaking of it. Even if we have a different sensibility about this subject, it is not negative in itself. A balance must be

found in our efforts not to make public space a space where convictions cannot be exercised in compliance with laws and secularism. But it must also be noted that respecting the laws imposes restrictions on the expression of convictions. This is the case at the company, where the law sometimes prohibits wearing a distinctive symbol.

### **The stakes of the meeting**

Meeting with Muslims opens us up to otherness, to

the recognition of difference. This dialogue is a source of questioning, joy, respect and spiritual and concrete deepening of our practices. This dialogue must bear witness to us living together in difference.

Our faith in God is inseparable from fighting for people to respect the dignity of God’s sons and daughters, to respect life, inseparable from fighting for justice and peace. These fights can be places of encounter. As Christians, our judgements are illuminated by the social thought of the Church. For Muslims, the

Quran is the Word of reference. This, then, raises the question of the context of expression and the correct understanding of this Word today.

We are invited to reject withdrawal and to meet those who have their own faith, their own values. In society we must, together, keep the question of God open. Christians or Muslims, we have similar beliefs on this issue. “Beyond our differences, there is a common attitude among believers that refers to Abraham’s law and consists of consenting to lead one’s life not only for oneself but also based on The Word and the promise of a God who reveals himself to men”<sup>1</sup>.

Pascal Fouque  
General Secretary  
of ACO France

Ever since one day when he asked me, quite unexpectedly, to teach him to pray, Mohammed (a resident of the village) has got into the habit of coming and talking to me regularly. He’s a neighbour. We have a long history of sharing.

I often had to keep it brief with him, or go weekends without meeting him when the guests were too numerous and time-absorbing.

One day, he found the perfect method to bring me to task and ask for an appointment:

“We haven’t dug our well for a long time!” The image has remained. We use it when we feel the need to exchange in depth.

Once, as a joke, I asked him: “And at the bottom of our well, what are we going to find? Muslim water or Christian water?” He looked at me half-cheerful, half-upset: “Really, we’ve been walking together for so long and you’re still asking me this question...! You know, at the bottom of the well, what we will find is the water of God”.

*Christian de Chergé. Monk of Thibirine*

*Article published in number 113 of the magazine “Reprende” of the ACO France in September 2016. “Répères” is a review of the formation and behavior of the leaders of the movement.*

<sup>1</sup> *Encountering Islam* by Jean-Luc Brunin. “Tout Simplement” collection, éditions de l’Atelier, 1993.

## We are sad, but we are alive

**After 12 years of significant political achievements, when economic figures signaled the greatest social inclusion in the history of the Brazilian people, with victories in the fight against hunger (the country left the hunger map), generating millions of jobs and the increase in real wages that has allowed access to consumerism and the social increase of more than 40 million people; with the construction of more than two million homes which raised the self-esteem of women and men who lived homeless; with the admission of young people into universities, the sons and daughters of city and rural workers; with the creation and implementation of public policies of social protection and guaranteed rights to those who are permanently harmed in our perverse society: women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, Afro-descendants, indigenous people, domestic workers. After all these significant advances, we have passed from one day to the next, into darkness, from the parliamentary-legal-media coup; we have suddenly submerged into a deep sea of uncertainty. Apathy has occurred to our people and we are living a moment of total hopelessness.**

The country which had become a model for development, had been added to the BRICS block, which taught developing countries how to promote itself, the Brazil pre-salt, the Brazil of industrial advance, the champion in the production of proteins and grains, the country of strong family agriculture, the nation which, with long strides, conquered its place in the world, with autonomy and to impose respect, speaking in substance with the Northern Empire and in dialogue with the partners of the South, is going through the most dramatic situation in its history. It is like a heavy cloud of sadness that looms over our heads and obscures the horizon.

Neoliberalism, repressed since president Lula took office in 2003, has voraciously retaken the workers, ready to devour the rights acquired in many years of struggle and at the



Militants of the MTC Regional.

cost of much bloodshed. We are living this great nightmare that eliminates dreams and the struggle turns to the fight for survival in a kind of "each man for himself." As a result, in February of this year, in our metropolitan region of Salvador / Bahia alone, 245 young people, poor, black and those on periphery of society, were killed. Crime in recent times is more organized, is within the coup-led government. The insentient portrayal of recent events by the media has

worked, the coup has been victorious, and the poor have lost.

In spite of the continuous defeats of recent days, we believe in the possibility of the recommencing the fight. The protests have begun to take shape, the supra-partisan movement led by youth, women and social groups, the CNBB - National Conference of Brazilian Bishops and other civil society organizations have gradually begun to resurge. Social media has played a key role in this resurgence.

A general strike is scheduled for April 28. We have to stop Brazil to prevent the evils from being implemented by the Externalization Law, which was quickly approved by the House of Representatives in March and which extremely destabilises the jobs and lives of all workers. The approval of the Pension Reform, which condemns the poor to death, as well as the labor

reform, which will send us back to slavery abolished in 1888 must both be prevented. We must finally do this, for the return to democracy and for the deceitful crime currently in progress against our country, committed by those who usurped power in the somber year of 2016.

Marcelino Almeida  
Regional MCW NE III

October 7

# World Day for Decent Work

**The creation of decent work is a crucial contribution to the reduction of global poverty. The right to decent work must finally be implemented. This right was supported in a joint statement on October 7, the World Day for Decent Work, by the Federation of German Trade Unions, the Episcopal relief organization Misereor, The German Commission for Justice and Peace, and the KAB (Catholic Worker Movement) Germany.**

«Human rights before profit», this is the demand with which the alliance addressed the German Federal Government about the need for legal action regarding adherence to the concept of decent work. German corporations must be obligated by law to respect human rights, both at home and abroad. The proposed "National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights" needs to set Germany on the path to legal regulation, which means obligating German corporations to examine the possible negative consequences of their foreign operations on human rights, to actively work against those consequences, and to report on them in a transparent manner:

- Promoting transparency in global supply chains, as well as on informal and precarious working conditions.
- Allowing the awarding of public contracts and the promotion of foreign trade only when corporations comply with their responsibilities and due diligence to human rights.
- Giving the opportunity for victims to file a claim for compensation in Germany when German corporations disregard their human rights abroad.
- Fundamentally strengthening labor and human rights during negotiations

and in the implementation of trade agreements. The declaration also states that "work can be the deciding factor in allowing people to escape poverty". That is common knowledge and the international community of nations officially calls for it in their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But work does not automatically protect against poverty. Many workers live at or even below the poverty line despite being in employment, whether in the informal or the formal economy. Wages on which it is impossible to live, unpaid overtime, exploitative child labor, injuries to health, and inhumane working conditions are part of everyday life for many. Often people do not even have the right to legally unionize. Germany shares in the responsibility for this because German corporations also source products and raw materials from abroad, where they are manufactured or produced under inhumane conditions.

Many groups of the KAB will read the "World Prayer for Decent Work" on October 7th. The KAB in the diocese of Münster took this occasion to implement a "prayer chain" on October 7th from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. During this time, 38 groups and individuals from



Actions of October 7 World Decent Work Day.

the entire diocese prayed for half an hour for humane working conditions worldwide. The chain began with a prayer from the KAB St. Paulus and ended with a common prayer in Haltern am See. The KAB Germany had compiled and distributed some inspirations for the world prayer.

These included a prayer card and a template for a worship service, the prayer from President of the WMCW (World Movement of Christian Workers) Guy Boudaud, as well as the statement from the WMCW.

The world prayer of the WMCW was also read on October 7th at a European seminar of the LOC/MTC Portugal (Catholic Employee Association/Christian Workers' Movement), by delegations of the KAB, as

well as the HOAC (Catholic Action Workers' Brotherhood) and ACO (Workers' Catholic Action) in Spain.

Additional actions also took place, including at the diocese of Freiburg in Germany. Activists from the KAB visited nursing homes in several locations and gave a rose to each employee, thanking them for their work.



Wilfried Wienen



## 1st may international message

# Long live the working class!

Here comes another Mayday celebration. We are encouraged to reflect on the history of the working class. We want decent work, a fairer society and a more equal economy, enabling us to live in dignity.

We carry out this struggle on a daily basis, whether the sun is shining or the rain is pouring. We finish late in the evening and start early in the morning, to work or to seek work. Through this action to support ourselves and our families, we realise that we are not alone. There are dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions of people who, like us, after drinking a cup of coffee or a glass of water, struggle for a fair salary, so that all workers' dignity is respected in this world with so many inequalities. One cannot but wonder why SO FEW people have a lot whereas SO MANY have so little. My God, isn't the wealth of this planet intended to all?

During the 50 years of our Christian Workers Movement, we have striven to fully live the mission that Jesus Christ gave us. It is not an easy task, but it is possible. We are fighters! We were born to fight for workers' survival and we want to remain firm in this struggle, in our training work towards a common and collective action within the working class, in light of the Gospel. The method we chose is "**SEE, JUDGE, ACT**", reflecting on the four pillars of society: politics, social matters, economics and ideology. This is how we want to carry out our struggle, interacting and

intervening in our reality, in the workplace and in the daily lives of those male and female workers.

And, as WMCW, we are aware that each one of us can suffer from unemployment, from economic, political and social crises. We might even lose our self-esteem. But this should not

called forward to victory, despite many defeats. We must not forget: **we are not alone, we are many** and we shall continue fighting for work, food, housing, education, health, respect, dignity and many other things. And above all, **we shall continue fighting for life!**

want above all is our dignity to be respected and our place within society to be recognised. Any discrimination is unacceptable and we must fight against every type of oppression. The world is our common home, designed for all. It is where we earn a living, we raise our children, we visit our parents, we live with our friends, we praise God and we work day after day for our survival.

Life is work and work is life. In those daily struggles, perseverance leads us, as WMCW, to reflect, and motivates us to be creative, tireless workers, faithful to the Working Class, fighting for our rights. Despite the bitterness of defeat in our daily lives, we are always confident, full of hope and determined in our struggles, especially for a fairer and more equal society.

Our journey continues, companions, against any system that oppresses and refuses to recognise and respect the rights of working men and women.

During the 50 years of our Christian Workers Movement, we have striven to fully live the mission that Jesus Christ gave us. It is not an easy task, but it is possible

break our strengths, our dreams, this life given out of love. We know that God's love for each human being is transmitted through all those who struggle for human dignity. We are also aware of the fact that, despite the fatigue affecting people, despite how ferocious the system is, hurting us, we must continue to believe that things will get better. We should always believe that we are

How many of our comrades, men and women from the working world, have committed suicide, or died due to terrible working conditions, or lost their job when machines arrived? How many of them have suffered illnesses such as depression? This is why we seek refuge in our families, friends, and even in other countries. We do not only look for some space, a hug or some help. What we



World Movement  
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## International Women's Day

### Being a woman

Today, in the 21st Century, in a pluralistic world, the different societies on planet Earth combine what is traditional and what is not. Capitalism considers the societies of the world as a single whole. In view of this, this century's maladies are loneliness and individualism. New technologies do not take into account the daily life of human beings. And if women continue to be treated like objects, what is civilisation?

In our societies, women play a unique role, and a woman should not be considered a man. Women should be respected for their political, social, and economic difference. Through the history of the world, the women of every age have claimed their place, and today, because male chauvinism remains high, we tend to forget the progress made. However, consciousness is growing and women have proved their ability in politics despite so many difficulties. Is it not possible and indeed natural to respect the **rights** of every human being?

As full-fledged human beings, shouldn't women have the **same** rights as men? "Workers of the world, unite!", said Karl Marx, aware that women and children were always part and parcel of labour history, though agriculture, household chores, etc., that contributed to family life and to the economic life of their societies. So why are we still witnessing unequal pay and many other inequities? Why are women still performing work similar to that of men, without equal pay? All human beings are workers, whether the work they do is manual or intellectual.

From the beginning of history until today, women have waged a justified



struggle to improve their position. Women are not things but complete persons. And like any other, they should be able to live authentically in politics, society and culture, instead of being only considered for their utility. Women know how to combine work, household, emotions... Why must they still fight, despite such progress, just to be treated fairly as a woman?

There is still a long way to go. We need to end indifference and reach a shared awareness of the role of political movements that seek the common good and the best way to move forward. Social, political and economic struggles should continue to foster women's empowerment. They should enable women to hold their

heads high and to be part of this struggle. Within the historical dynamic, men and women who do not give up and actively fight for a greater respect for human dignity must build this world.

Through our mission as the World Movement of Christian Workers, we recall pope Francis' speech during a mass celebrated in St. Martha's Chapel in Rome. In a courageous speech advocating equality between men and women, he said that women do not only exist to accomplish household chores. Pope Francis recalled that men and women are destined to form one single flesh, clearly supporting gender equality. After a long sermon, pope Francis concluded that women's role is to

create harmony, and without women there would be no harmony in this world.

We remain committed in our mission as a movement of formation and of the Church, together with women workers involved in this struggle for justice, every second of their lives.



World Movement  
of Christian Workers



## Motion for Nissan workers

**The World Movement of Christian Workers MMTC, on its 50th anniversary, as part of the General Assembly and the International Seminar on the theme Earth, Home, Work for a Dignified Life, meeting in Avila, Spain, with the assistance of delegates from 42 countries, expresses its solidarity with the struggle of the workers of NISSAN, a company dedicated to the production of vehicles for the European market.**

For several years these workers have been fighting against the company's restructuring plans effecting the city of Avila with job cuts and dismissals of workers.

The closure of the company involves the dismissal of almost 500 workers, which would increase the percentage of employees and impact indirectly upon 300 jobs. It would also result in the impoverishment of families and the entire community of Avila.

The Gospel calls us to be salt of the earth and to live in fraternity, the life of Jesus inspires us to be supportive, to accompany, educate and opt for the poorest and for the excluded. Likewise, pope Francis argues that "there is no greater poverty than depriving a person of his work". The MMTC is a movement of laity in the world of work and its mis-

sion of accompaniment, calls us to bear witness to his love.

Faced with this reality The World Movement of Christian Workers:

Ante esta realidad, el Movimiento Mundial de Trabajadores Cristianos:

- 1 Rejects the actions of NISSAN-AVILA, dismissal of workers.
- 2 We support and sympathize with the struggle of organized workers in trade unions; CCOO (Comisiones Obreras), UGT (General Union of Workers), and USO (Union Sindical Obrera).
- 3 We demand that the NISSAN Company comply with the agreements it has committed to the workers, because the life of a worker is worth more than all the gold in the world.

*General Assembly  
WMCW Ávila 2017*





### Prayer for the day 7th October 2017

## For the dignity of employment and a universal basic income. An appeal for global solidarity



Moments of the General Assembly and the International Seminar.



Moments of the General Assembly and the International Seminar.

**L**ord God, who are the source of all sanctity and dignity, we come before you in prayer in all faith on this important day. In Your dignity, you created us in Your image, and you entrust us with running the world such that all men and women of our country might live in this same vital dignity.

Lord, behold! Behold the millions of men, women and young people surviving in living conditions unworthy of human dignity - unworthy of You, the God of Love. Behold all those living without the security of a roof over their heads, without fertile soil, without gainful employment. Behold those who breathe, eat, drink or work in conditions or situations unbefitting of a dignified life.

Lord, behold! [\(let each movement to choose a current example of from their own country and insert it here\)](#)

Lord, on this day 7th October 2017, we also want to express to you our desire, as part of our movement, to give hope to this world you have entrusted to us.

As our pope Francis says: "Things have a price. However, people have dignity – they are worth more than things and do not have a price!". Father Cardijn, the inspiration for our various movements, said: "A (young) worker is worth more than all the gold in the world, for they are a son or daughter of God". Through them, thanks to them, we know full well that human dignity is linked to gainful employment and sufficient income.

Therefore, Lord, inspire those with economic and political influence in our country, and throughout the world, to put human beings back at the heart of all decision making.

Lord, inspire too all activist movements, such as the WMCW, so that all willing men and women might create a new world in the image of Your Kingdom.

Lord, inspire the activists of our movement to... [\(let each movement choose a relevant action taken or in progress within their own country, and insert it here\).](#)

Lord, inspire each and every one of us to struggle ever harder against fatalism, and all that which threatens peoples' dignity.

In this way, we will be witnesses to Your Love.

In this way we will proclaim Your hope, for tomorrow and forever and ever.

Amen!

## Final Declaration of the General Assembly of the WMCW

# Land, Housing and WORK for a decent life

Gathered to discuss and renew our commitment to bringing the Gospel closer to the world of work, we have completed the work of the WMCW International Seminar and General Assembly on the theme "Land, Housing and WORK for a decent life". This seminar was held in Avila, Spain, from 15 to 21 July 2017, and brought together 120 delegates from 42 movements of Christian workers from Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

During those days, we lived together in a caring and fraternal way. We were welcomed by the city, its diocese, and its mass media, and for that we are very grateful. During our meeting, we were able to welcome among us Spain's Church and trade union leaders, who encouraged us to continue building bridges between the world of the Church and the world of work.

We thank God for 50 years of Christian presence in the world of work and for this journey alongside so many working brothers and sisters, share their doubts and hopes, their joys and their sorrows.

We feel supported by Pope Francis in our task of evangelization. In his message to our Assembly, through the Bishop of Avila, the Pope invited us to "bring the Gospel closer to the world of work, so that the voice of workers continues to resonate within the Church, and to lead the struggle so that the whole world can live in dignity, with no one excluded from it."

From our perspective as believers, we have shared our experience and our presence in the different movements that make up the WMCW. The International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Trade Union

Confederation (ETUC) and the Popular Movement of Forgotten Neighbourhoods shared their experience with us. We have explored the depths of the teaching of Pope Francis on pastoral work, the economy of rejection and decent work.

**We share our concerns** about unemployment, the lack of decent jobs and the precarious labour markets around the world, and how these generate pain, suffering, death, lack of solidarity, despair, war, violence and migration. A profit-based model of labour relations weakens labour law, collective bargaining, protection and social rights, as well as the representation

and defense of workers. In one word, it is based on the impoverishment of life, dehumanization and inequality at work. These conditions affect the lives of millions of people and entire families irrespective of age, sex, race, or the place where they live. Young people, women, and children (child labour) are affected.

This suffering is the result of a system based on a culture of rejection that transforms people into goods. These characteristics are found in all countries, since we share a context of economic globalization which does not take into account solidarity and respect for the common good.



Final Declaration of the Seminar and the General Assembly WMCW 2017.



### We feel challenged.

The pain of the whole family of workers is our pain. We want to be a sign of hope and show signals of hope, personally and collectively. We want to maintain an attitude that strengthens our presence among our working brothers and sisters, listening, accompanying, educating, criticizing... This depends on our personal commitment and is how we can bring about processes of humanization and allow Jesus to be visible through us, as a gesture and sign of love towards others, in narrow, precarious and poor spaces. This goes together with an explicit commitment to increase global solidarity, in line with the international dimension of our movements.

Meeting these challenges can be achieved by continuing the evangelization of the world of work and announcing the good news, in line with the humanization project that God is pursuing

for all and which places the person, made in his image and likeness, at the centre of all concerns...

We are aware of our limitations but we also know that other major actors share our commitment and fight for the sacred dignity of the person. They share the slogan "land, housing and work for a decent life". Pope Francis encourages us to continue building alternatives, both small and large. The World Movement of Christian Workers wants to continue to grow, in partnership with other realities, to build a world with more justice, solidarity and a more sustainable world.

**We offer our commitment,** our work and our struggles to all the workers of the world, at local, regional and global level. This is how we will realize our evangelization mission. We intend to adapt the organization of the WMCW to better respond to this challenge.

### We commit ourselves to:

- 1 Strengthen our militant lifestyle, our formation and our revision of life in accordance with our faith in Jesus Christ, with the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.
- 2 Promote the relationship between movements and pastoral workers: we need to be a voice in the Church and a voice in the world of work, with particular attention to the most excluded and precarious workers.
- 3 Analyze the regional situation of workers in order to create dynamics that denounce situations that endanger human rights and protect the dignity of the person. Promote equal opportunities for men and women in all areas, including within our organizations. Contribute to the training of young Christian workers.
- 4 Encourage alliances with other major actors at local and regional level who share our approach to decent work and the construction of the common good.
- 5 To promote solidarity and common action with popular movements, during World Meetings, in a dialogue with the Pope, and at specific meetings by zone or region.
- 6 Continue to invite all Christian Workers movements to take part to the International Day of Decent Work (7 October), together with the world trade union movement and the International Labour Organization.
- 7 Propose at local and regional level a confluence of Catholic-inspired organizations, and in doing so try to launch an international initiative of the Church in favour of decent work.
- 8 Demand decent work for all.
- 9 Urge states to guarantee a social wage or citizen's income that will help avoid the abandonment of millions of people if access to decent work is not guaranteed.

*University of  
the Mystique, Avila,  
Spain, July 2017*





## Fear in the world of work

**Fear is a determinant of the extremist neoliberal communication that dehumanises the world of work and puts man at the service of work, instead of work at the service of man.**

The LOC/MTC (the League of Catholic Workers/ Movement of Christian Workers) sponsored three interdiocesan training days in March 2017: one on the 5th in Porto for the Northern area, on the 12th in Coimbra for the central region and another on the 12th in Torres Novas for the Southern area. These days, which saw nearly 250 members and supporters of the Movement in attendance, aimed to discuss and dig deeper into the Summary of the Review of Working Life, which was recently carried out by dozens of teams from LOC/MTC on the topic of: **"Civilising; knowledge to confront fears in the world of work"**.

To help analyse and develop this topic, the summary of the Review of Life was made available for reference as it distinguishes the challenges for and paths that make way to tackle concerns within the world of work. We were also joined by Elísio Estanque, Custódio Oliveira and Eduardo Bento. From the summary of the Review of Life, ideas put forward by the speakers and from the debates and group work that followed, several key areas were identified:

### **Fear which is provoked, fuelled and manipulated**

People are worried about losing their jobs because nowadays it's easier to fire



**This fear is provoked, fuelled and manipulated. Anything goes when it comes to profit- that's the tyranny of money**

workers without any problems or great expense. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness that, in all sectors, firing workers has become easier. Instability and lack of job security are what concern workers the most.

They're afraid to be punished for being part of a union or for going on strike. They're afraid of no longer being useful and of not being able to honour their commitments. They have concerns about starting a family, they're afraid to have children and afraid of no longer being an individual.

This fear is provoked, fuelled and manipulated. Anything goes when it comes to profit- that's the tyranny of money. Fear inhibits freedom and action, it undermines, alters and destroys the spiritual and psychological defences. It's the anaesthetic given before the suffering, and it dehumanises us.

This "fear" is a decisive characteristic of extremist neoliberal communication that, within the world of work, dehumanises man and put him at the service of work, instead of work at the service of man. It pro-

motes an economy that kills both the present and the future. To this effect, a cult of fear has been developed so as to irrationally dominate, which then leads to an illness that has seen a staggering increase. We are, therefore, at a historic time when fear is driving history and humans are becoming superfluous.

### **We should fight back against injustice and oppression**

Organisational models whether it be for work, in society or for the economy

do not adhere to human dignity; fear is a strategy used by the rich so they can keep on dominating.

It is neither fair nor human to work under pressure or out of fear or blackmail. Fear oppresses and enslaves. We will only know true success in business if everyone feels good and fulfilled, and is comfortable voicing their thoughts and feelings (workers and managers alike).

We should fight back against injustice and oppression because the more we allow it to intimidate us, the more we allow ourselves to be walked all over. We shouldn't sit back and allow this current devaluing of work in a Europe that wants to care for its people. Let's demand good governance. Let's not be deceived when they want to make us think there's no other way. There is always another way. Therefore, we must ask 'where are human rights today?' 'What about Christian values?'

Jesus was also threatened and was scared. Therefore,

Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea (John 11:54), yet he was able to free those who were oppressed, give those who were excluded a voice and help those who were despondent. We cannot succumb to this fear mongering carried out by those who only seek profit, opportunity and greed. "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

### **Fears are better controlled when workers are united**

In Portugal, we are now experiencing a new political situation at government level. Workers see this as a window of opportunity. Despite the financial limitations, of which there are still many, things are looking positive for those workers earning the minimum wage in terms of job prospects and in other areas of labour legislation that are currently being drafted. Since the party in power doesn't hold

**Just as pope Francis said:  
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There's good reason  
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an outright majority, it has been possible, through dialogue, to formulate proposals that set out solutions that are more worker-friendly rather than solutions that have been imposed from the top as if there were no other alternatives. The reality is a challenge that forces political and social parties and institutions to mobilize and enlightened citizens to search for alternative solutions for a fairer, more sustainable and democratic society.

There are problems, but if everyone gets involved, they can be resolved due to the fact that fears are far easily controlled when workers are united and have faith and they'll find ways of dealing with them.

### **There's good reason to be hopeful**

Just as pope Francis said: "In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history". We therefore have no reason to be afraid! There's good reason to be

hopeful! Throughout history, humanity has always made progress; even though nowadays –especially for those who are going through a tough time– it seems hard to believe.

The future depends greatly on all of us and our values, faith, motivations, on understanding life as a form of relation with others and not a competition, and also on our capacity to SEE, EVALUATE and REACT and to involve and challenge others, so that all humanity may know a better future.

We are going to open ourselves up and socialise more with others, especially with workers, and try to spread our message by captivating and promoting the initiation and expansion of our Movement.



## Living a revision of life

# Every man counts in the light of the Gospel

The world of 2016 is open to multicultural and multi-religious dimensions. But this situation also causes tensions, misunderstandings and isolationism. We witness it every day in the working class, where mistrust and of rejection are manifested towards others, especially towards Muslim believers.

**T**he French Republic reminds us that they share our rights and our duties and often our citizenship. The Church strongly reminds us that every man counts in the light of the Gospel and that our legitimate differences must not hinder encounters with others or the dialogue between different cultures and religions...

The other is my brother in the first instance because he is a creature of God.

### SEE: The story of a meeting

We invite you to a revision of life based on the ac-

count of one of the members who has evoked of his meeting, his way, his action, his dialogue with Muslims in various sectors of life. His testimony can aid in opening us up to different aspects of encounter and dialogue.

After listening to the story, we can ask:

- How and in what way does it affect us, make us question, disturb us?
- What do we think? What are the different aspects of the meeting?
- Which meeting am I the bearer of, with its share of wealth, tensions, difficulty?

### JUDGE: Let us open the book of the Word

The invitation to love our brothers is inseparable from the love of God (Mt 22, 35-40). We are invited to a respectful, demanding, and truthful dialogue that can go as far as a spiritual dimension, a “debate of faith”. Deepening our own faith and bettering our knowledge of God is achieved through the encounter with the Other, the journey taken together. Let’s choose a text where Jesus meets the Other, who is different:

- What strikes us about the attitude of Jesus?

- What are the elements of the dialogue which is taking place?
- Our faith makes us apostles of Christ; how are we witnessing his good news?

### ACT

- How do we deepen this encounter and this truthful dialogue?
- How can we reach the other workers and people involved?

*Article published in n° 113 of the magazine "REPERES" of ACO France in September 2016.*



Life review of one of our movements.



# Supporting the workers of Mali

**The Christian Workers' Movement of Mali (Mouvement des Travailleurs Croyants du Mali - MTC Mali) plays a role in helping disadvantaged and marginalized groups for decent work and social protection.**

**M**TC Mali is committed to the fight for decent work for:

- Unemployed young graduates through quality training in computing, courses on the techniques finding a job, and entrepreneurial skills.
- Domestic workers.
- Teachers in community and private schools.

### 1) Training unemployed young graduates

Even in the 21st century, many young people finish their studies at a university or secondary level without having the opportunity to touch a computer or have one as a work tool. In our times, this lack of knowledge is an obstacle for obtaining work. Following a 'review of life' with regards to this problem, MTC Mali started a training

program to benefit these unemployed young graduates. An introductory training session in computing, for which a certificate is awarded, enables participants to search for employment on job websites. Another training session instructs on the techniques of finding a job. Throughout this training, participants learn how to edit their CVs, to write letters of motivation, and to prepare for a job interview.

### 2) Training teachers in private and community schools

Teachers are employed in precarious positions with salaries below the guaranteed minimum wage for Mali, which is 60 euros (40.000 CFA Francs), paid 9/12 months, and benefit from no social protection. They can be dismissed at any moment as they have

no employment contract. This group of teachers is trained in didactic methodologies to strengthen their educational capacity and allow them to present themselves before the public services of state institutions to receive a decent salary, health insurance, and an employment contract.

### 3) Training domestic workers

MTC Mali has 15 training centers for domestic workers. At the centers, workers learn to read and write numerical skills, how to cook better meals for themselves and for better pay, and how to sew as a revenue-generating activity. They are also instructed in health and hygiene. Thanks to this training, the average salary of these workers has doubled compared to the salary of 5 years ago, where they were paid 7.500 CFA Francs or 11 euros. Due to our training, the lowest salary today is 15.000 CFA Francs or about 23 euros, in addition to benefits such as a weekly rest period and enrollment in a health-care scheme, enabling them to benefit from health coverage. They are also informed and made aware of the contents of Convention 189 of the International

Labour Organization (ILO) and the laws on Malians' right to work.

Still within the frame of training domestic workers, the Terre de Vie Association, one of MTC Mali's partners, funded a bureau initiative to open a sewing center for domestic workers. This center is still in its early stages and currently possesses 5 sewing machines. Training takes place from Monday to Thursday.

### 4) Placement of domestic workers

To better support a decent life for domestic workers MTC Mali has opened a reception and placement center, within which workers are trained in the culinary arts, their rights and responsibilities according to Convention 189 of the International Labour Organization, and the right to work before being placed with an employment contract guaranteeing social protection and a weekly rest.

### 5) A restaurant

MTC Mali, in order to adequately train its domestic workers in the culinary arts, has opened a mini-restaurant within which domestic workers are trained during their rest day



The sewing center.



Photo of teachers during training.

in order to improve their skills. In the days to come, it will also serve to offer employment working within the mini-restaurant.

### 6) Raising awareness

MTC Mali takes advantage of events such as March 8th to organize open door meetings with domestic workers and employers. Authorities such as Honorables, mayors,

and ministers are invited in order to inform and make them aware of living and working conditions for domestic workers. This is done in the hope of garnering support, so that they might help them in their actions, in particular the ratification of Convention 189 of the ILO by the Malian government.

On May 1st, after more than 3 years, MTC Mali

marched with over 200 domestic workers to attract the attention of unionists and the current authorities, presenting the living and working conditions for domestic workers and teachers in community and private schools, while urging them to ratify Convention 189 of the ILO. Slogans on banners and signs read: "Political and legislative authorities, ratify Convention 189 of the ILO, promote decent work, worthy and recognized for all domestic workers of Mali" or: "Policy makers, limit our weekly work times, grant us a period of rest and leisure".

### 7) Training activists in review of life and in AGR (to develop)

Each Catholic movement has a need for review of life. For this reason, MTC Mali launched

training sessions in review of life to introduce their activists and to familiarize them with this method of reflecting on life, so that they may perform it with their core teams.

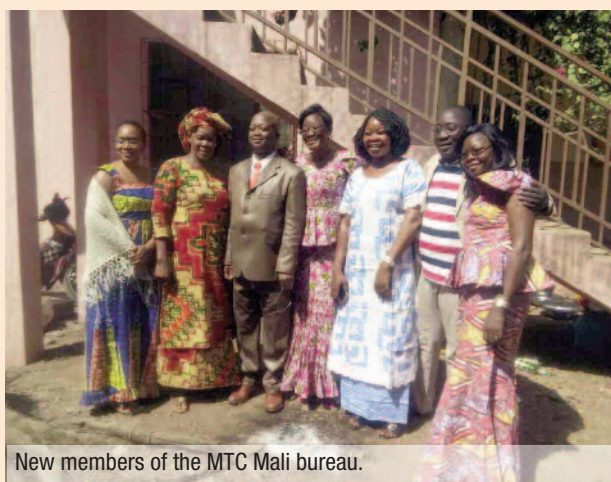
This enables members, especially youths, to meet and to reflect with elders of the movement.

It's through these reflections that several facts of life are shared and discussed, bringing about the creation of activities within the movement.

MTC Mali often organizes trainings in revenue-generating activities so that core teams can have their own activities to ensure self-financing.

### 8) General Assembly of MTC Mali

The 10th General Assembly of the Christian Workers Movement of Mali was held from December 10th to 11th 2016. This assembly saw the participation of delegated activists coming from teams of Bamako and elsewhere in the country. Activities lasted for two days and an election established the new national bureau, elected for a 4-year term. It was concluded by a mass of giving thanks performed by the national chaplain of MTC Mali, the Abbot Joachim SAMAKE.



New members of the MTC Mali bureau.

Movement of Christian  
Workers of Mali



# May 1st 2017 celebration in Togo

**On the 15th April 2017, we received the international message for May 1st. The executive board convened on the 22nd April 2017, during which they familiarised themselves with the text and its content, in order to determine its objective and relevance.**

**W**e produced 1.500 copies. We sent out 800 copies to base groups for distribution to parishes and to their workplace; we delivered copies to the Maria Togo radio for broadcast the day of May 1st celebrations, and to the Catholic press (Christian Presence).

### **May 1st celebration strictly speaking**

Eucharist celebration in honour of Saint Joseph patron saint of workers in Lomé, at the Franciscan church of Saint Anthony of Padua in the Ahanoukopé neighbourhood; where the members of the executive board and the archdiocese of Lomé base group convened.

After mass, each participant returned to their socio-professional group for the traditional processions.

### **Socio-professional strata processions**

Compared to the preceding years, this year's processions are organised in divided rows, as the four existing trade union centres in Togo aligned and strode one after the other. Furthermore, the common platform is not returned to the minister for labour and the civil service. Only private sector employees expressed their complaints to their employers.



The trade union centres experienced a crisis where some were criticised for being on the government payroll, and for being associated with the governors.

### **Declaration about public media broadcasts by the secretary generals of the four centres**

The declarations by the secretary generals of the four trade union centres agree unanimously that Togolese workers' salary is the lowest in the West African sub region. They state that between 1990 and 2017, required raw materials (ce-

ment, fuel, rent, etc.) and food products (corn, beans, cassava flour, rice, etc.) have increased by 10, however salaries have not. They acknowledge that the Togolese worker does not live a decent life. They cannot make ends meet, they are in debt. The situation for workers in the Africa Free Zone is worse and unacceptable.

The secretary generals appeal to the authorities in order to, on the one hand, organise the High Civil Service Council and, on the other hand, that they get together to adopt a strategy to collectively fight for imple-

mentation of private individuals and for SMIG revision to guarantee workers' rights.

Just as the procession started, torrential rain and hurricanes descended upon the city and suburbs of Lomé. Those in the procession had to return to their respective work where shelters are installed. We were not able to take photos.

Victor Gbossou





MOVIMIENTO MUNDIAL DE TRABAJADORES CRISTIANOS • MOUVEMENT MONDIAL DES TRAVAILLEURS CHRÉTIENS  
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