

## Quotes and reflections on work

"The most terrible thing as I see it is that the people worst affected by these neoliberal economic structures are women and young people.

One million young people work in Mexico's *maquiladoras* [manufacturing plants that rely almost exclusively on foreign investment and produce for export]. Young people are being offered nothing better than virtual slavery, without any decent alternatives. Keeping young people in these conditions is killing their future. And that in turn is destroying the future for the country.

The future of any community lies in its young people, and if they are not cared for and nurtured, then the whole community suffers."

*Fr Sergio Cobo is a Mexican Jesuit priest. He is director of Fomento Cultural y Educativo. The labour rights team, CEREAL, is a part of Fomento that provides support and information to workers in Mexico.*

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"After five months of working I continued to receive the wages of a manual assembly line worker, even though I was involved in repair work the whole time. I began to speak with the supervisor and later with the foreman to ask them to increase my salary. By that time we had already taken all the courses for repair work... I also took courses in advanced welding and passed them with a 100-mark average. I thought: I don't know how much more they want – Superman or Batgirl – before they increase my wages to reflect what I am, a good repair worker!

Now I wonder if there was any point in arriving early and reaching all my work targets. I was always on time, and whenever overtime was requested I stayed behind to work. When the buck got passed to us for other people's errors, there we were, me and my friends, to do the repairs. I never failed in terms of my obligations despite the injustices inflicted on us workers. How many times did my back ache or my eyes fill with tears? But I always started work again the next day."

*Paty, a former electronics industry worker*

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"These conditions lead to the dehumanisation of our workers. It is the end of the human being as a person with dignity, feelings, and a sense of justice."  
*Monsignor Raul Vera, Bishop of Saltillo, Mexico*

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"The goal of maximum profit - the cornerstone of the capitalist economy - is at odds with the promotion of human dignity. One doesn't need to be a Christian or a catholic to see this.

When work dehumanises, or simply exhausts the energy and will to want to work, then this kind of work is incompatible with nature and with the dignity of human beings created at the image of God.

The god 'profit' has superseded the God of life and dignity. This is the triumph of the individualist god over the God who is society (Father-Son-Spirit)."  
*Freud Jean, CAFOD partner, Haiti*

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"The first priority is information. Information for the outside world about what is going on. There is a terrible silence surrounding the exploitation of human beings that is taking place here.

CAFOD needs to create opportunities for the spread of information. People need to investigate, to find out what is going on, and then circulate the information as widely as possible through their networks, such as Justice and Peace groups. We must make this situation known inside and outside Mexico.

We must stand together in solidarity, or we have no chance. The protests of civil society are getting louder every day."  
*Monsignor Raul Vera, Bishop of Saltillo, Mexico*

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"I think employment is uplifting, and if we do it willingly and ethically we can feel that we are very important to society, and, through our faith, to God.

I believe it was man who created and established the economic wealth. It was not the plan of God to destroy the environment or encourage social injustice. Because of this it is important that we take up again God's plan for the human race. The environment and its creatures are part of the world we live in."  
*Gilberth Bermudez Umana, Costa Rica*

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"The global economic systems are geared by the rich entrepreneurs, multinational companies and the global funding agencies, only to promote greater strength for profit, more profit and greatest possible profit at the least possible time. They try to monopolise information, financial resources and natural resources."  
*Reid Shelton Fernando, Sri Lanka*

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