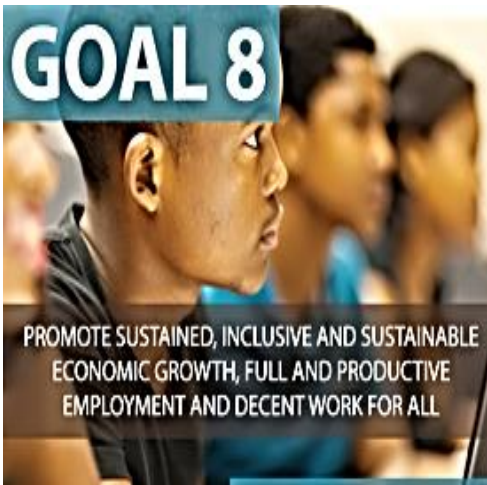


## Reflection on SDG 8: Economic Growth/Decent Work

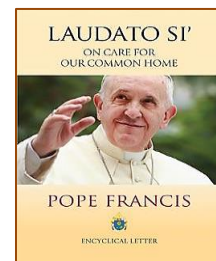


### Included in Goal 8's targets:

- measures to provide decent jobs for all - including youth & people with disabilities;
- equal pay for work of equal value; safe & secure working environments;
- protect labour rights; end child labour, end recruitment of child soldiers, end modern day slavery and human trafficking;
- decouple economic growth & productivity from environmental degradation;
- improve global resource efficiency in consumption & production;
- growth of micro-, small- and medium enterprises;
- expand access to banking, insurance and financial services;
- promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs & promotes culture & products;
- provide trade-related technical assistance for least developed countries

*It is essential that we “continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,” no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning.*

(LS 127 - citing Benedict XVI's 'Caritas in Veritate')



On June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016, here in the Philippines, President Duterte was inaugurated and hailed as the new redeemer by those who brought about his landslide victory. There are promises of great reforms and to date, while we question his means for achieving his ends, we are very happy with his choice of Education Secretary and delighted with the choice of the activist, Gina Lopez as Environmental Secretary.

As in most countries of the 'Global South' the gap between the rich and poor is enormous. Many years ago, I saw the show 'Evita' on stage in London. The doling out of goods to the poor from boxes lying on the backs of the poor was for me, a very powerful image of charity versus justice.

*“Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work.”*

(LS 128)

Duterte's promise to end *contractualization* brings the hope of great improvement to the employment scene. Our billionaire supermarket owners have been using contractualization in order to avoid paying the benefits, required by law, that are the entitlement of full-time employees. Young college graduates find themselves with no job security, no benefits as required by law, but forced to accept “the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table.”

*We have to accept that technological products . . . create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups.*

(LS107).

**Pope Francis says we are enthralled with a technocratic paradigm which tends to dominate economic and political life. Those supporting this paradigm show “no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behaviour shows that for them, maximizing profits is enough.”**

LS Chapter 3: The human roots of the ecological crisis.

The OFWs - Overseas Filipino Workers, are main contributors to the figures presented in relation to the growth in Philippines' GDP. While the current administration refutes migration as a development strategy, it cannot deny its dependency on it. Unfortunately, the government is happy to call them 'present day heroes' and welcome their money. The policy of "exporting" at least a million people per annum has led to consumerism and non-sustainable consumption. Marginalization has increased due to the increased spending powers of the relatives of these overseas contract workers. Agricultural land is being converted to real estate as developers persuade people of the importance of investing in their own sites and houses. There is no educational programme helping them to set up their own small income-generating projects and giving them the possibility of repatriation. Such an approach could restore the dignity of many whose hard earned remittances have come at the cost of human degradation.

*"Human costs always include economic costs  
and economic dysfunctions always involve human costs."*

LS 128

Our kindergarten schools in Binalbagan and Himamaylan are fee-paying and 70% of our clients are able to pay, thanks to the money provided by absentee parents. The social cost of two parents working abroad, while their children are left in the care of their parents, is not being taken into account and indeed the true results may remain hidden for yet some years.

In discussion with relatives of OFWS, we reflected on topics such as *need versus want* and *the power of the hidden persuaders*. It is easy to point the finger at those in authority but we all contribute to the consumerist mentality. Yet we know that "*Faster, cheaper, newer versus safer, healthier and more fair*" (You-tube: *The Story of Solutions* - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpkRvc-sOKk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpkRvc-sOKk)), is the goal of the mass producers whose businesses are generally based in countries where workers do not have the experience of ***a dignified life through work.***



In the Philippines, by far the largest number of poor comes from rural places consisting of small farmers and landless tillers. Many of them have joined the unemployed and underemployed as squatters in the cities.

In December 2008, CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) was passed into law aiming to redistribute private and public agricultural lands to help the beneficiaries survive as small independent farmers. While on paper it sounds promising, in practice it is "more honoured in the breach than in the observance." Our lawmakers belonging to the landed upper class, have found ways and means of circumventing the law to avoid the redistribution of their land. Some landlords did give a portion of their land in compliance with the law, but alas, rural peasants had not been educated in how to manage a farm and were given no cash incentives to buy seeds and fertilizers.

Sr. Aquila recently wrote for IPA, "*A Story of Success*" - telling how the intervention of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines have, over the years, trained peasant farmers to become self-sufficient, balancing consumption and production, while at the same time caring for the environment. Like all worthwhile solutions, it was not a quick fix but required years of patience and dedication, weaning farmers off artificial fertilizers, which, apart from damaging their precious soil, had the extra disadvantage of putting them into a cycle of debt. Sr. Aquila's widow's mite is echoed

in the efforts of Presentation Sisters, Associates, Co-Workers, Friends and like-minded people in many places around the world.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an  
opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between  
the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Cardinal Dearden by Ken Untener/Blessed Oscar Romero

## What is the 'something' we can do in relation to SDG 8?

### Further information and actions:

- Labour Behind the Label - <http://labourbehindthelabel.org/get-involved/take-action/>
- World Day for Decent Work - <http://2015.wddw.org/>
- Campaign to End Child Labour - [http://goodweave.org/child\\_labor\\_campaign/about](http://goodweave.org/child_labor_campaign/about)
- End Modern Slavery - [www.walkfree.org](http://www.walkfree.org)
- Stop the Traffik - <http://www.stophetraffik.org/uk/>
- Act to Prevent Trafficking - <http://www.aptireland.org/what-can-i-do/>

In closing, we pray that we may live *"The Gospel Without Compromise"* (the title of a book by Catherine De Hueck Doherty) - and, in the words of Catherine De Hueck Doherty, may we change the world and whatever needs changing, through His transforming power. Discover the sublime challenge of His call to us to live the Gospel.

