



International Women's Day 8 March 2010 message

This month of March 2010, we celebrate a 100 years of the proclamation of International Women's Day. It was in 1910, during the international conference of women workers in Copenhagen, that proposal by the German socialist Clara Zetkin to have a day that marks the struggle for women's rights to full participation and equality with men in society and at work and in the integral development of the person was approved.

It is a proclamation in memory of a very old struggle between the sexes that leaves a memory of very sad events. One of which took place in 1908 in a "Cotton Factory", where 129 women workers burnt to death following a bomb attack in the middle of a strike, where the women were protesting against the infamous working conditions to which they were subjected, low salaries, long working hours, child labour.

On this day, we underline the immense recognition for all these women of all ages who have throughout a part or in the totality of their lives been protagonists in their struggles for a significant advancement in justice and equality, and that now we can see their fruits. We observe the social and political advances and the approval of rights, and the presence of women in important positions of power and the realisation of the right of women to take their place in public and political positions.

However, there is still much to be done in order that this equality can become a reality in all the areas and places of daily activity. There are still numerous situations in which discrimination against women is maintained, where there is a lack of respect for justice. Simply take a look at our neighbours and neighbourhoods, families, our work colleagues, women workers in other continents to see that there still exists many differences and discrimination and sexual violence.

We can see that this situation is getting worse today with the global crisis that we face which hits without mercy the working class, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged, but in a way that is more brutal and lasting longer, an specifically hitting poorer women the young and migrants.

In 2009 a report was published on the "Global Employment Trends for Women" by the ILO which confirmed that inequality between the sexes remain a big problem in the world labour market.

Women workers confront many obstacles to access the labour market they are facing many restrictions in relation to sectors of activity in which they would like to work and with conditions to which they aspire.

They are over represented in the agricultural sector, they are disadvantaged because they make up a large proportion of the informal economy with precarious employment low wages and often working in inhuman conditions.

As the church present in the world of work, as Christian worker activists, we cannot remain passive in front of these unjust situations. The recognition and protection of women's rights in the world of work depends on work organisations taking into account the vocation and dignity of

women (Social Teaching of the Church 295). We have to continue to demand equal salaries for equal work, a work-family balance, equal rights and an end to sexist violence.

We want equality between the sexes inside the church. The respect for the autonomy of women and their right to equality should be continued, which is a struggle that requires the commitment of all men and women. It is urgent to promote changes in cultural attitudes that reinforce in a decisive manner obedient women and prevent their self-development.

The ILO report mentioned above states: "The crisis has raised attention for the need for a dramatic shift to an improved globalization that includes sustainable and quality jobs, broader social protection, and social dialogue. Social dialogue, which includes explicit representation of women on solutions to the economic crisis matters now more than ever. In the world, there remains a huge untapped labour potential of women, and economic growth and development could be much higher if social and economic readjustments are made so as to provide every women with the opportunity of decent employment."

We can live the 8 March united around the demands of women around world as a time of change. Let's participate in this way together, with new experiences that show that human beings are capable of social re-organisation with cooperation over competition, equality rather than inequality, a sense of community over individualism.

Let's practice other forms of power a power shared between individuals and collective power; let's research new models for a different world, where there is a way life for all. Let us remember, "Without women, rights are not human."

It is only by this way that it will be possible to life in respect of diversity and that a women will not be penalised for the fact that she is a women. It is a new opportunity to reinforce in all areas of life the possibilities which open themselves up to regain a profound sense of work that ennobles a person, women or man, and that does not leave human beings at the hands of production and consumption

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