



Catholic Bishops' Conference of India *COMMISSION FOR LABOUR*

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To,
The Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops
Catholic Bishops Conference of India
Superior Generals, Provincial Superiors
Conference of Religious in India

SUBJECT: DOMESTIC HELPERS

Your Eminence / Grace / Excellency / Father / Brother / Sister,

Greetings of Peace and Joy of the Risen Lord.

On the occasion of the Workers Day (May 1) I wish to draw your attention to the plight of domestic workers in Church related institutions. Seeing the condition of the domestic workers, the CBCI had come out with instructions "Domestic Workers in Church related Institutions". Guidelines and suggestions were given in plenty. The Church in India has always had option for the poor. The concern of the Church for the poor and the marginalized is seen in the charitable and social developmental works in rural areas, the social awareness created at village level, the empowerment of women and the poor.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines Domestic Worker as "someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages". Though domestic work is the largest employment category for women, girls, young boys and men yet there is no proper national standards to regulate employment and conditions of work, wages and social security of domestic workers.

The estimated number of domestic workers in India is 90 million; women and girls being the overwhelming majority. An estimated 20 percent of domestic workers are children below 14 years of age. Under child labour laws, employing such children is an offence. There are numerous instances of the abuse of young girls and boys in work place. The exploitation of women and children domestic workers is frequent and regularly reported. With no rights and laws to fall back on, most of the domestic workers become contemporary slaves. It is a known fact that many women and children are trafficked and exploited by the placement agencies and middle men.

Now the concern of the CBCI - Labour Commission is the domestic workers in Church related institutions, such as Bishop's Houses, Parish houses, Generalates, Provincialates, Convents, small schools and institutions. In general we love and take care of our helpers. However we forget that **THEY ARE HUMAN PERSONS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS** like any other employee; we forget or take it lightly many things that are due to them in justice.

To mention a few :- 1) Job security – proper appointment letter to be issued; records to be maintained; job assurance. 2) Daily working hours 3) Holidays – weekly leave, sick leave, casual leave, annual leave 4) Salary – at least the minimum salary prescribed by the State Governments 5) Future Security Schemes – provident fund, gratuity, other social security schemes like Mazdoor Suraksha Yojana.

My appeal to all of you is that the welfare of our domestic helpers be our first priority. We pay more attention to the above mentioned points and deliver justice to our domestic workers. Let our love for our helpers be seen in being just to them. The Archbishops, Bishops and Major Superiors will ensure that the domestic helpers are given their just wages, due rest and holidays, job security and future security. At least this minimum we must do. Then we can go for generosity.

May St. Joseph, the Worker intercede for Domestic Workers.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Most Rev. Jose Porunedom
Member

Most Rev. Oswald Lewis
Chairman

Most Rev. M. Devadass Ambrose
Member