

## **As Thanksgiving Approaches, Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice Supports Fast-Food Workers' Campaign for \$15 and a Union**

“Catholic social doctrine teaches us that a ‘just wage is the legitimate fruit of work,’ explains Dr. Joseph Fahey, National Chair of Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice. “But for fast-food workers across the country who earn minimum wage or just above it, the fruit of their labor is far from just.”

Fast-food jobs are the fastest growing jobs in the United States, but they are also the lowest paid: workers earn between \$10,000 and \$18,000 a year—a fraction of what it costs to support a family. Fast food workers are not paid enough to afford basic needs like food, clothing, and rent. They often qualify for food stamps and other public assistance, or have to live in homeless shelters, which means that big, profitable corporations are forcing taxpayers to subsidize their low wages and burdening our economy. To make matters worse, fast-food employers are stealing wages by compelling workers to work off the clock, denying them overtime pay or forcing them to use fee-laden pay cards to get paid, among other measures— making it even harder for workers to scrape by.

Big, profitable employers like McDonald’s and YUM! fail to understand that better wages for their workers will mean millions of families will have more money to spend at their stores. A healthy economy depends on businesses that pay enough for workers to afford the basics. And fast-food is booming. It’s a \$200 billion industry, full of companies that can afford to pay workers a wage that allows them to support their families.

Now, there is hope. Fast-food workers are joining together across the country to fight for \$15 an hour and the right to form a union without employer interference. Thousands of fast-food workers have gone on strike in recent months, feeling they have little to lose by coming together and speaking out.

Support for workers trying to organize unions and improve their wages enjoys a long history in the Catholic Church. The Popes from Leo to Francis have encouraged workers to organize to improve their wages. In 1986, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced support for the rights of workers to form unions.

Sister Mary Priniski, O.P., Vice Chair of Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice urges, “Today, as low-wage jobs proliferate, Catholics should once again be by workers’ sides. We should support their much-needed campaign for a just wage. It’s the Catholic thing to do.”