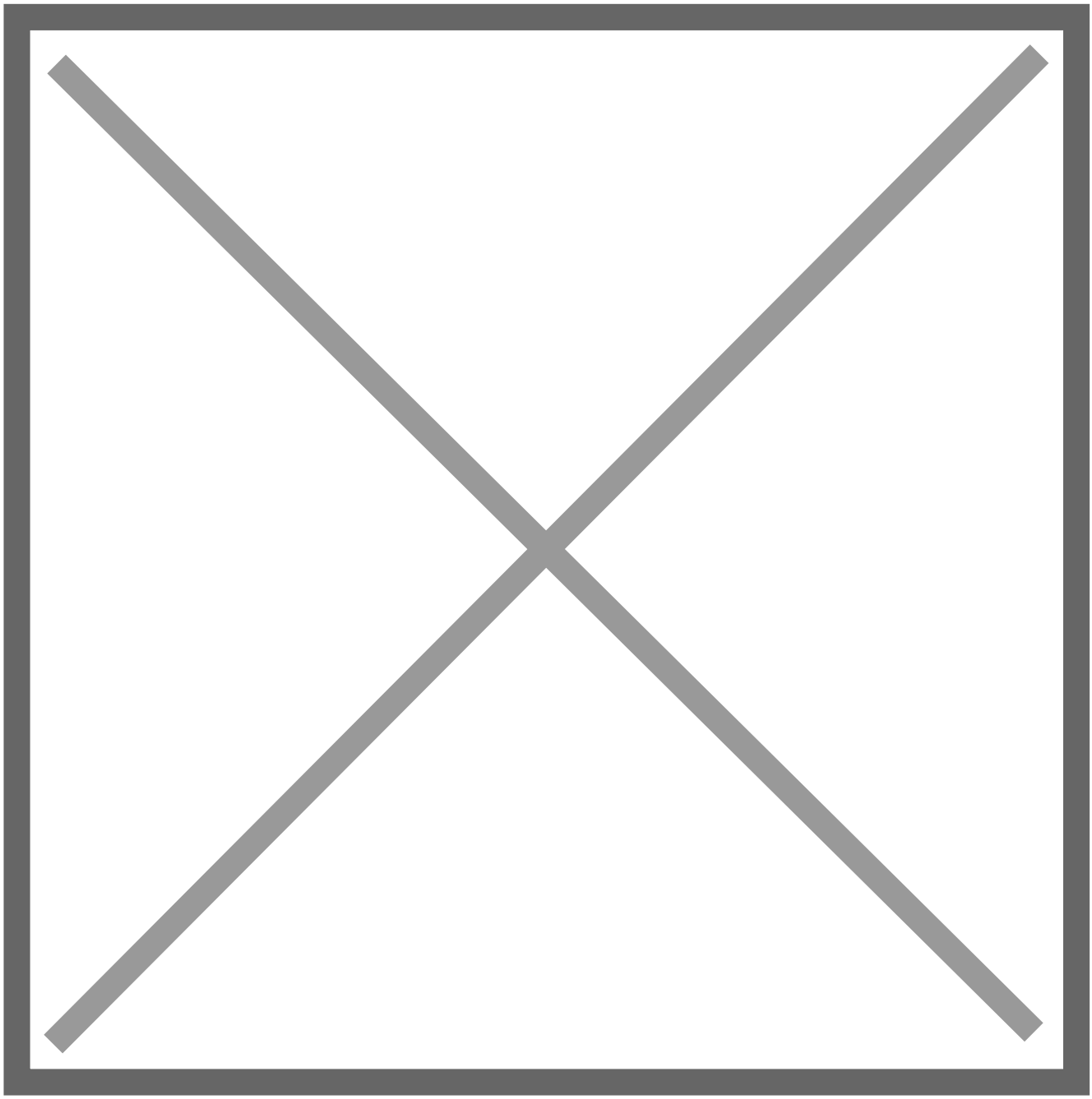


Striking McDonald's workers in Las Vegas demand a $15 minimum wage June 14, 2019. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that about 42% of the U.S. workforce will be covered by $15 minimum wage laws by 2026. (CNS/Reuters/Mike Segar)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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Even in the rush to recoup losses due to the global pandemic, governments must work for the benefit of all and avoid implementing measures that further isolate the poor and the vulnerable, Pope Francis said.

In a June 17 video message to participants at the International Labor Organization's "World of Work" summit, the pope warned that in hastily returning "to greater economic activity," world leaders must "avoid excessive fixations on benefit, isolation and nationalism, blind consumerism and denial of the clear evidence of discrimination against our 'disposable' brothers and sisters."

"On the contrary, let us look for solutions that will help us build a new future of work based on decent and dignified working conditions, originating in collective bargaining, and promoting the 'common good' — a phrase that will make work an essential component of our care for society and creation," he said.

In this sense, the pope added, "work is truly and essentially human. That is what it is about, that it is human."

According to its website, the June 17-18 summit "will focus on the response to the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the world of work and the action required to build a better future of work."

The pope was among several world leaders who addressed the event via video message, including U.S. President Joe Biden, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, President Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo of Congo and Prime Minister António Costa of Portugal.

In his address, the pope lamented the treatment of "workers on the margins of the labor market," especially migrant workers and their families, who are often excluded from access to health services.

Such exclusion, he said, "complicates early detection, testing, diagnosis, contact tracing and seeking medical care for COVID-19 for refugees and migrants, and thus increases the risk of outbreaks in those populations."

"This is one of the many cases of this philosophy of exclusion that we have become accustomed to imposing on our societies," the pope said.

Furthermore, the lack of social protection measures for vulnerable people has led to "increased poverty, unemployment, underemployment, an increase in illegal work [and] the delay in the inclusion of young people in the labor market, which is very serious."

He also said a lack of protections has led to increased child labor, human trafficking, food insecurity and increased exposure to infections among the sick and the elderly.

Francis highlighted the role of the Catholic Church, as well as other religions and denominations, in fostering dialogue between governments and local communities, which is "essential for achieving a solidarity-based and sustainable future for our common home."

He also appealed to political leaders to use their authority and influence to help the poor and reminded business leaders "of their true vocation: to produce wealth in the service of all."

"The current pandemic has reminded us that there are no differences or boundaries between those who suffer," he said. "We are all fragile and, at the same time, all of great value. We hope that what is happening around us will shake us to our core. The time has come to eliminate inequalities, to cure the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family."

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