

Think about it! (17)

I don't like strikes. They almost invariably lead to suffering – sometimes more, sometimes less – for a lot of "innocent" people – okay, in a sense there are no "innocent" people (the only truly innocent person who ever lived was Jesus of Nazareth), but you know what I mean: people who have nothing whatsoever to do with the problem that is supposed to have led to the strike. In fact more often than not the people who may have some kind of responsibility for the cause / causes of any strike – in other words, the government of the day, the owners and directors of the big companies, and so on – are the ones who suffer least the consequences of strikes, because they are the ones who are best protected; and the people who suffer most tend to be the most vulnerable members of society: the poorest, some ill people and their loved ones, etc., or simply thousands of "ordinary citizens" and their families.

If in the context of the justice-system we would never accept the idea that someone should have to pay for some crime of which they were totally innocent, how can anyone possibly think that it's okay for thousands of innocent citizens, many of whom have enough problems of their own to cope with without the extra ones caused by a strike, to be used, against their will, whether by workers, or by industrial chiefs or by the government, in a political battle that has little, if anything, to do with them?!

Furthermore, the underlying philosophy behind the idea of striking is the same old utilitarian argument: "the end justifies the means" – in other words, if, by applying pressure through a strike, you can achieve a just end: fairer prices, fairer wages, more humane working-conditions, etc., it doesn't matter how much suffering has been caused in the process, or the number of innocent people affected – at the end of the day, "the end justifies the means."

But all that said, it has to be recognized that the right to strike is, sadly, necessary. Before such a right existed, millions of workers were exploited without mercy and without any right of appeal, and if there were no right to strike today, there would be even more exploitation than there is.

All of this ought to serve to undermine our blind confidence in mankind's innate goodness. I mean, if mankind really were so good, those who pay would pay a fair wage plus a bit more on top, those who work would work better, grateful for the opportunity to do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, those who govern would govern with more sensitivity, wisdom and justice, and any problem that arose would be solved by a system of arbitration that was completely honest, independent and fair, and that would be accepted by everyone involved. But no, there's the strike, hurting a lot of people, an unwilling witness confirming the verdict of the divine Judge that we're not so good after all, and that we need a change of heart that only God, and only through Jesus Christ, is able to give us.

*Andrew Birch
pastor@iglesiapalma.com*