This year May Day is celebrated with mixed emotions. Today we celebrate labor (which is always a good thing) while remembering its absence. Those who lost their jobs and the young people unable to find work may shed tears or even fall into depression while others rejoice. The youth implore us, more than ever, to listen to them and stand by their side. Nevertheless, we should celebrate labor since the ability of festivities to lift people's spirits becomes even more precious during hard times. Otherwise, people begin to feel like the Hebrews in the desert and crave the 'onions' they used to receive as slaves in Egypt.

We can only consider today a holiday for all Italians if we don't forget those without work (they need workdays instead of holidays!). May Day and the 2nd of June are meant to be a singular celebration praising labor as the main pillar of the Republic. In fact, when that essential pillar is fragile, insecure, and inadequate, our common house crumbles. The shameful unemployment ratio should be cut down to zero as soon as possible. Doing so is more important than any tax cut if we wish to keep our “common house” standing. Similar to other shortages in the past, the dramatic scarcity of employment today stands in stark contrast to the opulence of a few people. The super-rich do nothing to relieve the never ending struggle of the poor or ordinary people. The latter are in fact further exploited by the wealthy.

What labor and which workers do we celebrate today? This is a difficult yet necessary question to keep in mind. Labor is democracy's common denominator. Workers are all equal (to a certain extent) regardless of their salary, function, position or social class. In fact, since labor generates civil equality - and unemployment combines with speculation to destroy it -, labor is the first word of our Republic; we will continue to defend it as such.

The 1st of May is a day of celebration for workers and millionaire entrepreneurs, women who support gambling addicted husbands and the employees of casinos, and managers of hedge funds and the workers of recently bankrupt companies (these businesses are usually sold to those hedge funds). Today is truly the holiday for all workers. However, this isn't the complete extent of what today's labor celebration really means.

The jobs of Carlo, a wealthy director, and Anna, a part-time employee, have some things in common and a lot of stark differences. The same is true when comparing the owner of the town's hypermarket to Giovanna, who spends her life savings to avoid firing her two employees and closing down her shop. Between Anna, Giovanna, and Carlo there are huge differences in power, privileges, rights, opportunities, freedom, pay-checks, and happiness in life (I wonder who is the happiest?).

Different kinds of work result in a varied quality of life and amount of dignity. Employment is a much better democratic indicator than finance and consumption. If the employee Luca buys a sport car (running up debt), the car dealer will treat him the same as his boss or any other super-rich customer. He will then feel like a director, a mayor, or a governor as he drives his nice car. Consumption allows us to understand the symbolic power of modern goods that guarantees a certain aspect of democracy, but this aspect alone is fragile and superficial. As a matter of fact, when Luca returns to work, he immediately realizes that he is not similar to his boss. If he loses his job, the car dealer and the bank manager will drastically change their attitudes toward him; Luca will suddenly be treated like feudal servant.
May Day reminds us that modern society was founded on the promise that (fair) employment would be a great equalizer, reducing the differences in rights, opportunities, effective freedom, and dignity between people. Until a few decades ago, this promise was being partially fulfilled as differences between workers and bosses decreased; the divide was no longer as great as it had been between a serf and his lord.

Employment contracts are meant to connect classes, various interests, and people together as a society, creating a network of solidarity that should one day cover the world. Labor is highly dignifying since it binds people together through win-win relationships and civil friendship. It can and should be a bridge between the different levels of society. However, financial capitalism has increased the social and economic divide. Today's bosses are becoming ever more like the old feudal landlords. That's why I believe that this Labor Day should be dedicated to Anna, Giovanna, and Luca.

Although the holiday is for everyone, it sides with labor while criticizing Carlo's attitude. We invite him to bring about personal changes that help renew the system. This day teaches us not to give up as long as differences exist between the effective freedom, rights, opportunities, and dignity of people; we must reduce and close this divide. Italy is a democratic republic founded on labor.

*Translated by Cristian Sebok*