

# LIFE, PEACE & JUSTICE MINISTRIES

“Love One Another”

## Catholic Social Teaching: The Dignity of Work and the Rights of the Worker



Photo by Ahsanization on Unsplash

*“Work is about more than making a living; it is a form of participation in the creative work of God. People have a right to decent, meaningful work and fair wages. Work should promote the dignity of the worker. Our economy exists to serve people, not vice versa. Our faith calls us to demand justice for all workers and a just economy that serves the life and dignity of all.”* -United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003, “In the Footsteps of Jesus: Catholic Social Teaching at Work Today”

Pope Leo XIII is considered the first Pope to take a significant stance on the social teachings of the Catholic Church. In 1891, he wrote the encyclical “On the Condition of the Worker” (Rerum Novarum). The rights and responsibilities of workers have been repeated many times in papal encyclicals. Typically every ten years over the past 130 years, the current Pope has issued a major statement about the importance of the way workers are regarded in our society. And yet the wealth gap between wealthy nations and poor nations, between wealthy owners and poor laborers has widened. We have personally witnessed how lowest paid “essential workers” sustained the economy through their efforts while experiencing the greatest risk of exposure to the Corona virus.

In the 1970’s Pope Paul VI gave us a clear “Call to Action” in which he directed individual Christians to work for social and political reform to promote social justice. We are reminded that short term charity is not enough; long term change in justice must be our Christian mission as well. If we “see” God in the work of each human person, we “hear” the call for dignity and respect for each worker in God’s creation.

Let us ask ourselves:

1. When possible, do I buy products produced by workers whose rights and dignity were respected?
2. Addressing the rights of all workers, do I support adequate wages, health insurance, vacation and sick leave?
3. Do I affirm the right to form unions or worker associations?



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*Wisdom from Pope John XXIII*

“...both workers and employers should regulate their mutual relations in accordance with the principle of human solidarity and Christian brotherhood.”

- Encyclical on Christianity & Social Progress, Paragraph #23 - May 1961



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### WATCH



**As consumers, do we think about the workers that created each**

**product?** This short video on **Dignity of Work and Workers** speaks to the importance of the rights of all workers to fair wages and working conditions.

[Watch now...](#)

### PRAY



In their **Prayer for the Elimination of Racism**, the Augustinians pray

to "abolish social structures and systems which inhibit economic, educational and social advancement of the poor."

**Let us join them in prayer.**

[Pray now...](#)

### READ



**The right to meaningful work** is often difficult to find for those completing their

prison sentences. "**Worth Taking A Chance**" shares the importance of programs of rehabilitation and restoration for people after prison.

[Read now...](#)