

must not lead to a slackening of efforts to sustain and assist the countries of the Third World."

■ **For all in need:** "The Church has always been . . . active among the needy, offering material assistance in ways that neither humiliate nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance. . . Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ Himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice."

Traditionally, migrant workers put in many strenuous hours in the fields. But migrant families in Frederick, Colo., find hope at a county-run day-care center where they teach and care for youngsters, and help the families with food and clothes. According to nurse Kathy Topol, "You hear so much that is wrong with the treatment of migrant workers. But here, fortunately, we have something that is different."

Working for peace

■ **Promoting development:** "Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development."

■ **Transforming cultures and peoples:** "The Church promotes those aspects of human behavior which favor a true culture of peace. . . May people learn to fight for justice without violence."

Liberia endured a year-long civil war that claimed 20,000 lives. A church leader there commented: "The greatest challenge is to try to help heal the wounds of the people. Many have lost everything that they have worked for, and some are looking for revenge. The Church is challenged to help people become reconciled, and for that we have to be reconciled with ourselves."

On the international debt

"The principle that debts must be paid is certainly just. However, it is not right to demand or expect payment when the effect would be the imposition of political choices leading to hunger and despair for entire peoples. . . In such cases it is necessary to find . . . ways to lighten, defer or even cancel debt."

Jesus told the story of a king who settled accounts with his servants. One owed him a great

sum but had no means of paying. The king ordered that servant, along with his family and possessions, sold in payment. The servant pleaded for mercy. Moved with pity, the king cancelled the debt. Then that servant dealt harshly with a fellow servant who owed him money. When the king heard of this, he reinstated the debt, and turned the servant over to the jailers. Jesus concluded: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." (cf. Matthew 18:23-35)

On the family

"It is necessary to . . . see the family as the sanctuary of life (and) to promote . . . policies which assist the family by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and for looking after the elderly."

The U.S. Catholic Bishops state: "No community is more central than the family; it needs to be supported, not undermined. The family has major contributions to make in addressing questions of social justice. It is where we learn and act on our values. What happens in the family is at the basis of a truly human social life."

On the environment

"The ecological question . . . accompanies the problem of consumerism. . . In his desire to have and enjoy rather than to be and to grow man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive disordered way, (forgetting) his role as cooperator with God . . . in the work of creation."

Bernard Evans, a theology professor of social ethics at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn., believes that "committing ourselves to personal recycling and planting trees every Earth Day is important. But more important is commitment to public policy changes that focus on the larger causes of environment destruction."

"The present encyclical has looked to the past, but above all it is directed to the future. Like *Rerum Novarum*, it comes almost at the turn of the century, and its intention, with God's help, is to prepare for that moment."

Coming soon

All in a Mother's Day salutes the vital role mothers play in the lives of their children and discusses the problems they face in today's world.

In his book describing the Christopher message, *You Can Change the World*, Father James Keller wrote about the importance of each person in terms as relevant today as they were over forty years ago:

"In these disturbing times, there is a thrilling challenge in the realization that the world itself can be better because we are in it. No matter what our circumstances or failings, we can yet do more than say, 'Thy will be done on earth.' We can, with Christ's help, actually help make this tired old world of ours the prelude to heaven! And since that is what God wants it to be, truly it is a great time to be alive."

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Centesimus Annus



Highlights of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical on Social Justice and The Church

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“The social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action.”

Pope John Paul II,
Centesimus Annus

Human rights in the workplace have always been a concern of conscientious people.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (“Of New Things”). His primary concern was to respond to the hardships of workers in the industrial world. In his letter, Pope Leo laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching. He:

- insisted on the Church’s right and duty to comment on economic, social and political issues.
- affirmed the right to private property and drew attention to the obligations of ownership.
- asserted the right of workers to form associations; and argued the basis of a just wage.
- stated that governments have a duty to protect the poor, as do all Christians.

100 Years later: a call to action

On May 1, 1991, on the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, Pope John Paul II issued his own encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (“The Hundredth Year”). As its title suggests, it celebrates the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* and a century of the Church’s social teaching.

This document, written after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, also looks at the “new things” influencing today’s social order.

At the heart of the Church’s social commitment is a call to action. **This calling is . . .**

- **founded on the words and deeds of Jesus Christ**, who came “to preach good news to the poor . . . release to the captives . . . recovering of sight to the blind . . . liberty to those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18-19), and who identified Himself with the hungry, the homeless, the stranger.
- **inspired by the Hebrew prophets and their passion for justice**: “Let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:24).
- **carried out by the People of God**, who seek to apply Scriptural values in their families and churches, at work and in the service of their communities, nation and world.
- **shaped by the social teaching of the Catholic Church**, as established in *Rerum Novarum* and restated in *Centesimus Annus*.

To help readers better understand *Centesimus Annus*, we present here highlights, with quotes from this encyclical, plus examples.

The importance of the gospel

“There can be no genuine solution to the ‘social question’ apart from the Gospel.”

Mother Teresa explains the motivation for her work: “Jesus gave us a new commandment: ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ And to make it easy for us to love, he said, ‘whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.’ I call this the Gospel on five fingers—five words: ‘You did it to me.’”

The rights of workers

“Pope Leo XIII (in *Rerum Novarum*) affirmed the fundamental rights of workers.”

- **The right to dignity**: “Indeed, the key to reading (*Rerum Novarum*) is the dignity of the worker as such and, for the same reason, the dignity of work.”
- **The right to form unions**: “Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical . . . affirms . . . above all the right to establish professional associations of employers and workers, or of workers alone.”
- **The right to a just wage and fair working conditions**: “. . . the right to the ‘limitation of working hours,’ the right to legitimate rest and the right of children . . . to be treated differently.”

“*Rerum Novarum* pointed the way to just reforms (to) restore dignity to work . . . Historically, this has happened in two ways: through economic policies aimed at ensuring . . . full employment, and, through unemployment insurance and re-training programs.”

The Business Executives for Economic Justice in Chicago, Ill., explained how they work to ensure respect for workers: “In one of our companies, keypunch operators whose skill was no longer needed due to the technological development of computers were retrained as computer operators rather than laid off. This development benefited both the employees and the company.”

Capitalism and human rights

“It would appear that . . . the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs . . . But there are many human needs which find no place on the

‘Teachable Moments’

The 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* presents “teachable moments,” opportunities for each of us to learn a lesson about social justice and our responsibility. It’s a good time for:

- **Government officials**—to review whether policies affirm family life and human rights, offering all the opportunity for dignity.
- **Wealthy persons**—to think about the obligations that stem from their riches, and their opportunities to help others.
- **Employers**—to consider how their business decisions can help preserve the dignity of their workers.
- **Workers**—to ponder how their faith affects what they do and how well they do their jobs.
- **Parents**—to draw attention to human need in the community and teach their children—by example—how to respond to that need.
- **Schoolchildren**—to learn how they fit in to the great stream of human justice. Teachers can encourage efforts to welcome newcomers.

“Our work for social justice is first and foremost a work of faith . . . It is Jesus who calls us to this mission . . . to bring the healing hand of Christ to those in need; the courageous voice of the prophet to those in power; and the Gospel message of love, justice and peace to an often suffering world.”

U.S. Catholic Bishops, *A Century of Social Teaching*

market . . . The resulting domination of things over people (is) far from disappearing.

“The Church acknowledges the legitimate role of profit as an indication that a business is functioning well (but) profitability is not the only indicator of a firm’s condition. It is possible for the financial accounts to be in order and yet for the people—who make up the firm’s most valuable asset—to have their dignity offended.”

Richard Green, executive vice-president of Blistex, Inc., on management’s responsibility: “To me, people’s jobs are one of the most important . . . aspects of their lives, and losing one’s job can be devastating. It is important for an employer to respect an employee’s dignity. We, as managers, have a responsibility to our employees to maintain and grow a viable business.”

Governments and human rights

“The State has the duty of watching over the common good.”

- **Promoting family life**: “Society and the States must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount for savings.”
- **Overcoming pitfalls of the ‘Welfare State’**: “In recent years the range of (State) intervention has vastly expanded . . . creating (in some cases) the so-called ‘Welfare State’. This leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies . . . dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serv-

ing their clients . . . Those in circumstances which call for assistance (are best served) by people who act as neighbors to those in need.”

■ **Protecting democracy from abuse**: “The Church values the democratic system . . . It is necessary for peoples in the process of reforming their systems (of government) to give democracy an authentic and solid foundation through the explicit recognition of human rights.”

■ **Affirming human rights**: “Among the most important . . . is the right to life, the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment, the right to develop one’s intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth, the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth’s resources and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one’s dependents, and the right to freely establish a family.”

Boston’s Mayor, Raymond L. Flynn, says about government: “People are not entitled to a government job. But they are entitled to a government whose job it is to help create jobs, jobs that sustain families.”

Special option for the poor

“It is necessary . . . to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development.”

■ **For those emerging from Communism and for those in the Third World**: “A great effort is needed to rebuild . . . the countries which have abandoned communism . . . This need, however,