

Leo xiii: rerum novarum

Law, Justice



1. What did Leo say about the poor people?

The present age has handed over the working poor to inhumane employers and greedy competitors. (a. 6) He saw the working poor as needy and helpless, (a. 66)

And they are insufficiently protected against injustices and violence. (a. 32)

2. What did he want the working poor to understand?

He wanted the working poor to understand that the lowest in society cannot be made equal with the highest and that poverty is no disgrace. (a. 37)

To suffer and endure is human. (a. 27)

The working poor are told not to injure the property or person of their employers and not to forcibly take the property of others. (a. 55)

3. What was the moral component of Leo's message?

The message to the working poor seems to be aimed at calming and consoling the poor, encouraging them to accept their position in society without rancor and without harm to others. Leo sought to enlist the aid of the working poor in preserving good order.

4. What did Leo say to those who work with the poor?

Leo XIII declared that the working poor must be cared for. Employers have clear moral obligations: workers are not to be treated as slaves; the dignity of your workers' human personality must be respected; do not use people as things for gain; do not oppress the needy or the wretched for your own

profit. The approach to employers is on a high moral plane, but it is also very practical: you need your poor worker, so work with him harmoniously. It is immoral to treat workers unjustly, and it is also not in the best interest of ownership and management.

5. What was the message to the employers?

Leo warns the employers against the pitfalls of being wealthy; pointing out that wealth does not end sorrow and that it is a hindrance to eternal happiness. In view of eternity, what counts is not how much we have but how we use what we have, and we will have to account to God for our use of wealth

6. What did the Pope say to the wealthy?

The wealthy are told that their goods are for their perfection and the benefit of others, and they are encouraged to share their goods when they see others in need: when the need is extreme, the demand is of justice: otherwise, the demand is of charity.

7. What was R. N's teachings of unions and strikes?

The encyclical comes down strongly in favour of unions, stating that their increase is to be desired. (a. 69)

The immediate object of unions is the private advantage of those associated, so that workers are to use their unions to secure increase in goods of body, soul and prosperity. (a. 71)

The principal goal of unions is moral and religious perfection. (a. 77)

The message about preserving good order is clear and unmistakable, but so is the message about standing up for rights. Leo XIII wanted the working poor to protect their interests, to make demands, to press their claims, and the principal means for doing this was the formation of unions.

8. What did Leo say about working conditions?

Wages should never be less than enough to support a worker who is thrifty and upright. (a. 63)

Work should not be so long that it dulls the spirit or that the body sinks from exhaustion. (a. 59)

The factors in the establishment of hours are listed as: the nature of the work; the circumstances of time and place; the physical condition of the workers. (a. 59)

9. What was his stand on private ownership and property?

Private ownership must be preserved inviolate. (a. 23)

Must be regarded as sacred. (a. 65)

It is wrong for ownership to be limited to a small number of people, and private property must be spread among the largest number of population. (a. 65)

And a more equitable division of goods. (a. 66)

10. How did Leo see the role of government?

The purpose of government is to cause public and individual well-being. (a. 48)

The government must protect the community and its constituent parts. (a. 52)

Protect equitably each and every class of citizens. (a. 49)

Give special consideration to the weak and poor. (a. 54)

This special care should include the working poor. (a. 54)

Improve the condition of workers. (a. 48)

Safeguard the well-being and interests of workers. (a. 49)

Protection of the goods of the worker's soul. (a. 57)

The government's intervention in matters of wages, hours, and working conditions should be avoided. (a. 64)

The government does not have the authority to forbid unions. (a. 72)

It can oppose, dissolve and prevent unions when their objective is at variance with good morals, justice, or to it that there are no strikes. (a. 56)

It should seek to remove the causes of strikes. (a. 56)

Government must permit freedom of action to individuals and families. (a. 52)

Government should give public aid to families in extreme difficulty. (a. 21)

- Briefly summarise the popes intention and purpose for the Rerum Novarum.

The Popes intention was his conviction that the present ages has handed over the working poor to inhumane employers and greedy competitors. He wanted to help the working poor by setting these rules. These rules help people to know their roles and obligations when dealing with work.