

# Rerum novarum literature review

[Environment](#), [Earth](#)



The Rerum Novarum is an encyclical issued in the year 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. It is considered to be an open letter to all the Catholic bishops addressing the issues of working class people. Pope Leo wrote the encyclical in response to all the social conflicts that had led to socialism due to the wake of industrialization. According to Pope Leo, the role of the State was to endorse social justice by protecting people's rights while the role of the church was to speak out on matters regarding social issues and teach acceptable social principles while ensuring social harmony is maintained. The Pope restated the church's teaching concerning the significance of private property rights. However, he acknowledged that the free market operation forces have to be accompanied by moral considerations.

### **Dignity of Workers as Human Beings**

Every human being is created in the image of God. This in itself gives the human being dignity. Therefore, each person has God's life in him love and law imprinted deeply in him. Every human being has the desire and ability to give love as well as give and receive life to other human beings. The human being has a higher value as compared to other earthly creatures due to his ability to practice good values such as justice, prudence and fortitude in regard to his fellow human beings and God. Human beings dignity also comes from the fact that they have free will. A person can choose to use his abilities and gifts to serve fellow human beings and God, or choose to use the abilities and gifts to make others serve him. Free will, therefore, can be either a curse or a blessing in the society.

Assets that were meant to help human beings reach their eternal happiness is sometimes altered and used to harm other human beings, therefore,

preventing a man from reaching the eternal happiness. Taking this into consideration, the relationship between employer and employee can become complicated. Generosity should always be the guiding standard but greed usually comes in the way. Selfishness sometimes exists where only self-sacrifice should exist. Capital and labor go hand in hand and are vital in upholding one's dignity. Capital is used to provide the funds needed provide human beings with food, shelter and clothing. Labor, on the other hand, offers the man-power needed to make the earth provided by God fruitful. The encyclical states that every human being should be treated with self-respect as he/she holds an eternal soul, and a hope of living eternally as God's son or daughter. In order to implement the dignity of workers as a human being in the United States; the workers are given time off from work to attend church or worship God. This maintains their dignity as they are kept connected to God. They are given time to rest and get maximum sleeping time. The workers are also not expected to work in unsafe and immoral environments.

## **Right of Property**

God gave the earth to human beings so that it can be used and enjoyed by the whole human race. This, however, should not be a constraint to owning private property. God gave the earth to all mankind but not so they can do with it as they please and without distinction or be assigned to any one person in particular. The limit to private property possession has been sorely left to human beings and their industries and to the laws governing individual races. Despite being shared out among private owners, the earth, however, should not cease to cater to the needs of all human beings.

For those who do not own private property or the earth, they contribute through labor. The labor contribution can, therefore, be said that the continuation of all human beings depends on the work done on ones' land, any form of labor that is either paid for to make the land produce or by means of exchange so as to get what the land has produced. Right of property ownership is in agreement with nature's law. In order to preserve life, the land has to be cultivated. The human being has to cultivate and apply his skills and attentiveness so as to get produce. When a human being, through his mind activity and body strength, cultivates the earth to produce fruits of nature, his action on that portion of the earth makes it his own. All these arguments are convincing that it would be surprising for any person to come up with opposing opinions. It is believed that private property owners have the right to use the earth and its fruits for whatever purpose they wish for, but wrong for a human being to outright possess the earth on which he has cultivated or built. To deny these rights is denying a human being what he has produced through his own labor. The encyclical points that if a human being acquires ownership of property, he is motivated to work even harder so as to take care of the property.

### **Rights of the Poor**

The Catholic Church directly intervenes on behalf of the poor people. This is done by maintaining those associations that have proven and are efficient in poverty relief. The church has succeeded so well such that her enemies have praised her. The early Christians had so much brotherly love that those who were well off would despoil themselves of their wealth so as to relieve their poor brothers. Hence, there were no needy people among them. The church

teaches that those who do not possess wealth are not disgraced by God and that it is no shame for a human being, to earn his living through labor. The fact that Jesus Christ was rich but became poor and being the son of God chose to be considered the son of a carpenter, proves that the poor are not disgraced by God. The nobility of a human being is determined by his moral qualities. Jesus Christ called the poor blessed, therefore, seems that God favors those who suffer from misfortunes. If human beings are to follow the Christian precepts, all the social classes would not only have bonded friendship, but also brotherly love. They will understand that all men are children of the same father and that they all have the same end. The church provided aid for the poor in order to save them the shame that comes from begging.

Many charities and other useful institutions have been aroused everywhere to help the poor. There are those who condemn the church for the reputed charity as they would prefer the charity to be organized by the government. It is, however, sad that no human means can ever make up for the Christian charity's sacrifice and devotedness. However, in order to attain the purpose of attending to the poor, all human being must work together. The United State government implements the rights of the poor by playing the part in reliefs and remedies aimed at benefiting the poor.

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