

120 YEARS OF PAPAL SOCIAL TEACHING



Since the end of the nineteenth century, popes have regularly written encyclicals dealing with the social, political, and economic concerns of their day (e.g., economic disparity, social revolutions, industrialization, war, etc.). These encyclicals, which are the foundation of modern Catholic social teaching, utilize the Church's scriptural, philosophical, and theological wisdom in order to propose a new way of living, based on true charity and justice.

Rerum Novarum (Of New Things)

Pope Leo XIII, 1891

Pope Leo XIII wrote the first social encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, in response to the changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution and political upheaval in Europe. Pope Leo rejected socialism as a solution to the unequal distribution of wealth and instead upheld the right to private property and the right of workers to form associations.



Quadragesimo Anno (In the Fortieth Year)

Pope Pius XI, 1931

Pope Pius XI wrote *Quadragesimo anno* to commemorate the 40th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*. Rejecting both communism and unbridled capitalism,



Pius warned against the excessive concentrations of economic and political power, and articulated the principle of subsidiarity, namely that no higher level of organization should do what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.

Mater et Magistra (Mother and Teacher)

Pope John XXIII, 1961

Pope John XXIII wrote on the anniversaries of *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*. Affirming the role of the Church as a mother and teacher of all nations, he reiterated the teaching of his two predecessors and focused on the new social questions of his time: the plight of depressed agricultural economies in relation to industrial ones, international aid and development, and scientific and technical advancements.

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth)

Pope John XXIII, 1963

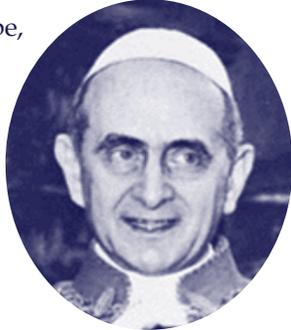
Covering the entire spectrum of relations between individuals, between the individual and public authorities, and between nations, John XXIII affirmed the inviolability of human rights and the Christian obligation to work toward lasting peace by following God's laws. Recognizing the threat of nuclear arms, he called for their elimination.



Populorum Progressio
(On the Development of Peoples)

Pope Paul VI, 1967

The first pope to travel extensively around the globe, Pope Paul VI highlighted the ethical dimensions of global development. Peace is not just the absence of war, it is spiritual and human development.



Octagesima Adveniens
(Eightieth Anniversary)

Pope Paul VI, 1971

In his apostolic letter written on the 80th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, Paul VI called on Christians (particularly the laity) to live up to the duty of participating in social and political reform as a way of discovering the truth and living out the Gospel.

Laborem Exercens (On Human Work)
Pope John Paul II, 1981

Celebrating the 90th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, Pope John Paul II explained that work is fundamental to human existence for it is a sharing in God's creation. Labor has a special dignity and priority over capital.



Sollicitudo Rei Socialis
(On Social Concern)

Pope John Paul II, 1987

Pope John Paul II celebrated the 20th anniversary of *Populorum progressio* by updating and extending Paul VI's teaching. Neither communism nor capitalism by themselves can ensure authentic development. While the Church has no technical solutions to offer, it is an "expert in humanity" that has something to say about what constitutes true progress.

Centesimus Annus (Hundredth Year)

Pope John Paul II, 1991

Writing on the 100th anniversary of *Rerum novarum* and soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Pope John Paul II recognized the merits of market-based economies, but warned of the dangers of consumerism. Humanity has an essential "capacity for transcendence" which the Church safeguards.

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)

Pope John Paul II, 1995

Pope John Paul II wrote *Evangelium vitae* to highlight the most basic of all principles – the value and sacredness of all human life – and to call on Christians to build a new culture of life. Science and technology have produced new threats to human life: contraception, abortion, artificial reproduction, and euthanasia. He also articulated the Church's objections to capital punishment.

Deus Caritas Est (God Is Love)

Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

In a world where the name of God is sometimes associated with vengeance or even hatred, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of God's limitless love and the distinctive nature of Christian charity that we must show to one another.



Caritas in Veritate
(Charity in Truth)

Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

Charity in truth, Pope Benedict wrote, to which Jesus Christ bore witness, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. The book of nature is one and indivisible: environment, human life, sexuality, marriage, family, social relations. Authentic development requires that we protect and nourish all these while relying on God's love and providence.