

About Work in the Social Doctrine of The Catholic Church

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Abstract

Work represents the commandment of God, the fundamental law of human life and it is affirmed in this meaning since the man has existed.

The value of work is presented in Rerum Novarum, written by Leo XIII and edited on the 15-th of May, surnamed The Right and The Duties of The Capital and Work. The industrial revolution described by The Encyclical is also presented in nowadays. The differences between rich and poor are acuter. A just salary according to the effected work. Beginning with Rerum novarum it is opened to The Social Magisterium of Pope and The Social Doctrine of The Church, a road to make declarations about the central premises of liberalism and the economy of market.

To analyze the impact of capitalist economy on the man who works, The Roman-Catholic Sfântul Iosif Institute and Caritas Union Of Romania organized in the period between 17th-18th of April, 2008) a conference with the theme Man And The Market.

The social interventions of Pope and The Magisterum have not the scope to interfere in the political and economical affairs but they consists the expression of the honest carry which The Church has for the good and salvation of the humankind and the correct valorizing of the work of man in the actual society

Keywords: *work, The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, The Encyclical Rerum Novarum, salary, market, right.*

Work represents the commandment of God, the fundamental law of human life and it is affirmed in this meaning since the man has existed. So after the man was created and after the preparing of the garden of Eden, The Genesis tells how the man was put in that garden to work it: "The Lord God took the man and put

him in the garden of Eden to work it and guard it” (Genesis 2.15).

Work, in biblical approach, is characterized by religiosity and piety and represents a duty towards God. Not to work means not to listen to God and to commit a sin in front of God. The human work is put in a relation with all the good of the world: “six days to work and to do all your things” (Exodus, 2.9). The human work is put in the relation with the creative activity of God: “in six days God made the sky and the earth” (Exodus, 6.11).

The fruit of work represents a blessing from God, but also a result which comes by nature from work itself because “the work of the hand of man is spreading over him” (Proverbs 12.4).

Jesus Christ never said a sentence to refer especially to work, but he specifies, by His Footsteps and His Parables, His great appreciation which he gave to the work, so assuming the old testimony concept of valorizing work. Among the Apostles, the one who was directly preoccupied with the issue of work was St. Paul, who gave clear sentences about man’s necessity to work. In this way, in his first trip to Thessaloniki, which lasted only a few weeks, the Apostle St. Paul talked to the inhabitants of Thessaloniki about the duty of work: “each of you to do his duty and to work with your own hands, as I commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4.11). The emanated Christians of the pagan world which was used to depreciate work are receiving in this way a fundament of the religious value of work. Saint Paul even had a job to earn his existence: he was a knitter of tents (Acts 18.3). For Saint Paul the hand work and the spiritual activity are not controversial but there are in a blessed relation. (I Thessalonians 2.10).

From the words of Holy Scripture, it results that work is an inevitable duty, but also a great honor for man. It is a duty towards God, towards the self and the others. At the same time, the work dresses the man in the highest dignity because God himself works so man who works, imitates God, continuing the creation, whereas he takes from nature the goods put by God in it in a virtual state, and so participating to the providential activity of God, forasmuch contributes to the maintaining of his life and of his fellows.¹

The value of the work is presented in *Rerum Novarum*, written by Leon XIII and edited on The 15-th of May, surnamed *The Right And The Duties Of The*

¹ Dumitru Stăniloie, “Învățătura creștină despre muncă”, retrieved at <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/editoriale/invatatura-crestina-despre-munca-70075.html>, accessed December 20, 2009.

*Capital And Work*² and having as a subtitle *About The condition Of Work*³.

Leon XIII elaborated *The Encyclical Rerum Novarum* in 1891, in a time when mankind was confronted with the revolutionary changes of the domain of technology, society and politics. There was the time of appearing of the national and socialist movements and there was configured the atheist humanism.

The Encyclical presented, from the Christian point of view, the true dramas of the workers, being, in fact, in contradiction with the Marxist ideas.

So it was shown previously, in *The Christianity*, man is called from the beginnings to work. So man is distinct from the other creatures. Work puts the basis of the inner characteristics of every man and reflects its real nature. But only in *The Christian* concept, the man who works is considered a person. In the Non-Christian approach (as example in *The Marxism*), the worker is transformed into a tool, arriving to lose his Christian role and the implicitly the dignity.

The Encyclical shows that worker cannot be dispossessed of his fundamental rights:

- the right of property,
- the right of forming professional associations,
- the right to civil and religious freedom.⁴

It is also told in *The Encyclical* that *The Catholic Church* sustains the free syndicates whereas the right of association represents a natural law which is anterior to the creation of the political society.⁵

In the year 1891, like today, it was contoured the wild capitalism through which some persons were enriched in an excessive way and others became more and more poor. *The Encyclical* shows that the state must not only be limited to the favoring of rich people and not to take care of the poor people which are, in clear meaning, the majority of the human society. The state should help especially the poor people which have no defense, whereas the rich ones have enough ways to protect themselves and they do not necessary need the help of the state.

The work performed by the working class, by the exercise of the vocations and the capacity of performing different jobs from agriculture to commerce, is indispensable. Their cooperation is so important that can be said that the activity which is performed by the workers, can help the state to enrich itself. So, it would be right to say, that the interests of the working class should be defended by the

² Papa Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor*, Ignacio Hills Press, 2009.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

*administration, for the ones who contribute the most to the developing economy to be enjoy the benefits they are creating.*⁶

The Papal Encyclical is not a manifest which pleads to divide society in two antagonistic societies but represents the recognition of the existence of two human groups which in a logic way start from the same starting point in life. It is important to understand that these two social classes must be in harmony, that they should coexist in an united society, not a divided one because only in this way the human society can manifest in peace. The Marxist fight does not resolve the contradictions between rich and poor but increases them, trying to create a new society after a utopian-atheist model. The Marxist fight determines the hate of class and can bring only a conflictual condition, arriving to neglecting those fundamental rights of man from which he is requesting the authority.⁷

Pope Leon al XIII does not forget to show that the right of a good salary which has to be according to the work performed and to be sufficient to assure needs of his own family. There are also mentioned other rights like:

- the rest of Sunday and
- the right to religion.⁸

The industrial revolution described by *The Encyclical* is also present nowadays. The differences between rich and poor are acuter. In 2004 appears *The Handbook of Social Doctrine of Church* where it is shown that the world of work, modified in a radical way by the modern technological conquests, is aware of the extraordinary levels of quality but it also records original forms like:

- instability,
- exploitation and even
- slavery.

In different areas of the society continues to increase the level of prosperity but also in a threatening way, the number of poor people increases. The free market is an economical concept, having positive accents but although having its limits, by the meaning that it favors only the rich people. The result is an incorrect value and the role of the Church is to call the people to solidarity to increase to authentic civilization orientated towards searching solitary and integral human development.⁹

To analyze the impact of capitalist economy upon the man who works, *The Roman-Catholic Sfântul Iosif Institute* and *Caritas Union Of Romania* organized

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹ *Compendiu de doctrină socială a Bisericii*, Sapienția, Iași, 2007, p.5.

(in the period of 17th-18th of April, 2008) a conference with the theme *Man And The Market*. In the editorial of the magazine that is dedicated to the manifestation, Wilhelm Dancă, resumes the ideas of the symposium, showing that it is required the necessity of a profound reform to the level of institutions and the economical practices of valorizing in a moral way the work of the man...¹⁰

The paper called *The Man and Economy of Market* (sustained at the conference mentioned previously) specifies that, it exists a deep relation between the human phenomenon and the economical systems, because the propose of these systems, even they do not succeed only partially, to be at the service and the extent of human”.¹¹

In the economy of market, man must be paid in a just way so that he can get a decent life. *The Just Salary* has a primordial place in the *Social Magisterium of Catholic Church* and, implicitly, in the social doctrine of The Catholic Church, but this concept is also treated, in a large way, in social sciences, especially in economy. In the paper called *The Just Salary And The Conditions Of unity Of The Family In The Social Doctrine Of The Church* (*also sustained during this event which is previously mentioned*). Monsignor Ioan Robu treats the implications which are inherent to the concept of a just salary, as it results of:

- *The social Doctrine of Church* and

- the social Encyclicals of the Pops, beginning with *Rerum novarum* (1891) of *Leon al XIII* The articles concludes that in this world there are several economical disequilibrium which mark the market in a global way and in this unstable social context is needful to describe the directive of the moral theology and of the *Social Doctrine Of The Catholic Church* about discovering operative solutions to defend the dignity of the human person and to be applied in the worldwide economy.¹²

The human work according to the approach of *The Doctrine Of The Catholic Church* follows the steps of the biblical tradition, showing that the fulfill of human vocation can only take place through work but also shapes the necessity of elaborating a social ethics hereby the man can receive a just salary according to the work performed.¹³

Beginning by *Rerum novarum* a road is opened to *The Social Magisterium of*

¹⁰ *Omul și Piața*, Sapienția, Iași, 2008.

¹¹ Wilhelm, Dancă, „Omul și economia de piață, astăzi” în *ibidem*

¹² Ioan Robu, „Salariul just și condițiile de unitate ale familiei în doctrina socială a Bisericii” în *ibidem*.

¹³ *Compendiu de doctrină socială a Bisericii*. Sapienția, a Institutul Teologic Romano-Catolic, Iași, 2007

Pope and The Social Doctrine of the Church, to make declarations about the central premises of liberalism and the economy of market. These interventions of Pope and the Magisterium have not the purpose to interfere in the political and economical affairs but they represent the expression of the honest care which The Church has for the good and salvation of the humankind and the correct value of human labor in modern society. The objective critics against the mercantile civilization and economy of market does not anyway have a polemical purpose but aims creating a political and social project to correspond to the quality requirements of human life and so the average person can ensure a decent living.

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