

From: Bobby Mermer
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 12:52:36 AM
To: jeffrey.senese@saintleo.edu <jeffrey.senese@saintleo.edu>
Subject: St. Leo Should Observe Catholic Social Teaching

Dr. Senese,

My admiration for the Roman Catholic Church runs deep, despite my not being a Catholic. Ecclesiastic and lay leaders of the church can be found in every corner of the globe championing the cause of the downtrodden, promoting the universal dignity of the human person, and reminding the powerful of the inherent value of every individual. From the Pope rightly diagnosing today's widespread economic inequality as a "social disease" in Rome, to the congregant toiling away to provide immediate relief to the homeless at their local Society of St. Vincent de Paul chapter, the Church stands as an indispensable beacon of justice.

Thus, I was absolutely bewildered to learned that your institution so shamelessly flouted more than 100 years of Catholic social teaching by unilaterally severing your relationship with the faculty union, United Faculty of Florida-St. Leo University (UFF-SLU), and voiding their long standing collective bargaining agreement. I urge you to consider the words of Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum* encyclical, in which he declared labor unions as essential vehicles for attaining justice for workers. He writes: "We may lay it down as a general and lasting law that working men's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property."

This "general and lasting law" was reaffirmed by Pope Benedict XVI, who also bemoaned the contemporary decline of organized labor and the proliferation of obstacles to union organization and maintenance, writing:

"Through the combination of social and economic change, *trade union organizations* experience greater difficulty in carrying out their task of representing the interests of workers, partly because Governments, for reasons of economic utility, often limit the freedom or the negotiating capacity of labour unions. Hence traditional networks of solidarity have more and more obstacles to overcome. The repeated calls issued within the Church's social doctrine, beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, for the promotion of workers' associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honoured today even more than in the past, as a prompt and far-sighted response to the urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level."

It is clear through Leo XIII's original proclamation and Benedict XVI's reaffirmation that the Catholic social teaching demands you immediately reverse course and recognize UFF-SLU as the collective bargaining agent for full time faculty at St. Leo University and restore all rights and privileges previously agreed to in their collective bargaining agreement.

With Great Concern,

Bobby Mermer
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