

Celebrating the birth of modern Catholic Social Teaching – 130th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s landmark encyclical ‘On the Condition of the Working Classes’

This year is the 130th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s landmark 1891 encyclical “Rerum Novarum,” the English title of which was “On the Condition of the Working Classes.”

Not only did the encyclical mark the birth of modern Catholic Social Teaching but it has continuing relevance today, according to Fr Bruce Duncan, CSM, from Yarra Theological Union, a college of the University of Divinity.

“Faced with our gig economy, low or stagnant wages, housing stress, astonishing wealth in the hands of a few and neoliberal economics driving growing inequality, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, known in Latin as Rerum Novarum, is acutely relevant today,” Fr Bruce explained. “It has guided Catholic social teaching ever since.”

“Pope Leo began robustly:

“That the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing the nations of the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the sphere of practical economics is not surprising. The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; in the increased self-reliance and closer mutual combination of the working class... The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension.” (par. 1).”

Key teachings of the encyclical include:

- the dignity of every person and of work in God’s eyes;
- defending the right to private property when serving the common good;
- opposing the concentration of great wealth in the hands of a few;
- maintaining just wages for working people;
- spreading ownership more equitably and as much as possible;
- the duty of the State to regulate living and working conditions fairly;
- the need for systems of arbitration and conciliation to mediate disputes;
- the right of working people to form unions to bargain equitably with employers; and
- the duties of the rich to deal justly and redistribute surplus wealth.

To mark the anniversary, Yarra Theological Union, Social Policy Connections and the Australian Cardijn Institute will host a webinar on Saturday from 2.30-4.00pm on 15 May 2021. Fr Bruce will be the keynote speaker and will address the theme ‘Why Pope Leo’s social manifesto remains critical today,’ noting also the influence of England’s Cardinal Manning on the document and its impact in Australia.

Registration for the event is via email at aci@australiancardijninstitute.org

Or directly via the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEqcu-vpjssEt3mziJ28VQ4aIvQIGDZSTXd>

More info: <https://australiancardijninstitute.org/celebrating-the-birth-of-catholic-social-teaching/>

SATURDAY 15 MAY 2021, 2.30-4.00PM AEST

130 YEARS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

*A webinar commemorating Pope Leo XIII's
landmark encyclical Rerum Novarum*



Yarra
Theological
Union

SPEAKER: BRUCE DUNCAN CSSR



UNIVERSITY
OF DIVINITY



Register: aci@australiancardijninstitute.org/

social policy **connections**
Striving for a better world

