

The Foundation of the Modern Church

Institute of Lay Formation
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Church at Low Point

- **Pope Pius IX virtual prisoner in the Vatican beginning in 1870.**
- **Lost papal states.**
- **Diplomatic ties with world largely cut.**
- **Strong opposition to rigidity from within the Church.**
- **Intellectuals and skilled working class leaving the Church in large numbers.**

Meanwhile, in Ireland

- Long suppression of Irish people by England helped create strong identity of Irish with Catholic Church.
- Potato famine, beginning in 1845, disrupted Irish society and caused nearly 12% of population to emigrate to America (Charles Morris).
- Irish Church suppressed and in disarray until the rise of Bishop (later Cardinal) Paul Cullen in 1849.
- Cullen, a favorite of Pius IX, introduced a rigorous, militant, centralized, bureaucratic, Church (Charles Morris).
- He successfully gained control of the Irish education system under the auspices of the Church.
- Developed seminaries, including seminary for priests destined for America, and took control of the clergy.

Irish Catholic Church in America

- Prior to 1840, Catholics in America were much like all other immigrants. French Catholics most numerous.
- As Irish emigration rapidly grew, “Catholic” became increasingly associated with “Irish.”
- Under the direction of Cardinal Cullen and Irish-American bishops, such as John Hughes and John Ireland, American Church became dominated by Irish.
- Church faced growing opposition in America, largely driven by anti-Irish sentiment.

Nativism in America

- Catholic Church was opposed to democracy, it favored hierarchical governance based on divine right of kings.
- Irish emigrants overwhelmed cities, especially New York and Chicago. New industry, however, demanded cheap labor.
- Secret, nativist, societies developed to oppose Catholics and Irish.
- Workers secret societies, such as the Knights of Labor, dominated by Irish, also arose to counter nativists and industry exploitation.

Discussion

- What parallels do you see in the world of the early 19th century and today in regards to the economic situation, immigration, and the Church?

The Modern Era of Catholic Social Teaching Began with Pope Leo XIII

- *Rerum Novarum (On New Things)*—1891
- Often known as “*On the Condition of Labor.*”
- *Cultural Context:*
 - *Industrial Revolution*
 - “*Gay Nineties*” in America
 - *Massive Immigration to America*
 - *Rise of Socialism*
 - *Formation of Secular “Self-Help” Societies and Unions*

On New Things? (*Rerum Novarum*)

- “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 cognate 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; the increased self reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and rulers of nations are all busied with it - actually there is no question which has taken deeper hold on the public mind.”

Rerum Novarum—Key Points

- Attacked socialism and liberal capitalism
- Called for greater ownership by all people of private property (land)
- Called for and defended a just wage
- Defended the right of workers to organize
- Called for limited intervention by the state to correct injustices and rescue destitute classes

Socialism and Liberal Capitalism

- Opposite, secular extremes.
- Both undermine the dignity of the human person.
- “It is shameful and inhuman, however, to use men as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy” (31).
- “To cure this evil, the Socialists, exciting the envy of the poor toward the rich, contend that it is necessary to do away with private possession of goods and in its place to make the goods of individuals common to all, and that the men who preside over a municipality or who direct the entire State should act as administrators of these goods. . . But their program is so unsuited for terminating the conflict that it actually injures the workers themselves. Moreover, it is highly unjust, because it violates the rights of lawful owners, perverts the function of the State, and throws governments into utter confusion” (7-8).

Leo XIII suggests Catholic “Third Way.”

- Private property is to be encouraged, but the use of that property should be oriented to the common good:
- “however the earth may be apportioned among private owners, it does not cease to serve the common interest of all, inasmuch as no living being is sustained except by what the fields bring forth. Those who lack resources supply labor, so that it can be truly affirmed that the entire scheme of securing a livelihood consists in the labor which a person expends either on his own land or in some working occupation, the compensation for which is drawn ultimately from no other source than from the varied products of the earth and is exchanged for them” (14).
- Enterprise and industry are to be encouraged, but the poor must be protected:
- “In protecting the rights of private individuals, however, special consideration must be given to the weak and the poor. For the nation, as it were, of the rich, is guarded by its own defenses and is in less need of governmental protection, whereas the suffering multitude, without the means to protect itself, relies especially on the protection of the State. Wherefore, since wage workers are numbered among the great mass of the needy, the State must include them under its special care and foresight” (54).

Ownership of Private Property

- Property is the best safeguard against poverty.
- Private property gives people dignity and security.
- Ownership of private property protects people against the excesses of the state.
- Private property allows people to participate in the stewardship of God's creation.
- “When men know they are working on what belongs to them, they work with far greater eagerness and diligence. Nay, in a word, they learn to love the land cultivated by their own hands, whence they look not only for food but for some measure of abundance for themselves and their dependents” (66).

Discussion

- *“All who believe were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need”* (Acts of the Apostles 2:44).
- Pope Leo XIII emphasizes the importance of private property, especially land, to individual and collective freedom and prosperity. How do you reconcile his teaching with the ideal Christian community portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles?