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# Love, Charity, & Pope Leo XIII: A Leadership Paradigm for Catholic Education

Henry J. Davis

Fordham University, [hdavis8@fordham.edu](mailto:hdavis8@fordham.edu)

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## Love, Charity, and Pope Leo XIII: A Leadership Paradigm for Catholic Education

Henry J. Davis, Fordham University

*The treatment of workers is an ongoing social issue. No organization is immune to questionable employee practices, including Catholic educational institutions. To fully embody its intended justice-based role, Catholic leadership must first be aware of the social teachings put forth by the Roman Catholic Church. In this study, the researcher posits Pope Leo XIII's social writings as a guiding presence for beginning this formation, starting with the concepts of love and charity within labor. Analysis of Leo's work reveals love and charity as interchangeable virtues that enhance one's God-given dignity by acknowledging other people's inherent worth. In turn, educational leaders are called to make decisions centered on love and charitable acts that actively pursue their employees' best interests without irreversibly depleting the institutional resources needed for overall survival.*

### Keywords

Catholic education, leadership, labor, equity, Leo XIII, 19th century, social writings, Catholic social teachings, love, charity, solidarity, ethical decision making, historical analysis

Showing concern for laborers is a tenet of Catholic social teachings. As explained by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), every human being has an inherent dignity that must be protected from unfair economic practices hindering his or her right to reasonable wages and union representation (USCCB, 2005). Present-day society does not always recognize the manifestation of human dignity in the act of labor. In a recent letter on wage inequality directed toward the United States Senate, Arch. Thomas G. Wenski and Rev. Larry Snyder (2014) expressed their concern about the lack of available well-paying jobs, stating, "So many of our families find it increasingly difficult to afford basic needs, forcing some to take multiple jobs or, in desperation, even seek out predatory loans" (para. 2). The exploitation of labor and the anxiety workers face in being unable to adequately provide for themselves and/

or their families is not exclusive to any particular field. For Catholic higher education, the untimely death of Duquesne University adjunct professor Margaret Mary Vojtko signaled that labor inequalities are indeed systemic. Vojtko, who died of cardiac arrest on September 1, 2013, taught French for 25 years at Duquesne without a contract or health benefits, making under \$25,000 yearly (Kovalik, 2013). In her last years, Vojtko was undergoing cancer treatment and became homeless when she could no longer afford to heat her home during the winter months (Anderson, 2013). Although this occurrence may not be the norm for faculty or staff members in their respective institutions, the Vojtko case proves just how important Catholic social values such as love and charity are in the treatment of Catholic school employees.

“Money must serve, not rule! ... I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings” (Francis, 2013, para. 58). These words from Pope Francis’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* appropriately frame how—above all else—resources are meant to support employees. In the life of Catholic educational institutions, such pontifical statements possess deep significance as the institutional identities of Catholic schools rely on the Church for guidance and spiritual sustenance (John Paul II, 1990). To fully understand Catholic social teachings, educational administrators would benefit from learning about Pope Leo XII’s writings on labor, which established the Church’s official dialogue on social awareness in the modern world.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to introduce Pope Leo XIII’s vision of love and charity for labor through an analysis of his writings to deepen Catholic higher educational leadership’s understanding and decision-making framework for improving relations with staff members. Recognized as being one of the first modern-day pontiffs to address social issues, Leo delivered messages that hold the potential to offer contemporary leadership a foundation grounded in Catholic faith and social consciousness aimed at resolving labor-related matters in an equitable manner. Alongside the ability to assist in decision-making, Leo’s vision can foster an improved understanding of Catholic education’s commitment to social justice as demonstrated in countless institutional mission statements.

### Servant Leadership Paradigm

The theoretical paradigm undergirding this analysis is servant leadership. As defined by Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership is one's personal inclination to serve others first and foremost, followed by a deliberate decision to become a leader. In being a servant first, the leader understands that his or her primary role is to be an available resource for team members attempting to complete tasks. Throughout the process, the servant-leaders must reflect on whether their support allows individuals to increase their knowledge base, become more self-sufficient, and nurture their own desires to serve those around them in a similar manner (Spears, 2001). Under thoughtful scrutiny, servant leadership suggests that faith is an honorable position to maintain when evaluating a person's progress because results require extended periods of time to manifest. Having faith acquires significant meaning because, as more subscribe to its method, they will have the power to create positive change within an organization and within society as a whole (Greenleaf, 1977).

A commitment to promoting equality among all individuals is another essential component of servant leadership. To begin facilitating this process, open communication is necessary to constructing awareness of another group's plight in those unfamiliar with the given experience. Following internalization of the discussed experiences, emotions such as compassion and understanding begin to replace any preconceived notions that may form before the dialogue exchange. Eventually, candidness leads to "a disciplined and unflinching look at the wrongs we do to one another," leading to forgiveness and reconciliation (Ferch, 2012, p. 30).

In a leadership approach, servant-leaders are expected to gain deeper insights concerning the population for whom they advocate to enhance their overall effectiveness in driving change. From a Christian standpoint, the model of Jesus Christ and his disciples embodied these tenets because their ministry was to work alongside the poor and marginalized, exposing them firsthand to the heavy burdens faced in everyday life. Jesus's message regarding God's love of the underprivileged and their ultimate reward of eternal life helped to ease suffering while bringing economic injustices to light. An example associated with Jesus practicing this brand of servant leadership was during the Sermon on the Mount, in which he emphasized the care of the needy as central to God's plan for us (Agosto, 2005).

### Pope Leo XIII'S Social Writings on Labor

Before becoming head of the Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Joachim Pecci (aka Leo XIII) penned the pastoral letters known as *Church and Civilization* for the Lenten seasons of 1877 and 1878. In the letters, Pecci made the case that the Church was a catalyst for advancing society because it provided humanity with the necessary spiritual guidance to move into a new age of development. Pecci placed clergy leaders on equal footing with economic industries and social organizations that assisted in man's progress because meaningful endeavors could not exist without a moral foundation (Wallace, 1966).

By including the Church as a vibrant participant interested in the evolution of mankind, Pecci turned to how the Catholic faith championed the workingman throughout its history. According to Pecci (1878), pagan belief systems based on Greek and Roman philosophies despised the act of manual labor, deeming workers as the lowest population next to slaves. Though such non-Christian societies shunned laborers, Catholicism was built on the teachings of Jesus Christ, a carpenter whose own labor illustrated that people could achieve humbleness and moral strength through work. The idea of labor as virtuous was further extolled by the monastics, whose agricultural endeavors fed the hungry and whose contributions to the local infrastructure improved travel for the communities they called home (Pecci, 1878). Whereas he acknowledged that labor was a blessing to mankind, Pecci (1878) clarified that labor without moral perspective could lead to greed and unethical practice.

The theme of labor as a cherished and dignified act was continued in Leo's (1891) *Rerum Novarum*, which focused on the rights of laborers and the obligations employers had in securing such rights as recognized by the Church. From the start of *Rerum*, Leo denounced the immeasurable greed and lack of accountability that operated within the free market system (Hitchcock, 2012). Connected to the unscrupulous practice of hoarding monetary and material resources, *Rerum* (Leo XIII, 1891) reaffirmed the notion of the laborer as an individual who, by God's graces, was entitled to share in the profits generated from his or her work. The reason, as explained by *Rerum*, was that for man to be fully human and to achieve his highest aspirations, he must have assets at his disposal to sustain himself as well as those under his care. As God's authority supersedes man's laws, employers must abide by this supernatural power and safeguard their workers' ability to earn a proper living because this ideal has been destined for all people (Leo XIII, 1891).

Although Leo XIII (1891) advocated for personal property in *Rerum*, he did not excuse owners from taking liberties with those under their employ. Instead, Leo envisioned employers as an intricate part of society who could contribute not just to the economic but also to the spiritual welfare of those less fortunate. Employers were called to recognize the humanity of their workers by affording them time off for religious and family obligations, allowing for a manageable work week, providing suitable wages, and supporting unions that protected worker rights and offered members educational opportunities (Henriot, Deberri, & Schultheis, 1989; Leo XIII, 1891).

Employer cooperation, according to Leo (1891), was part of a more integral equation in achieving justice for labor forces. The civil government and the Church itself must involve themselves in preserving an equitable environment for employers and workers. For Leo, the environment would be attained by the government not interfering with family life, because parents had the God-given right to raise children as they deemed fit. Though government interference was discouraged, civil authorities were summoned to guard the rights of family life from intrusion. The one exception to this rule was if an act threatened family life or the community at large and required prompt action. For its part, the government was an observer who acted as a last resort to uphold the rights of all involved parties (Leo XIII, 1891).

In framing the labor question, Leo's (1901b) encyclical *Graves De Communi Re* further clarified the roles of Catholic social thought and Christian democracy within the political arena. After *Rerum* (Leo XIII, 1891) was initially released to the public, many religious and lay groups began defining themselves as Christian Democrats who placed economic rights above all other aspects of the faith (McMillan, 2006). Witnessing that misunderstandings were common concerning political activism and that worker's rights, though vital, were elevated at the expense of other societal responsibilities, Leo released *Graves* on January 18, 1901, to expand on the finer points of supporting the labor movement while maintaining one's own religious identity.

For Leo XIII (1901b), *Graves* had a twofold purpose: to caution Christians against interweaving popular government with Christian Democracy and to encourage similar participation in societal issues comparable to efforts implemented on behalf of the working class (Molony, 2006). To explain these motives, *Graves* defined Christian Democracy as religiously grounded and in accordance with Gospel teachings meant to improve the overall existence of every human being. Connecting Christian Democracy with church teachings, *Graves* articulated that justice was conceptually holy, as the right to

acquire property or goods was a direct result of God's plan for us. The same reason of justice as holy was used to justify why Christian Democracy should remain out of the political realm. According to *Graves*, God's natural law, as well as religious truths found in the Gospels, transcended human governance. Because natural law was divine and supernatural, no one should attempt to place it under civil jurisdiction because Christian Democracy must remain free from governmental rule. This call to sovereignty was intended to enable the global community to lawfully follow its ideals of loving God and caring for His children, despite their respective governments' constitutions (Leo XIII, 1901b).

Whereas Christian Democracy's aim was to perfect the souls of humanity so they could share in eternal life, in *Graves*, Leo (1901b) equally preached on the necessity of the influential and wealthy to take familial guardianship of the working-class. The principle steering this duty was Christian charity. As described in *Graves*, Christian charity arose from the fact that all mankind was connected to each other in Christ. For this reason, caring for mistreated laborers or the destitute via charity was the equivalent of illustrating one's love of God; however, to be complete, Christian charity had to be enacted from religious tenets set forth by Jesus through His church. Without religious beliefs operating as its foundation, this form of charity would be incomplete (Leo XIII, 1901b).

Alongside the need for religious faith in confronting oppressive labor situations, *Graves* (Leo XIII, 1901b) encouraged the launch of charitable institutions to attend to the various needs of laborers as they worked for economic self-sufficiency. The establishment of such institutions funded by the rich would uphold the Church's tradition of aiming to alleviate the economic struggles of the working-class. As described by Leo (1901b), the establishments would provide education and temporary financial support to workers until they reached a position to better care for themselves and their dependents. Fitting into the Catholic scheme of being one body in Jesus Christ, whenever an individual reached stability, the person was called upon to take care of his brothers in a cyclical fashion. Whether through fiscal support or religious evangelization, *Graves* extolled the virtue that humanity was unified and that any actions perpetrated on its behalf would be repaid in both the temporal and spiritual realms.

### Analyzing Leo XIII's Message of Love and Charity

Leo's writings showed that loving labor calls for being proactive in its defense against abusive measures. This aim is illustrated in Leo's belief that laborers should be shielded from those employees who exploit laborers for love of profits. In Leo's words, love is a resin that has the power to keep communities together by reminding all classes of people that laborers need comfort akin to ecclesial efforts supporting the poor (Pecci, 1878). Promoting love as a sacrificial act that inspires others to reciprocate, Pecci (1878) exemplified the Church's approach by writing, "She was not content with establishing asylums, hospitals, retreats, but she did incomparably more; she caused the divine virtue of sacrifice to penetrate into the souls of her children" (p. 52).

As described by Leo, the physical manifestation of love for labor is the act of charity. In theological terms, charity is a significant factor because giving alms serves the higher purpose of empowering individuals and/or groups according to God's design (McDermott, 2013). Pecci (1878) advanced this description of charity to include the survival of civilization itself, believing that society could not function without a transcendent and unifying love bringing all of its diverse members together. To enact what Pecci referred to as "Christian charity," one must follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who called upon the wealthy and working-class "to help the weak, and obtain the blessings reserved for those who would rather give of their goods than receive the goods of others" (Pecci, 1878, p. 51). Pecci saw love, charity, and sacrifice as an interrelated set of actions divine in their operation and not above God Himself in practice and execution, and asserted that such virtues proved humanity's worth.

[God] exercises a loving care over all His creatures indiscriminately, even those deprived of [average] reason, from the greatest to the least; that He guides and preserves them by wise laws, and that He embraces all rational creatures with such tenderness as to love His dearly beloved Son for the redemption of all. And he loves not only those who acknowledge and adore Him, and are obedient and respectful to Him, but even those who betray Him, who rise up against Him and trample His laws under their feet. And for this love that God nourishes, within Him for His creatures, He, most assuredly, expects nothing for Himself for He is the absolute Master and the Creator of all things. Not satisfied yet with being so lavish of His love, He adds to it the immense sacrifices by which He has been pleased to redeem us at the price of



His sufferings and of His blood, to cleanse us from the state of original sin, and make us a people acceptable in His sight and pursuers of good works. Such, dearly beloved, is the foundation of the mutual relations that men should have towards each other, according to the morals preached by the Spouse of Jesus Christ. (Pecci, 1878, pp. 83–85)

If God was willing to sacrifice His beloved son to redeem mankind of the original sin compromising our natural birthright, then every human being, according to Leo's mindset, was worthy of love and the charity that supported this love. From an organizational standpoint, Pecci reassured his audience that God was ever-present in the institutional Church where these tenets were practiced, authenticating the message of love and charity by stating, "The vivifying breath of God pervades all parts of the Church, to awaken the power of sacrifice and . . . a prodigious energy ready to alleviate all manner of afflictions" (Pecci, 1878, p. 54).

*Rerum* reflected the Church as an institution of and for the poor, establishing a rapport with its majority of followers (Leo XIII, 1891). Whereas agents outside of the Church might see charity as negative and shameful, Leo brought dignity to the act of receiving by elevating charity as a genuine kindness laborers should view with brotherly love. Leo wrote:

In order to spare them the shame of begging, the Church has provided aid for the needy. The common Mother of rich and poor has aroused everywhere the heroism of charity, and has established congregations of religious and many other useful institutions for help and mercy, so that hardly any kind of suffering could exist which was not afforded relief. (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 30)

Charity was in no way to be considered dishonorable because the characteristics constituting honest labor were deserving of imitation and financial support if earned wages were inadequate. In backing this notion, *Rerum* depicted "the providence of God" as boundless to the rules of time and space (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 59). Being ethereal in nature, love and charity adopted this same form, which caused them to be prevalent in every century. For this point, Leo wrote on the situation of laborers in the early Church, explaining:

We are told that it was cast as a reproach on the Christians in the early ages of the Church that the greater number among them had to live

by begging or by labor. Yet, destitute though they were of wealth and influence, they ended by winning over to their side the favor of the rich and the good-will of the powerful. They showed themselves industrious, hard-working, assiduous, and peaceful, ruled by justice, and, above all, bound together in brotherly love. (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 59)

If labor was eventually accepted during a period of extreme persecution, Leo (1891) estimated that a similar acceptance, compassion, and respect could manifest in modern times for the common worker. Such acceptance and appreciation could take on a cyclical motion to shape future occurrences, reaching an altered level of awareness by which charity was not pitiable but a revered duty. To initiate the change whereby human dignity could be recognized and truly loved, Leo went to the source upon which the Church was built, Jesus Christ, to promote the universal ideals of love and charity.

The instruments which she [the Church] employs are given to her by Jesus Christ Himself for the very purpose of reaching the hearts of men, and drive their efficiency from God. They alone can reach the innermost heart and conscience, and bring men to act from a motive of duty, to control their passions and appetites, to love God and their fellow men with a love that is outstanding and of the highest degree and to break down courageously every barrier which blocks the way to virtue. (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 26)

Leo estimated that every human being had the potential to love another person through religious convictions. However, the true power of charity came from meaningful contemplation and the eventual decision to be Christ-like, which according to Leo, meant not allowing unfavorable notions of the laboring class to dictate whether to offer support. In effect, offering charity should take place freely and without strings, just as God gives freely of His love to humankind (Leo XIII, 1891).

Tying in his message of labor as a vital component deserving of generosity, Leo reaffirmed charity as a necessary activity to celebrate humanity's God-given worth. In Acts 20:35, where the virtue of looking out after one another was extolled, Leo (1891/1943) quoted Jesus by writing, "*Beatius est magis dare, quam accipere,*" which translates to English as, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (pp. 30–31). In line with this sentiment, Leo (1891/1943) used Matthew 25:40, in which Jesus said, "*Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis mi-*

*nimis, mihi fecistis*,” or “As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me” (pp. 30–31). These words rectified Leo’s argument on loving labor, comparing workers and everyone alike to the Christian God, whose “laws and judgments” are beyond reproach (Leo XIII, 1891, para. 22).

The idea of charity as a common standard for imitation and reciprocation is clearly implied in *Graves*, where Leo (1901b) claimed:

The Christian law of charity . . . embraces all men, irrespective of ranks, as members of one and the same family, children of the same most beneficent Father, redeemed by the same Saviour, and called to the same eternal heritage. . . . Wherefore, on account of the union established by nature between the common people and the other classes of society, and which Christian brotherhood makes still closer, whatever diligence we devote to assisting the people will certainly profit also the other classes, the more so since, as will be thereafter shown, their co-operation is proper and necessary for the success of this undertaking [of a Christian-based democracy]. (para. 8)

Leo (1901b) believed that charity was not just a revered practice with a time-honored history, but one that mutually benefitted those handing over resources for the welfare of others. Emphasizing the connected quality of charity within the Church and civilization, Leo reiterated the need for full participation, because to fail in this respect inevitably hurt the economic and social foundations of society. Maintaining this stance of charity profiting all was Leo’s insistence on creating institutions to provide financial support as well as training for workers so they could improve their situations. The rationale behind such organizations was not to dole out free services but to instill a sense of understanding and self-worth to elevate laborers out of their current situation. Leo (1901b) continued:

To aim at that [charity-based institutions] is not only to dignify the duty of the rich toward the poor, but to elevate the poor themselves, for, while it urges them to work in order to improve their condition, it preserves them meantime from danger, it refrains immoderation in their desires, and acts as a spur in the practice of virtue. Since, therefore, this is of such great avail and so much in keeping with the spirit of the times, it is a worthy object for the charity of righteous men to undertake with prudence and zeal. (para. 17)

Charity dignified labor in that it did not allow workers to debase themselves or rescind their natural rights under God's law for their daily survival (Leo XIII, 1901b). The only way to prevent such miscarriages of justice against the working faction was for those in leadership positions to see charity and love as binding forces coming from a greater spiritual source. When leaders deemed love as one of "the highest things we know in the universe" (Nichols, 1991, p. 76) and originating from a divine source, individuals had to accept their duty to God (Leo XIII, 1901b). Leo touted this shared obligation with the words:

For, no one lives only for his personal advantage in a community; he lives for the common good as well, so that, when others cannot contribute their share for the general good, those who can do so are obliged to make up the deficiency. The very extent of the benefits they have received increases the burden of their responsibility, and a stricter account will have to be rendered to God who bestowed those blessings upon them. What should also urge all to the fulfillment of their duty in this regard is the widespread disaster which will eventually fall upon all classes of society if his assistance does not arrive in time; and therefore is it that he who neglects the cause of the distressed masses is disregarding his own interest as well as that of the community. (Leo XIII, 1901b, para. 19)

The intent of the charitable institutions Leo described in *Graves* was not to replace existing secular organizations performing the same work. Instead, Leo (1901b) viewed charity and institutions working on behalf of society—such as the Church and government—as collaborators in God's mission of loving one another. Similarly, charity was not a competitive force because loving humanity required the sacrifice of abundance for the sake of general prosperity. Not to make this sacrifice was an offense comparable to stealing (Merton, 1967). Concerning this form of charity, Leo (1901a) cited John 13:34–35, where Christ said, "*Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem. In hoc cognoscent omnes quia discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem,*" or "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you love also one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for the other" (pp. 305–306; para. 13). In other words, we live to love, and when we extend this fraternal love to someone else, we validate their human dignity as well as our own innate humanity (Merton, 1979).

From Leo's vision of love and charity, one begins to see that the general welfare of society must be taken into account when making decisions. Every individual is entitled to his or her fair share, and no outside agent should be allowed to violate this inherent right. However, Leo clearly stated that employers have distinct entitlements allowing them to prosper from their own holdings. The key to balancing equity between both sides comes from employers' willingness to look after their subordinates because management holds the greater amount of power.

In the practice of leadership, Leo weighed heavily upon love and Christian charity as virtues necessary for meaningful change. To love one another as one would love Christ is central to honoring humanity made in God's image. For those who were vulnerable, a leader must recognize the God-given humanity in the oppressed and support them through charitable actions. Although charity may seem irrelevant to standard leadership theories outside the Church structure, Leo saw it as strengthening society because the whole benefitted when its weakest members were empowered. Leadership was to safeguard institutions promoting charity because they fell in line with God's own purpose of teaching humankind love when He sacrificed His son to redeem humanity of its sins. Displaying love and charity is important to countering those injustices injuring the right to work for individual survival and potential advancement in life.

### **Following Leo's Example**

Influenced by his words on love and charity, Leo's successors continued these teachings in their encyclical letters commemorating *Rerum Novarum*. In Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), the concept of brotherly love attributed to *Rerum* is expressed in the metaphoric "one body in Christ," which calls for every person to care for one another, stating:

For then the rich and others in positions of power will change their former indifference toward their poorer brothers into a solicitous and active love, listen with kindness to their just demands, and freely forgive their possible mistakes and faults. And the workers, sincerely putting aside every feeling of hatred or envy which the promoters of social conflict so cunningly exploit, will not only accept without rancor the place in human society assigned them by Divine Providence, but rather will hold it in esteem, knowing well that everyone according to his function and duty is toiling usefully and honorably for the common good and

is following closely in the footsteps of Him Who, being in the form of God, willed to be a carpenter among men and be known as the son of a carpenter. (para. 137)

Pius's *love as solidarity* viewpoint reinforced Leo's notion that, through exclusion, the separation of societal classes denies the dignity we all possess as human beings. To combat the survival of the fittest theory that dismisses love, charitable action is highlighted once again with the line that charity "binds us not only to render to everyone what is his but to succor brothers in need as Christ the Lord Himself" (Pius XI, 1931, para. 125).

The timeliness of Leo's social agenda was blatantly spelled out by Pope Paul VI (1967), who wrote that *Rerum* "is still valid today," as economic gaps continued widening from mass inequalities (para. 59). Loving one's global neighbor is therefore mandatory for our survival as a species. Paul VI talks about a new humanism that seeks to raise the poor out of subhuman conditions to those befitting their humanity. When this task is accomplished, humans can "enjoy the higher values of love," which directly correlate to charitable works on behalf of the needy (Paul VI, 1967, para. 20).

Paul VI continued his veneration of Leo's work on love and charity in *Octogesima Adveniens*, written on the 80th anniversary of *Rerum*. Placing the charitable message of *Rerum* in a modern context, Paul (1971) discussed a number of areas for social renewal, including technological advances leading to increased positivism, the plight of emigrant workers, discrimination against women, and racial bigotry. In the midst of change, charity is lauded as mandatory to elevating the human condition. Wealthy stakeholders should share their abundance for solidarity's sake. As outlined by Paul (1971), global powers ought to examine their economic structures, including their international business practices to see whether fairness is being achieved. With the unequal distribution of Western power, affluent countries must take into account "the actions of human solidarity," confirming that those lacking power are receiving extra support (para. 43).

For Pope John Paul II's (1981) encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, the love of work is integral for humanity's development and sustenance. Because honest work is considered a sacred act, leadership must become stewards in its defense. In making decisions affecting workers, "This entirely positive and creative, educational and meritorious character of man's work must be the basis for the judgments and decisions being made today in its regard in spheres that include human rights" (John Paul II, 1981, para. 46). Through the virtues

of “faith, hope, and charity” work reaches its intended level of respect destined by God (John Paul II, 1981, para. 110).

The 100th anniversary of *Rerum* brought about John Paul II’s (1991) encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which testified to Leo’s enduring messages of love and charity for the less fortunate. In estimating the Church’s commitment to struggling laborers, *Centesimus Annus* saw charity as a virtue never in short supply—indeed even increasing throughout the years after *Rerum*. Though charity is a continuous force molding the Church, communities must embrace “a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity,” starting with their immediate surroundings, and eventually extending to the larger whole (John Paul II, 1991, para. 50). When one shows charity toward others, he or she is cultivating human dignity with love. “Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice” (John Paul II, 1991, para. 58). Based on John Paul’s words, love and charity are cyclical in nature as they honor both human dignity and God who is the Creator of this goodness inside us.

### Conclusion

In his writings, Leo equated the love of labor to leadership that looked after its employees’ best interests. Whereas he placed a great deal of responsibility on leaders to act as guardians of the working-class, Leo also made clear in *Rerum* that owning property and being successful were not morally wrong. Therefore, institutions are not required to disperse their entire holdings to the populous or prohibited from earning profits. Nonetheless, due to the uneven distribution of power, institutions must remain vigilant that each worker receives his or her fair share. This share should be enough for workers and their dependents to live on comfortably.

Love and charity are also seen as compatible virtues that further develop human dignity when practiced by leadership. Their symbiotic nature cannot be separated for personal means or used in contradictory terms to make decisions affecting employees. Manipulating charitable acts to sustain one’s own self-interest violates the love God has modelled for us through His son, Jesus Christ. Similarly, disguising a selfish act or policy as one grounded in love defies the very act of loving one another as human worth becomes a negotiable item instead of a non-negotiable absolute. Therefore, leadership decisions should actively pursue the employee’s best interests without irreversibly depleting the institutional resources needed for overall survival.

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*Henry J. Davis, Ph.D. received his doctorate in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy from Fordham University's Graduate School of Education. Recently, Dr. Davis presented his paper entitled "Adjuncts First: Applying Gaudium et Spes to Adjunct Wage Inequality" at the Catholic Social Tradition Conference on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Gaudium et Spes hosted by the University of Notre Dame. Contact: [hdavis8@fordham.edu](mailto:hdavis8@fordham.edu)*