



www.catholicscholarsforworkerjustice.org

Statement of Support for **LABOR UNIONS**

Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice speaks in strong opposition to the attacks that are being made on labor unions and collective bargaining today. We speak for the right of workers everywhere to form and join labor unions in order to negotiate collectively for fair wages and benefits for themselves and their families. We urge people everywhere to recognize the many contributions labor unions make to the universal common good.

Support for labor unions enjoys a long history in the Catholic Church. Beginning in the medieval period and especially since the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the Church has given exceptional support for labor unions. The Popes—from Leo to Benedict XVI—have *encouraged* workers to form unions. The official teaching of the Catholic Church as found in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) holds that labor unions exert a “positive influence for social order and solidarity, and are therefore an *indispensable element of social life.*” (#305) In 1986 the Catholic Bishops of the United States stated: “The Church fully supports the right of workers to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to fair wages and working conditions...No one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself.” (*Economic Justice for All*, 1986, #104)*

These points are rooted in Catholic Teaching on Labor Unions:

- * Labor unions are based on the inalienable natural right of free association.
 - * Labor unions promote social justice and the common good.
 - * Labor unions defend the vital interests of workers and their families.
 - * Workers have a right to bargain collectively for fair wages and benefits.
 - * Employers who refuse to pay a just wage are guilty of a grave injustice.
- * No one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself.
 - * Governments may not limit the negotiating capacity of labor unions.

The attack on labor unions and collective bargaining must stop immediately!

*For a complete understanding of Catholic teaching on labor unions see the Chapter 6 of the *Compendium*, “On Human Work” pp. 115-140. See also CSWJ’s Foundational Statement that is posted on our website.

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