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# CATHOLICS AND POLITICS

*The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power*

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## THE UNITED STATES– VATICAN RELATIONSHIP

*“Parallel Endeavors for Peace,”  
Competing Visions of Justice*

PAUL CHRISTOPHER MANUEL

DURING HIS MAY 2007 VISIT to Brazil, Pope Benedict XVI denounced the opposing economic systems of Marxism and capitalism. Benedict bemoaned “the painful destruction of the human spirit” done in the former communist countries, and he was equally harsh regarding contemporary capitalism and globalization, warning people against its “deceptive illusions of happiness.”<sup>1</sup> North American observers were clearly pleased with his remarks on Marxism and its implied criticisms of the economic policies of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, but they were considerably less sanguine concerning his views on capitalism. To be sure, Benedict’s warning statements on capitalism confront several key assumptions of American economic liberalism and are at the center of a deep philosophical cleavage between the Vatican and the United States in the contemporary world.

Strongly influenced by John Locke, mainstream American economic thinkers have long maintained that social justice is primarily a question of individual rights and freedom—the idea that a just society is one in which there are free and unfettered markets and a limited government. Locke tends to minimize the concept of community obligations and, in its stead, to elevate individual rights and freedom as the barometer of social justice. In this view, according to the classic formulation, the only legitimate function of government is the protection of each citizen’s life, liberty, and property.<sup>2</sup>

The views expressed by Pope Benedict, and which originate in the one-hundred-year tradition of Catholic social teaching, run squarely against traditional American notions of capitalism, property rights, individualism, and personal choice. In the Catholic view, social justice is best defined as a relational concept—the ability of each person to fully participate as a member of a larger community. The key concept of poverty as “structural sin,” for example, in which all members of a community have a duty to help the poor, is a central tenet of Catholic social teaching and may be understood to be a Catholic corrective to the American emphasis on individual freedoms and rights.<sup>3</sup> Expanding on this notion, Lisa Ferrari points out that “John Paul II writes of authentic human development rather than simply economic development and offers a ‘theological reading of modern problems,’” in which he asks the faithful to reframe political and economic questions in terms of sin and “structures of sin.”<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will examine the relationship between the Vatican and the United States in light of these divergent views. It will look at how they have cooperated and conflicted over the years by analyzing how the two sides have engaged in, following President Franklin Roosevelt’s formulation, “parallel endeavors for peace,” and then contrast that aspect of the relationship involving their competing visions of justice. Throughout, this chapter is interested in discovering a nuanced understanding of the nature of the relationship between these two global powers.

## TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF GLOBAL POWERS

The diverging worldviews of the Vatican and the United States have become significantly more important since the fall of Soviet communism. In the post-cold war world, the United States has focused much of its energies on exporting a liberal economic version of globalization, while the Vatican has fought for a preferential option for the poor, the needy, and the vulnerable in the global economy. As the United States proclaims to the underdeveloped world that free market capitalism is the means of escaping poverty, the Vatican seeks to temper American capitalistic enthusiasm with dire warnings against inordinate attachments to material things. Just as the United States is a political, social, and economic reality in the world, the Vatican is a leading moral voice in the contemporary global scene.

Although both the Vatican and the United States are currently powers with a global reach, James Kurth has insightfully argued that the Vatican and the United States are polar opposites in at least three fundamental ways. First, the Vatican is the smallest state in the world, whereas the United States occupies a vast landmass.<sup>5</sup> Next, the Holy See represents one Catholic faith in many nations across the globe, while the United States is one nation composed of many faiths. Third, the pope is the mediator for Catholics between the secular and spiritual worlds, while the United States is a society predicated in many ways on a strict separation between state and church.<sup>6</sup> They are not enemies, but they do offer the world very different prescriptions for achieving social, economic, political, and moral justice.

and which originate in the one-hungry, run squarely against traditional, individualism, and personal choice. It is seen as a relational concept—the ability to belong to a larger community. The key difference, in which all members of a community are equal, is the tenet of Catholic social teaching and its contrast to the American emphasis on individualism. Lisa Ferrari points out that the Vatican's approach is "not simply economic modern problems," in which he asks questions in terms of sin and "struc-

ture" between the Vatican and the United States. Look at how they have cooperated and how both sides have engaged in, following the "parallel endeavors for peace," and then compare their competing visions of justice. This offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between the two global powers.

## ENDS

The United States have become significant powers in the post-cold war world. In the post-cold war era, the United States has focused its energies on exporting a liberal economic system. It has fought for a preferential option for the global economy. As the United States promotes free market capitalism as the means to global development, American capitalistic enthusiasm with material things. Just as the United States is a leading power in the world, the Vatican is a leading

The United States are currently powers with a global influence. That the Vatican and the United States have different ways. First, the Vatican is the smallest country in the world. It occupies a vast landmass.<sup>5</sup> Next, the Vatican has no military. Nations across the globe, while the Vatican has no military. Third, the pope is the media figure of the Catholic world, while the United States is a secular nation. The separation between state and church.<sup>6</sup> The world very different prescriptions for justice.

## "PARALLEL ENDEAVORS FOR PEACE"

Two years before American entry into World War II, President Roosevelt penned a letter on December 23, 1939, to Pope Pius XII announcing his decision to appoint Myron C. Taylor as his personal representative to the pope.<sup>7</sup> Roosevelt spoke of the need for improved U.S.-Vatican relations, adding in his letter that "the people of this nation . . . know that only by friendly association among the seekers of light and the seekers of peace everywhere can the forces of evil be overcome. . . . I am, therefore, suggesting to Your Holiness that it would give me great satisfaction to send to you my personal representative in order that our parallel endeavors for peace and the alleviation of suffering may be assisted."<sup>8</sup>

The United States and the Vatican did successfully engage in "parallel endeavors for peace and the alleviation of suffering" and worked together during the rebuilding of Europe following the war. This effort helped to frame an important aspect of their relationship. Taylor remained in Rome until 1950 and later served as President Harry S. Truman's personal representative to the Vatican.<sup>9</sup> Truman then appointed Mark Clark to replace Taylor but was forced to withdraw the nomination following resistance from Congress; consequently, diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the United States were suspended for a period.<sup>10</sup>

As the cold war heated up in the 1950s, American presidents became increasingly aware of the important role the Vatican could play in the global anticommunist struggle. At a press conference on December 2, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed his admiration of the pope's "strong stand for peace, for liberty and freedom in the world, and his stand against communism."<sup>11</sup> With that statement, President Eisenhower identified three key themes that helped to frame the U.S.-Vatican relationship throughout the cold war, and especially in the 1980s. Elected in 1960, John Kennedy, as the first and thus far only Roman Catholic president of the United States, was acutely aware of the pope's moral influence around the globe and met with Pope Paul VI in Rome in July 1963 a few days after his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech of June 26, 1963.<sup>12</sup> The tradition of appointing a personal representative to the Vatican continued under Presidents Richard M. Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan, and there were various meetings between American presidents and popes during the cold war.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, the diplomatic relationship between the United States and the Vatican has been very complicated since the early years of the American nation. The United States opened consular relations with the Papal States in 1797, but formal diplomatic relations involving an exchange of ambassadors were not initiated until January 10, 1844. The strong influence of the anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic group known as the Know-Nothings in the mid-nineteenth century considerably slowed down the process of developing a relationship.<sup>14</sup> The Know-Nothings were in large part responsible for the 1867 legislation prohibiting the funding of an American embassy to the Holy See, which helped to delay formal U.S.-Vatican diplomatic relations for over a century. That legislation was finally repealed in 1983.

For its part, the Vatican, although a fact of international relations long before the American Revolution, is a particularly complex entity with a Byzantine institutional

structure. The Vatican acknowledges only a fuzzy differentiation between its political and ecclesial institutions: the government of Vatican City and the Holy See. Yet they are, in fact, distinct offices. The Vatican's secretariat of state is assigned the formal responsibility to conduct foreign relations for Vatican City, and foreign diplomats are typically accredited to the Holy See. However, some sovereigns actually have diplomatic relations with the Catholic Church but not with the government of Vatican City.<sup>15</sup>

The 1980s were a particularly important time for relations between the Vatican and the United States. Pope John Paul II and President Reagan worked well together, and the two sides sought common solutions to East–West relations. President Reagan's personal representative to the Vatican was William A. Wilson, who diligently worked towards formal U.S.–Vatican relations, finally achieved in 1984.<sup>16</sup> Of course, as will be examined later in this chapter, the two sides voiced significant differences on social welfare policies during this time, but the foundational challenge of the period was the problem of Soviet communism. President Reagan and Pope John Paul II, along with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, each played a critical role in the ending of Soviet communism; the end of Soviet-style communism in Eastern Europe represented a zenith in their “parallel endeavors for peace and the alleviation of suffering.”

### COMPETING VISIONS OF JUSTICE

In the aftermath of the cold war, the diverging worldviews of the United States and the Vatican have become significantly more pronounced. The United Nations Conference on Women of 1994 is an important case in point. Under President Bill Clinton, the United States led a movement at the conference to make abortion and family planning more accessible to women in the underdeveloped parts of the world, to help alleviate for these women some of the societal burdens of child rearing, and to empower them with educational and vocational training and employment opportunities. The Vatican strenuously worked to block this U.S.-led movement, arguing that it would essentially legalize the murder of unborn children throughout the world, and enlisted the support of many Catholic nations in Latin America in alliance with Muslim nations. The Vatican was successful, and its victory was secured when Pakistani prime minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto stated her opposition to abortion in the most forceful of terms: “Islam lays a great deal of stress on the sanctity of life. The Holy Book tells us: ‘Kill not your children on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for them and for you.’ Islam, therefore, except in exceptional circumstances rejects abortion as a method of population control. . . . Let me state, categorically, Mr. Chairman, that the traditional family is the union sanctified by marriage. Muslims, with their over-riding commitment to knowledge would have no difficulty with dissemination of information about reproductive health, so long as its modalities remain compatible with their religious and spiritual heritage.”<sup>17</sup>

Bhutto, of course, spoke from her own religious tradition and convictions at the United Nations conference—but the success of the Vatican was to find significant points of moral harmony between the two great religious traditions and, in turn, to leverage their shared views into a significant anti-abortion, pro-traditional family, vic-



significantly transformed since the end of the cold war from one strongly marked by political and ideological division to an integrated, capitalist, and Web-based one. In many ways the product of American foreign policy initiatives of fifty years ago, the contemporary phenomenon of globalization, Friedman holds, is a new global system of international arrangements with its own set of assumptions, logic, and incentives: in short, the worldwide supremacy of capitalism has been achieved.

#### VATICAN CRITICISMS OF AMERICAN-STYLE CAPITALISM

The Vatican has long sought to point out the dangers of unfettered capitalism, and Pope Benedict certainly understands that Friedman's brilliant analysis aptly describes the contemporary global setting. He offered these thoughts on globalization while in Brazil: "Today's world experiences the phenomenon of globalization as a network of relationships extending over the whole planet. Although from certain points of view this benefits the great family of humanity, and a sign of its profound aspiration towards unity, nevertheless it also undoubtedly brings with it the risk of vast monopolies and of treating profit as the supreme value. As in all areas of human activity, globalization too must be led by ethics, placing everything at the service of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God."<sup>24</sup>

Indeed so, for if one's starting point in the discussion of economic theory and social justice is that all are made in the image of God, and that justice implies that human dignity and human rights precede rights such as those of private property and the right to unlimited accumulation of goods and money, then one's subsequent definition of justice would be rather different from the dominant liberal paradigm in American political and philosophical thought. Accordingly, the Vatican has always been very skeptical of capitalism, and it has developed a social teaching in response to the social challenges posed by industrialization known as Catholic Social Teaching. It represents a pragmatic solution to the serious economic, social, and political problems plaguing societies. Among other steps, this teaching focuses pastoral and relief efforts on the poor and seeks to make the Catholic Church itself a more welcoming, open, and just place for all, especially the poor.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, Catholic Social Teaching manifests a wariness with the Lockean emphasis on individualism and its views regarding private property, and it seeks to reconcile the traditional Christian and Catholic concerns for the dignity of human life with demands for political freedom and economic equality. For Leo XIII and subsequent popes, the Catholic Church has stood against excessive liberty for free market capitalists (and remained wary of the liberal preference of individualism over community) and has guarded against the excessive equality of the socialists. In particular, the popes have feared three troubling characteristics of the growing socialist movement: its emphasis on materialism, its willingness to use violence to achieve its objectives, and its hostility toward religion.<sup>26</sup> Wariness of capitalism and socialism is critical to subsequent Catholic teachings about social justice.<sup>27</sup>

In his World Day of Peace message on January 1, 1972, Pope Paul VI offered the oft-quoted observation that "if you want peace, work for justice" as a critique of the



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s, work for justice" as a critique of the

condition of world poverty in the 1970s, and he has offered social justice as an anti-  
dote to revolutionary political movements. Later, he argued in his encyclical, *Populo-  
rum progressio*, that "genuine progress does not consist in wealth sought for personal  
comfort or for its own sake; rather it consists in an economic order designed for the  
welfare of the human person, where the daily bread that each man receives reflects  
the glow of brotherly love and the helping hand of God."<sup>28</sup> As such, the Vatican eco-  
nomic worldview represents something of a challenge for American economic poli-  
cies.<sup>29</sup> The century-long tradition of Catholic Social Teaching challenges citizens to  
think in terms of community, with a preference for the poor and vulnerable in soci-  
ety.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Following World War II, the United States became the world's most important global  
power for the first time in its history, whereas the Vatican has been a significant global  
player since the Portuguese discoverer Vasco da Gama reached the shores of India in  
1498 and Pedro Álvares Cabral reached Brazil in 1500—bringing with them the Ro-  
man Catholic Church. As the world's largest economic power, the United States is a  
key global player; as the world's largest church, the Vatican offers an important moral  
voice. Pope Benedict's observations in Brazil are but a continuation of a hundred-year  
tradition of an ongoing Catholic critique of capitalism for its emphasis on con-  
sumerism, materialism, selfishness, secularization, and individualism. This teaching  
has increased awareness among Catholics and other people of good will of the impor-  
tant human issues at stake in economic relations. In the aftermath of the Second Vat-  
ican Council in the mid-1960s, the Roman Catholic Church assumed a new global  
identity as it sought to engage questions of economic justice and human rights in the  
modern world.

What of the future U.S.–Vatican relationship? A future pro-life Republican ad-  
ministration would certainly support some aspects of the Vatican's social policy, but  
not its economic ones, and a pro-choice Democrat would likely support some of the  
Vatican's economic views, but not its social ones—especially on abortion. Whichever  
party wins in the United States, its relationship with the Vatican will remain a dynamic  
one, with cooperation in their "parallel endeavors for peace" and conflict over their  
competing visions of justice.

In the end, their competing views may perhaps someday result in new global  
policies aimed at economic growth, the alleviation of human suffering, and the deep-  
ening of democratic legitimacy in civil society across the globe.<sup>31</sup> This is certainly part  
of what Pope Benedict had in mind when he made his comments in Brazil.

## NOTES

1. [www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/05/14/america/LA-GEN-Pope-Brazil.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/05/14/america/LA-GEN-Pope-Brazil.php) and [www.usato-day.com/news/religion/2007-05-14-pope\\_N.htm](http://www.usato-day.com/news/religion/2007-05-14-pope_N.htm). Benedict also stated that "the Marxist system, where it found its way into government, not only left a sad heritage of economic



and ecological destruction, but also a painful destruction of the human spirit." [www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/americas/05/13/pope.brazil.ap/index.html?eref=rss\\_topstories](http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/americas/05/13/pope.brazil.ap/index.html?eref=rss_topstories). Benedict further warned that capitalism and globalization may give "rise to a worrying degradation of personal dignity through drugs, alcohol and deceptive illusions of happiness." The pope criticized abortion and same-sex marriage as well, and he called upon Catholic leaders to lead Brazil in a new direction respectful of life and of the poor and the vulnerable. See the Vatican website for his full comments, available from [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070513\\_conference-aparecida\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida_en.html).

2. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Also see Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, intro. by Alan B. Krueger (New York: Bantam Classics, 2003).
3. See *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, esp. n. 36–37. On a related point, this Catholic challenge is also directed against what is viewed as the "excessive individualism" of American politics and society. Stephen Carter aptly observes that the United States has both the highest rate of abortion and the highest rate of private ownership of firearms in the world. Carter further notes that American courts protect individual behavior such as the rights of the homeless to sleep in public libraries and other public places, even if offensive odors or unsanitary conditions threaten the use of public facilities for others. In Carter's words, "it is as though once an individual has made up his mind to do a thing, no matter how tasteless or repulsive, nobody else has legal recourse" (Carter, *Civility* [New York: Harper Collins, 1998], 219).
4. Lisa L. Ferrari, "The Vatican as a Transnational Actor," in *The Catholic Church and the Nation-State: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Paul Christopher Manuel, Lawrence C. Reardon, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 36. Also see *Redemptoris missio*, n. 32, 37, 38, 58.
5. The 1929 Lateran Pact between Italy and the Holy See formally created the 108.7 acre Vatican City.
6. James Kurth, "The Vatican's Foreign Policy," *The National Interest*, Summer 1993, 43.
7. Pius XII served as pope between 1939 and 1958.
8. [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15853&st=Parallel+Endeavors+for+Peace&st1=](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15853&st=Parallel+Endeavors+for+Peace&st1=).
9. President Harry S. Truman stated that "at my request the Honorable Myron C. Taylor is proceeding to Rome as my personal representative for further exchanges of views with His Holiness Pope Pius XII, on problems relative to the establishment of peace under a moral world order and to the alleviation of the human suffering still continuing in many parts of the world," available from [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12738&st=Vatican&st1=](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12738&st=Vatican&st1=).
10. See [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/print.php?pid=13971](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/print.php?pid=13971) and [://www.trumanlibrary.org/truman-3.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/truman-3.htm).
11. [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10147&st=Vatican&st1=](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10147&st=Vatican&st1=).
12. [www.brainyhistory.com/years/1963.html](http://www.brainyhistory.com/years/1963.html).
13. See Raymond L. Flynn, "Letter from the Vatican: Common Objectives for Peace," *SAIS Review* 16, no. 2 (1996): 143–53. Between 1951 and 1968, the Vatican and the United States had no official diplomatic contacts. Flynn notes that President Nixon recommenced a formal relationship when he appointed Henry Cabot Lodge as his personal representative to

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 ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK:  
 lam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, intro. by  
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10147&st=Vatican&stl=.

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the Vatican in 1969. President Carter appointed businessman David Walters as his personal representative to the Vatican in 1977, and the following year Carter named former New York City mayor Robert F. Wagner to that post. President Reagan appointed businessman William A. Wilson as his personal representative in 1971.

14. Ibid. In addition, Gene Burns, in *The Frontiers of Catholicism: The Politics of Ideology in a Liberal World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), observes “the immigrant, lower-class Catholics in this country experienced sporadic nativist attacks (e.g. anti-Catholic riots and burning of churches) into the early twentieth century, sometimes inspired by groups such as the Know-Nothings and the Ku Klux Klan. . . . One of the most common accusations was that they could not be true patriots because . . . their allegiance to a foreign pope necessarily took precedence over their allegiance to the United States” (74).
15. Ferrari, “Vatican as a Transnational Actor,” 35.
16. The following is the list of United States ambassadors to the Holy See since formal diplomatic relations began in 1984: William Wilson served from 1984 to 1986; Frank Shakespeare from 1986 to 1989; Thomas Patrick Melady from 1989 to 1993; Raymond Flynn from 1993 to 1997; Corinne Claiborne Boggs from 1997 to 2001; James Nicholson from 2001 to 2005; and Francis Rooney from 2005 to the present. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Ambassador\\_to\\_the\\_Holy\\_See](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Ambassador_to_the_Holy_See).
17. [www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/gov/940907211416.html](http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/gov/940907211416.html)
18. Ferrari, “Vatican as a Transnational Actor,” 33. Also see Christine Gorman, “Clash of Wills in Cairo,” *Time*, September 12, 1994, 56.
19. George W. Bush, a pro-life president, was influenced by Pope John Paul II during their meeting in the summer of 2001 to limit scientific experimentation on human stem cells, and the two men shared a similar concern with the life of the unborn. See [archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/07/23/bush.pope/](http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/07/23/bush.pope/) and [www.zenit.org/english/archive/0101/ZE010124.htm#2025](http://www.zenit.org/english/archive/0101/ZE010124.htm#2025).
20. A classic expression of this literature may be found in the numerous works of political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset. Starting with his 1959 article, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” which appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, and in his noteworthy book, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (1960), Lipset gathered information related to economic development and computed averages for several countries. In each case, he found that the democratic countries were also the richer countries. Consequently, Lipset’s research suggested that economic development improved a society’s chances for democracy because it increased opportunities for widespread education, literacy, and wealth.
21. Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971). Rostow served as an aide to Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign and then became JFK’s deputy special assistant for national security affairs.
22. [www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03Inaugural01201961.htm](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03Inaugural01201961.htm).
23. This philosophical approach identifies traditional and modern societies as opposing ideal types. Traditional society is characterized by elitist and hierarchical structures, with ascriptive, particularistic patterns of authority and an extended kinship structure. Modern society is portrayed as having the opposite characteristics of these, being based on a rational, legalistic, and democratic authority system. Furthermore, the approach maintains

that a society based on traditional authority patterns and divided between rich and poor will probably result in some nondemocratic form of governance, whereas a democratic form of government will prevail in a modern, rational society with a large middle class.

24. [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070513\\_conference-aparecida\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida_en.html).
25. Contemporary Catholic thinking on social justice can be traced back to the papacy of Leo XIII (1878–1903), who wrote the important encyclical, *Rerum novarum: The Condition of Labor*, in 1891. Later, Pius XI picked up where Leo had left off and wrote the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno: After Forty Years*, in 1931. John XXIII built on these works with two additional encyclicals, *Mater et magistra*, in 1961, followed by *Pacem in terris* two years later. Combined, these encyclicals focused the attention of the Church squarely on the key social justice issues of the modern and industrializing world. Citing, among sources, scriptural passages and Thomas Aquinas, Leo XIII established a framework for a critical analysis of capitalist society from a Catholic perspective in *Rerum novarum*. Although generally optimistic about capitalism, Leo argued that Lockean liberals are wrong to think that economic life operates in a vacuum. To the contrary, he argues, economic life is intimately connected to human life and experience. It is simply not sufficient for those people engaged in economic life to focus on economics as if it did not concern human life. Rather, those engaged in economic life and activity are all required to take into account the basic needs of the individual and of the community. That is, profit and property rights are limited by the common good. See David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992): 12–13, and David Hollenbach, SJ, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 42.
26. Notably, Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* proposes that a Catholic perspective on social justice under a capitalistic economy supports the idea that the state has a moral duty and an obligation to assist those in need. In the words of Leo XIII, "man is older than the state, and he holds the right of providing for the life of his body prior to the formation of any state" (O'Brien and Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, 16).
27. Pope John XXIII made a number of key contributions to Catholic social justice teaching. In 1961 he issued *Mater et magistra*, which deals with the question of social justice. In that encyclical he emphasizes the moral duty of the state to intervene in the marketplace to ensure that property is used for the common good. Two years later he authored the watershed encyclical *Pacem in terris*, which endorses the "welfare state" model of capitalism. In particular, it supports the rights to life, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, culture, and education of all people. Certainly, when John XXIII called for the convening of Vatican II, his progressive thinking influenced many in the Church seriously to consider economic issues from a Catholic social justice perspective. See *Mater et Magistra* in *Catholic Social Thought*. Also see Donald Door, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 147.
28. [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html).
29. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States entered the national debate on social justice in the United States with the publication of its pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All* (Washington, DC: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1986). Published as a response to the economic policies being pursued by the Reagan administration, this letter sought to direct the attention of policymakers in Washington to the plight of the poor and

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disenfranchised. Extending the Catholic concern with human rights and human dignity,  
the letter challenged the dominant liberal modes of thinking about justice and the econ-  
omy in the United States.

30. See *Populorum progressio*, available from [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html). Pope Paul VI adds, “However, certain concepts have somehow arisen out of these new conditions and insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These concepts present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, having no limits nor concomitant social obligations. This unbridled liberalism paves the way for a particular type of tyranny, rightly condemned by Our predecessor Pius XI, for it results in the ‘international imperialism of money.’ Such improper manipulations of economic forces can never be condemned enough; let it be said once again that economics is supposed to be in the service of man. But if it is true that a type of capitalism, as it is commonly called, has given rise to hardships, unjust practices, and fratricidal conflicts that persist to this day, it would be a mistake to attribute these evils to the rise of industrialization itself, for they really derive from the pernicious economic concepts that grew up along with it. We must in all fairness acknowledge the vital role played by labor systemization and industrial organization in the task of development” (ibid.).
31. [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070509\\_welcome-brazil\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070509_welcome-brazil_en.html). Pope Benedict also said in Brazil that “the Church seeks only to stress the moral values present in each situation and to form the conscience of the citizens so that they may make informed and free decisions. She will not fail to insist on the need to take action to ensure that the family, the basic cell of society, is strengthened and likewise young people, whose formation is a decisive factor for the future of any nation. Last but not least, she will defend and promote the values present at every level of society, especially among indigenous peoples” (ibid.).