

[From an outline for the talk, “Is Being Good-Hearted Enough: A Spirituality of Charity, Justice and Prophecy”, by Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, August 2018.  
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### **From Church Teachings ...**

- Most of us have been raised to believe that we have right to possess whatever comes to us honestly, either through our own work or through legitimate inheritance. No matter how large that wealth might be, it’s ours as long as we didn’t cheat anyone along the way. By and large, this belief has been enshrined in the laws of democratic countries and we generally believe that it is morally sanctioned by the Christianity.
  - But here is a brief summary of the Social Teachings of the Roman Catholic Church – teachings very much endorsed by leading social justice figures in other Christian Churches (e.g., Jim Wallis, Bishop Tutu, William Stringfellow, and Allan Boesak.
- i. God intended the earth and everything in it for the sake of all human beings.
  - ii. Thus, in justice, created goods should flow fairly to all. All other rights are subordinated to this principle. (*Gaudium et Spes* 69, *Popularum Progressio* 22)
  - iii. We do have a right to private ownership and no one may ever deny us of this right (*Rerum Novarum* 3-5, 14, *Quadragesimo Anno* 44-56, *Mater et Magistra* 109) but that right is subordinated to the common good, to the fact that goods are intended for everyone. (*Laborem Exercens* 14)
  - iv. Wealth and possessions must be understood as ours to steward rather than to possess absolutely. (*Rerum Novarum* 18-19)
  - v. No person (or nation) may have a surplus if others do not have the basic necessities. (*Rerum Novarum* 19, *Quadragesimo Anno* 50-51, *Mater et Magistra* 119-121 & 157-165, *Popularum Progressio* 23)
  - vi. People are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and if a person is in extreme necessity he has the right to take from the riches of others what he needs. (*Gaudium et Spes* 69)
  - vii. The present economic situation in the world must be redressed. (*Popularum Progressio* 6,26,32, *Gaudium et Spes* 66, *Octogesimus Adveniens* 43, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 43)
  - viii. Thus the law of supply and demand, free enterprise, competition, the profit motive, and the private ownership of the means of production may not be given complete free reign. They are not absolute rights and are only good within certain limits. (*Popularum Progressio* 26, *Quadragesimo Anno* 88, 110)
  - ix. In regards to the private ownership of industry and the means of production, two extremes are to be avoided: Unbridled capitalism on the one hand, and complete socialism on the other. (*Quadragesimo Anno* 46, 55, 111-126)
  - x. Governments must respect the principle of subsidiarity and intervene only when necessary. (*Rerum Novarum* 28-29, *Quadragesimo Anno* 79-80, *Mater et Magistra* 117-152) However when the common good demands it they not only may step in, they are obliged to do so. (*Popularum Progressio* 24, 33, *Mater et Magistra* 53, *Gaudium et Spes* 71)

- xi. As well certain forms of property should be reserved for the state since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals. (*Quadragesimo Anno 114, Mater et Magistra 116*)
- xii. Governments may never sacrifice the individual to the collectivity because the individual is prior to civil society and society must be directed towards him or her. (*Mater et Magistra 109, Quadragesimo Anno 26*)
- xiii. Employers must pay wages which allow the worker to live in a “reasonable and frugal comfort” (*Rerum Novarum 34*) and wages may not simply be a question of what contract a worker will accept. Conversely, workers may not claim that the produce and profits which are not required to repair and replace invested capital belong by right to them (*Quadragesimo Anno 55, 114*) and they must negotiate their wages with the common good in mind. (*Quadragesimo Anno 119, Mater et Magistra 112*) As is the case with the employer, it is not just a question of what kind of *contract can be extracted*.
- xiv. *Both the workers and the employers have an equal duty to be concerned for the common good. (Laborem Exercens 20)*
- xv. And, the condemnation of injustice is part of the ministry of evangelization and is an integral aspect of the Church’s prophetic role. (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 42*)
- xvi. Nature must be respected as having its own intrinsic rights and human impact on nature and climate must be taken as a moral issue.