

The CATHOLIC LABOR NETWORK

The Most Reverend José Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles

Cc: The Office of Life, Justice, and Peace

Dear Archbishop Gomez,

The Catholic Labor Network, a private association of the faithful dedicated to promoting Catholic Social Teaching on labor and work, is deeply concerned about the recent decision by Loyola Marymount University's Board of Trustees to cease bargaining with the union chosen by its contingent faculty.

Catholic Social Teaching from the time of Pope Leo XIII's 1891 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* [49] has been very clear: workers have the right to organize in trade unions to bargain collectively. As reaffirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*, "Among the basic rights of the human person is to be numbered the right of freely founding unions for working people [68]." And indeed, in their 1986 pastoral letter on the economy, *Economic Justice for All*, our nation's Catholic bishops taught that "All church institutions must also fully recognize the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively with the institution through whatever association or organization they freely choose [353]."

The Chair of LMU's Board of Trustees explained its decision with reference to two arguments. The Board was ending negotiations *because* as a religious institution they were exempt from the National Labor Relations Act, and because the contingent faculty made demands that were financially unsustainable.

Neither argument justifies ending negotiations with the union chosen by the faculty. The right to organize comes from God, not the NLRB; the university should negotiate with the union because the faculty chose it, not because the civil law requires it. And while nothing in Catholic Social Teaching requires employers to grant every demand presented by their employees, it does require them to bargain with the union they have selected to represent them.

Again, as the Bishops noted in 1986,

On the parish and diocesan level, through its agencies and institutions, the Church employs many people; it has investments; it has extensive properties for worship and

mission. *All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary* [*Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, no.347; italics in original].

When Catholic institutions model Catholic Social Teaching in their employment relations, lay business leaders take note. When Catholic institutions flout that teaching, they court scandal. We prayerfully ask that you intervene with the LMU administration and counsel them to resume bargaining with the union representing the contingent faculty.

Yours respectfully in Christ,



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