

Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice

Promoting Catholic Social Teaching on the Indispensable Role of Unions for Every Profession

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Statement of Support

Adjunct Faculty at Manhattan College

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Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice is an international association of scholars who are committed to Catholic Social Teaching on workers' rights. We were founded to proclaim the Church's extremely welcoming attitude to unions in the workplace and to support workers in both Catholic and secular workplaces who seek to form unions.

Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice is pleased to issue a Statement of Support for the adjunct faculty at Manhattan College who seek to form an employee union. We urge the adjunct faculty to persevere in this noble effort. We encourage the Trustees and administration of Manhattan College to support their employees as they assert the right to free association that is rooted in the natural moral law and that serves as the cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching on workers' rights.

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 and 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) The Church further teaches that, “*The Magisterium recognizes the fundamental role played by labor unions to defend the vital interests of workers employed in the various professions.*” (#305) [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.] In addition, 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)

Unfortunately, Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice has encountered all too many Catholic institutions that choose to respond to an organizing drive by immediately seeking recourse to the civil law or to outside “union avoidance” specialists in order to neutralize, or to delay, or to discourage workers from forming a union. In Catholic teaching the civil law only has legitimacy if it is rooted in the natural moral law. **Hence, we urge the Trustees and administrators of Manhattan College to consult the natural moral law that is found in Catholic Social Teaching as a first course of action in this matter.** We believe an adjunct union at Manhattan College will vivify and enhance the College's mission of “**excellence in teaching, respect for individual rights and commitment to social justice inspired by the innovator of modern pedagogy, John Baptist de La Salle.**”