



SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION

Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters District/NMU, AFL-CIO



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Heard@HQ / Heard at Headquarters 2009 / July-September (Q3)

Papal encyclical: honor right to form unions (7/8)

The Catholic Labor Network has issued the following news release:

Catholic Labor Network Press Release for *Caritas in veritate*

For Immediate Release - July 7, 2009

WASHINGTON - The Catholic Labor Network today welcomes the release of Pope Benedict XVI's new encyclical, *Caritas in veritate* or "love in truth." The Holy Father dedicated his third encyclical to the economy and labor, signing it on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29th), with public distribution beginning today (July 7).

We in the Catholic Labor Network take special notice of the Holy Father's observation that:

"Through the combination of social and economic change, trade union organizations experience greater difficulty in carrying out their task of representing the interests of workers... The repeated calls issued within the Church's social doctrine, beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, for the promotion of workers' associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honored today even more than in the past...[25]"

Yet we Americans live in a nation where workers face increasing harassment when they seek to form a union, in large measure because of widespread unlawful action by employers to obstruct the right of workers to organize in unions. We urge all our brothers and sisters in the faith involved in today's contentious debate over the Employee Free Choice Act to reflect on their position in light of the new Encyclical and consider how we can best reconcile our attitudes towards American trade unionism with those expressed by the Holy Father.

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Statement by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney On the Pope's Encyclical

July 8, 2009

Pope Benedict XVI's commitment to the cause of working people worldwide shines today. In the new encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* or *Charity in Truth*, Pope Benedict XVI offers an ethical critique of the global economic crisis and proposes concrete elements for policies anchored in moral values that enhance the dignity of all, especially the poor and working people. The encyclical levels a strong critique at the forces of unfettered free-market capitalism and globalized greed.

Particularly, the new encyclical offers a much-needed reminder that to create an economy that works for everyone it is critical to protect workers' fundamental right to join together as a union and bargain for a better future. As the Pope makes clear, it is not only working people, but also entire communities -- nations even -- that stand to benefit when workers exercise this right. In the document, the Pope reaffirms the Church's longstanding position that labor unions play a vital role in efforts to build a more just economy -- one in which even the most marginalized workers are guaranteed basic dignity and respect.

As the gap between the wealthy and the poor continues to widen, and workers around the world are denied the dignity and freedom they deserve, the union movement stands with the Catholic Church in its call for a global economy that works for working people. Now, more than ever, we must rally to protect the rights of workers -- at home and worldwide -- to come together in unions and build a better future for us all.

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