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The Labour Question in the USA in First Half of 20th Century. Contribution of the Catholic Church to Its Solution

The problems of workers’ wages taken by the Catholic Church in the United States of America are interesting issues from the point of view of the ethics of economic life and the development of Catholic social thought. The interpretation of the main Catholic social ideas contained in Leo XIII’s encyclical letter Rerum novarum was made by Father John Augustine Ryan (1896–1945), who soon became a major proponent of the idea that a good economic policy can flow only with good ethics. In the history of the United States of America, the turn of 19th and 20th centuries was a time of the development of labor unions, associations, and workers’ organizations, consolidating efforts to achieve equitable remuneration (a living wage) and regulate working conditions. It was also a time of struggling with the ideas of socialism and nationalism. The Catholic Church played a significant role in the discourse on these issues, including the influence of John A. Ryan. His efforts led to one of the most important interpretations of economic life: The Program of Social Reconstruction (1919), and some postulates can be found in the legislation of the New Deal.

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