

## COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 77

### **The dignity of workers and the respect for their rights**

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Human Resource management is a critical area of management that has risen in prominence over the last two decades. This is because the well being of the employee has been highlighted as essential to the effectiveness of the workplace. Much of the work surrounding human resource management revolves around the rights of workers.

“The rights of workers, like all other rights, are based on the nature of the human person and on his transcendent dignity. The Church’s Magisterium has seen fit to list some of these rights, in the hope that they will be recognised in juridical systems: the right to a just wage; (*Laborem Exercens*) the right to rest (*Laborem Exercens*); the right to a working environment and to manufacturing processes which are not harmful to the workers’ physical health or to their moral integrity (*Laborem Exercens*); the right to one’s personality in the workplace should be safeguarded ‘without suffering any affront to one’s conscience or personal dignity’; the right to appropriate subsidies that are necessary for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families (*Laborem Exercens*); the right to a pension and to insurance for old age, sickness, and in case of work-related accidents (*Laborem Exercens*); the right to social security connected with maternity (*Laborem Exercens*); the right to assemble and form associations (*Rerum Novarum*).”

In light of this list of rights that workers have, we see the breadth of issues that need to be dealt with in order to ensure that the worker is happy. This responsibility does not however fall solely on those persons in human resource management, but all persons in the workplace including all employees, managers and supervisors.

It is also imperative for all of us to know the rights we have as employees. This will ensure that when we negotiate our terms and conditions in the workplace that we are not taken advantage of, as this is in fact an unfortunate reality. Parents have to guide young adults as they go into the workplace and governments must ensure that the necessary policies and legislation are put in place and enforced.

“These rights are often infringed, as is confirmed by the sad fact of workers who are underpaid and without protection or adequate representation. It often happens that work conditions for men, women and children, especially in developing countries, are so inhumane that they are an offence to their dignity and compromise their health.” Workers’ rights are therefore fundamental to maintaining human dignity.

Next week we discuss the right to fair remuneration and income distribution Chapter 6 V b  
Persons interested in purchasing the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* may contact the CCSJ, Archbishop’s House at 622-6680.