

8-2001

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Recommended Citation

Beyer, Gerald J. (2001) "An Ethical Evaluation of Poland's Transition to Capitalism and the Roman Catholic Church's Response," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 21: Iss. 4, Article 2.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol21/iss4/2>

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An Ethical Evaluation of Poland's Transition to Capitalism and the Roman Catholic Church's Response

by Gerald J. Beyer

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A little more than a decade has past since the fall of Communism in Poland.¹ Today one encounters myriad, divergent appraisals of the Polish political and socioeconomic transformations. Some have lauded the general shape of the transformations, bestowing accolades on the political and social actors responsible for them. Others have sharply criticized many policy decisions and their agents. Consider the following assessments:

A minority of Polish society has benefitted at present from the transformations taking place, in the material sense, and societal sense (social prestige). The vast majority has experienced great losses.²

-Professor Czeslaw Bywalec, Kraków Academy of Economics

New business and service centers have appeared, new cars on once empty roadways, many cafes, which may obstruct walking on the sidewalks, but these things all prove that democracy and the free market have arrived. . .The road of reforms is long and tumultuous, the goals may not be achieved for one or two generations, but it is worth making this journey.³

-Hillary Clinton during an official visit to Warsaw on September 9, 1999

For several years now important transformations have been taking place in Poland in the economic sphere. They are essential to making the economy an effective instrument of progress and well-being. However, in Poland many people remain in immeasurably

difficult circumstances, homeless persons, the abandoned, the hungry, the disabled and those who have been wronged, who have found themselves in this situation, not as a result of their own fault.⁴

-Pope John Paul II, Speech to the Polish R.C. bishops during an *Ad limina* visit to the Vatican, Feb. 2, 1998

For ten years the health level of the society has improved, people more greatly value education, and foreign specialists come to Poland to make a career for themselves. It is clear that we are living better and healthier in the capitalist order than during communism.⁵

-Concluding remarks from a conference entitled "The Propaganda of Failure in the Midst of Success." The Society of Polish Economists and the Business Center Club

The poorest comprises 14% of our population. . .Unemployment consists of 30% structural unemployment. Of those unemployed, 60% have lost the right to unemployment benefits. All of these people negatively judge our transitions. It is a subjective judgment, but this is precisely why we should treat it seriously...Take notice of the fact that responsibility for the transitions on the macro scale was always described with a simple, often resembling ideological language, more or less [as follows]: 'We have a free market, as a result we all must accept the fact that some will do fine and others will not.'⁶

-Krzystof Madel, SJ

Among economic liberals, one hears that Poles live much better today than they did prior to 1989. However, 56% of Poles declared that they were better off under First Secretary of the Communist party Edward Gierek, who ruled from 1970 to 1980.⁷ In the following essay, I will attempt to illuminate why so much social discontent exists. While certain successes should be accorded their just recognition, many members of Polish society have suffered tremendously as a result of the shift to a market economy. I will focus mainly on the changes in the wage structure. These changes evince who have been the "winners" and "losers" in capitalist Poland. In addition, I will touch upon other issues such as poverty, the social welfare system and education. In order to evaluate these facets of the Polish transformation, an "ethical lens" must be chosen. In other words, social phenomena must be analyzed from the perspective of certain norms. I will examine

these exigent social issues through the lens of Roman Catholic social teaching.⁸ In the second half of the essay, I will assess the response of the Roman Catholic church in the social, economic and political spheres throughout the last decade in Poland. The 1971 Synod of Bishop's document *Justice in the World* and Paul VI's *Octogesima Adveniens* present two salient claims which will guide my reflection on this matter. Thus, I will consider how and to what degree has the church in Poland embodied the claim that "[a]ction on behalf of justice and participation in the world appear to us as a fully constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel?"⁹ Furthermore, has the Roman Catholic church, in particular the local bishops, heeded the call of Paul VI "to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes. . .[that are] urgently needed."¹⁰

Wages and Salaries of Poles During the Free-Market Era: An Empirical Glance

The key problem of social ethics in this case is that of just remuneration for work. In the context of the present, there is no more important way for securing a just relationship between the worker and the employer than that constituted by remuneration for work. . .It should also be noted that the justice of a socioeconomic system and, in each case, its functioning, deserve in the final analysis to be evaluated by the way in which man's [sic] work is properly remunerated in the system.¹¹

I concur with John Paul II's contention regarding the "key problem of social ethics" in the context of worker justice. It represents a crucial issue because without just compensation for work, human beings cannot afford the basic goods needed to flourish, such as food, shelter, health care, education and access to culture. Moreover, according to the principle of participation and the principle of subsidiarity, it is more appropriate *whenever possible* for individuals to provide these goods for themselves and their

families than for the government or any other intermediary agency to distribute them. If all workers were to receive a just wage, they would, to a large extent, be able to attain the basic goods for human flourishing. Their dignity as workers and human beings would be more greatly respected than in a system that heavily requires government subsidies for food, housing, etc. due to the prevalence of insufficient remuneration for work.

Compensation for work undoubtedly represents one of the most complicated and complex dimensions of the Polish socioeconomic transformation. It evokes strong emotional reactions because it is related to the issues of poverty, the stratification of society, commutative, distributive and social justice, and economic freedom. The Polish economist Tadeusz Kowalik describes a “revolution” in the income structure of Poles during the last decade.¹² Research indicates that 56% of working Poles are not satisfied with their compensation and only one out of ten states that their “work insures him or her good earnings.”¹³ How can the earnings of Poles be evaluated from an ethical standpoint? In order to obtain an answer, I will utilize Roman Catholic norms regarding just wages and the “living wage.” However, prior to offering ethical evaluations, it behooves me to provide a brief empirical glance at the changes that have taken place in wages and salaries over the last decade in Poland.¹⁴

While overall incomes for the society as a whole rose by over 19% since 1989, many people experienced a real loss in income.¹⁵ A 1998 World Bank report indicated that about half of all working Poles earn less than they did in 1989 (despite 15% overall growth in GDP).¹⁶ Succinctly stated, certain groups prospered while others experienced negative repercussions from the changes in the wage structure. The following charts illustrate this fact according to various social groups:

1. Real incomes in Poland, 1990-1998 (1989=100)

Incomes	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	90-98
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All incomes	85.3	90.3	93.5	92.9	96.2	98.2	102.3	114.4	119.7	+19.7
avg. monthly salary	76.1	75.9	73.8	71.7	72.0	74.1	78.4	86.6	91.0	-9.0
Avg. monthly old-age and disability pension	91.1	104.3	97.5	94.7	97.4	100.6	103.1	109.5	113.6	+13.6
Income from indiv. farming	50.1	40.7	46.4	51.6	49.3	56.3	58.8	67.7	64.8	-35.2
Employers and self-employed	-	100.0	109.1	121.9	119.5	121.7	127.1	140.0	145.1	+45.1
GDP *	88.4	81.7	82.9	86.1	90.3	96.9	102.8	109.8	115.1	+15.1

Fixed Prices

Source: Mieczyslaw Kabaj, *Programme Outline for Actively Counteracting Poverty and Social Exclusion* (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1999)¹⁶.

2. Earnings differentials by educational attainment, 1988-95* (Basic vocational=100)

Educational Attainment	1998	1992	1995(national economy)	1995 (public sector)	1995 (private sector)
University	118.7	146.1	148.3	137.2	188.4
Post-secondary	-	-	98.0	90.9	122.7
Secondary a)	95.9	109.9	-	-	-
Vocational	-	-	111.3	108.8	113.9
General	-	-	105.8	104.2	106.7
Basic vocational b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Primary c)	87.0	93.6	87.3	85.9	88.7

*Earnings = Average net monthly earnings of full-time workers in main jobs.

a) Including post-secondary;

b) Vocational training (3 years) which does not lead to a high school diploma;

c) Including less than primary education

Adapted from: Jan Rutkowski, *Welfare and the Labor Market in Poland: Social Policy during Economic Transition* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1998)³⁶.

3. Socio-vocational income differentials of households in Poland per capita*

Year	white-collar	blue-collar	blue-collar/agricultural	agricultural	retirees and disability recipients	self-employed	unearned income	average deviation (in%) b)
1990	100.0	74.0	88.2	85.3	72.9	-	-	19.1
1991	100.0	72.9	79.1	70.0	80.4	-	-	19.6
1992	100.0	72.3	74.1	67.7	73.1	-	-	23.0
1993	100.0	66.4	64.3	69.8	82.2	96.8	42.2	26.6/26.4 c)
1994	100.0	66.8	64.7	68.2	81.7	99.0	42.8	26.6/26.3
1995	100.0	65.7	66.7	72.2	81.1	98.8	39.9	26.3/26.3
1996	100.0	62.9	61.4	65.5	76.8	93.2	38.2	30.5/30.6

*disposable incomes since 1993

b) average deviation in percent calculated as the average deviation from white collar workers, assumed as 100;

c) average deviation for the first five types of households in the numerator; average deviation for all seven types given in the denominator.

Source: Czesław Bywalec, *Spoleczne aspekty transformacji gospodarczej w Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej* (Kraków: Akademia Ekonomiczna, 1998) ²³.

White-collar workers represent about 10-15% of all households in Poland. The self-employed represent roughly 8-12%. Blue collar workers comprise about 25-30%. Blue-collar/agricultural workers comprise approximately 15%. Households of old-age pensioners and the disabled are abundant: about 30% of the total population. However, those who receive “unearned income”, such as unemployment benefits, temporary welfare benefits, alimony, etc. represent only 3-5%.¹⁷ These tables clearly portray who belongs to the “winners.” As we see in Table 1, a radical decline took place in real incomes at the outset of the transformation. Fortunately, a gradual increase in incomes in all categories took place from 1994. However, a closer look reveals that employers and the self-employed benefitted to a much greater extent from these gains. These groups essentially did not experience the “income shock” that took place at the dawn of the “free-market” era. It is important to notice (in Table 2), the increasingly greater relationship between large incomes and higher educational levels.¹⁸ This fact evinces the need for equal access to education (or at least “more equal”; discussion of this will follow). Another noteworthy trend existed in the income changes of retired persons and those who received disability payments. Contrary to complaints often heard by these groups, their real income rose by 13.6% (see Table 1). According to the 1999 UNDP Poland report, “[h]ouseholds of retirees and those receiving disability with at least one elderly person had an average nominal disposable income per capita...higher than the average household in general.”¹⁹ The ratio between the average retirement pension and the average salary grew from 53% to 73%, making it one of the highest in all of Europe. Economists and social commentators often criticized this exorbitant growth in government expenditures (all pensions in Poland were, until last year, paid out by the government).²⁰

As I mentioned previously, not all were “winners.” The occurrence of low wages (2/3 of the average pay) rose from 14% to 17% among legal workers, which has pushed more people into the category of the “working poor.” Of poor people in Poland, 60% work.²¹ The Polish economist Mieczysław Kabaj enumerates the decline of real incomes of large professional groups as one of the primary causes of the rise in poverty in Poland from 1996. Kabaj claims that according to all poverty measurement indices, rapidly more and more people are falling into poverty in Poland. He points to three phases in the increase of poverty: (1) a large growth between 1990 and 1994; (2) a slight decrease of the poverty domain from 1994 to 1996; (3) another wave of poverty after 1996. In 1999, Kabaj wrote that

The number of people living in absolute poverty (income below subsistence level) is estimated at a level of 5-5.5 million persons, i.e. 12-13% of the population of the country. The main reasons are: unemployment (35%), low income (60%) and low pensions (5%). According to the World Bank methodology the poor constitute 18.5% of the population, that is 7 million people. Using the Leyden methodology or the subjective poverty line, the poor constitute 30.8% or 12 million. As observed by recent research, poverty is closely

connected with the size of household, place of residence (60% of the poor live in rural areas), unemployment and the level of education.²²

Unfortunately, a recent World Bank report concluded that a tendency towards chronic, long-term poverty exists in Poland today. Perhaps more disconcerting is the fact that during the years analyzed (1993-96) every second child experienced poverty for at least one year in Poland. Moreover, every second permanently poor person was a child. Children also tend to spend the longest amount of time in poverty.²³ Children, as we see, do not have a political voice.

Other groups also suffered real wage decreases. Tables 1 and 3 above reveal that farmers and industrial workers were struck the hardest. Despite the fact that white collar workers in general experienced gains, certain professional groups received nominal wage increases or even decreases. Health care givers (especially nurses, who continue to strike frequently), teachers and professors comprise this group. In other words, while a higher premium has been given to education, as evidenced by the general increase among white-collar workers, not all those with higher education prospered. The income differentials according to deciles also reveals who suffered and who reaped handsome rewards. World Bank economist Jan Rutkowski encapsulates these trends in the following statement:

The income of the richest decile is now 7.8 times as high as the poorest decile, while before the transition this “wealth gap amounted to 5...the first 8 deciles have lost their income shares. The losses have been larger in the lower deciles and smaller in the upper deciles. The 9th decile has slightly improved its relative position, but only the top decile has gained substantially. Overall, 5 percent of the total income has been transferred from the bottom 80% of the population of the top 20%. That is, losers outnumber winners by four to one.”²⁴

In short, 17% of all workers earn less than 2/3 of the average monthly salary. One-fifth of those working earn 150% of that amount. The vast majority of Poles earn close to the average monthly wage.²⁵ Thus, “poor families have become somewhat poorer, but rich families have become much richer.”²⁶

The realities described above are to a large degree the result of conscious political decisions. Two political instruments functioned in this regard. First, Minister of Finance Leszek Balcerowicz instituted a tax in 1989 that was to prevent the “inordinate growth of wages.” “Disobedient” companies which allowed such increases in wages were penalized and had to pay an additional, large tax as a result. The majority of companies at that time were state owned. Therefore, most companies had to abide by this tax law. Moreover, most private companies adopted Balcerowicz’s “appropriate levels” of wage growth of their own accord.²⁷ The fact that during those years real wages grew ten times slower than the GDP²⁸ indicates that Balcerowicz was successful in “taming the tiger” of avaricious wage-earners. Balcerowicz’s tax was abolished in 1994 and a new Trilateral Commission for Social and Economic Affairs was established. Composed of representatives from the business community, workers of various sectors and governmental agents, it began to regulate wages from that point forward.

The second instrument utilized in shaping the wage structure was legislation concerning official the minimum wage. Article 77 of the Polish Labor Code enjoins the

Minister of Labor to establish the minimum wage after negotiations with the Trilateral Commission. The minimum wage in Poland fluctuated during the 1990's, with a pronounced rise at the beginning of the decade and a tapering off and gradual decline since 1994. This reversal in the earlier trend arose due to the convictions of private employers, who first entered the bargaining process in 1994, that raising the minimum wage would lead to greater unemployment.²⁹ Unemployment continues to plague Poland today (13.6% in January, 2000 as opposed to 13% in January 1998). Many voices have argued that "the biggest enemy of the unemployed are union leaders" and that raising the minimum wage is the primary cause of unemployment.³⁰ In April, 2000 The Federacja Pracodawców Prywatnych [Federation of Private Employers] issued the "Capitalist Manifesto." In this declaration, they demanded "lower labor costs...elastic labor relations...and the adjustment of social guarantees to the demands of the market."³¹ These desires were expressed in spite of the fact that the minimum wage in Poland does not equal the "social welfare minimum" for one person.³² Thus, those who work for minimum wages cannot afford basic necessities.

Prior to moving to an ethical analysis of these phenomena, two groups deserve individual attention because of their remarkable, controversial gains in income. Politicians and managerial-level civil servants in Poland now earn inordinate amounts in comparison to their counterparts in other countries. For example, , civil servants in managerial posts earn 8.1 times more than the average monthly wage in Poland. The corresponding ratio in most European countries is dramatically less: United Kingdom (5.4), Germany (4.9), France (4.6), Belgium (4.4), Switzerland (3.9), Denmark (3.2), Sweden (2.2), Norway (1.9). Presidents of small towns, such as Ursynów, earn as much as 10,000 PLN per month (7.3 times greater than the average), while the average wage for a doctor working in a hospital is 1,200 PLN.³³ When public outcry led to a bill that would limit civil servants salaries, many of them deplored it as populist and anti-market.³⁴ As we have seen, many statistics indicate Poland has changed from being a country of "forced egalitarianism" to a country less and less egalitarian.

Like old-age pensioners, coal miners also succeeded in securing high incomes for themselves. From 1990 to 1997 their wages grew faster than any other sector in the Polish economy. According to UNDP Poland, "the unjustifiable chasm between growth in wages and productivity is waning, but in some sectors the opposite is occurring. The mining industry is a clear example; its wages rose the most despite its ailing productivity." The average salary in the coal mining industry was 160% of the average salary in Poland in 1996.³⁵ At the end of 1998, the average monthly salary in mining was 1833 PLN, compared to 986 PLN in farming, 946 PLN in education, and 845 PLN in health care services and social work.³⁶ The Polish government simply capitulated to the strong and vociferous mining unions. Moreover, it offered an early retirement package to many with cash benefits of 40,000 PLN. Such an offer was not extended to workers in other sectors.

Having examined the empirical trends in incomes in Poland, an ethical analysis of them is in order. What conclusions can be drawn from an examination of this data through the lens of Roman Catholic social teaching?

Catholic Social Teaching and Polish Wages/Salaries During the "Free-Market" Era

The axiom that in a market economy wages should be established according to productivity is hardly debatable. Even in Roman Catholic social teaching, which made a mark for itself defending workers who, in Leo XIII's words, "have been given over, isolated and defenseless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition."³⁷ According to ethicist Aniela Dylus of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Roman Catholic social teaching concerning just remuneration evolved by adding objective criteria to its "subjective elements", namely the subjective rights of workers. In other words, Catholic social teaching recognized the need to consider both productivity and the macroeconomic context of employer-labor relations.³⁸ As early as Pius XII's *Quadrogesimo Anno*, we read that three things are to be considered in fixing wages: "Support of the Workingman and His Family", "The State of the Business" and "Requirements of the Common Good."³⁹ Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* explicitly names "each man's assignment and productivity" as a factor in determining wages.⁴⁰

This acknowledgment of the role of productivity in setting wages perhaps justifies, to some extent, the decrease in wages in the farming industry. If wages in this sector were artificially "propped-up" by the Polish government in the 1980's, it is quite natural that they had to fall under the new, capitalist system.⁴¹ However, as the esteemed professor of Roman Catholic social ethics Fr. Józef Majka wrote, "the Department of Agriculture not only did nothing to strengthen individual farms, but in many instances, and even in the entire politics of collectivized farming, it created particularly difficult conditions for agriculture."⁴² Therefore, the Polish government should take responsibility for the debacle it helped create in the farming industry. Until recently, Polish farmers have been left alone to struggle to survive. The situation is particularly bleak in the areas of the former "PGR's", or massive collectivized farms. In such heavily agricultural areas, unemployment reaches 30%. The incidence of poverty among farmers has risen to more than one out of every three.⁴³ In the last few years, programs sponsored by the EU and by the Polish government have injected capital into agriculture. However, it is doubtful that these programs even begin to redress the years of neglect and their consequences.⁴⁴ Moreover, the EU itself believes that half of all farmers in Poland will need to retrain in order to work in other fields (33% of Poles work in agriculture, as opposed to 3% in the U.S. and 5% in Austria). Unfortunately, the Polish government began to fund retraining programs for farmers just last year. It supplied such funding for other groups a number of years earlier. Prior to this, the government tried to appease Polish farmers with paltry welfare benefits.⁴⁵

In my judgment, Catholic social teaching commends several policy decisions in regard to this situation. First, according to the principle of social justice, "persons have an obligation to be active participants in the life of society..." and "...society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way."⁴⁶ If Polish farmers need to be retrained in order to contribute to the common good, the Polish government bears an obligation to enable this. Of course, this also applies to industrial workers who work in antiquated and unprofitable industries, which were created by the Polish government during communism. Second, in order that farmers obtain wages that enable them to "lead a life worthy of man [sic] and to fulfill family responsibilities"⁴⁷, the Polish government should more heavily subsidize agriculture to maintain fair prices. Pope John XXIII, who showed particular concern for the "depressed sector" of agriculture, recommended price

protection of agricultural products in 1961.⁴⁸ Today, when Polish farmers must compete against the flood of European agricultural products, which are heavily subsidized by the EU, his words remain relevant. Low-interest microlending represents another option. Supplying capital to farmers would enable them to pool their resources and form more productive industries. To reiterate, in order to be effective, this would need to be done on a large-scale. Borrowing from the Grameen model, which began in 1983 in Bangladesh, the creation of banks for low-income entrepreneurs could make this proposition viable. In addition, perhaps non-governmental organizations such as churches could lend capital for business initiatives in the way that many churches do in the United States.

Catholic social teaching does not demand that government props up unproductive sectors of the economy ad infinitum. Some farmers will need to acknowledge the need to equip themselves with job skills. However, it does demand that workers are not left unprotected to the devices of the market. Catholic social teaching also requires that “every effort should be made to ensure that persons be enabled, on the basis of merit, to go on to higher studies, so that, as far as possible, they may occupy posts and take on responsibilities in human society in accordance with their natural gifts and skills they have acquired.”⁴⁹ The situation in Poland today reveals quite the contrary. Children of farmers least benefit from higher education and the educational system in general. In the 1980’s, one out of every 14 high school graduates from farming or farm labor backgrounds or the working class in villages and small towns went on to college. Today, that ratio has changed to one out of 140. This translates into 2% of young people from small towns and villages attending institutions of higher learning.⁵⁰ Educational discrimination against children from rural areas begins earlier. They have less access to government-funded pre-schools, kindergartens and the quality of their teachers fails to compare to those in the cities.⁵¹ Given the strong correlation between wages and educational attainment in contemporary Poland, this puts them at greater risk of falling into a “poverty trap.” Hence, intensified educational aid should be targeted at children from villages and small towns. However, the government cut spending on scholarship aid by one-half from 1990-1996.⁵² As the UNDP Poland report on access to education states, “[e]xpenditures on education thus ‘compete’ with other social expenditures in particular pensions and social transfers.”⁵³

Pius XI contended that “lowering or raising wages unduly, with a view to private profit, and with no consideration for the common good, is contrary to social justice.” More specifically, he argued that wages should be set in order to provide as many employment opportunities as possible and in order to ensure a “suitable means of livelihood” for all.⁵⁴ Clearly those in Poland such as coal miners, politicians and managers of firms who demanded the exorbitant wages described above were not cognizant of this teaching (if they were, they dismissed it). John Paul II, who probably wrote *Laborem Exercens* with Poland in mind, staunchly opposes union demands which become “a kind of group or class ‘egoism’” and reminds workers in any given profession that they must limit their demands based on “the general economic situation of the country.”⁵⁵ It would not seem unfair to assert that members of those unions, such as the mining unions, engaged in the kind of class egoism that their fellow countryman rejected as immoral.

Catholic social teaching consistently defends the claim that wages must always be determined with an eye towards serving the common good. In this vein, John XXIII

wrote that in considering the common good in the context of wage justice on a national level, the following objectives obtain:

to provide employment for as many workers as possible; to take care lest privileged groups arise even among workers themselves; to maintain a balance between wages and prices; to make accessible the goods and services for a better life to as many persons as possible; either to eliminate or to keep within bounds the inequalities that exist between different sectors of the economy. . .⁵⁶

While I agree that it is very difficult to calculate a just wage concretely, I would maintain, in agreement with Catholic social teaching, that a just wage is established by considering the individual's contribution to the economic enterprise and the common good. In this regard, John XXIII claimed that sometimes "very great remuneration is had for the performance of some task of lesser importance."⁵⁷ The salaries of managers in Poland today are anywhere from 20 to 50 times greater than the nation's average.⁵⁸ In light of Catholic social teaching, the legitimacy of such wages seems dubious. The exact value of their contribution certainly escapes any facile calculation. However, as Michael Novak has cogently argued in regard to CEO salaries, "there is something supremely social in their achievements...It is wrong to award them as if they were Lone Rangers."⁵⁹ In other words, the CEO's and the manager's ability to succeed rests heavily on the social system from which he or she benefits (in terms of education, and more generally the entire costly architecture of the nation's political economy, i.e. investments in infrastructure, human capital, etc.).

It is difficult to imagine that the contribution of a manager to the common good is that much more valuable than that of a doctor teacher or professor. Yet, the Polish manager's salary is exponentially greater.⁶⁰ In the "information societies" that exist in developed nations, investment in "human capital" is said to be the key to development. Who will develop "human capital", inculcating the skills necessary to achieve success in today's world, if not teachers and professors? The wages of these professionals are so scandalously low that many teachers and professors are leaving their jobs for more economically advantageous positions. If they do remain in their vocations, they are often forced to teach at several schools, leaving little time to directly work with students.⁶¹

The same criticism can be rendered towards those politicians who expressed outrage at the prospect of wage cuts for their profession. A member of the advisory council for monetary policy at the Polish National Bank exemplified this reaction. "The regulation concerning the earnings of managers and politicians is contrary to the basic principles of the market."⁶² Catholic social teaching on wages rejects this "market mentality." Rather than clamoring about their potential losses, civil servants should see themselves and their wages in a relationship of solidarity to others in Poland. The late Fr. Józef Tischner, the philosopher of the Solidarity movement, defined solidarity by appealing to Galatians 6:2. Solidarity, he said, exhorts us to "carry one another's burdens." He also claimed that solidarity is something that continually must be defined.⁶³ Solidarity should be embodied in Poland in the context of wage negotiations and demands (among other places, of course). Does the politician who demands immoderate wages consider, for example, the plight of the 17% of workers who earn less than 2/3 the average salary? In speaking of active solidarity, John XXIII argued that civil authority exists, above all, to protect the common good "of the entire human family."⁶⁴ Therefore,

politicians should acknowledge their role as servants. They were elected to serve, not to earn ten times more than the average Pole. As John Paul II has articulated, [t]he exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess.⁶⁵

Solidarity requires everyone to consider the fate of others. In other words, in wage negotiations, employers and employees alike should attempt to show mutual understanding: “what are the needs, difficulties and fears of my partner in dialogue? What consequences might my inordinate demands have for others and for society, directly and indirectly?” Poles must ask themselves such questions if they are to build a just economic order for all members of their society.

Catholic social teaching also sheds light on the ethical status of political processes that shape wages. It would seem to question the equity of wage policies such as the Balcerowicz tax, which hurt the poorest workers to the largest degree. On the contrary, it would commend the trilateral dialogical process in determining wages that began in 1994. The right to participation in all levels of society, including wage negotiations, flows from the principle of social justice.⁶⁶ Finally, Catholic social teaching urges that wages enable workers to “cultivate...[their]...own material, social, cultural and spiritual life worthily, and that of his [or her] dependents.”⁶⁷ As we have seen, the minimum wage in Poland does not meet this criterion. As a result, it mandates against the recommendation of the “Capitalist Manifesto”, specifically its proposal to lower the minimum wage. Catholic social teaching also advises that those who receive the minimum wage should obtain shares in companies in order to compensate for extremely low remuneration.⁶⁸

The argument that the minimum wage leads to greater unemployment appears untenable on the basis of empirical studies. For example, in 1995 one-hundred American economists published a statement in the Wall Street Journal in which they demanded a raise in the minimum wage. They cited the fact that raising the minimum wage in the 1980’s had a negligible effect on the level of employment in the U.S.⁶⁹ Moreover, businesses with higher wages retain employees longer, thus avoiding the high costs of turnover: lost productivity, recruitment, training, etc. As noted economist George Akerlof states, “a firm that gives workers a ‘gift’ of higher wages...finds that workers reciprocate with a ‘gift’ of higher effort norms.”⁷⁰ More efficient productivity offsets higher labor costs. In addition, higher wages for the lowest wage earners opens new markets by giving more consumers greater purchasing power. Empowering workers through the living wage also leads to less expenditures on government subsidies for low-income workers. Small businesses, which lack the “corporate welfare” tax breaks bestowed upon large corporations, are hit the hardest for these subsidies. Therefore, many small business owners in the United States have adopted living wages of their own volition. For these reasons, in addition to the deontological perspective of Roman Catholic social teaching concerning just wages⁷¹, Catholic leaders in the U.S. have continually called for raises in the minimum wage.⁷² It would seem that Catholic leaders in Poland, in order to be faithful to Catholic social teaching, should do the same.

How has the Roman Catholic church reacted to the realities which have been described in this essay? What, if anything, has the church said and done in order to assuage the plight of those who have suffered from the socioeconomic transformation? Has it attempted through various means to promote just political and economic policies? What type of activity belongs to the “right and competence of the church”, as Fr. J. Bryan Hehir puts it.⁷³

The Catholic Church’s Witness During Poland’s Transition to a Market Economy

At the outset of this essay, I stated that two claims from Catholic social teaching would frame the discussion of the church’s activity in Poland during the last decade. Let us return to those statements in order to address the topic at hand.

Prior to Vatican II, the “social apostolate”, as it was then called, was considered necessary preparation for the Gospel.⁷⁴ As I mentioned earlier, the bishops declared in *Justice in the World* (1971) that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the world appear to us as a fully constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” However, the question concerning the kind of action remains nebulous. What level of specificity is appropriate? In *Octogesima Adveniens*, Paul VI called on local churches to “discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes. . .urgently needed.” Some commentators argue that the local churches must make their teaching more refined and precise in order to have real meaning and impact in the local context. For example, Richard McBrien contends that the church in the United States “cannot simply reiterate papal teachings” in the hope that they will correspond to contemporary American realities. In his view, the Catholic church in the U.S. must read the “signs of the times” in its national context and respond to them “in the light of the Gospel.” He points out that the U.S. bishops have done precisely this in their two pastoral letters, *The Challenge of Peace and Economic Justice for All*. However, the appropriate level of specific policy proposals remains elusive. I would contend that there is an ambiguity on the social teaching on this matter. On the one hand, we encounter a statement such as Paul VI’s, which challenges local churches to delve into the specifics of the local political and economic systems. On the other hand, *Justice in the World* itself appears to contradict or at least qualify this challenge. It states that “[o]f itself it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic and political spheres for justice in the world.”⁷⁵ John Paul II portrays the issue a similar vein in *Laborem Exercens*, no. 1. Yet, one notices, that he, along with the previous popes, do not hesitate to offer quite specific policy proposals. Recall the earlier cited recommendation of John XXIII for price protection of agricultural products. As for the current pontiff, consider, for example, his quite concrete proposals on wages (*Laborem Exercens*, no. 19) and joint ownership of the means of production (*Laborem Exercens*, no. 14). In regard to the former, John Paul II states that proper remuneration for a worker responsible for a family can and should be achieved by one of two means: a family wage or grants to mothers who devote themselves “exclusively to their families.”⁷⁶

Fr. Franciszek Kampka, professor of social ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin and advisor to the Polish bishops on social issues, considers this problem. He contends that when “it seems that the economic system does not respect the dignity of the human person, the Church cannot be silent and must take a strong stance.” Yet, he

continues by saying that the church's teaching on economic life must remain at a certain level of generality and it is not the place of the church to analyze the technical, economic changes that economic experts handle. He gives an example. The church might speak in favor of private property, but it should not propose a concrete model of privatization.⁷⁷

It would seem then that at the very least many concur that the church should take some stance in regard to economic issues. This implies agreement on the notion that promoting social justice is a "constitutive element of preaching the Gospel." The only disagreement comes in considering the level of specificity of teaching and action regarding social issues. Does the church in Poland at least acknowledge the former? The best way to answer this question is to turn to voices from Poland.

Aniela Dylus has published a book on the Polish socioeconomic transformation from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. In her analysis, she contends that the bishops' conference in Poland very seldom spoke out on economic issues. This silence may be explained by the church's fear of being perceived and portrayed as biased towards a political party and its program. The bishops did, according to Dylus, express their general approval of the reforms that took place after the fall of Communism in a few pastoral letters. However, they also recalled in their first letter that social justice demands that "undue burdens not be placed on society and that the burdens of the transformation be placed equally among all members of society." In 1992, the bishops again generally condoned of the changes taking place in society. They also proclaimed that unemployment and the impoverishment of society were inevitable consequences of the necessary reforms.⁷⁸ One assumes that they meant that these were temporary consequences. If this is not the case, their statement remains enigmatic, if not contrary to Catholic social teaching.

Other commentators confirm Dylus' position. Jaroslaw Gowin, author of a thorough book-length analysis of the Roman Catholic church "in the era of freedom" (the book's title), accuses the church in Poland of the lack of serious reflection on socioeconomic problems, despite the existence of a theoretical basis for such reflection in *Centesimus Annus*.⁷⁹ Like Dylus, he describes the general support of the bishops for the overall shape of the reforms in documents of local archdioceses and the church at the national level. For example, the bishops' conference *Justitia et Pax* commission released a declaration on unemployment in Poland. Here one finds the idea that the high unemployment in Poland is a necessary, temporary painful evil that should be tolerated as part of the restructuring of the labor market. In another document, the bishops address the dire need for an overhaul of the Polish agricultural sector. In Gowin's opinion, the latter document demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the problems of the farming industry today in Poland. Nonetheless, his overall assessment of the bishops' teaching concerning the socioeconomic changes is negative. He explains the lack of serious, sustained reflection in this area as a result of several factors. First, the bishops were not prepared for this "unexpected meeting with capitalism." Reading between the lines, one surmises that the bishops lack the kind of training needed to undertake serious reflection on economics. Unfortunately, a distrust towards lay persons that existed under Communism persists and stifles consultation with lay experts.⁸⁰ Second, in an earlier book, Gowin maintains that the anti-abortion theme dominated the speeches and statements of the episcopate.⁸¹ While this may have changed in the latter part of the decade, the abortion issue certainly absorbed the bishops' attention until 1997. Finally,

the church feared that if it criticized the reforms, it would be attacked and deemed “anti-Polish” or “anti-national.” In point of fact, the church was criticized from both the left and the right. For example, the head of the cabinet of prime minister Hanna Suchocka claimed that the church’s hierarchy still acts as though it were in a battle with Communism by not supporting the government’s reforms. On the other hand, progressive intellectuals such as church historian Bohdan Cywinski accused the church’s hierarchy of not being faithful to the universal church’s “option for the poor.” This group criticized the hierarchy’s unreflective acceptance of liberal economic proposals that invariably hurt the weakest members of society the most.⁸²

This onslaught of criticism, coupled with the general decline of the church’s authority in Poland⁸³, lead many bishops to believe that the church should withdraw from the political arena. Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, the Secretary General of the Polish episcopate from 1993-98, demonstrated his preference for this course of action on many occasions.⁸⁴ However, like John Paul II, he calls for a church that is politically neutral but socially engaged. In this vein, he offers an apologetic for and an indictment of the Church’s stance towards the socioeconomic trends and policies instituted in Poland in the last decade.

Has the Church in Poland sufficiently called attention to the fate of the weakest? It was difficult to protest against appropriate reforms. It was difficult to demand of bishops that they knew and proposed to the economists better solutions, especially because they ensured us that the economic recovery would benefit all. The Church was still accused of not supported the reforms strongly enough. However, the Church can never give up calling attention to the most needy...Enough of that voice did not exist in recent years, or at least it was not heard enough.⁸⁵

Bishop Pieronek confirms the contentions of Dylus and Gowin. Indeed, an examination of recent documents reveals that little, if any at all, sustained reflection exists concerning the issues that I have described above. For example, the bishops did not react to the so-called “Capitalist Manifesto” and its demand to lower the minimum wage and create “elastic” (i.e. make labor laws concerning firing employees less stringent) labor relations. The bishops’ conference has released several documents that touch upon privatization and re-privatization⁸⁶, poverty, unemployment, and the “wealth gap” in Poland.⁸⁷ In a document published by the 309th Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Poland⁸⁸, the bishops cite Centesimus Annus to justify their intentions: “The ‘new evangelization’, which the modern world urgently needs...must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the church’s social doctrine.”⁸⁹ The bishops mention that those plagued by unemployment and poverty deserve protection by “political organizations, unions and greater interest and aid from society.” They fail, however, to recommend concrete ways in which these various agents can and should aid those who suffer. The document lacks analysis of the causes of poverty and unemployment. No relationship is shown between low wages and poverty. To their credit, the bishops note that “blameless poverty” (a term used by institutions such as the World Bank, in contradistinction to “deserved poverty”) often precludes educational opportunities for advancement. Yet, there is no mention of policies to remedy this injustice (such as targeted scholarship aid, raises in salaries for teachers in villages, etc.) In short, this document, along with others similar in nature and tone, represents a

necessary attempt to speak out on social ills in Poland. However, the Polish bishops, as far as I can discern, have yet to demonstrate the kind of engagement in issues of economic justice that bishops in Australia, Germany, the United States, Canada and in many other countries have shown.⁹⁰

Many Poles had great expectations for the documents that were to be borne of the II Polish Plenary Synod of Bishops. The preparatory documents were created by committees headed by esteemed theologians such as Fr. Józef Tischner and Fr. Andrzej Zuberier. Lay experts also comprised the committees. A document on the ethics of social life was to be produced. According to Gowin, many Polish bishops did not want to perform serious analyses of problems. Rather, they treated the Synod as another celebratory, perfunctory event. They eventually curtailed the role of the laity, according to the wishes of the head of the conference, Archbishop Glemp.⁹¹ The preparatory documents, published in a collection, did not stimulate discussion among the hierarchy and eventually were cast aside. Bishop Pieronek expressed his disappointment by saying that “we must openly admit that the bishops neglected the pastoral opportunity created by the Synod.”⁹² In fairness to the Polish bishops, Communist oppression precluded or at least hindered the ability of the Polish episcopate from building up the kind of expertise experience in economic justice advocacy that the U.S. bishops garnered throughout history.⁹³ Nonetheless, it would seem that the Polish bishops should more stridently begin to answer the challenge issued by Paul VI in *Octogesima Adveniens*. In my judgment, this entails sophisticated analysis, in consultation with lay experts, of socioeconomic phenomena in a given society, attempts to publicize the social teaching (such as study groups in local parishes), and political pressure. This last measure certainly contains inherent dangers. John Paul II rightly admonishes the church not to become too closely aligned with a political party or platform. However, lobbying representatives on issues such as living wage ordinances or raising the minimum wage belongs to the “right and competence” of the church if this will protect the most economically disadvantaged members of society. If the church in Poland does not politically advocate with the poor, utilizing its clout and sheer size in service of social justice, who will? Furthermore, if, for example, Bishop Chrapek, a member of the bishops’ committee on social issues, were to lobby the Polish government in regard to minimum wages, he will surely be more likely to have a hearing than the average parishioner. At the very least, the bishops in Poland should promote greater understanding of Catholic social teaching in Poland. At present, it would seem that this is not the case.⁹⁴

When asked why the church has not issued a separate document on poverty in Poland, bishop Chrapek of Radom responded: “up until this point, action has been more important. I fear that we speak too uninterestingly about the Lord Jesus; social issues cannot dominate the basic mission of the Church, namely evangelization.”⁹⁵ Yet, he also argues that the church is not faithful to its mission if it does not “stand unequivocally on the side of the poor and the marginalized.”⁹⁶ Hence, the question concerning the appropriate nature of the church’s activity returns. The bishop’s statement evinces some ambiguity. On the one hand, he seems to view action on behalf of social justice as secondary to the church’s mission. However, he sees it as an intrinsic part of it. It is simply not a part of what he calls “evangelization.” Perhaps he is thinking in the pre-Vatican II terminology of “pre-evangelization.” Despite the aforementioned citation of

John Paul II's notion of "new evangelization" by the Polish bishops' conference, it would seem that this perception, a misunderstanding in my judgment, dominates among the members of the episcopacy in Poland.

How has John Paul II reacted to the situation in Poland today? While a comprehensive analysis of this topic requires a separate essay, a few key papal statements elucidate John Paul II's concerns for our purposes. At the outset of this essay, we encountered the pope's exhortation to take greater care of those who suffer as a result of the Polish transformation - the homeless, the sick, the hungry, the disabled, the marginalized. This exhortation, delivered during the Polish bishops ad limina visit to Rome in 1998, was accompanied by numerous suggestions as to the "how" question. First, John Paul stressed the necessity to teach the "social doctrine of the Church."⁹⁷ In addition, he reminded the Polish bishops of his assertion from *Christifideles laici*. "Lay persons", argues the pontiff, "cannot resign from political activity."⁹⁸ According to John Paul II, the laity specifically must act in the political arena to protect the common good. This would seem to suggest that the bishops might employ lobbyists, as the American bishops do, or at least work with the laity in promoting the common good in the Polish Parliament. Immediately following the assessment of the Polish transformation, the pope adds: "Let the voice of the Church be clear and audible everywhere that the fate of these people [the homeless, the hungry, etc.] needs to be recalled."⁹⁹

In a later address to the bishops, John Paul defines the role of the church in Poland: The Church in Poland has...a gravely important role to play. It resides in ensuring that the essence and the values of the Gospel become imprinted upon the categories of thought, criteria of judgments and principles of action of the human. [The Church] must strive so that the entire culture is permeated by the Christian spirit.¹⁰⁰

John Paul II delivered a similar message to the Polish bishops in Kraków during his pilgrimage in 1997. During that speech, he recalled his exhortation from 1991 to the Polish bishops' conference, in which he stated that "the human being is the way of the Church...The task of the Episcopate and the Church in Poland is to somehow translate that into the language of concrete problems and tasks, utilizing the conciliar vision of the Church as People of God and the related analogy of 'the signs of the times'"¹⁰¹

During his last pilgrimage to Poland in 1999, John Paul II spoke unequivocally about the need to aid those who endure economic hardships in Poland today. He underscored this in his speech to the Polish Parliament on June 11, 1999 and in his homily in Elk on June 8, 1999. In his homily, he proclaimed that the "shout and the yearning of the poor demands from us a concrete and magnanimous answer." Furthermore, he argued that growth and progress cannot take place "at any cost" (recall the deliberate suppression of already low wages by Balcerowicz). According to the pope, the church's preferential option for the poor is not fulfilled through a fleeting, one-time response to the need of others. It requires "an actual and persistent will to promote the well-being of those in need and often lacking hope for a better future."¹⁰²

These statements, in my judgment, challenge the Polish bishops and the entire "People of God" to heed Paul VI's claim in *Octogesima Adveniens*, no.4. I have attempted to make the case that the Polish bishops have not fully risen to the task. This seems to stem from three factors: fear, lack of knowledge and, to some degree, apathy and/or lethargy. Until this juncture I have dwelled on what J. Bryan Hehir calls the

“legislative-policy” and “educational-cultural” functions of the church.¹⁰³ In other words, I have primarily dealt with the church’s role as a teacher, through its social teaching, and its role as a political actor, through direct political advocacy. My intention was to evaluate the Polish bishops’ activity in this essay. A separate essay should treat the role of lay movements. Moreover, it would be unfair not to at least note the positive role that the church in Poland has played in terms of direct pastoral responses to the need of the poor and marginalized. Therefore, by way of conclusion a brief word on this topic is in order.

John Paul II himself lauded the efforts of church-related organizations such as Caritas Polska and secularly-based institutions.¹⁰⁴ Some of these efforts are long-term, while others have come at specific times of need. An example of the later is the monumental effort of the church to aid the victims of the flood in Poland in 1997. Both Aniela Dylus and Jaroslaw Gowin see the many Catholic movements and organizations that have been created since 1989 as signs of hope for the church of the future in Poland. Gowin contends that they are one of the most important instruments of “new evangelization.”¹⁰⁵ Aniela Dylus discusses the more than 200 movements and organizations that have arisen. She points to, for example, the Society of Polish Catholic Lawyers, which made an appeal to regulate labor laws and to make agriculture a more profitable investiture for Polish farmers.¹⁰⁶ Local churches have not shied away from active aid as well. Just last year, after the announcement of massive lay-offs at the Sendzimir steel works outside of Kraków, local parishes created employment bureaus in order to assist the unemployed in finding jobs. Dylus criticized this effort, claiming that while the intentions of these local pastors were good, they lack the kind of expertise needed to run job training programs.¹⁰⁷ Her criticism might be valid. However, when the vast majority of the unemployed in Poland are not entitled to state-funded job training programs, it seems better for local churches to get involved in any way they can rather than sit on the sidelines, listening to the “shouts and yearning” of the poor from a distance.

In summary, many trials and tribulations have taken place in Poland since 1989. Millions of Poles have taken pay-cuts and have plummeted into poverty as a result. It appears that the institutional church, more specifically the bishops’ conference, has not yet fully recognized the promotion of the concrete structures and policies necessary for social justice as a constitutive element of the preaching of the Gospel. Whereas the church in Poland seems to have staggered in terms of its legislative-policy and educational-cultural roles, many of its members have done tremendous work by directly aiding the needy.

1. An earlier version of this essay was presented to the members of the Department of Philosophy at the Academy of Economics in Kraków in May 2000. I wish to express my gratitude to them and to many of the scholars mentioned in this essay for their assistance and to the Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission for facilitating the opportunity to undertake my research project in Poland during the 1999-2000 academic year. I am solely responsible for the normative evaluations presented here.

2. Czeslaw Bywalec, “Transformacja gospodarcza a poziom zycia społeczenstwa polskiego (1989-93)”, *Ekonomista* 4 (1995): 696.

3. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6 October 1999.

4. Jan Pawel II, *Program dla Kosciola w Polsce: Jan Pawel II do polskich biskupów; Wizyta Ad Limina* 1998 (Kraków: Znak, 1998) 36-37.

5. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 Dec. 1999.

6. "Odchodzenie od złudzeń? O dziesięcioleciu przemian społecznych i gospodarczych w Polsce dyskutują: Ryszard Bugaj, Waldemar Kuczynski, Krzysztof Madel, SJ, prof. Andrzej Rychard oraz Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska i Tomasz Wiscicki", *Wież* 2: 496 (2000): 47.
7. *Polityka* 2 (2227). The article on Polish contemporary attitudes towards the transformation also presents the following: 20% of those polled declared the nineties to be the decade their lives were the best. Eleven percent declared that the current economic situation is good, while 59% claimed the economic situation is bad.
8. I contend that using Roman Catholic social teaching as an ethical lens in the case of Poland is particularly justifiable and appropriate on several counts. First, the Roman Catholic social tradition's concepts, such as personalism, subsidiarity and socialization, the common good and its theory of justice, provide a coherent and comprehensive framework within which economic systems and their constitutive elements can be critiqued. Second, many of ethicists in Poland writing on issues such as poverty and unemployment are rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition. Their work will be highly useful to this analysis. In addition, more than 90% of the Polish population declares itself to be members of the Roman Catholic church. As a result, the "Catholic social vision" as it is presented in the official social teaching should weigh heavily on the consciences of the vast majority of Poles. Finally, many of the same concepts found in Roman Catholic social teaching are expressed in the Polish Constitution of 1997. For example, in the second article of the first chapter we read: "The Republic of Poland is a democratic state ruled by law which [seeks to] realize the principle of social justice."
9. See *Justice in the World* in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997) 289. All citations of Roman Catholic official documents in this essay are taken from this collection unless otherwise noted.
10. Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, no. 4. I acknowledge the controversial nature of this statement. I will evaluate it in the second half of this essay.
11. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no 19.
12. Tadeusz Kowalik, "Zmiany w podziale dochodu narodowego w czasie transformacji", Marek Belka, Władysław Trzeciakowski, eds., *Dynamika transformacji polskiej gospodarki (Tom I)* (Warszawa: PolText, 1997) 83-100.
13. Barbara Kieniewicz and Barbara Szopa, *Polityka dochodowa na tle rynku pracy w Polsce w warunkach transformacji systemowej* (Kraków: Akademia Ekonomiczna, 1997) 88.
14. I subscribe to the methodology in Catholic social teaching referred to as "Observe, Judge, Act." John XXIII refers to this method in *Mater et Magistra*, no. 236: "The teachings in regard to social matters for the most part are put into effect in the following three stages: first, the actual situation is examined; then, the situation is evaluated carefully in relation to these teachings, then only is it decided what can and should be done in order that the traditional norms may be adapted to circumstances of time and place. These three steps are at times expressed by the three words: observe, judge, act."
15. Mieczysław Kabaj, *Programme Outline for Actively Counteracting Poverty and Social Exclusion*, http://www.undp.org.pl/pages/pl_pov2.htm, (3 March 2000): 16.
16. Jan Rutkowski, *Welfare and the Labor Market in Poland: Social Policy during Economic Transition* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1998) 26.
17. Czesław Bywalec, *Spoleczne aspekty transformacji gospodarczej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Kraków: Akademia Ekonomiczna, 1998) 23.
18. Poland increasingly resembles OECD countries in this regard.
19. UNDP Poland, *Raport o rozwoju społecznym Polska 1999: ku godnej aktywnej starości* (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1999) 59.
20. Rutkowski 13-14. By comparison, that ratio is much lower in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary: 45%, 45%, 47%.
21. Rutkowski 28, 29. See also Kieniewicz and Szopa, who claim that the instance of low wages rose from 2% in 1987 to 15,7% in 1996. Kieniewicz and Szopa 87.
22. Mieczysław Kabaj, "Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion", http://www.undp.org.pl/pages/pl_pov.htm, (3 March 2000). The complex problem of how poverty should be measured exceeds the scope of this analysis. Włodzimierz Okrasa discusses this problem and its particular difficulty in regard to Poland in a World Bank report. Among the obstacles is the fact that the Polish government has yet to establish official poverty levels. See Włodzimierz Osaka, *Who Avoids and Who Escapes from Poverty during the Transition: Evidence from Polish Panel Data, 193-96* (Washington,

- DC: The World Bank, 1999) introduction; esp. page 3. My main point is that all indicators show substantial increases in poverty in Poland and that a distinct relationship between low wages and poverty exists.
23. Osaka 18-19. Osaka shows that the elderly suffer the least from poverty in Poland.
24. Rutkowski 54.
25. The average monthly income in Poland was (after taxes in brackets) in: 1998: 1, 232 PLN (1,027); 1997: 1,066 PLN (877), 1995: 691 PLN (561); 1994: 525 PLN (425); 1993: 390 PLN (320); 1992: 290 PLN (244). Statistics taken from *Rocznik Statystyczny*, GUS:1999 and *Rocznik Statystyczny*, GUS: 1996. The Polish currency, the zloty, has fluctuated between 4 and 4.6 USD in the last few years. This gives the American reader a sense of the meager average monthly wage in Poland, particularly if he or she is cognizant of the fact that many expenses, such as rent and train travel, are fast approaching the equivalent cost in the American context.
26. Rutkowski 53.
27. UNDP Poland, National Report on Human Development: The Changing Role of the State, Poland '97, (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1998) 124.
28. Tadeusz Kowalik, "Zmiany w podziale dochodu narodowego w czasie transformacji", Marek Belka, Wladyslaw Trzeciakowski, eds., *Dynamika transformacji polskiej gospodarki (Tom I)* (Warszawa: PolText, 1997) 99.
29. UNDP Poland, National Report on Human Development: The Changing Role of the State, Poland '97 (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1998) 126.
30. See, for example, Joanna Solska, "Gol6, niewesolo", *Polityka* 14 (1 April 2000): 56.
31. The "Manifest Kapitalistyczny" was published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 28 April 2000.
32. Michal Dabrowski, "Placa minimalna i jej wplyw na wielkosc zatrudnienia", master's thesis, Akademia Ekonomiczna w Krakowie, 1998, 92. I am grateful to the author and Professor of Macroeconomics Andrzej Wojtyna, who provided access to this thesis and numerous other articles and references. On the category of the "social welfare minimum", see L. Deniszczuk and B. Sajkiewicz, "Kategoria minimum socjalnego", S. Golinowska, ed. *Polska bieda II* (IPiSS: Warszawa, 1998) 150ff.
33. Kabaj 20.
34. The president of the National Bank of Poland, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, claimed that limiting her salary to the designated 12,000 PLN per month was outrageous. If it were to go into effect, the salaries of 135 employees who earned more than 12,000 PLN per month at the National Bank would also have to be lowered. See *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17 February 2000.
35. UNDP Poland, National Report on Human Development: The Changing Role of the State, Poland '97 (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1998) 126, 127.
36. Statistics taken from *Rocznik Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, GUS: 1999.
37. Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 2
38. Aniela Dylus, *Zmiennosc i ciaglosc: polskie transformacje ustrojowe w horyzoncie etycznym* (Warszawa: Centrum im. Adama Smitha, 1997) 128.
39. Pius XII, *Quadrogesimo Anno*, nos. 70-74.
40. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 67.
41. According to Professor Kazimierz Sosenko of the Academy of Economics in Krak6w, this was the case. He pointed this out to me in a conversation regarding this essay.
42. J6zef Majka, *Jaka Polska?: wezlowe problemy katolickiej nauki społecznej* (Wroclaw: Wroclawskie Wydawnictwo Archidiecezjalne, 1991) 211.
43. Rutkowski 59.
44. Cf. Marcin Makowiecki, "Inwestycje Wspierane Przez Panstwo", *Nowe Zycie Gospodarcze* 33 (15 August 1999): 30.
45. The new legislation is described in "Chlopi wielozawodowi", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 March 2000. According to the author, the "new legislation will eliminate the discriminatory rules against farmers."
46. United States Catholic Conference, *Economic Justice For All*, no. 71. in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997) 595.
47. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no 71.
48. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 137.
49. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 13. According to John XXIII, this is a requirement of the natural law.
50. UNDP Poland, National Human Development Report Poland 1998: Access to Education (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1997) 45.

51. For example, in grammar schools in villages, 11% of pupils learn English, while 29% of pupils in large cities learn the language in which 80% of all information on the Internet appears. English is also crucial as many businesses in Poland require it of their job candidates. See UNDP Poland, National Human Development Report Poland 1998: Access to Education (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1997) 71.
52. UNDP Poland, National Human Development Report Poland 1998: Access to Education (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1997) 44.
53. UNDP Poland, National Human Development Report Poland 1998: Access to Education (Warszawa: UNDP Poland, 1997) 17.
54. Pius XII, *Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 74.
55. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 20.
56. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 79.
57. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 70.
58. Tadeusz Kowalik, "Czy sprawiedliwosc spoleczna kosztuje?", *Ekonomista* 3 (1997): 302.
59. Michael Novak, "The Executive Joneses", *Forbes* 29 May 1989: 95. Cited in Michael Naughton and Robert G. Kennedy, "Executive Compensation: An Evaluation From the Catholic Social Tradition", *Social Justice Review* 84, No.11 (1993).
60. In 1998, the average monthly wage in Poland was 1,232.69 PLN. In the same year, the average salary in education was 1116.16 PLN in the public sector and 1,229.61 in the private sector. In health care services and social services it was 1,003.35 PLN in the public sector and 986.26 PLN in the private sector. These figures represent gross wages. They are taken from Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Rocznik Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 1999. Mieczyslaw Kabaj cites exorbitant salaries of managers and CEOs. For example, the chairman of public television earned 35,000 PLN per month. This is 25.8 times greater than the average monthly salary. The heads of coal companies earn up to 25.000 PLN, which is 18.4 times greater than the average. See the wage chart in Kabaj 18.
61. Cf. "Uniwersytet przed reanimacja," *Znak* 537 (2000).
62. Dariusz Rosati, "Powrot socjalizmu", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 9 March 2000.
63. Józef Tischner, *Etyka Solidarnosci oraz Homo Sovieticus* (Kraków: Znak, 1992) 10, 15.
64. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 98.
65. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 39.
66. Cf. *Justice in the World*, 291 in O'Brien and Shannon; See also *Economic Justice For All*, no. 71, 72.
67. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 67.
68. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 75.
69. Tadeusz Kowalik, "Czy sprawiedliwosc...". 85. See also Karen Kraut, Scott Klinger, Chuck Collins, *Choosing the High Road: Businesses That Pay A Living Wage and Prosper* (Boston: United For a Fair Economy, 2000) 10-12.
70. Cited in Joseph A. Ritter, Lowell J. Taylor, "Economic Models of Employee Motivation", *Review*, September-October 1997, 17. The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis publishes this journal.
71. Krishna Fells, founder of Small Business Owners of Washington State makes this case in Kraut, Klinger and Collins, *Choosing the High Road...* See page 7 of the report.
72. Cf. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 19.
73. Cardinal Roger Mahony, the chairman of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Domestic Policy Committee recently urged members of the House and Senate to pass the minimum wage increase bill. Citing a pastoral letter written by the bishop's conference, he contended that the minimum wage must become a living wage in order to protect the "well-being and stability of families." Cardinal Roger Mahony, "Raise the Minimum Wage: September 2000", *Social Development and World Peace: National Catholic Conference of Bishops/United States Catholic Conference*, <http://usccb.org/sdwp/national/minimumalert.htm>, (6 Jan. 2001).
74. J. Bryan Hehir, "The Right and Competence of the Church in the American Case", John A. Coleman, ed., *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) 55-71.
75. Richard P. McBrien, "The Future Role of the Church in American Society", L. Griffin, ed., *Religion and Politics in the American Milieu* (South Bend: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1986) 92.
76. *Justice in the World* 294 in O'Brien and Shannon
77. J. Bryan Hehir refers to the "moral and political specificity" of John Paul II's social teaching. See Hehir 62.
78. Franciszek Kampka, *Antropologiczne i spoleczne podstawy ladu gospodarczego w swietle nauczania Kosciola* (Lublin: KUL, 1995) 26.

79. Aniela Dylus 27-28.
80. Jaroslaw Gowin, *Kosciol w czasach wolnosci 1989-1999* (Kraków: Znak, 1999) 274.
81. This phenomenon is fairly widely recognized and criticized in Poland. Stanislaw Grabska, former president of the Catholic Inteligentsia Club of Warsaw describes it in "Obywatele Kosciola", *Dzieci Soboru zadaja pytanie* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Wiedzy, 1996) 291-309; esp. 308.
82. Jaroslaw Gowin, *Kosciol po komunizmie* (Kraków: Znak, 1995) 107.
83. Gowin, *Kosciol w czasach...* 273.
84. According to the Polish polling agency CBOS (1994), from 1987 to 1993, the approval of the Roman Catholic church's role in public life fell from approximately 80% to 54%. Gowin describes this phenomenon and its reasons in *Kosciol po komunizmie*. He chronicles the events that caused the church to lose its popularity: the hierarchy's repeated uncompromising stance on abortion (including its prohibition when a mother's life is in jeopardy), the demand to return Roman Catholic religion classes to public schools, the demand by the church to regain its property that the Communists appropriated, even when this meant the closing of schools, hospitals and shelters. For similar statistics, see Gowin 7.
85. Gowin, *Kosciol w czasach...* 278.
86. Tadeusz Pieronek, "Zatroskanie o czlowieka", *Wiedza*, 6: 488 (1999): 47.
87. Re-privatization refers to property appropriated by the Communists and its subsequent return to its prior owner. Józef Majka addressed this complex problem in an article entitled "Przemiany społeczno-gospodarcze w swietle etyki społecznej", *I ogólnopolska konferencja naukowa nt. "Transformacja gospodarki polskiej - doswiadczenia i perspektywy"* (Warszawa: Ruch "Demokracja Polska", 1993).
88. See, for example, "Społeczny wymiar Jubileusza Odkupienia: List na luty", *Konferencja Episkopatu Polski*, <http://www.episkopat.pl/dokumenty/d-17c.htm>, (12 Jan. 2001) and "Komunikat z 303. Zebrania Plenarnego" *Konferencja Episkopatu Polski*, <http://www.episkopat.pl/dokumenty/komunikat303.htm>, (12 Jan. 2001). The latter document contains a slightly higher degree of specificity than the other cited documents. It cites *Centesimus Annus* in regard to the primary duty of the state (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 48). Yet, concrete directives as to how to fulfill that duty are absent.
89. See "Szukajac swiatla na nowy tysiaclecie: Slowo biskupow polskich na temat niektórych problemach społecznych", *Opoka*, http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WE/kep/problemy_spoleczne_17122000.html, (12 Jan. 2001).
90. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 5
91. Terence McGoldrick describes the activities of local bishops conferences in "Episcopal Conferences Worldwide on Catholic Social Teaching", *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 22-50. Along with the aforementioned, he cites the Philippines, Congo, Cameroon as bishops' conferences that have done significant work in the area of economic justice.
92. Gowin, *Kosciol w czasach wolnosci* 458.
93. Cited in Gowin, *Kosciol w czasach wolnosci* 458.
94. David J. O'Brien chronicles the "highs" and "lows" of the American bishops engagement in economic affairs in "The Economic Thought of the American Hierarchy", Thomas M. Gannon, ed. *The Catholic Challenge to the American Economy* ([?]The Gale Group, 1997) 27-41.
95. Fr. Franciszek Kampka articulated to me in conversation that the bishops have not undertaken an analysis of the magnitude of Economic Justice for All. He stated that in his experience, it is difficult enough to convey to priests in Poland the importance and necessity of Catholic social teaching. As for the neglect of Catholic social teaching, see Stanislaw Pyszka, SJ, "Zaangazowanie chrzescijanin w polityke dzisiaj", *Katolicka nauka społeczna wobec wybranych problemów wspolczesnego swiata* (Kraków: WAM, 1995) 92-93.
96. Tomasz Golab, "Kosciol ubogich", *Gosc Niedzielny*, http://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TA/TAC/kosciol_ubogich.html, (21 Jan. 2001)
97. Tomasz Golab, "Kosciol ubogich"...
98. Jan Pawel II, *Program dla Kosciola w Polsce: Jan Pawel II do polskich biskupow: wizyta Ad limina* (Kraków: Znak, 1998) 23.
99. Jan Pawel II, *Program dla Kosciola w Polsce...* 22.
100. Jan Pawel II, *Program dla Kosciola w Polsce...* 37.
101. Jan Pawel II, *Program dla Kosciola w Polsce...* 48.
102. See "Kraków: Przeslanie do Biskupow z Konferencji Episkopatu Polski", Jan Pawel II, *Jan Pawel II w Polsce: 31 maja 1997-10 czerwca 1997: Przemowienia i homilie* (Kraków: Znak, 1997) 173-178.
103. Jan Pawel II, *Jan Pawel II: Polska 1999: Przemowienia i homilie* (Marki: Michalineum, 1999) 76-77.

104. See Hehir in Coleman 66-68.
105. See the above cited homily in Elk and Ad limina visit of the Polish bishops to Rome.
106. Gowin, Kosciol w czasach...452.
107. Dylus 206.
108. Aniela Dylus, "Kosciol wobec bezrobocia: czy i jak pocieszac?", Znak 537 (2000) 4-11.