

# MODULE 2

## Rerum Novarum

### Overzicht inhoud :

1. Vakoverschrijdende aanpak (Engels / levensbeschouwelijke vakken)  
Opzoekwerk in groepen
2. Individueel werk  
Individuele zoekoefening

De encycliek Rerum Novarum

“On the Condition of the Working Classes”



Inleiding

Eind 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw geeft de kerk een belangrijk signaal naar de maatschappij. De paus schrijft de encycliek Rerum Novarum. Voor Priester Daens is het document duidelijk een leidraad met hoop voor een betere toekomst: als dit geschrift opgevolgd wordt, zal de arbeider zijn situatie echt kunnen zien verbeteren.

Wie als gelovige beleidsverantwoordelijkheid draagt, moet immers rekening houden met het standpunt van de paus en met een nieuwe visie op de inrichting van de maatschappij.

De encycliek is zo belangrijk dat hij jaarlijks nog steeds herdacht wordt.

**Stap 1:**

Alle groepjes leerlingen beantwoorden de volgende vragen.

Ga na:

**-Wat is een encycliek en wat is het belang ervan, waar komt het woord encycliek vandaan?**

**-Wie heeft deze encycliek geschreven?**

**-Wanneer is die encycliek geschreven?**

**Stap 2:**

De klas werkt in groepjes.

Elk groepje vertrekt vanuit een stukje document in het Engels en beantwoord de vragen.

Bedoeling is niet het fragment in detail te begrijpen, maar de kernwoorden op te sporen die een antwoord op de vraag bieden. Het is derhalve ook een oefening in diagonaal lezen.

**Groep 1:**

In any case we clearly see, and on this there is general agreement, that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient workingman guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organisation took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practised by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labour and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.

**In dit stukje tekst merk je duidelijk welke vaststelling aan de basis ligt van Rerum Novarum. Verwijs naar de tekst.**

**Welke oorzaken hebben- volgens de paus - bijgedragen tot deze situatie?**

**Je merkt aan het woordgebruik hoe ernstig de paus de situatie acht. Welk woord toont dat goed aan?**

To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all,.....

The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property.

**De paus wijst – wat de oplossing van het probleem betreft – 1 groep met de vinger. Wie?**

**Wat stelt die groep volgens de paus voor? Gaat de paus daar mee akkoord?**

**Waarom wijst hij die groep met de vinger denk je?**

**Groep 2:**

Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labour, nor labour without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvellous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice. Of these duties, the following bind the proletarian and the worker: fully and faithfully to perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss. The following duties bind the wealthy owner and the employer: not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character. They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honourable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind.

Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age...

**Tot wie richt de paus zich in dit stukje van zijn encycliek? Hoe stelt hij dat hun relatie dient te zijn?**

**De paus wijst beiden op hun plichten. Kan je die uit het fragment halen?**

....working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honourable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their se

The efficacy of Christian institutions is marvellous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and

guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together,.....

**Mocht die encycliek toegepast worden – zoals Daens hoopte – dan zou dadelijk heel wat veranderen voor de arbeider. Wat bijvoorbeeld?**

**Wat is de rol van de kerk, het geloof in deze zaken?**

“It is lawful,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “for a man to hold private property; and it is also necessary for the carrying on of human existence. But if the question be asked: How must one’s possessions be used? - the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy Doctor: Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need.

Of that which remained, give alms.”(Luke 11:41) It is a duty, not of justice (save in extreme cases), but of Christian charity - a duty not enforced by human law.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive”;(Acts 20:35.) and who will count a kindness done or refused to the poor as done or refused to Himself - “As long as you did it to one of My least brethren you did it to Me.”(Matt.25:40.)

**Dat de maatschappij moet veranderen, beseft ook de paus .Wie lijkt hij hier extra aan te porren en waar haalt hij zijn argumentatie?**

### **Groep 3:**

At the present day many there are who, like the heathen of old, seek to blame and condemn the Church for such eminent charity. They would substitute in its stead a system of relief organised by the State. But no human expedients will ever make up for the devotedness and self sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity, as a virtue, pertains to the Church; for virtue it is not, unless it be drawn from the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ; and whosoever turns his back on the Church cannot be near to Christ.

It cannot, however, be doubted that to attain the purpose we are treating of, not only the Church, but all human agencies, must concur. All who are concerned in the matter should be of one mind and according to their ability act together. It is with this, as with providence that governs the world; the results of causes do not usually take place save where all the causes co-operate. It is sufficient, therefore, to inquire what part the State should play in the work of remedy and relief.

The foremost duty, therefore, of the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as of themselves to realise public well-being and private prosperity. This is the proper scope of wise statesmanship and is the work of the rulers. Now a State chiefly prospers and thrives through moral rule, well-regulated family life, respect for religion and justice, the moderation and fair imposing of public taxes, the progress of the arts and of trade, the abundant yield of the land-through everything, in fact, which makes the citizens better and happier. Hereby, then, it lies in the power of a ruler to benefit every class in the State, and amongst the rest to promote to the utmost the interests of the poor; and this in virtue of his office, and without being open to suspicion of undue interference - since it is the province of the commonwealth to serve the common good. And the more that is done for the benefit of the working classes by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for special means to relieve them. As regards the State, the interests of all, whether high or low, are equal. The members of the working classes are citizens by nature and by the same right as the rich; they are real parts, living the life which makes up, through the family, the body of the commonwealth; and it need hardly be said that they are in every city very largely in the majority. It would be irrational to neglect

one portion of the citizens and favour another, and therefore the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and the comfort of the working classes.

If by a strike of workers or concerted interruption of work there should be imminent danger of disturbance to the public peace; or if circumstances were such as that among the working class the ties of family life were relaxed; if religion were found to suffer through the workers not having time and opportunity afforded them to practice its duties; if in workshops and factories there were danger to morals through the mixing of the sexes or from other harmful occasions of evil; or if employers laid burdens upon their workmen which were unjust, or degraded them with conditions repugnant to their dignity as human beings; finally, if health were endangered by excessive labour, or by work unsuited to sex or age - in such cases, there can be no question but that, within certain limits, it would be right to invoke the aid and authority of the law. The limits must be determined by the nature of the occasion which calls for the law's interference - the principle being that the law must not undertake more, nor proceed further, than is required for the remedy of the evil or the removal of the mischief.

When work people have recourse to a strike and become voluntarily idle, it is frequently because the hours of labour are too long, or the work too hard, or because they consider their wages insufficient. The grave inconvenience of this not uncommon occurrence should be obviated by public remedial measures; for such paralysing of labour not only affects the masters and their work people alike, but is extremely injurious to trade and to the general interests of the public; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder are generally not far distant, and thus it frequently happens that the public peace is imperilled. The laws should forestall and prevent such troubles from arising; they should lend their influence and authority to the removal in good time of the causes which lead to conflicts between employers and employed.

**De pauselijke visie getuigt hier van goed psychologisch inzicht. In welke zin?**

**Waar duikt hier een zeer moderne idee op?**

**Wie moet ingrijpen in de maatschappij, in welke omstandigheden en op welke wijze?**

**Groep 4:**

If we turn not to things external and material, the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making. It is neither just nor human so to grind men down with excessive labour as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies. Man's powers, like his general nature, are limited, and beyond these limits he cannot go. His strength is developed and increased by use and exercise, but only on condition of due intermission and proper rest. Daily labour, therefore, should be so regulated as not to be protracted over longer hours than strength admits. How many and how long the intervals of rest should be must depend on the nature of the work, on circumstances of time and place, and on the health and strength of the workman. Those who work in mines and quarries, and extract coal, stone and metals from the bowels of the earth, should have shorter hours in proportion as their labour is more severe and trying to health. Then, again, the season of the year should be taken into account; for not unfrequently a kind of labour is easy at one time which at another is intolerable or exceedingly difficult. Finally, work which is quite suitable for a strong man cannot rightly be required from a woman or a child. And, in regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed. For, just as very rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so does too early an experience of life's hard toil blight the young promise of a child's faculties, and render any true education impossible. Women, again, are not suited for

certain occupations; a woman is by nature fitted for home-work, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family. As a general principle it may be laid down that a workman ought to have leisure and rest proportionate to the wear and tear of his strength, for waste of strength must be repaired by cessation from hard work.

**In het bovenstaande fragment wordt de paus heel concreet en blijkt dat Rome wel degelijk op de hoogte is van echte maatschappelijke problemen. Geef enkele voorbeelden en toon aan dat sommige punten van bekommernis ook deel uitmaken van het programma van de christelijke volkspartij.**

For, the result of civil change and revolution has been to divide cities into two classes separated by a wide chasm. On the one side there is the party which holds power because it holds wealth; which has in its grasp the whole of labour and trade; which manipulates for its own benefit and its own purposes all the sources of supply, and which is not without influence even in the administration of the commonwealth. On the other side there is the needy and powerless multitude, sick and sore in spirit and ever ready for disturbance. If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to one another. A further consequence will result in the great abundance of the fruits of the earth.

Men always work harder and more readily when they work on that which belongs to them; nay, they learn to love the very soil that yields in response to the labour of their hands, not only food to eat, but an abundance of good things for themselves and those that are dear to them. That such a spirit of willing labour would add to the produce of the earth and to the wealth of the community is self evident. And a third advantage would spring from this: men would cling to the country in which they were born, for no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life. These three important benefits, however, can be reckoned on only provided that a man's means be not drained and exhausted by excessive taxation. The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether. The State would therefore be unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fair.

**De paus is voorstander van privébezit. Welke voordelen biedt dat?**

**Hij heeft ook een boodschap voor de staat. Welke?**

**Groep 5:**

We are treating, by means of such associations and organisations as afford opportune aid to those who are in distress, and which draw the two classes more closely together. Among these may be enumerated societies for mutual help; various benevolent foundations established by private persons to provide for the workman, and for his widow or his orphans, in case of sudden calamity, in sickness, and in the event of death; and institutions for the welfare of boys and girls, young people, and those more advanced in years.

The most important of all are workingman unions, for these virtually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were brought about by the artificers' guilds of olden times. They were the means of affording not only many advantages to the workmen, but in no small degree of promoting the advancement of art, as numerous monuments remain to bear witness. Such unions should be suited to the requirements of this our age - an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life. It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a

few associations of this nature, consisting either of workmen alone, or of workmen and employers together, but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. We have spoken of them more than once, yet it will be well to explain here how notably they are needed, to show that they exist of their own right, and what should be their organisation and their mode of action.

To sum up, then, we may lay it down as a general and lasting law that working men's associations should be so organised and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property. It is clear that they must pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality, and that social betterment should have this chiefly in view; otherwise they would lose wholly their special character, and end by becoming little better than those societies which take no account whatever of religion. What advantage can it be to a working man to obtain by means of a society material well-being, if he endangers his soul for lack of spiritual food? "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Matt. 16:26.) This, as our Lord teaches, is the mark or character that distinguishes the Christian from the heathen. After all these things do the heathen seek .

... Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:32-33.) Let our associations, then, look first and before all things to God; let religious instruction have there in the foremost place, each one being carefully taught what is his duty to God, what he has to believe, what to hope for, and how he is to work out his salvation; and let all be warned and strengthened with special care against wrong principles and false teaching. Let the working man be urged and led to the worship of God, to the earnest practice of religion, and, among other things, to the keeping holy of Sundays and holy days. Let him learn to reverence and love holy Church, the common Mother of us all; and hence to obey the precepts of the Church, and to frequent the sacraments, since they are the means ordained by God for obtaining forgiveness of sin and for leading a holy life.

**Belangrijk in deze Encycliek is dat de paus het belang van "organisaties" behandelt.**

**Welk soort organisaties heeft hij in het eerste fragment voor ogen denk je ?**

**In het tweede fragment verwijst hij naar vroeger. Over welke verenigingen heeft hij het? Hoe legt hij het verband met zijn tijd?**

**Wat moeten volgens de paus organisaties steeds beogen? Lees daarvoor het derde fragment. Hij wordt zelfs heel concreet. In welke zin?**