

Church Must Defend Poor, Pope Paul Tells Workers

Vatican City — (RNS)—Pope Paul declared that it is the Church's duty to "defend the poor" and to warn "the rich and the powerful" never to forget the claims of "universal brotherhood."

Addressing some 7,000 workers at St. Peter's Basilica, the Pope condemned groups whose "indifference, egoism, and arrogance" allowed them "to confiscate the goods of the earth

for their exclusive profit, especially when these are the fruit of another's sweat and sacrifice."

The liturgical service in St. Peter's commemorated the 80th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things), the Catholic Church's first major pronouncement on social questions.

"Pope Leo became the advocate of the poor who were be-

ing forced to remain poor. He spoke for the humble and the exploited," Pope Paul said. It is still necessary today, he added, to proclaim "the message of social justice and human duty" heralded "in that great document of 80 years ago."

Pope Paul said the Church was determined to continue in "the Christian effort to bring about justice in the workers'

world," and that new problems required "an even greater commitment."

"These problems are caused by the fact that today almost everyone is forced to work in different ways and to different degrees," he said. "But not every one can find work and there are many who are unemployed. Further, not everyone is getting a fair reward for his work."

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