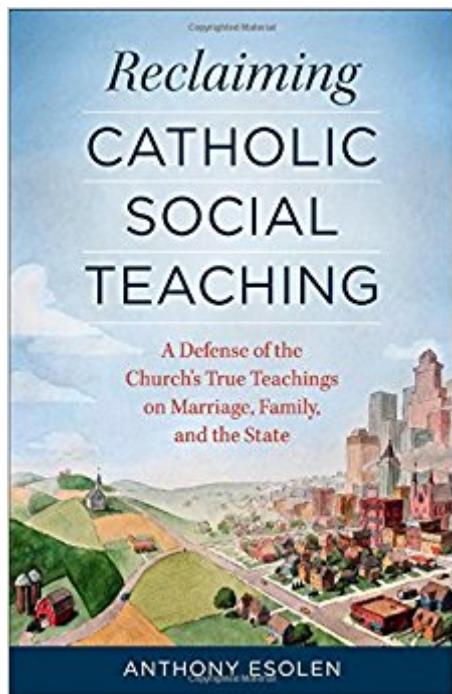


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# Reclaiming Catholic Social Teaching



## Synopsis

Many claim that Catholic Social Teaching implies the existence of a vast welfare state. In these pages, Anthony Esolen pulls back the curtain on these false philosophers, showing how they've undermined the authentic social teachings of the Church in order to neutralize the biggest threat to their plans for secularization the Catholic Church. With the voluminous writings of Pope Leo XIII as his guide, Esolen explains that Catholic Social Teaching isn't focused exclusively on serving the poor. Indeed, it offers us a rich treasure of insights about the nature of man, his eternal destiny, the sanctity of marriage, and the important role of the family in building a coherent and harmonious society. Catholic Social Teaching, explains Pope Leo, offers a unified worldview. What the Church says about the family is inextricable from what She says about the poor; and what She says about the Eucharist informs the essence of Her teachings on education, the arts and even government. You will step away from these pages with a profound understanding of the root causes of the ills that afflict our society, and, thanks to Pope Leo and Anthony Esolen, well equipped to propose compelling remedies for them. Only an authentically Catholic culture provides for a stable and virtuous society that allows Christians to do the real work that can unite rich and poor. We must reclaim Catholic Social Teaching if we are to transform our society into the ideal mapped out by Pope Leo: a land of sinners, yes, but one enriched with love of God and neighbor and sustained by the very heart of the Church's social teaching: the most holy Eucharist.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fr. George Rutler "The lively mind of Professor Esolen is incapable of clichÃ©, and he is artful in detecting the platitudes which have misled much of our culture's understanding of the social order. Fr. Peter John Cameron, O.P. Editor-in-chief, *Magnificat* Anthony Esolen's brilliant analysis of liberty, marriage, family, and other key issues of Catholic Social Teaching deserves to be a standard text in moral theology and catechesis. Robert Royal, Faith and Reason Institute "Freshness and insight are always evident in Anthony Esolen's writing. It's nothing less than a minor miracle that he's maintained those rare qualities in this illuminating treatment of one of the most poorly understood subjects: Catholic Social Teaching. This is a splendid book • an essential book." Fr. C.J. McCloskey "An unapologetic defense of marriage and family by America's best Catholic writer." --Personal Endorsements

Many claim that Catholic Social Teaching implies the existence of a vast welfare state. In these pages, Anthony Esolen pulls back the curtain on these false philosophers, showing how they've undermined the authentic social teachings of the Church in order to neutralize the biggest threat to their plans for secularization the Catholic Church. With the voluminous writings of Pope Leo XIII as his guide, Esolen explains that Catholic Social Teaching isn't focused exclusively on serving the poor. Indeed, it offers us a rich treasure of insights about the nature of man, his eternal destiny, the sanctity of marriage, and the important role of the family in building a coherent and harmonious society. Catholic Social Teaching, explains Pope Leo, offers a unified worldview. What the Church says about the family is inextricable from what She says about the poor; and what She says about the Eucharist informs the essence of Her teachings on education, the arts and even government. You will step away from these pages with a profound understanding of the root causes of the ills that afflict our society, and thanks to Pope Leo and Anthony Esolen well equipped to propose compelling remedies for them. Only an authentically Catholic culture provides for a stable and virtuous society that allows Christians to do the real work that can unite rich and poor. We must reclaim Catholic Social Teaching if we are to transform our society into the ideal mapped out by Pope Leo: a land of sinners, yes, but one enriched with love of God and neighbor and sustained by the very heart of the Church's social teaching: the most holy Eucharist.

Whether the reader is a novice in reading Moral Theology or more experienced, the book offers a rich discussion of essential topics for Christians who are troubled or confused by the cultural shifts that have been manifest in the last 30-40 years. Esolen's use of writings by Pope Leo XIII effectively undergirds the entire text and introduces the reader to papal texts that are proving prophetic as the

Church faces a culture in crisis. I'm grateful for this book!

Anthony Esolen does a better job of explaining the social teaching of Pope Leo than anyone else I've read. Everyone interested in the legitimate meaning/interpretation of Catholic social teaching needs to read this book. What Mortimer Adler did for Aristotle; Esolen does for Leo.

This book is an excellent and erudite explication of Catholic social doctrine and ought to be mandatory reading in Catholic institutions of higher learning. I would also commend it to our Catholic political leaders, to aid them in their efforts to discharge their civil duties in keeping with their faith.

Anthony Esolen's *Reclaiming Catholic Social Teaching* is an inspiring, masterful exposition of the amazing depth and wisdom of Catholic social teaching, especially as embodied in the writings of Pope Leo XIII. With chapters on issues like the nature of man, human liberty, marriage and the family, social life, the church, work, and the state, the subject matter could not possibly be more important, hitting every one of us right where we live every day of our lives. With the writing style of an English professor immersed in translation of the classics, it could hardly have been more engagingly written. Readers' jaws should stand agape when they see how perceptively Pope Leo saw in the late 19th century the potential implications of emerging trends in the decline of the influence of the family, the church, and of small clubs, guilds, and voluntary associations and the emergence of the encroaching powers of the State with a capital "S," (what the author calls the "Metastate"). Readers' minds and hearts should be informed and inflamed to put the Pope's prescriptions into practice to restore so many simple, yet profound things we've allowed to be swallowed up by the twin false gods of individualism and statism. The book paints grand themes and also provides plenty of specific details. Do you know, for example, the nine fundamental things Pope Leo declares society and owners owe to working people, or the four fundamental principles incumbent upon any state to promote the material and moral welfare of its citizens? Professor Esolen also includes many touching and relevant personal anecdotes along with several honorable mentions of my favorite theologian (St. Thomas Aquinas), and indeed, even some of one of my favorite classic movies (*How Green Was My Valley*). All in all, this book should be a must for every Catholic and for every person open to truth who desires the flourishing of his own life, and of that of his family, neighbors, and citizens of his city, state, and nation.

Let me first start by saying the content and message of the book, as a whole, is extremely

important. IT is a great decent primer for those with a simple desire to learn about Catholic social teaching. It would have been five stars if it flowed better. Unfortunately, when one writes a book that tries to discuss morality (right conduct in society), ecclesiology (life within the Church), and public policy in under 200 pages, there are going to be problems, even if one tries to neck it down by looking through the lens on only one person (Pope Leo XIII). As the author alludes to several times, Leo XIII only captured what had been taught in the 19 centuries previously, so it makes sense that he was the focal point. What was missing was its tie into what the Church has said since. The last 20 pages were more engaging and readable than the first 160. I believe this was because based on the title, I thought this would be more of a commentary using the numerous encyclicals to support a position rather than a literature review of over 30 select encyclicals from Pope Leo XIII which were loosely arranged to meet some pre-arranged chapter headings (which were not entirely cogent in and of themselves). (It felt as if I was reading an academic paper meant for other academics to faun over.) It was in the last pages that the author writes clearly and from the heart rather than an academician. Having said this however, unless someone has a strong understanding of Catholic social teaching, even in its most general form, it would have been difficult to fully appreciate the build-up to the Esolen's recommendation and commentary. I just wish it was presented in a different manner. Without giving too much away, with all the time spent on Catholic social teaching preparing for the final argument, a section devoted to the guild system would have helped solidify Esolen's final thrust. And while this would really pull away from the scope of the book as written, and, "Yes, all things are possible with prayer," but having opened the door to a radical departure from current American society, it would have been nice to hear about successes, whether in the U.S. or other places in the world, in which Catholics are living in the image of God, for God. If this is not possible, describe the last vestiges of such a society that we can relate to or work toward. As I said probably a bridge too far, especially given the book is a "defense of the Church's true teachings," but as I said, the 20 page commentary is what was most compelling.

I HIGHLY recommend this book. I thank God that I happened to notice it on . It proved to be a blessing. Anthony Esolen does an amazing job of not only compiling a vast amount of information into a highly readable format but of distilling it in such a way that it is inspiring and enjoyable. If you know of anyone that is looking for a comprehensive guide to Catholic Social Teaching...this book is it!

Esolen offers with great clarity and wit an account of what a Catholic "society" would look like and

why the state as we know it today confounds true social justice. This book may well also lead the reader to the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, which inform Esolen's arguments.

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