

Marquette University

**e-Publications@Marquette**

---

Theology Faculty Research and Publications

Theology, Department of

---

9-2020

## **Universal Basic Income and Work in Catholic Social Thought**

Kate Ward

Follow this and additional works at: [https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo_fac)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

Marquette1 University

e-Publications@Marquette

***Theology Faculty Research and Publications/College of Arts & Sciences***

***This paper is NOT THE PUBLISHED VERSION.***

Access the published version via the link in the citation below.

*American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (September 2020): 1271-1306. [DOI](#). This article is © Wiley and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](#). Wiley does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Wiley.

# Universal Basic Income and Work in Catholic Social Thought

Katharine Ward

Theology, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

## Abstract

Catholic social thought (CST) has obvious resonance with universal basic income proposals, due to the tradition's insistence on basic needs as human rights, comfort with government redistribution, and preference for programs that promote the agency of individuals and local communities, among other similarities. However, some CST scholars believe basic income challenges dearly held values of the tradition. This essay examines both views, concluding that basic income can comport with CST's view of work, correctly understood.

## Introduction

Proposals for universal basic income (UBI), which would give each adult member of society a subsistence grant in cash without means testing, has been around for centuries, but this idea leapt into common awareness with Andrew Yang's presidential campaign and the economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Catholic social thought (CST), a body of formal teaching on economy and society from the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, holds that the economy exists to serve human needs, and it supports government redistribution as a means to address poverty and help all people reach their full potential. On its face, CST would appear to support UBI, but commentators take radically different perspectives on whether UBI is permissible from a CST perspective. This essay will explain why CST can and should support UBI proposals and why objections to UBI's potential may be rooted in a failure to adequately engage CST's understanding of work.<sup>1</sup>

## What Is Basic Income?

At its simplest, universal basic income (UBI) or guaranteed minimum income proposes that governments provide a subsistence cash stipend to every adult (and, in some proposals, to every child) regardless of income and without means testing (Parijs **1992, 2000, 2013**). Basic income is basic: enough to maintain a floor of subsistence. It is universal: giving it to everyone reduces stigma and eliminates the need for means testing. It is also unconditional. Unlike many government assistance programs in the United States today, UBI places no restrictions on other earnings: whatever workers earn on top of basic income is theirs to keep. Basic income is supported by a stunning range of public thinkers past and present: Richard Nixon and Martin Luther King, Jr.; Nobel-Prize-winning free-market economist Milton Friedman; progressives, moderates, and conservatives, academic philosophers, political candidates, Silicon Valley billionaires, and those on the Ted Talk circuit (Bregman **2017**; Gordon **2014**; van Parijs and Vanderborght **2017**: 4).

What would basic income look like? Some advocates, including Andrew Yang, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, propose \$1,000 a month in the United States (Santens **2015**). Libertarian political scientist Charles Murray (**2006**) proposed the same, with the requirement that \$3,000 be used to purchase health insurance.<sup>2</sup> Along similar veins, economist Charles Clark created a basic income proposal for Ireland in 2002 at the request of a Christian organization there. Clark's (**2002**: 74) proposal would have provided 43 euros a week (about \$48 USD) to children 0–17, 110 euros a week (\$123) to adults 18–64, and slightly more per week to older adults.<sup>3</sup> Some, like Murray, envision UBI as replacing all means-tested benefits, while others, such as U.K. theologian and economist Malcolm Torry, argue some should remain in place (Torry **2016**: 1263). For Murray, U.S. recipients should use their UBI to purchase health insurance on the open market, while Torry treats UBI separately from the universal care provided by the U.K.'s National Health Service. Similarly, Clark's (**2002**) proposal retained Ireland's public health care, while replacing some other social safety net programs, including job retraining and agricultural supports.

While no countries currently guarantee their citizens UBI, the proposal is backed by a wealth of real-world experiments. UBI was pilot tested in states across the United States, which came close to adopting it in the early 1970s. The pilot tests found that UBI successfully reduced poverty with minimal reduction in paid working hours, which were generally replaced with other useful activity such as improving homes or education (Bregman **2017**: 38–39). More recently, from 1994 to 1998, the state of Minnesota pilot tested a version of basic income by combining several poverty aid programs, including food stamps, into one flexible cash benefit, and trying to lessen the “poverty trap” effect of having benefits decrease as the recipient earned more from work (Knox, Miller, and Gennetian **2000**: 6). The families enrolled in the pilot program experienced many positive outcomes, including higher rates of employment and incomes, increased marriage rates, decreased rates of abuse, and better behavioral and educational outcomes for school-aged children (Knox et al. **2000**: 10–15).

Native American tribes who distribute casino income among members demonstrate similarly impressive results. For example, before opening a casino and sharing its profits with tribal members, the Eastern Band of Cherokee had high rates of poverty and the many health problems that tend to accompany it. Their unconditional cash payments, now around \$12,000 per adult per year, reduced behavioral and emotional problems and addiction among children, without reducing participation in the labor force (Lapowsky **2017**). The nonprofit GiveDirectly is currently conducting a long-range study of basic income across hundreds of villages in Kenya. Finally, basic income has been tested in cases where it is not universal, and universal grants have been tested that fall short of providing a basic income, in communities as small as 15 families and as large as the entire United States.<sup>4</sup>

UBI's basis in real-world practicality should endear it to Catholic social thought, which proceeds by reading “the signs of the times” and placing the faith tradition in dialogue with other sources of knowledge, including the social sciences. Still, Catholic social thought does not approve of measures simply because they may appear

popular or doable. The tradition offers a number of norms that exist in healthy tension with one another. Those who uphold the values of human dignity sought by CST, who may be people of any or no faith, are tasked with engaging in dialogue to determine which outcomes will best promote the common good while remaining appropriate to a given time and place. This essay will examine how CST ought to respond to the proposal of UBI, drawing examples from my own U.S. context. CST has much to laud in UBI, but certain serious objections have been raised that demand sustained attention.

## CST and Basic Income: Obvious Resonance

The Catholic social thought tradition has consistently taught that every human being has the right to meaningfully access a fairly comprehensive list of basic needs, those things necessary for leading a life worthy of human dignity. As listed by Pope John XXIII, these include “food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, [and] the right to be looked after whenever through no fault of [their] own [workers are] deprived of the means of livelihood” (John XXIII **1963**: §11).

It is important to acknowledge that Catholic social thought insists on the right to *attain* these goods, not simply the right to remain free to pursue them.<sup>5</sup> We can see this in the way such rights are always discussed in a communal context; the right to attain those goods is coupled with a duty of each member of society to ensure those goods are meaningfully “made available” for people’s use (Paul VI **1965a**: §26).

Furthermore, Catholic social thought is completely comfortable with a robust state intervening in the economy to ensure everyone can achieve these basic goods. The breadth of the tradition supports redistribution, as well as governments setting guidelines for the way economies function (John XXIII **1961**: §136). Nationalization of key industries is supported in rarer instances (John Paul II **1981a**: §14; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace **1997**: §36). The Catholic tradition regards government as a positive force that represents all people of a society working together. The state is not something over-above or over-against individual persons or families; it is their creation and can legitimately work on their behalf to help those in need (Finn **2013**: 252–253, 270–271; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace **2004**: §§189–191; Shadle **2018**).

Since Catholic social thought promotes human dignity, wants all people to have access to the basic needs of a dignified life, and generally supports the levying of taxes by governments and providing resources to help people achieve those basic needs, CST and UBI have obvious resonance. Here I will further detail how UBI’s promises resonate with several key principles of CST: promoting human dignity, supporting workers through work and unemployment, strengthening families, valuing care, guaranteeing time for leisure, and understanding wealth as communal creation and property.

### Promoting Human Dignity

CST believes that every person has innate dignity as a creature of God. Society and others should treat humans in accordance with that dignity, but dignity is never lost, even through unjust treatment. Basic income promises to affirm human dignity in three fundamental ways: meeting basic needs, reducing the stigma of receiving assistance, and enabling free individual initiative.

The most straightforward reason growing numbers of people support basic income is this: It would enable people to meet their basic needs. Basic income proponents want people to have access to the basic food, shelter, and other necessities of a dignified life. They can see that even people who work hard are not always able to access these basic needs reliably because of low wages, precarious jobs, or just life events like unemployment, illness, or childcare. Assistance programs that lessen benefits as earned income grows are universally criticized by UBI advocates for keeping people in a constant state of struggle. To summarize the basic

needs argument: People in poverty do not have money. If you want to fix poverty, give people money. Thus, pro-UBI journalist Annie Lowrey (2019) entitled her book *Give People Money*.

Ensuring that universal access to basic needs is a primary concern of Catholic social thought, which sees it as a responsibility shared by governments, “intermediary organizations” such as nonprofit groups, and each individual person (John Paul II 1991: §13; John XXIII 1963: §11; Paul VI 1965a: §26).

Basic income also respects human dignity by reducing stigma. In the United States, government benefits received by everybody, such as Medicare for the elderly, are widely trusted and beloved, while recipients of means-tested benefits, such as EBT (electronic benefit transfer) or food stamps, experience significant social stigma and accompanying psychic distress (Halpern-Meekin et al. 2015: 115–125; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001: 1; Soss 2000: 38–46). Unlike mainstream U.S. culture, which regards poverty or need for assistance as evidence of a personal failing, CST conceptualizes poverty as the result of unjust systems or the greed of the wealthy, and does not see poverty as the fault of the poor. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986: 194) has pointedly criticized attitudes that stigmatize programs to help the poor as “welfare,” even as benefits to wealthy people or corporations are called “entitlements.” Proponents of UBI believe it would reduce stigma due to its universal nature.

Dependence, sometimes used pejoratively in conversations about assistance, is not a bad thing for Catholic social thought, but part of our human nature. In the words of Pope John XXIII (1963: §§31–32),

One man's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men ... [I]t is useless to admit that a man has a right to the necessities of life, unless we also do all in our power to supply him with means sufficient for his livelihood.

We all depend on others to make our way in the world. Businesses depend on their customers, many depend on family members, and some depend on assistance from the broader community, whether through private charity or government redistribution.

The return of control to recipients of UBI is another mark in its favor. In the United States, if your income is low enough, you might be eligible for housing assistance, food assistance, childcare benefit, and perhaps help with fuel in the winter. But you cannot spend housing assistance on diapers or put fuel assistance toward groceries if your EBT runs low. Basic income trusts that people will spend their benefit in the way that makes the most sense for themselves and their families—so economists who want to avoid market inefficiencies appreciate it for that reason. Libertarian Murray (2006: 71) celebrates this feature of UBI: unlike government programs that attempt to economically reward citizens for pursuing waged work, marriage, homeownership, or any other behavior, UBI “does not do anything that tries to stage-manage their lives.” Rather than restricting a person’s freedoms in exchange for assistance, a basic income allows people to avoid jobs that harm others or the environment and to choose jobs that “more clearly contribute to our personhood and that recognize that work is a means and not an end” (Torry 2016: 1554). In addition to affording the breathing room to leave jobs that are harmful or meaningless, UBI could offer the freedom to leave abusive relationships, an especial benefit to women, who are most commonly the victims of intimate partner abuse (Flanigan 2018).<sup>6</sup>

Placing control in the hands of ordinary people honors two goals consistently sought by CST: subsidiarity and a system that enables workers to share control of the means of production. Subsidiarity, a term from the Latin for “aid,” envisions that “a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society” (John Paul II 1991: §48). It means that issues should be handled at the most appropriate level, with more remote and powerful actors assisting those who are

closer to the situation, rather than taking over. Offering recipients cash that they can spend as they see fit is an expression of subsidiarity, *par excellence*.

Since its inception during the Industrial Revolution, CST has been concerned as well with workers having access to the means of production. Without calling for the abolition of capital, CST points out that capital exists because of labor and that a just economic system enables workers to begin to gain control over what they need in order to do their work, including land for farmers.<sup>7</sup> In contemporary capitalist economies, what is needed to become a producer is almost always cash. Education, likewise increasingly necessary, can most easily be acquired when one has an existing means of support. Given its promise to promote independent initiative, UBI can be seen as a contemporary model of allowing workers to share in the means of production they help create.

## Supporting Workers and the Unemployed

Resistance to UBI, or any social assistance, often stems from reticence to provide aid to those deemed undeserving—perhaps “low-income unattached persons without steady employment—drifters, hippies and the like,” as economist James Essig wrote in 1968. Culturally, U.S. people tend to be very concerned that people who receive help from society at large in the form of government assistance should “deserve it.” As historian Stephen Pimpore (2008) has shown, this concern with “deserving poverty” goes back to the earliest practices of private charity in the United States, and it tends to be accompanied by attempts to control and direct the lives of poor people in exchange for receiving aid.

I will argue later that the popular view of waged work as social contribution is too narrow, and show that the adult who truly contributes nothing to the common good is rare indeed. That said, in most cases, basic income does not reduce participation in paid work (Bregman 2017: 38–39). Where UBI has been tested, it generally does not reduce participation in the labor force, with two exceptions: students in higher education, and mothers of young children. When UBI was pilot tested in the United States in the 1970s, a researcher concluded that “the ‘laziness’ contention is just not supported” (Bregman 2017: 38).

Both libertarian Murray (2006) and theologian Torry (2016: 1525) applaud that UBI solves the paradox of means-tested benefits that disappear just as the worker begins to gain self-sufficiency, discouraging work and keeping workers in poverty. Murray (2006: 68–69) notes that in certain cases, universal basic income could be expected to *encourage* work by making it possible for low-wage workers, if they so choose, to live independently. Those who must now depend on family members for food and housing have little incentive to work, Murray argues, since work does not raise their income to the level of independence. By taxing the UBI gradually, and only when an individual’s total income rises to multiples of the basic income, Murray (2006: 74) envisions that society can “lure people into working until they are making so much money that they cannot afford to quit.” I will argue later that CST sees humans as having a duty to work, but not necessarily a duty to paid work. If I am correct, CST could accept UBI even if it did diminish participation in paid work, but that might be a stumbling block from other perspectives.

While it is reassuring that UBI does not tend to diminish paid work, basic income is particularly beloved by those concerned about the future of waged work as machine learning makes many jobs obsolete. For many UBI proponents, including Yang and several tech company founders, this is key: Jobs are going away, machines are going to do them, and people who will be less and less likely to find work need a way to meet their basic needs (Clifford 2017). While UBI does not seem to replace waged work for many people under current circumstances, we may need it to do so in the future, as machines increasingly do the work humans are doing now.<sup>8</sup> We can certainly envision a society where machines do a great deal of work, while humans receive a basic income and spend their time doing what they can—perhaps waged work for some, childcare or eldercare for others, art, exercise, community volunteering, or whatever useful pursuits we would all like to have more time for now, if not for all this pesky, yet necessary, waged labor.

Born of the Industrial Revolution, Catholic social thought has always dealt with the impact of automation on human work, but it has yet to adequately respond to the coming impact of mechanization on the contemporary landscape. Not till Francis (2015: §128) do we see even an acknowledgment that mechanization and machine learning are displacing human jobs. The proposed solution is a bit circular, as recent Catholic social thought still insists that the solution is helping people find *jobs*. For example, the Canadian bishops said the government should pursue full employment; market solutions that ensured some would be unemployed were unacceptable (Duffy 2008; Benedict XVI 2009: §§32, 63; Francis 2013: §192, 2015: §127). CST criticizes the idea of machines replacing human labor when humans are left with no means of support or meaningful activity (Francis 2015: §128). UBI could be the solution.

## Supporting Families

Many advocates of UBI view it as a pro-family policy. While some may be leery of government policies pursuing goals related to families' lives, it is worth noting that support for UBI exists among those with very traditional as well as very radical ideas of family structure. Some proponents of UBI, like Murray and the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, value it as a potential promoter of marriage and traditional family structures. According to sociologists Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas (2005: 130–131, 216–217), women in poverty can be leery of marriage because they worry that a male partner would become an economic burden instead of a support. Basic income helps address that concern. Murray foresees UBI reducing teen pregnancy rates by attaching the economic incentives to avoiding pregnancy that currently exist only for wealthier young people (Murray 2006: 62–63). In a different vein, feminist philosopher Kathi Weeks (2011: 170) praises basic income for enabling people to choose “alternatives to the dominant ideals of family form.” For example, we could envision single mothers pooling their basic incomes to live together and raise their children together, whether or not they are romantic partners.

Malcolm Torry (2016: 2074) puts it best: basic income promises to both “relativize and enhance the family.” Social policies structured around nuclear family units are revealed as a form of “extreme anachronism” in light of the many forms family can take in contemporary society (Torry 2016: 2140). On the one hand, basic income thus supports more traditionally conservative goals for families, such as allowing two-parent families to have one parent at home with children. On the other hand, UBI also supports expansive notions of family, such as a group of young adults who pool resources to live together and support each other. Catholic social thought notes that economic instability can hinder people from making long-term plans for the future, including marriage and family (Benedict XVI 2009: §25; Francis 2016: §§25, 40). Whether we are interested in supporting nuclear families, chosen families, or the whole spectrum of ways love and care are shared and homes are forged—nobody thinks it is good for people to feel forced to stay in families, or hindered from forming them, because of economic desperation. Basic income could help change that.

Another way basic income would help support families is by providing support for the types of care work that are frequently performed by family members, including care for children and sick or vulnerable adults. Many people, disproportionately women, will, at times, leave the waged workforce or curtail their waged work hours to give care to family members or others. This does not make them noncontributing citizens; indeed, as a society, we desperately need this care to take place. Unpaid caregiving work, whether it is done full time or alongside a paid job, contributes considerable value to the formal economy, at significant cost to the unpaid caregiver (Hinze 2015: 88–90). This point is made in remarkably similar fashion by Catholic feminist theologian Christine Firer Hinze (2015: 106–108) and by Marxist feminist Kathi Weeks (2011: 124, quoting Federici ([1980] 1995). In Hinze's (2015: 90–91) words:

*“Unpaid care work entails a systemic transfer of hidden subsidies to the rest of the economy that go unrecognized, imposing a systemic time-tax on women throughout their life cycle.”*

UBI could help fix this imbalance by ensuring that those who must leave work or cut back hours to care for family members have the security of an economic floor they cannot fall below. When the U.S. welfare system was created, one of its stated goals was to allow mothers—and at the time, it was only mothers—to stay at home with their young children (Bane and Mead **2003**: 42; Moffitt **2015**). Our current welfare system tends to require mothers of very young children to work or look for work. Nearly half of U.S. states require a parent of a newborn to be working or looking for work at least 20 hours a week by the time the baby is three months old. Only two states extend that grace period beyond a year (Hahn et al. **2017**: 7).

Low-income working families not on public assistance may have even fewer options when it comes to time off for a new baby. An analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that 23 percent of mothers return to work within *two weeks* after having a child (Lerner **2015**). In a Pew research study, 7 in 10 people who had taken family leave within the previous two years said that, for financial reasons, they had taken less time than they needed, and half were worried about losing their jobs entirely (Stepler **2017**). This included leave taken for childcare or to care for sick family members. Universal care leave policies have documented positive effects on children's health and on economies, but they can introduce gender inequalities to the workforce (Freiberg **2019**). It is possible that basic income, by assuring a modest income for any family member who leaves the paid workforce to provide care, could help provide the benefits of care leave, while eliminating some gender-unequal effects.

## Valuing Care and Other Unpaid Work

The Catholic social thought tradition not only upholds the dignity and importance of care work and specifically frames it as work; it also argues that caregiving work in the home deserves “economic compensation in keeping with that of other types of work” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004: §251). Pope John Paul II (1981a: §19) explains that either employers can pay workers a “family wage” sufficient to care for all dependents, or the government can help provide it in the form of “family allowances or grants to mothers devoting themselves exclusively to their families.” The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004: §250) in its *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which is more gender-inclusive than earlier statements, seems to accept government support for diverse types of families as more realistic:

*“There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members, and also remuneration for the domestic work done in the home by one of the parents.”*

Theologian Meghan J. Clark (**2010**: 77–78) argues that government programs to pay for family caregivers and guarantee them respite are needed at the present moment in the United States, when adults may be called upon to care not just for children but for their own ailing parents or adult family members. Hinze observes that as difficult as the trade-offs are for those who must leave paid work to care for family members, even this difficult choice is not available to all workers. Poorer workers, who are most vulnerable in globalizing capitalist economies, cannot access what Hinze (**2009**) calls a “right to [give] care” for the vulnerable in their own families. Parents in developing nations may be forced to leave children alone, while rich-world parents struggle with the ability to “afford” removing a parent from waged work. Universal basic income, like other government subsidies for family caregivers, would help access this “right to give care.”

Hinze's (**2015**: 90–91) insight on “hidden subsidies to the rest of the economy” points us to a broader justification for UBI: beyond care, many activities performed for little or no pay create tangible economic benefits for others. For example, one reason people desire to live in big cities and pay premiums for urban real estate is proximity to the creative output of artists, who often must hold “day jobs” to afford to exercise their creative gifts. Social media users produce reams of content daily, deriving no wages from their work but lining



the pockets of technology companies that place advertising next to their words and images. British journalist Kirsty Major (2017) observed: “Baby photos, birthday party invites and self-indulgent status updates are the coal, iron and steel of the fourth industrial revolution.” Indeed, much of the Internet is sustained by content created without expectation of reward, other than the satisfaction of sharing knowledge and connecting with others. Citizen journalists who document protests on Twitter; fanfic authors and artists who painstakingly perfect their tributes to their favorite characters; and Reddit users who share hard-won knowledge about baking sourdough bread or finding a bra that fits do so without the expectation of compensation and often without even taking credit under their own name. The technology companies that create vast fortunes for a few, on the unpaid labor of so many, embody Torry’s (2016: 1558) insight that “[n]ot all wealth is created by paid employment.”

It may seem somehow crass to connect dollar values to work done out of love, like family care or artistic creation. However, Catholic social thought would agree with the premise that humans supplied with freedom and basic security will take the initiative to enrich the human community in a thousand ways that go far beyond pecuniary gains. When people’s struggle for survival excludes them from pursuing work that suits their skills, participating in the democratic process, or creating art and new ideas, the whole community loses out on the goods their participation would have brought into being (C. Clark 2019: 431–432). This is why Catholic social thought insists on the right to participate, recognizing that poverty or other deprivations can result in exclusion, and giving society the responsibility to help all to contribute as they are able. Unpaid forms of work such as care are crucial to flourishing societies, and every society should find ways to support and reward them.

## Leisure

Even as it rewards and supports time for work in all its varieties, basic income would afford more people the time for something CST holds in the highest regard: the all-important human activity of leisure. In a casual way we might think of leisure as rest and fun, zoning out with TV on the couch to restore body and mind to return to work. This understanding of leisure as a “break” suggests that our true purpose in life is to work or prepare to return to work. However, as highly regarded as work is within the Catholic tradition, leisure is the true purpose of human life. Philosopher Josef Pieper (1998: 31) explains that in leisure we contemplate what is real, which means our own lives, God’s creation, and the reality of the divine:

*“Leisure is a form of stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still, cannot hear ... Leisure is the disposition of ... immersion—in the real.”*

In leisure, we open ourselves to the world and celebrate it, so the highest form of leisure is worshipping God, celebrating the real truth of divine love for us (Pieper 1998: 33–34, 50). Time spent with one’s family, engaged in social issues, or immersed in literature or art could also qualify. To allow ourselves to attend to and celebrate what is real takes time. We need an attitude of openness to what is around us. This is why the Catholic social tradition advocates strongly that paid labor afford us sufficient time off, not just for bodily rest and social connection, but because time away from work is necessary to accomplish leisure, to contemplate what is real. Basic income could afford many workers the room in their budget and schedule to perform this most crucial act of human life.

## Social View of Wealth

For economist and UBI proponent Guy Standing (2017: 25–26), the most compelling argument for basic income is that it reflects the truth that wealth has a social character: “Our incomes and wealth today are due far more to the efforts and achievements of past generations than to anything we may do ourselves.” Earlier philosophers pointed out that private wealth came from natural resources, which are part of the earth, the common heritage

of all people. Standing (2017: 31–33) adds that legal regulations now create artificial scarcity, which enables individuals to amass wealth at others' expense. (Lindsey and Teles [2017] offer a thorough explanation of this phenomenon.) The "hidden transfers" to the economy of unpaid care work and social media use are further evidence that private wealth derives from resources that, in a sense, belong to everyone. For Standing (2017), basic income reflects this understanding, by returning some portion of vast fortunes, through taxation, to average people.

Catholic social thought shares this understanding that wealth is never created alone, and is destined not to enrich individuals, but to help all people meet their basic needs. (See John Paul II [1981a: §12]: "Capital is the result of work ... everything that is at the service of work ... is the result of work.") John Paul II (1987: §42) describes private property as existing under a "social mortgage," which means it is justified by being used to benefit everyone; society has the ultimate right to it, as when a bank holds a mortgage on a home. John Paul II (1981a: §14) says that private property is useful and good only to the extent that it achieves "the universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them." In the United States, we assume that wages represent the workers' due share of the wealth they have helped create. But this is not as immutable as the laws of physics; it just happens to be the current way we strive toward the fundamental goal of sharing the earth's goods with everyone. Universal basic income, as Standing points out, would be another way to honor the social character of wealth.

Of historical interest, Catholics pointed to the social mortgage on private property and CST views of the family when the United States was last seriously considering basic income proposals in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC; now Catholic Charities USA) published a pamphlet calling for "national, guaranteed minimum income" in light of Catholic social thought (Masse 1969).<sup>9</sup> In testimony before the U.S. Congress, Ronald Hayes (1968), a representative of the Income Maintenance Committee of the NCCC, quoted the Second Vatican Council, saying: "The right to have a share of earthly goods for one's self and one's family belongs to everyone." Hayes implicitly drew on the universal destination of goods as he argued for basic needs as a right and the community as the proper actor to help provide them. Journalist Jim Castelli (1972: 20) drew upon the NCCC position to argue for the benefits of a guaranteed annual income to families, blasting work requirements in a Nixon Administration proposal as "unchristian" because they could require "mothers with children as young as three" to work.<sup>10</sup> *U.S. Catholic* publishes periodic "Sounding Board" pieces in which a representative sample of readers comment on the ideas discussed in the article before publication, with their comments published alongside the piece. In a 1972 "Sounding Board" on UBI, 60 percent of respondents supported that concept (Corcoran 1972: 12–13). When I contributed to "Sounding Board" on UBI nearly 50 years later, 78 percent of respondents (not a representative sample of U.S. Catholics, of course) supported it (Ward 2020).

## CST and Basic Income: Potential Dissonance

It is clear that CST can find much to approve of in UBI, and finds common ground with secular proponents on many of its benefits and even the philosophical view of wealth. Opponents, however, have used CST to argue against UBI just as strenuously. Particular CST concepts that opponents have marshaled against basic income are the preferential option for the poor and the duty to work. We will examine these objections now.

### Preferential Option for the Poor

The preferential option for the poor is one of the most crucial, and biblically resonant, principles in Catholic social thought. Just as God demonstrates special care and concern for the materially poor and all those pushed to the margins, so Christians are called to ask, at every decision point, how the poor are being supported and served (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004: §182). Understanding that poverty exists, at least up to a point, because of the greed of others, the option for the poor "implies a commitment to trying to change the

unjust structures of society” (Dorr [1983] 1992: 298). A policy that fell short of serving the preferential option for the poor would have serious flaws indeed from a Catholic social thought perspective. Is this the case with basic income?

Theologian David Cloutier has described UBI as “an enormous mistake because it does not display a preferential option for the poor” (Miller 2019). It is true that universal basic income, by definition, goes to everybody. In that sense, it is not a program that goes preferentially to the poor. Still, Cloutier’s objection may be overly literal. The preferential option for the poor is a heuristic to evaluate the concerns of a person, group, or society, an expectation that the poor and their needs will be consulted in a primary way in making societal decisions and that those who are not poor will see their concerns as one with those who are. Universal programs like healthcare in most rich nations or Social Security in the United States do not violate the interests of the poor simply because they are universal.

There are other reasons why UBI may appear to violate the preferential option for the poor on its face, but not in practice. Catholic social thought urges prudence in attention to what is possible in a pluralistic society. If UBI is more likely to gain broad acceptance than programs geared toward the poor, it may be the best way to assure the poor concrete help. It is also possible to deal with Cloutier’s objection by making UBI taxable when income reaches certain high levels. Furthermore, as many of my undergraduate students pointed out when we discussed this question, the poor stand to benefit most from an extra \$10,000 a year, compared to those better off for whom such a sum would be marginal. In that sense, UBI is indeed preferential to the poor because it benefits them most. Women, children, and other groups who are overrepresented among the poor stand to benefit more than others from a UBI (National Women’s Law Center 2017).

## Work

In my view, the most substantive objections to UBI from a CST point of view assert that UBI challenges CST’s view of the role of work in human lives in ways that are unacceptable. CST repeatedly and clearly states that work is a duty (John Paul II 1981a: §16; John XXIII 1961: §44, 1963: §20; Paul VI 1965a: §67). In writings from the Anglo-American world, this is often stated with a slight variation—that CST imposes a duty to work to provide for one’s basic needs. (For example, Finn [2012: 878] says CST holds that “the able-bodied have a moral obligation to work to obtain the things they need,” but he does not cite this reference to papal documents.) If this were true, it might indeed be difficult for CST to accept UBI, given the possibility of living (albeit frugally) on a basic income without working for wages. However, I believe that this position links two genuine assertions of CST that the tradition, taken as a whole, does not connect. One, human beings have a duty to work; and two, humans have a right to attain their basic needs. But the second premise does not depend on the first. Rather, the duty to work—in the broad sense—and the right to basic needs can be strongly asserted based on a theological view of the human person, without the right resting on the performance of the duty. This, I believe, is an accurate reflection of the view of Catholic social thought.

Here I will spend some time examining what CST actually says about work in human lives and whether it is true that UBI would undermine it. As an added challenge, some basic income proponents envision a highly automated future in which the availability of human jobs is greatly reduced and UBI helps ordinary people survive. Could CST accept this vision?

First, it is important that we understand what work is *not* for CST. In U.S. society, we tend to say that the purpose of work is income: work is valuable because it provides wages to allow the worker to support herself and, one hopes, her family. This perspective has many implications, not all of which are supported by Catholic social thought. For example, it leads us to believe that higher-paid work is more valuable, that financial managers contribute more to society than primary and secondary school teachers. However, Catholic social thought explicitly calls this view out as an “error” (Finn 2012: 876).

Catholic social thought views work as important human activity, not just because it provides people with the means of survival but because of work's impact on the one who does it, which is referred to as its subjective or personal aspect (John Paul II **1981a**: §6). Rather than what we get out of work, Catholic social thought is interested in *who we become* when we work (Francis **2015**: §127). At its best, work allows us to live out our human nature as creative, striving, and social beings, to develop our unique potential, to act on our values, and to emulate God (John Paul II **1991**: §§6, 32, 37; Francis **2015**: §127). In the words of John Paul II (**1981a**: §9, emphasis in original), through work, the worker “*achieves fulfillment as a human being*” and indeed, in a sense, becomes “*more a human being.*” So the purpose of work is not “*to take home a wage*” or “*keep ourselves busy*” or even to make ourselves useful to society, but to be the type of creature God made us to be: a creative, active human being in relationship with others (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace **2004**: 270–275).

It should be clear by now that work, as it is understood in the Catholic social tradition, is not simply what we do for wages. Rather, work is any activity in which we act upon the world around us, imitating the Creator and even contributing to God's ongoing creative activity (John Paul II **1981a**: §§5, 25; Paul VI **1965a**: §§34–35). Toth (**2007**: 1139) notes succinctly that “*the universal scope of this definition excludes any reduction of work to paid employment.*” Caring for children or the elderly, taking care of household chores, volunteering, making art, and building up social communities are all acts of work in the Catholic understanding.<sup>11</sup>

When the tradition insists that unpaid work is work, I believe we should take it at its word that the duty to work can be fulfilled by any productive, creative human activity. This is further supported when we see the great respect with which CST treats many forms of unpaid work, without criticizing those who do them for failing to draw a paycheck. Entrepreneurs, artists, community volunteers, and family caregivers all come in for high praise. Those who live off inherited wealth, while not praised for their good fortune, may be in mind when CST framers explicitly disavow a requirement to work for wages or to consider wage-earning as the norm.

While entrepreneurs are starting a business, they may live off a partner or savings, or take “*day jobs*” or “*side hustles*” to meet their basic needs in order to do the work of launching a new enterprise. Starting a business is clearly work, even before the entrepreneur makes her first dollar from it. In fact, as theologian Francis Hannafey (**2006**) shows, Catholic social thought on entrepreneurship does not cast it in terms of wages and income at all, but rather focuses precisely on the creative, personally developmental aspects of entrepreneurial work. Artists, whose creative labor is so often unpaid or underpaid, are also highly respected by the CST tradition (Paul VI **1965a**: §§57, 59, 62).

As Francis himself has observed, action for justice, whether in direct service to human needs or in fighting for structural change, is crucial work that is rarely compensated. In an address to a global organization for members of popular movements during the coronavirus pandemic, Francis (2020) commented:

*“Vendors, recyclers, carnies, small farmers, construction workers, dressmakers, the different kinds of caregivers: you who are informal, working on your own or in the grassroots economy, you have no steady income to get you through this hard time ... This may be the time to consider a universal basic wage which would acknowledge and dignify the noble, essential tasks you carry out.”*

Francis makes two linked points here: organizing for justice is work that deserves to be remunerated, and informal types of paid work often do not command wages worthy of the dignity of the human worker. Francis (**2015**: §232) also took time to praise volunteers who work on a much more local scale, such as beautifying shared common spaces. Again, all of these types of effort are work, frequently allowing workers to access the best of their creative, collaborative, caring human nature—yet it is not at all uncommon for those who do them to divorce this work from their basic needs entirely, accessing what they need to live in some other way.

The tradition praises another significant class of workers whose work has profound importance to societies, is truly human, creative, and dignified, and yet is rarely if ever performed for wages. Family caregiving is work.<sup>12</sup> It meets the basic theological description of work, in that it is a quintessentially human activity through which we engage and enact our human nature, in this case, to creatively care.<sup>13</sup> It is not waged, and CST has never claimed it should be. Family care is certainly a way that much of humanity fulfills our duty to work, regardless of the fact that this work is rarely performed for pay (Hinze 2015).

Is at-home caregiving legitimized because, in the family model most commonly discussed in CST, the at-home spouse meets her basic needs through her association with a wage earner? The tradition does not say so. No one could disagree that by caring for children in their own homes, women (or men) fulfill their duty to work. Yet it strains credulity to say that a mother who cares for her children at home does so *in order to* fulfill her basic needs. Her basic needs may be fulfilled through the wages of a working spouse or other family member, through government redistribution, private charity, or inherited wealth; or, tragically, they may not be met at all. But to say that this mother works *in order to* fulfill her basic needs requires us to envision her as employed by her spouse, employed by the government to care for her own children, or some other unbearably reductive and transactional view of what it means to be a caregiving parent. Family caregivers may not work *in order to* fulfill their basic needs, but they work—thereby fulfilling their duty as human beings. This is further proof that the duty to work is not a duty to work *in order to* meet basic needs.<sup>14</sup>

We can see that very many people are honoring their duty to work, despite the fact that they may not be currently working for pay. Since the Catholic tradition understands human beings as inherently good, creative, and social, there is no surprise in finding people who work to contribute in the way they feel God calls them to do.

There are some instances of papal documents linking the right to basic needs to the performance of work. Yet far more frequently, this link is qualified or even flatly disavowed. The burden of proof remains with those who define the duty to work narrowly as a duty to work for wages.

One example of a statement that seems to require work for basic needs is in Paul VI's (1967: §18) encyclical *Populorum Progressio*:

*"The pursuit of life's necessities is quite legitimate; hence we are duty-bound to do the work which enables us to obtain them: 'If anyone is unwilling to work, do not let him eat.'"*

This sounds straightforward enough, although the rest of this paragraph betrays a concern not for idleness but for overwork, warning that acquisitiveness can lead to "avarice and soulstifling materialism."

The biblical quotation from 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that Pope Paul VI cites in this passage comes up frequently in Christian conversations about basic income. U.S. observers are frequently concerned about idleness when we think about providing basic needs to all without distinction. However, this can hardly be said to be a concern for the framers of Catholic social thought. In all other instances where the Thessalonians quote is used in social encyclicals, its context either softens or outright reverses the notion that a right to basic needs depends on work. *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul II's (1981: §26) great encyclical on work and its dignity, quotes this passage in a discussion of the apostle Paul's entire contribution to the spirituality of work, implying, quite correctly, that individual biblical passages need exegesis. Francis's (2016: §24) encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* similarly depicts this as a view of Paul, not of the Catholic social thought tradition, describing the passage as "a strict rule for his communities." Finally, Pius XI (1931: §57) quotes this passage to disavow what appears to be its most common interpretation: "The Apostle [Paul] in no wise teaches that labor is the sole title to a living or an income." Here Pius is defending inherited wealth against Communists who desired to expropriate it, but this perspective within the papal documents has important implications for basic income, too.

If the Catholic social thought tradition truly believed that the duty to work means a duty to work for one's basic needs, the popes who frame it could at any point have censured inheritors of generational wealth for maintaining themselves without labor. However, one looks in vain in the CST tradition for condemnation of such lifestyles *because they do not derive from work*. While warnings about the moral dangers of wealth are frequent and recurrent in the Christian tradition, they tend to refer to wealth's tendency to tempt to sin and vice, not to the fact that inherited wealth does not derive from work by the one who owns it. Catholic social thought might criticize such people, if they own the means of production, for using wealth to enrich themselves instead of helping workers achieve the goods of the earth. But wealthy inheritors are not criticized for not earning their own keep.

Those who live on wealth they did not work for might be the reason John Paul II presents work as a qualified means of attaining basic needs throughout *Laborem Exercens*. There is an audible asterisk in the sentence "the family requires the means of subsistence which man *normally* gains through work" (John Paul II **1981a**: §10, emphasis added). (The Latin here means "as often happens.") Furthermore, the document frequently insists that when work is said to be a duty, what is meant is work in the broader sense (John Paul II **1981a**: §§10, 16). In fact, waged work is not even a *privileged* means of obtaining basic needs within CST. Consider the description of work in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* as the way a worker "*ordinarily* supports himself and his family" (Paul VI **1965a**: §67, emphasis added). Pope John XXIII (**1961**: §18, emphasis added) made a similar claim that "*in the majority of cases* a man's work is his sole means of livelihood." John Paul II (**1981a**: §18, emphasis added) repeats the theme: wages are "*a practical means* whereby the vast majority of people can have access to those goods which are intended for common use: both the goods of nature and manufactured goods." Again, wages are a *practical* means for achieving the goods necessary for a dignified life; they are not the only one.

Wages are a means, not an end, in Catholic social thought, due to the social nature of wealth and the fundamental principle that "*the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use*, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone" (John Paul II **1981**: §14, emphasis in original). At times, wages fail to distribute goods adequately, such as when there is not enough employment, or when employers pay wages that do not support families' basic needs. CST sharply criticizes such employers. Whatever the reason, when the wage system fails to distribute the goods of the earth to all who need them, Catholic social thought fully supports, with no hint of reticence, government provision.

The existence of a category called alienating work also reminds us that CST does not insist on a duty to waged labor under any circumstances. Certain types of work are described as alienating because they distance ourselves from our human nature.<sup>15</sup> They might allow no room for creativity, treating workers as nothing more than cogs in a machine, or they might misuse or overwork workers' bodies and minds (Benedict XVI **2009**: §63). It is up to the creativity of business owners and workers to figure out how to eliminate those types of labor—an insistence that challenges the pro-work mentality common in the United States that holds that one should be grateful for a job, any job, no matter how objectifying, precarious, or dangerous.

To be clear, CST absolutely could not subscribe to a basic income guarantee that *forbids* people to do waged or unwaged work.<sup>16</sup> Working for wages to support self and family is one of the basic rights Catholic social thought consistently defends. Humans have the right to attain basic needs and the right to engage in waged employment. Catholic social thought emphatically does *not* require that employment be the *only* way to achieve these basic needs, nor does it rule out government provision as a way to achieve them.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, it seems quite logical that basic income would free people's time for the many valuable forms of work, beyond waged employment, that promote healthy families, strong communities, and vibrant local cultures. Maintaining homes, repairing vehicles and possessions, gardening, cooking, providing care, and making art are indisputably work. Paid or not, they are creative, sustaining activities through which we shape the world.

Given the data that suggest that universal basic income does not depress waged labor as much as is commonly feared, it might seem like I have devoted a lot of space to the idea that the duty to work is not a duty to paid work. In real-world situations, many people who receive UBI still do waged work, or look for waged work. For theologian Jeremy Posadas (2017: 352), “[i]t is not self-evident why Christian theology and ethics should accept any system in which people cannot, unless they work, have access to the things necessary for living with basic human dignity.” I believe that Catholic social thought can agree with this. It need not diminish the dignity of human work—in its expansive, inclusive definition, far beyond waged work—to decide, as a society, that we do not need to make the attainment of basic needs contingent upon working for wages, having done so in the past, or having another wage earner agree to support us.

## Anti-Work?

Posadas is inspired by the standpoint of “the refusal of work,” deriving from a body of thought called “anti-work theory,” whose adherents tend to favor universal basic income. When Catholic social thought places such a high value on work, does this throw suspicion on UBI? Let us look at what the proponents of “anti-work theory” actually believe and how their views comport or conflict with CST.

Posadas (2017: 343) clarifies the main premise of anti-work theory for a theological audience:

*“An anti-work perspective seeks to actively decrease the amount and necessity of work in everyone’s life, not as a byproduct of economic forces but because work itself is not accepted as an overriding good for human life.”*

This can mean simply challenging the fact that some must work a punishing number of hours to attain their basic needs, while others who would like to work for wages have no work available. Political theorist Kathi Weeks (2011) proposes a stance of “the refusal of work,” which Posadas (2017: 348) explains as “the epistemic and political space that opens up when one proceeds without making the assumptions that work is an inherently good thing in human life ... and that it must be organized so that it dominates lives in the ways that it has for a very long time.” Rather than advocate that every worker simply stop working, the refusal-of-work stance seeks to imagine and enact the structures that would need to be in place for work to occupy a lowered priority in terms of what humans value and how we spend our lives. Weeks proposes universal basic income and reducing the expected workday from eight hours to six as ways of enacting the refusal of work, envisioning human life beyond work as a central organizing principle in public policy.

For Posadas (2017: 353), Weeks’s refusal of work raises important questions about the Christian view of work:

*“[It] challenges Christian ethics and theology to justify why incorporating people more fully into an improved work structure is a more properly Christian project than making participation in the work structure less necessary in the first place.”*

It should be clear that the critiques by Weeks and Posadas focus on *waged* work and seek to lessen the overriding role *waged* work takes in many human lives under late capitalism. As we have already seen, CST explicitly warns against many of the misuses of waged work with which anti-work theory is concerned: low-wage workers condemned to toil long hours to earn a basic subsistence; the overvaluing of work as a source of personal dignity by educated professionals; the preeminence of waged work in an average life compared to time with family and community or spent in leisurely worship. Nor, as Posadas (2017: 358) points out, need we stop advocating better conditions and wages in work while aspiring to change the overall place of waged work in society. “Anti-work theory,” as outlandish as it sounds to a culture accustomed to work as a source of ultimate meaning, presents useful challenges to Catholic social thought.

Catholic perspectives that locate opposition to UBI in concerns about work sell short the tradition's richness on work as a human activity. Such perspectives run the risk of accepting economic fallacies that view human nature as selfish and motivated by profit, rather than inherently creative, caring, and connecting. A correct understanding of the Catholic social thought tradition on work can view universal basic income as promoting, rather than challenging, the practice of the types of work that matter most. It can follow anti-work theorists in viewing UBI as posing a healthy challenge to the preeminent role sometimes given to paid jobs in contemporary life.

## Conclusion

Catholic social thought does not recommend specific economic models to follow, recognizing that multiple models may be appropriate to embody the tradition's ideals in various local contexts (John Paul II **1991**: §43).<sup>18</sup> It is up to all people concerned with social justice to engage in democratic deliberation to locate the model that will best honor the preferential option for the poor, promote human dignity, and serve the common good in a particular context. I believe universal basic income can be that solution for the United States and other wealthy nations.

CST views work as dignified, important, and as a duty, but does not assert a duty to work for wages. The Catholic social thought tradition beautifully proclaims that human beings are created by God as creative, striving, and interdependent. (For the contrasting anthropologies of Catholic social thought and of mainstream economics, see C. Clark [**2019**] and Hinze [**2015**: Ch. 4].) We all have a responsibility to exercise our creative, striving, active nature: to fail to do so would be to squander God's gift. This means each human being has a duty to work: to create, maintain, cultivate, or care for some aspect of God's creation. Such work—be it intellectual creation, physical labor, or caregiving for vulnerable humans—carries immense innate dignity precisely because it allows humans to exercise some of the various capabilities given to us by God.

It is also true that human beings are created by God as needy. We need food, shelter, healthcare, and the society of others. No human ever created has been able to attain all these basic needs without the help of others—not even as an adult, certainly not throughout the entire life span. We all depend on the work of others to achieve some part of our basic needs, both in vulnerable childhood and old age, and even when at the peak of adult health and ability. Since the human person is created by God as needy and must have these basic goods to survive, the Church teaches that attaining these basic goods is a right, and a right that may place duties of response on other persons, even entire societies (John XXIII **1963**: § 31–32). Government provision is a dignified way to meet basic needs, and our faith in active, creative human nature asserts that people will fulfill their duty to work in a thousand creative, caring ways, even if the work is not done for pay.

With universal basic income, we can choose to build a society where technology provides its many benefits to humanity, and people continue to engage in dignified work and achieve the basic needs of life. Doing so will require us to leave behind our conviction that a dignified life must depend on waged labor. We can learn from the Catholic social tradition that our right to basic needs flows forth from our human nature, not from our participation in waged work. As creative, relational, God-inspired creatures, humans will continue to perform the many irreplaceable forms of work that currently fit into the hours between waged labor and sleep. Why shouldn't we do so with the security of a basic income for a safety net?

## Notes

1. A version of this essay was presented as the 2018 Villanova Ethics Lecture through the Ethics Program at Villanova University. I would like to thank Mark Doorley, other faculty affiliates of the Ethics Program, and the Villanova community for thoughtful engagement during my visit. I would also like to thank the



staffs of the Marquette Libraries and the Milwaukee Public Library, particularly Rose Trupiano at Marquette, for helping me access needed materials during the COVID-19 shutdowns.

2. Murray's proposal includes certain restrictions on the health insurance industry to ensure that everyone could access a policy for \$3,000 or less.
3. Euro to dollar conversions were performed in June 2020. Clark modeled a tax restructure that would allow Ireland to pay for this while taxing well below the E.U. average.
4. Non-universal basic income pilots are taking place in the city of Stockton, CA and in Jackson, MS (Goodman 2018; Springboard to Opportunities n.d.). One example of a universal cash program that does not provide a basic income is the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (Parijs and Vanderborcht 2017: 94). Another example is the one-time COVID-19 stimulus in the United States. For a more complete list of basic income experiments, see Standing (2017: 11).
5. Contra Michael Novak (1985); for more context on Novak's outlier view of freedom in Catholic social thought, see Shadle (2018: 200).
6. The Centers for Disease Control reports an inverse relationship between income and intimate partner violence: low-income women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence relative to the general population. A common factor here could be the stress of living at low-income levels, but it also seems intuitive that the financial freedom to leave abusive situations helps better-off women escape violence in ways not available to women in poverty (Breiding, Chen, and Black 2014: 31–33). Basic income could also help empower women to leave or challenge sexually harassing workplaces, as Lewis (2018) points out.
7. This concern is present at the very beginning of Catholic social thought, as Leo XIII (1891: §5) in *Rerum Novarum* envisions a waged worker saving his wages in order to invest in land and ultimately live independently. It is no less of a concern in recent Catholic social thought. It is reflected in the response of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986: 129, 217, 236–237) to the 1980s farm crisis or in the concern of Francis (2015: §134) in *Laudato Si'* that patent control of GMO crops drives small farmers off the land, concentrating farmland in the hands of a few wealthy owners.
8. Grey (2014), a widely cited video commentary with over 12 million views at this writing, warns that up to 45 percent of current human jobs, including ones in white-collar professions, such as writing and the law, could be lost to automation in the coming century.
9. The NCCC position envisioned guaranteed minimum income as a combination of a jobs guarantee and direct payments or a negative income tax, which is different than the model this essay has been discussing.
10. This proposal, the Federal Assistance Program (FAP), which never passed, was intended to reform Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a Social-Security-era program of federal cash assistance. When President Bill Clinton finally replaced AFDC in 1997, work requirements for mothers of young children were much more stringent than Nixon's. According to Lerner (2015), nearly a quarter of new mothers in the United States return to work within two weeks after giving birth.
11. One caveat here: a case could be made that art, as a means of contemplating creation, is actually leisure in the classical definition advanced by Josef Pieper (1998). However, it seems to me that more CST commenters understand it as work, and it is hard to miss the similarities of artistic creation and God's creation.
12. The majority of popes have assumed family caregiving to be the primary work of women; see Leo XIII (1891: §42), Pius XI (1931: §71), Paul VI (1965a: §52, 1965b, 1971: 13), and John Paul II (1981a: §19, 1981b: §23). Benedict XVI developed this teaching by treating women working outside the home as equally unremarkable with men doing so, and Francis developed it by discussing men's role in providing care in the home. See Ward (2019, 2020).
13. John Paul II (1981b: 9) describes childrearing and other forms of work as "toil."

14. We should also be wary of passing too quickly from “CST asserts a duty” to “those who do not perform this duty do not deserve help.” The Catholic tradition envisions many duties that pertain to all people, such as faithfulness to one’s spouse, and others that bind Catholics, such as attending Mass weekly. But in a pluralistic society, rarely do we take the position that those who fail to perform these duties should be denied access to social safety nets.
15. A primary example of alienating work in CST is repetitive, mindless, or dangerous assembly line work—just the type of work that robots have taken over in many industries.
16. I am not aware of any contemporary UBI proposal that would do this. A sociological look at one potential incident of this happening is depicted in Moore (2016), which describes a study of unemployment in Marienthal, Austria, in the 1930s, conducted by Jahoda et al. (1971). It is certainly possible to interpret the struggles of Marienthal’s unemployed as resulting from the prohibition on waged work, rather than from the basic income.
17. CST does not require governments to furnish a jobs guarantee, which would represent too much control of the economy and infringe too much on individual creativity. This is further evidence that CST does not intend to enshrine waged labor as the only acceptable way to meet basic needs (John Paul II 1991: §48).
18. The encyclical tradition steadfastly proclaims that the Church does not recommend particular economic models. Alert readers of the tradition, however, note that it approves of government setting rules on the economy, praises the role of small businesses and farms, and recommends particular methods of redistribution, including family grants. Francis’s (2020) comment about universal basic income does not carry the same weight as the primary documents of Catholic social teaching, since it was made in an address and not an encyclical.

## References

- Bane, Mary Jo, and Lawrence M. Mead. (2003). *Lifting up the Poor: A Dialogue on Religion, Poverty, & Welfare Reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Benedict XVI. (2009). *Caritas in Veritate*. [Encyclical “Charity in Truth”]. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html)
- Bregman, Rutger. (2017). *Utopia for Realists: And How We Can Get There*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Breiding, Matthew J., Jieru Chen, and Michele C. Black. (2014). *Intimate Partner Violence in the United States—2010*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Castelli, Jim. (1972). “How to Get Rid of the Poor.” *U.S. Catholic* September: 17– 23.
- Clark, Charles M. A. (2002). *The Basic Income Guarantee: Ensuring Progress and Prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Dublin, Ireland: Liffey Press in association with CORI Justice Commission.
- Clark, Charles M. A. (2019). “Catholicism and Economics: Towards a ‘Deeper Reflection on the Nature of the Economy and its Purposes’.” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* **78**(2): 409– 441.
- Clark, Meghan J. (2010). “Crisis in Care: Family, Society and the Need for Subsidiarity in Caregiving.” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* **7**(1): 63– 81.
- Clifford, Catherine. (2017). “What Billionaires and Business Titans Say About Cash Handouts in 2017 (Hint: Lots!).” *CNBC*. <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/12/27/what-billionaires-say-about-universal-basic-income-in-2017.html>
- Corcoran, Lawrence J. (1972). “Let’s Have a Guaranteed Annual Income: Feedback.” *U.S. Catholic* September: 12– 16.
- Dorr, Donal. ([1983] 1992). *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, rev. ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Duffy, Gavan. (2008). *Labour and Justice: The Worker in Catholic Social Teaching*. Herefordshire, UK: Freedom Publishing.
- Edin, Kathryn, and Maria Kefalas. (2005). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Federici, Silvia. ([1980] 1995). "Wages Against Housework." In *The Politics of Housework*. Ed. Ellen Malos, pp. 187– 194. Cheltenham, UK: New Clarion.
- Finn, Daniel. (2012). "Human Work in Catholic Social Thought." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* **71**(4): 874– 885.
- Finn, Daniel. (2013). *Christian Economic Ethics: History and Implications*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Flanigan, Jessica. (2018). "The Feminist Case for Universal Basic Income." *Slate* January. <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/01/the-feminist-case-for-universal-basic-income.html>
- Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium* [Apostolic Exhortation "On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today"]. November 24. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)
- Francis. (2015). *Laudato Si'* [Encyclical "On Care for Our Common Home"]. May 24. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)
- Francis. (2016). *Amoris Laetitia* [Apostolic Exhortation "On Love in the Family"]. March 19. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html)
- Francis. (2020). *Letter to Members of Popular Movements*. April 12. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200412\\_lettera-movimentipopolari.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200412_lettera-movimentipopolari.html)
- Freiberg, Tracey. (2019). "Effects of Care Leave and Family Social Policy: Spotlight on the United States." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* **78**(4): 1009– 1037.
- Goodman, Peter S. (2018). "Free Cash to Fight Income Inequality? California City Is First in U.S. to Try." *New York Times* May 30.
- Gordon, Noah J. (2014). "The Conservative Case for a Guaranteed Basic Income." *Atlantic* August 6.
- Grey, C. G. P. (2014). *Humans Need Not Apply* (video). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pq-S557XQU>
- Hahn, Heather, Eleanor Pratt, Eva Allen, Genevieve Kenney, Diane K. Levy, and Elaine Waxman. (2017). *Work Requirements in Social Safety Net Programs: A Status Report of Work Requirements in TANF, SNAP, Housing Assistance, and Medicaid*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Halpern-Meekin, Sarah, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Jennifer Sykes. (2015). *It's Not Like I'm Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Hannafey, Francis. (2006). "Entrepreneurship in Papal Thought: Creation of Wealth and the Distribution of Justice." In *Rediscovering Abundance: Interdisciplinary Essays on Wealth, Income, and Their Distribution in the Catholic Social Tradition*. Eds. Helen J. Alford, Charles M. A. Clark, S. A. Cortright, and Michael J. Naughton, pp. 102– 128. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hayes, Ronald C. (1968). "Statement of Ronald C. Hayes, Income Maintenance Committee, National Conference of Catholic Charities." In *Income Maintenance Programs: Proceedings*. U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, pp. 391– 410. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Hinze, Christine Firer. (2009). "Women, Families, and the Legacy of 'Laborem Exercens': An Unfinished Agenda." *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* **6**(1): 63– 92.

- Hinze, Christine Firer. (2015). *Glass Ceilings and Dirt Floors: Women, Work, and the Global Economy*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Jahoda, Marie, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel. (1971). *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*. Chicago: Aldine Atherton.
- John XXIII. (1961). *Mater et Magistra* [Encyclical “On Christianity and Social Progress”]. May 15. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html)
- John XXIII. (1963). *Pacem in Terris* [Encyclical “Peace on Earth”]. April 11. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)
- John Paul II. (1981a). *Laborem Exercens* [Encyclical “On Human Work”]. September 14. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html)
- John Paul II. (1981b). *Familiaris Consortio* [Apostolic Exhortation “On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World”]. November 22. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html)
- John Paul II. (1987). *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [Encyclical “On Social Concern”]. December 30. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html)
- John Paul II. (1991). *Centesimus Annus* [Encyclical “Hundredth Year of Rerum Novarum”]. May 1. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html)
- Knox, Virginia, Cynthia Miller, and Lisa Gennetian. (2000). *Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program*. Minneapolis: Minnesota Department of Human Services; and New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. <https://www.mdrc.org/publication/reforming-welfare-and-rewarding-work-summary-final-mfip-report>
- Lapowsky, Issie. (2017). “Free Money: The Surprising Effects of a Basic Income Supplied by a Tribal Government.” *Wired* November 12.
- Leo XIII. (1891). *Rerum Novarum* [Encyclical “On Capital and Labor”]. May 15. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html)
- Lerner, Sharon. (2015). “The Real War on Families: Why the U.S. Needs Paid Leave Now.” *In These Times* August 18.
- Lewis, Michael (2018). “‘Me Too’ and the Basic Income Guarantee.” *Basic Income News*. <http://basicincome.org/news/2018/01/basic-income-guarantee/>
- Lindsey, Brink, and Steven Michael Teles. (2017). *The Captured Economy: How the Powerful Enrich Themselves, Slow Down Growth, and Increase Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lowrey, Annie. (2019). *Give People Money: How a Universal Basic Income Would End Poverty, Revolutionize Work, and Remake the World*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Major, Kirsty. (2017). “If Facebook Makes Billions from My Data, I Deserve the Basic Income as a Dividend for My Work.” *Independent* February 7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/universal-basic-income-data-advertising-facebook-google-profit-from-posts-reward-hard-work-data-a7567751.html>
- Masse, Benjamin L. (1969). “SOCIAL FRONT: Guaranteed Minimum Income.” *America Magazine* March 8.
- Miller, John W. (2019). “Universal Basic Income Is Having a Moment. Can Advocates Convince a Skeptical Public?” *America Magazine* October 2.

- Moffitt, Robert A. (2015). "The Deserving Poor, the Family, and the U.S. Welfare System." *Demography* **52**(3): 729– 749.
- Moore, Anne Elizabeth. (2016). "Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal." In *Threadbare: Clothes, Sex, and Trafficking*, pp. 51– 61. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing.
- Murray, Charles. (2006). *In Our Hands: A Plan to Replace the Welfare State*. Washington, DC: AEI Press.
- National Women's Law Center. (2017). *Women and Poverty, State by State*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center. <https://nwlc.org/resources/women-and-poverty-state-state/>
- Neubeck, Kenneth J., and Noel A. Cazenave. (2001). *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor*. New York: Routledge.
- Novak, Michael. (1985). "Economic Rights: The Servile State." *Crisis Magazine* October 1. <http://www.crisismagazine.com/1985/economic-rights-the-servile-state>
- Parijs, Philippe Van. (1992). "Basic Income Capitalism." *Ethics* **102**(3): 465– 484.
- Parijs, Philippe Van. (2000). "A Basic Income for All." *Boston Review* **25**(5). <https://bostonreview.net/archives/BR25.5/vanparijs.html>
- Parijs, Philippe Van. (2013). "The Universal Basic Income." *Politics & Society* **41**(2): 171– 182.
- Parijs, Philippe van, and Yannick Vanderborght. (2017). *Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Paul VI. (1965a). *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]. December 7. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)
- Paul VI. (1965b). *Address of Pope Paul VI To Women*. December 8. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651208\\_epilogo-concilio-donne.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-donne.html)
- Paul VI. (1967). *Populorum Progressio* [Encyclical "On the Development of Peoples"]. March 26. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html)
- Paul VI. (1971). *Octogesima Adveniens*. [Apostolic Letter "On the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum"]. May 14. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html)
- Pieper, Josef. (1998). *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press.
- Pimpare, Stephen. (2008). *A People's History of Poverty in America*. New York: New Press.
- Pius XI. (1931). *Quadragesimo Anno* [Encyclical "On Reconstruction of the Social Order"]. May 15. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragesimo-anno.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html)
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (1997). *Towards a Better Distribution of Land: The Challenge of Agrarian Reform*. November 23. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_12011998\\_distribuzione-terra\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_12011998_distribuzione-terra_en.html)
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2004). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)
- Posadas, Jeremy D. (2017). "The Refusal of Work in Christian Ethics and Theology: Interpreting Work from an Anti-Work Perspective." *Journal of Religious Ethics* **45**(2): 330– 361.

- Santens, Scott. (2015). "Universal Basic Income as the Social Vaccine of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *Medium*. <https://medium.com/basic-income/universal-basic-income-as-the-social-vaccine-of-the-21st-century-d66dff39073>
- Shadle, Matthew A. (2018). *Interrupting Capitalism: Catholic Social Thought and the Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soss, Joe. (2000). *Unwanted Claims: The Politics of Participation in the U.S. Welfare System*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Springboard to Opportunities. (n.d.). "Introducing the Magnolia Mothers' Trust!" Jackson, MS: Springboard to Opportunities. <http://springboardto.org/index.php/blog/story/introducing-the>
- Standing, Guy. (2017). *Basic Income: A Guide for the Open-Minded*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Steppler, Renee. (2017). *U.S. Views on Paid Family and Medical Leave: Key Findings*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/23/key-takeaways-on-americans-views-of-and-experiences-with-family-and-medical-leave/>
- Torry, Malcolm. (2016). *Citizen's Basic Income: A Christian Social Policy*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd. (citations are to "locations" in ebook).
- Toth, William J. (2007). "Work, Catholic Understanding Of." In *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*. vol. 2. Eds. Michael L. Coulter, Stephen M. Krason, Richard S. Myers, and Joseph A. Varacalli, pp. 1139– 1141. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). (1986). *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*. Washington, DC: USCCB. [http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic\\_justice\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf)
- Ward, Kate. (2019). "Catholic Teaching Changes: Women in the Workplace." *Women in Theology* August 23. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/23/key-takeaways-on-americans-views-of-and-experiences-with-family-and-medical-leave/>
- Ward, Kate. (2020). "Sounding Board: Universal Dignity." *U.S. Catholic* July: 21– 24.
- Weeks, Kathi (2011). *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.