

11/12/2020

Dr. Jeffrey D. Senese
President,
Saint Leo University
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St. Leo, FL 33574

Dear Dr. Senese,

On behalf of the United Faculty of Florida, UF chapter, the union that represents tenured and non-tenure track faculty at the University of Florida I am writing to urge you to recognize the UFF-SLU as the collective bargaining agent for full-time faculty and to immediately restore all rights granted to them as outlined in the existing Collective Bargaining Agreement at Saint Leo University.

As you are well aware, Dr. Senese, the teaching of the Church since the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican has been crystal clear on the role of unions in what *Gaudium et Spes* refers to as the “universal common good.” In case you would like to read the full passage on unions from Vatican II, I quote:

Among the basic rights of the human person is to be numbered the right of freely founding unions for working people. They should be able truly to represent them and to contribute to the organizing of economic life in the right way. Included is the right of freely taking part in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal. Through this orderly participation joined to progressive economic and social formation, all will grow day by day in the awareness of their won function and responsibility, and thus they will be brought to feel that they are comrades in the whole task of economic development and in the attainment of the universal common good according to their capacities and aptitudes.

More recently, Pope Paul VI in 1971 notes, “*The important role of union organizations must be admitted: their object is the representation of the various categories of workers, their lawful collaboration in the economic advance of society, and the development of the sense of their responsibility for the realization of the common good.*”

I am including these lengthy quotations on unions—I could include many more as you are well aware—from the Holy See just in case Saint Leo University’s Board of Trustees is unfamiliar with the Church’s teachings on these matters. I believe that the decision to unilaterally violate the contractual provisions with your faculty union—which you surely know will be overturned in subsequent proceedings—was made in haste and without adequate counsel on all levels.

In conclusion, I beg you President Senese to reverse this remarkably undemocratic decision promulgated by your Board of Trustees, a decision that goes against over a century of Catholic Doctrine dating back to Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891) on the *Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*. I know that you will do the right thing in these matters. Please recognize your faculty union!

Sincerely Yours,
Paul Ortiz
Professor of History, University of Florida
President, United Faculty of Florida-UF (NEA/FEA/AFL-CIO)