

they make ownership impossible of attainment by many others. The primary purpose of material goods, they declare, is to serve the essential needs of all mankind. Private property is justifiable only insofar as it contributes to this primary purpose.

Pope Pius XI in his encyclical, *On Restoring the Christian Social Order*, reaffirmed the natural right of private property and stressed its social character. He declared that "the distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good, that is, of social justice. For every sincere observer is conscious that the vast differences between the few who hold excessive wealth and the many who live in destitution constitute a grave evil in modern society." (par. 58) He advocated both widespread ownership of productive property (par. 63) and declared it "advisable that the wage contract should, when possible, be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership, as is already being tried in various ways to the not small gain both of the wage earners and of the employers. In this way workers and officials are made sharers in the ownership or the management, or in some way participate in the profits." (par. 65)

Pope Pius XII further stressed the primary purpose of material goods and insisted that the right of every man to use them for his own sustenance is prior to all other rights in economic life, including the right of private ownership. (Radio address, June 1, 1941)

Pope John XXIII in his encyclical, *Christianity and Social Progress*, noted that "the number of persons is increasing who, because of recent advances in insurance programs and various systems of social security, are able to look to the future with tranquility. This sort of tranquility once was rooted in the ownership of property, albeit modest. It sometime happens in our day that men are more inclined to seek some professional skill than possession of goods. Moreover, such men have greater esteem for income from labor or rights arising from labor, than for that deriving from capital investment or rights associated therewith. This clearly accords with the inherent characteristics of labor, inasmuch as this proceeds directly from the human person, and hence is to be thought more of than wealth in external goods. These latter, by their very nature, must be regarded as instruments. This trend indicates an advance in civilization." (par. 105-7)

Pope John insists that this statement must not be interpreted as a rejection of the principle of private ownership of property. He declares: "The right of private property, including that pertaining to goods devoted to productive enterprises, is permanently valid. Indeed, it is rooted in the very nature of things whereby we learn that individual men are prior to civil society, and hence, that civil society is to be directed toward man as its end. Indeed, the right of private individuals to act freely in economic affairs is recognized in vain, unless they are at the same time given an opportunity of freely selecting and using things necessary for the exercise of this right." (par. 109). This tie between ownership and civil rights is prompting many civil rights leaders in the United States to press for increased ownership of property by minorities.

With regard to Pope's statement about men who "are more inclined to seek professional skills than possession of goods," we note that rapid inroads of automation into many skilled professions are now drastically reducing the number of persons who can safely take this stand. For the vast majority of people, ownership of goods is an urgently needed source of income and security.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical, *On the Development of Peoples*, places great emphasis on the obligation of rich individuals to share with those less fortunate. He declares: "Private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities. . . . If certain landed estates impede the general prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples or are detrimental to the interests of the country, the common good sometimes demands their expropriation." (par. 23-24). This principle provides a vindication for certain types of land reform.

We note the repeated affirmations by these Popes of the natural right of all men to private property and their growing insistence upon the need for making ownership and its benefits serve the needs of all of God's people. Therefore, we urge both private organizations and Governments to initiate programs which will make the ownership of productive property more widespread.