

# Catholic Social Teaching on Human Rights and Solidarity

*“Beginning our discussion of the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and finally the necessary social services.”*  
Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* 11

*“There can be no progress towards the complete development of the human person without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity.”*  
Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* 43

At the end of World War II, the world order as it had existed was in shambles. The unspeakable horror and devastation of both the Holocaust and the war itself required a global response. Though this is the period of growing Cold War alliances, 1948 also marked the emergence of a new social and political order with the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the Catholic Church and Catholic intellectuals were deeply involved with both developments, the official moral teaching of the Roman Catholic Church did not then embrace the language of human rights.<sup>1</sup> Catholic moral

1. For a full treatment of these developments, see Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951; repr., Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1998); David Hollenbach, SJ, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1979); and Jack Mahoney, SJ, *The Challenge of Human Rights: Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

theology preferred the language of natural law, in which the church sought to discover and explain moral laws based upon relationships within the created world.<sup>2</sup> During the 1960s there was a significant shift toward the language of human rights through the teachings of Pope John XXIII, Vatican II, and Pope Paul VI. Beyond the inclusion of human rights language, this period also marked the development of Catholic social teaching on solidarity. Deepening and expanding the centrality of human rights and solidarity, the papacy of John Paul II from 1978 to 2005 continued the social message of his recent predecessors, infusing it with a personalist philosophy. This process continued with Pope Benedict XVI, who further developed the tradition on human rights and solidarity through the lens of charity. This chapter traces the prioritization and development of human rights and solidarity, highlighting key insights and lasting ambiguities that emerge within the tradition. Both human rights and solidarity are recognized as central to any comprehensive response to global problems. However, deep ambiguity remains concerning solidarity, and yet solidarity is the necessary companion of human rights.

#### THE TURN TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOLIDARITY: JOHN XXIII, VATICAN II, AND PAUL VI

As a living tradition, Catholic social teaching develops and adapts to deal with emerging historical situations and the presence of new ethical concerns. Throughout their history, emerging Catholic social encyclicals use the vast wealth of Catholic moral theology to address new ethical situations in order to adapt the tradition and develop new ethical theories to deal with the problems of the modern world. Each encyclical builds on its predecessors as it moves forward. It would, therefore, be incorrect to imply that the concepts of human rights and solidarity are alien to the earlier encyclicals or that there is a lack of continuity in the tradition. Chronicling the development of Catholic human rights theory, David Hollenbach states that it “has roots all the way back to Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, the Bible and Aristotle. More proximately, it emerged from the social doctrine of the modern papacy.”<sup>3</sup> While rooted in

2. A common example of this is Catholic social teaching’s defense of private property in the early social encyclicals. For example, in 1931’s *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI states, “The right to own private property has been given to man by nature or rather the Creator himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide their own needs and those of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose” (QA 45). In this natural law understanding of the right to private property, the distinction is that private property is a derived right based on the universal destination of goods and the duty to provide for oneself and one’s family. The right as such is not the primary or absolute goal.

this tradition, the writings of John XXIII, Vatican II, and Paul VI demonstrate a significant movement in both the theory and language of official Catholic social ethics. John XXIII's purpose and approach is rooted in his predecessors, yet he is the first pope to explicitly incorporate the language of human rights.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the language of solidarity evolves out of growing recognition of interdependence and its relation to the duty of the common good. During the decade from 1961 to 1971, the two are positioned as the two major pillars of an ethics for the contemporary world, though there is ambiguity in how and why the two are practically linked.

#### *DEFINING AND GROUNDING HUMAN RIGHTS*

In his 1961 encyclical, *Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress)*, Pope John XXIII began to lay the foundation for the central mission of both *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and Vatican II (1960–1965), to reposition and refocus the engagement of the church in the many issues of the contemporary world—the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and neocolonialism, among others. Examining this development in light of the growing complexity of the global sociopolitical situation, David Hollenbach explains:

The consequence of this complexity is two-fold. First, human freedom is more and more both exercised and limited by social organization and government. Second, the process of social complexification threatens to undermine people's confidence in their ability to assume responsibility for their own lives. This process thus brings into question the transcendence of persons by threatening to subordinate them to the dynamics of social organization and government.<sup>5</sup>

Pope John XXIII's answer is a Catholic human rights theory built on the combination of rights and duties highlighted by his predecessors. All human rights are understood by John XXIII as applying to persons within communities. Reflecting back on *Rerum Novarum*, John XIII states that “private property, including that of productive goods, is a natural right possessed by all,

3. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 41. For an extended examination of the development of Catholic human rights theory, see chapter 2.

4. Prior to John XXIII, Catholic social teaching focused on the natural law, which included both the right to property and an emphasis on duties; however, it intentionally avoided the specific language of human rights as evidenced in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

5. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 63.

which the state may by no means suppress. However, as there is from nature a social aspect to private property, he who uses his right in this regard must take into account not merely his own welfare but that of others as well” (MM 19). John is clearly and strongly reiterating the central concerns of Catholic social teaching: the dignity of the human person and the welfare of the community. This constant focus on both the person and community is further highlighted by his definition of the common good as embracing “the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby men are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection” (MM 65). True community, for John, exists “only if individual members are considered and treated as persons, and are encouraged to participate in the affairs of the group” (MM 65). Thus, John and his successor Paul VI develop a Catholic approach to human rights that includes all of the major hallmarks of the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and expands this list significantly to include the rights and duties of individuals, communities, and nations, as well as the human right to development.

Explicit in its use of international human rights language, *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*) is groundbreaking and controversial from its opening salutation. Traditionally, encyclicals had been addressed only to the Catholic hierarchy and faithful. The first encyclical addressed to non-Catholics, *Pacem in Terris* seeks to engage *all people of good will* on the heels of the Cuban Missile Crisis. While the subject of peace was not controversial, “the encyclical’s recourse to rights’ language itself constituted an intellectual challenge. For some it seemed a capitulation to the Enlightenment; to others it amounted to an overdue encounter with the secular (western) world.”<sup>6</sup> However, in adopting the language of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, John was not capitulating but explicitly seeking a critical encounter with the secular world. *Pacem in Terris* adopts and adapts the rights found in secular rights theory and seeks to transcend the common political debates concerning the canon of human rights.

While much of the world was debating whether or not civil-political rights (those emphasized by Western democracies) or socioeconomic rights (those often associated with communism) were the primary or “real” rights, the actual cause of human rights suffered as a result. The UN declaration sought to transcend this debate by including all categories of rights and leaving it to the

6. Drew Christiansen, "Commentary on *Pacem in Terris*," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, et al. (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2005), 224.

member states to implement and prioritize them. John XXIII, instead, sought to integrate and expand further the canon of human rights by offering a systematic listing of human rights and corresponding duties. Defining his starting point, John XXIII explains: “Any human society, if it is to be well ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person; that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as these rights are universal and inviolable so they cannot in any way be surrendered” (PT 9). The divisions of Catholic human rights are not the polarized divisions between civil-political and socioeconomic rights. Instead, they are divided into three major categories: order between persons, between individuals and public authority within a state, and between states.

In the first section, *Pacem in Terris* details a very common list of the human rights of each and every individual human person. From the right to life and a worthy standard of living (PT 11), to freedom in seeking the truth (PT 12), to an education (PT 13), to active participation in political life (PT 26), to an opportunity to work, to a just wage and private property (PT 19–21), and to the right of meeting and association (PT 23–24), the individual rights enumerated are similar to those in any canon of human rights. However, as is characteristic of Catholic ethics, they are contextualized within the community and linked to associated duties. For example, while one has the right to active participation in the political life of the community, “the fact that one is a citizen of a particular state does not detract in any way from his membership in the human family as a whole, nor from his citizenship in the world community” (PT 25). While human rights apply to individual human persons, they are in no way individualistic. “The natural rights with which we have been dealing are, however, inseparably connected, in the very person who is their subject, with just as many respective duties. . . . [T]he right of every man to life is correlative with the duty to preserve it; his right to a decent standard of living with the duty of living it becomingly” (PT 28, 29). The rights one holds as an individual human person cannot be properly understood without the responsibilities attached to those rights.

Recognizing and living out one’s own individual human rights is not sufficient; all human rights include the primary duties of reciprocity and mutual collaboration. Founded on the equality of all human persons, human rights demand that when we recognize our own human rights, we have a duty to recognize the human rights of others; “once this is admitted, it also follows that in human society to one man’s right there corresponds a duty in all

other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question” (PT 30). To claim rights for oneself or one’s own community but deny them to others is to “build with one hand and destroy with the other” (PT 30). Moreover, this duty is not abstract. John emphatically states, “It is not enough, for example, to acknowledge and respect every man’s right to the means of subsistence if we do not strive to the best of our ability for a sufficient supply of what is necessary for his sustenance” (PT 32). We have a profound obligation to promote the human rights and flourishing of others as part of the common good. My own substantive exercise of my human rights is contingent on my striving for the substantive exercise of these rights for each and every individual human person and community. The practical application of this is evidenced throughout *Pacem in Terris*, in its attention to the interdependence of individuals and communities and its attempt to place relations between nations under the governance of human rights. Theologically and philosophically, however, the encyclical does not offer a developed foundation for why this is so.

*Pacem in Terris* goes beyond addressing the rights and duties of individuals to those associated with broader communal relationships. Where *Mater et Magistra* offers a clear definition of the common good with reference to both the community and each person within that community, John’s treatise on human rights continues by addressing the relationship between individuals and the state. Human persons are social; they always live in communities. Therefore, they need civil authority: “Human society can neither be well-ordered nor prosperous unless it has some people invested with legitimate authority to preserve its institutions and to devote themselves as far as is necessary to work and care for the good of all” (PT 46). However, in accordance with the common good, this does not represent a blanket acceptance of all forms of authority. Legitimate authority, within the encyclical, is consistent with political participation in democracy as well as with civil disobedience against unjust laws and governments. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the civil authority is directly related to its protection and promotion of the human rights of its citizens or members (PT 60). A government that denies or violates the human rights of its citizens “not only fails in its duty, but its orders completely lack juridical force” (PT 61). The responsibility of the civil authority does not end with the nominal recognition of human rights, but extends to promoting the substantive value of these rights through social support and services (PT 56, 64). Employment is one area where the civil authority has expanded positive responsibilities for human rights: “the government should make similarly effective efforts to see that those who are able to work can find employment in

keeping with their aptitudes and that each worker receives a wage in keeping with the laws of justice and equity” (PT 64). Without active support of the government, the substantive exercise of human rights is impossible for the marginal within society, as “inequalities between the citizens tend to become more and more widespread, especially in the modern world, and as a result human rights are rendered totally ineffective and the fulfillment of duties is compromised” (PT 63).

At the same time, the individual’s right to political participation includes the duty to participate in the civil society: “it is in keeping with their dignity as persons that human beings should take an active part in government; although the manner in which they share in it will depend on the development of the country to which they belong” (PT 73). For example, the right to vote as a citizen (or most specifically the right to political participation) carries with it an implicit duty to vote or engage in oppositional protest as a form of political participation. Without baptizing a particular form and organization of civil government as divinely appointed, John defines legitimate civil authority in terms of human rights and the common good.

As persons, we are social beings who exist in various levels of community. Therefore, any understanding of human rights, from the perspective of Catholic social teaching, must be understood with reference to the community as a matter of the common good. The relationship between the individual and the state is to be judged, then, based on the promotion of human rights. The power and legitimacy of the government are directly related to its promotion of justice for its citizens through human rights, and human rights for the individual oblige participation in the civil society and political processes of the state. Expanding active participation is crucial to the evaluation of both. *Pacem in Terris* moves to the relations between states and argues that not only persons, but also nations, are the subjects of rights (PT 80). Framing his discussion of the relations between states within the framework of truth, justice, solidarity, and liberty, Pope John XXIII affirms, “All states are by nature equal in dignity. Each of them accordingly is vested with the right to existence, to self-development, to the means fitting to its attainment, and to be the one primarily responsible for this self-development.” (PT 86). Just as it is the duty of individuals to recognize the rights of others, so too justice requires that states recognize the rights of others (PT 91). Rights and their respective duties always require mutuality and reciprocity (PT 92–93). Building on this, relations between states should be based on a working solidarity and in liberty, focusing on disarmament, freedom of states, and the centrality of the common good in relation to both their own citizens and other states.

Central to human rights, therefore, is its focus on duties or responsibilities. John succinctly argues, “if a man becomes conscious of his rights, he must become equally aware of his duties” (PT 44), including duties to himself or herself as well as to others. The attention to both human rights and their correlative duties is a defining characteristic of Catholic human rights theory and an important adaptation for our understanding of human rights. Catholic social teaching’s understanding of the duty operates on three distinct yet related levels. First, an affirmation of human rights requires the duty of mutuality or reciprocity. On the individual level, this requires the recognition that if I claim human rights for myself, I must also recognize those rights for others. This duty of reciprocity is the context for duty within the UN declaration. This sense of duty, which addresses the *claim* of human rights, traditionally applied to the nation-state’s legal recognition of these rights. Individuals have rights that they can claim against the state, which has the duty or responsibility to enforce them. In *Pacem in Terris*, however, this sense of duty applies to many levels: the individual, the state, and the international community.<sup>7</sup>

Second, there is a positive understanding of duty that goes beyond merely focusing on protecting individuals from having their rights directly infringed upon or violated. Duty here includes a positive requirement to promote human rights for oneself and others. It is not sufficient to acknowledge rights if we do not work for the exercise and substantive reality of these rights. While the role of the state is dominant in these matters, *Pacem in Terris* does not relinquish all responsibility for the duty of human rights to the state. Based on the principle of *subsidiarity*, which maintains that society should deal with situations on the lowest level possible but at the highest level necessary, the duty to actively create the conditions for greater exercise of human rights is the duty of individuals, families, communities, nations, and the international community. The state, then, is not necessarily the primary locus of the duties associated with human rights. The duty begins with the individual and extends to all levels, including the state and beyond. Finally, there is a correlative duty latent within the right itself. As stated, the right to life comes with a correlative duty to live life to the fullest. The freedom of choice is not the ultimate value. Human rights are understood as entitlements that carry a responsibility to human flourishing.

7. In its approach to the international community, *Pacem in Terris* receives a considerable amount of criticism for its idealism. The text envisions international structures that could enforce this larger duty of mutual respect for human rights in ways that did not exist at the time and still do not exist today. However, it is also a precursor to the development of the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court at The Hague. While neither of these function as John envisioned, they are developments in the direction of enforcing human rights.



Based on this, the next step after *Pacem in Terris* was the recognition of the right to development, the central theme for John's successor Paul VI. While the definition of integral development and solidarity is the subject of the next section, the listing of a right to development as a human right is a major addition in the Catholic human rights tradition and clearly points to the practical application of a focus on the community. Perhaps the clearest defense of the right to development as a central human right comes in the 1971 Synod of Bishop's statement *Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World)*, which states: "In the face of international systems of domination, the bringing about of justice depends more and more on the determined will for development. . . . This is expressed in an awareness of the right to development. The right to development must be seen as a dynamic interpenetration of all those fundamental interpenetration of all those fundamental human rights upon which the aspirations of individuals and nations are based" (JM 1.2). It is a clear example of a distinctive aspect of Catholic thought on human rights. As Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, notes, "it can be understood as an overarching category that includes many of the particular human rights endorsed by the Church" and necessary for a just structure of society.<sup>8</sup>

Recognized in Catholic social teaching more than twenty years before the United Nations acknowledged it as a human right, the right to development concretely illustrates that both individual persons and communities can be the subject of rights and of human dignity as understood both personally and communally.<sup>9</sup> This recognition of "*the dignity of the person in society*" leads John XXIII to focus on the common good and socialization, and to offer a canon of human rights that goes well beyond the rights of individuals.<sup>10</sup> This recognition also prompts Pope Paul VI to write two encyclicals addressing the concrete problem of authentic, equitable development: "The thread that ties all these rights together is the fundamental norm of human dignity. Human dignity is not an abstract or ethereal reality but is realized in concrete conditions of personal, social, economic and political life. The history of the papal teaching has been a process of discovering and identifying these conditions of human dignity. These conditions are called human rights."<sup>11</sup> Human rights and duties, then, are clarified by our understanding of the human person.

8. Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World)*," in Himes et al., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 343.

9. "United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development," 1986, [un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a411/28.htm](http://un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a411/28.htm) and [ohchr.org/documents/issues/development/RTD\\_booklet\\_en.pdf](http://ohchr.org/documents/issues/development/RTD_booklet_en.pdf)

10. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 66; emphasis added.

11. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 68.

The strength of these early statements on human rights is in their concrete practical arguments. In particular, they adapt secular human rights language for a more integrated view of human rights applying to persons in communities and applying among communities, as well as a more complete understanding of duty or responsibility. The articulation of a right to development illustrates the centrality of the social situation and interdependence; however, these texts do not address the theological and anthropological foundations upon which the claims depend. This is a limitation of encyclicals in general: they do not develop the foundation. This is not a particular failure of *Pacem in Terris* as much as a limitation of encyclicals as a genre. Behind this integrated and communal approach to human rights, however, is an implicit theological and philosophical understanding of the human person. The understanding of the person in community leads to Catholic social teaching's emphasis on human rights and sparks the emergence of the theme of solidarity that follows.

#### *INTERDEPENDENCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND SOLIDARITY*

As secular ethics and society became more focused on the individual and individual freedom, Catholic social teaching emphasized the complexity of social relationships and the common good.<sup>12</sup> Without eliminating freedom, it develops an account of freedom within society through human rights but also by turning to solidarity as the answer to the complex social relationships of the modern world. However, unlike the detailed account of human rights, solidarity emerges as a much more diffuse and elusive concept.

Known for its definition of the common good, *Mater et Magistra* also briefly mentions the emerging theme of solidarity in response to the plight of agriculture workers (MM 146–48). Solidarity, as it develops, engages both persons and institutions. On the one hand, John XXIII argues for institutional support for agriculture, and, on the other, he encourages the cooperation and organizing of the farmers themselves. He states, “Indeed, it is proper for rural workers to have a sense of solidarity. . . . Finally, by acting thus, farmers will achieve importance and influence in public affairs proportionate to their own role. For today, it is unquestionably true that the solitary voice speaks as they say to the winds” (MM 146). In accordance with this, *Pacem in Terris* uses *active solidarity* as one of four organizing virtues—along with truth, justice, and

12. David Hollenbach explains: “1) human dignity is always supported, conditioned, and limited by the forms of social life within which it is found; 2) all arguments about the foundation of morality must take this social context of dignity into consideration as one of their starting points; and 3) the moral responsibility to the claim of worth of persons will be more and more mediated through social structures, even in ‘the more intimate aspects of personal life.’” *Claims in Conflict*, 64.

liberty—governing the relations between states. Political leaders and citizens alike, we all “must remember that, of its very nature, civil authority exists not to confine its people within the boundaries of its nation, but rather to protect above all else, the common good of the entire human family” (PT 98). Thus, solidarity as the recognition that everyone must live together is a clear focal point for the argument for disarmament and against the arms race during the Cold War. In his book, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891–Present*, Charles Curran points out that “here John XXIII substitutes solidarity for love, but this substitution makes sense because the topic involves the global relations between states.”<sup>13</sup> However, while it applies to this context, it is not sufficient to understand solidarity simply as a placeholder for earlier discourses on love.

As it begins to emerge, solidarity has a political appeal: “Solidarity means recognizing that all political authority exists to fulfill the common good of the whole human family.”<sup>14</sup> Whether aimed at moving the state to provide greater aid and services to its own rural farmers, or at convincing the community of nations that we belong to one human family and therefore the nuclear arms race poses a threat to all, solidarity points to the political and moral responsibility associated with both the domestic and universal common good. And yet, solidarity is not simply an ethical responsibility of the state, nor can it be fully understood within the realm of politics. The complex and multifaceted meaning and implications of solidarity are manifest in the myriad ways in which the term has been used throughout modern Catholic social teaching. Vatican II’s use of solidarity in *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) clearly illustrates the deep theological significance of solidarity beyond the responsibilities of the state. The document uses solidarity in three different contexts. First, similar to *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, it states, “Although the world of today has a very vivid sense of unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity; it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces” (GS 4). In a paragraph establishing the political and social context of the document, this use of solidarity is almost as a synonym for interdependence, as the council points to the same dangerous reality that prompted John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*. Second, *Gaudium et Spes* points to the emergence of scientific study and the rise of a “sense of international solidarity, an ever clearer awareness of the responsibility of experts to aid men and even to protect them, the desire to make

13. Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891–Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 74.

14. Christiansen, “Commentary on *Pacem in Terris*” 225.

the conditions of life more favorable for all” (GS 57). This growing sense of interconnectedness among the scientific and intellectual community is one of the positive values the council seeks to highlight from the modern world.

Instead of merely pointing to empirical *signs of the times*, the third use of solidarity in *Gaudium et Spes* points to the theoretical and theological foundation for this emerging call as an ethical imperative. In a section entitled, “The Incarnate Word and Human Solidarity,” *Gaudium et Spes* 32 explicitly links solidarity with the theology of the *imago dei* and salvation history. Solidarity is not simply an empirical description of the modern world; it is also the way the world ought to be. According to the council:

God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. . . . So from the beginning of salvation history He has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community. Revealing His mind to them, God called these chosen ones “His people” (Ex 3:7-12) and even made a covenant with them at Sinai. This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship. . . . This solidarity must be constantly increased until the day on which it will be brought to perfection. Then, saved by grace, men will offer flawless glory to God as a family beloved of God and of Christ their Brother. (GS 32)

Vatican II clearly illustrates that solidarity is not simply a commentary on the signs of the times. Unlike interdependence, development, or increasing social complexity, solidarity develops as a theoretical way to understand many different aspects of the human person and the human reality. Not simply a reflection of the status quo, the call to solidarity is a normative theological reflection on the way human persons and human communities were created and intended to develop and flourish. To say that solidarity is an integral part of the very creation of human persons is furthermore to say that this intended solidarity is the way human communities *ought* to exist. *Gaudium et Spes* does not go any further in defining solidarity. It does, however, clearly illustrate that this solidarity is integral to the ethical involvement of Christians and the church within the modern world. Theologically, solidarity is beginning to be used in a broader sense. It is more than simply the statement that as human beings we are all part of the one human family. It is a call for that community to live and act in particular ways. To invoke creation, the incarnation, and God’s covenant

with the people is to call humanity to particular types of communities. This call goes beyond disarmament and an end to the Cold War.

Elaborating on solidarity and the many facets of the call to solidarity, Pope Paul VI turns his focus to development in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*). From the first paragraph, Paul VI explains, “the demand of the Gospel makes it her duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problems in all its dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency” (PP 1). Solidarity, as it is explicated in *Populorum Progressio*, is about integration and wholeness. “Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete, integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man” (PP 14). Thus the distinction between authentic and inauthentic solidarity emerges in Catholic social teaching’s contribution to debates concerning development.

Central to this connection between development and solidarity is Paul VI’s argument that development touches all facets of human life—not only the economic and political. Solidarity applies to all persons, not only to political governments or individuals who are in leadership positions. Paul VI explains, “It is not just certain individuals, but all men who are called to this fullness of development. . . . We have inherited from past generations and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason, we have obligations toward all . . . the reality of human solidarity, which as a benefit for us also imposes a duty” (PP 17). Like the common good, development in solidarity must always attend to both each person and the community. Showing the deep influence of Catholic thinkers like Jacques Maritain, Paul VI is clear that development and solidarity are always both personal and communal; one cannot exist without the other in the common good. Adding to this, Paul VI speaks of the spirit of solidarity in which “there can be no progress toward the complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity” (PP 43). What precisely is the spirit of solidarity? And what is the deeper reality out of which this spirit of solidarity is emerging? I contend that it is not sufficient to see this rising spirit of solidarity as merely the growing recognition that we live in an interdependent world; however, the reality of this interdependence is crucial for understanding the fundamental solidarity of humanity.

The strength of *Populorum Progressio* is its specificity, offering concrete ethical statements on how we should proceed in light of interdependence. In particular, it offers a specific understanding of the ethical obligations of

solidarity. The obligation is threefold: “The duty of human solidarity—the aid that the rich nations must give to developing countries; the duty of social justice—the rectification of inequitable trade relations between powerful and weak nations; the duty of universal charity—the effort to bring a world that is more human toward all men, where all will be able to give and receive without one group making progress at the expense of another” (PP 44). Understood with justice and charity, solidarity is the duty of wealthier nations in relation to those underdeveloped nations. This duty, however, is not limited to nations; it is the same for each individual person as for larger political communities (PP 44). The emphasis within this document is the responsibility of developed nations to place their superfluous wealth at the service of the underdeveloped nations and the eradication of poverty in these countries. This is not, however, without its dangers, and one must remember that the duty of solidarity cannot be neocolonialism. Christian or authentic solidarity as it is being envisioned here is necessarily linked to justice in trade and charity. Whether it is being described as a spirit, an attitude, or a duty, equity and mutuality are hallmarks of solidarity in development. Allan Deck, SJ, clarifies, “In the task of pursuing a complete human development, the ability to enter into healthy dialogue with others is essential. That is the way to draw people and nations together in solidarity. That dialogue must first of all be based on the human person, not on commodities or things.”<sup>15</sup> This is the strength of Paul VI’s treatment of solidarity, and it is all building to Paul’s final statement that development is the new name for peace.

Merely five years later, the 1971 Synod of Bishops picked up the theme of solidarity through development as the only way to peace in their letter *Justitia en Mundo* (*Justice in the World*). They begin: “The crisis of universal solidarity . . . economic injustice and lack of social participation keep man from attaining his basic human and civil rights.”<sup>16</sup> In particular, they emphasize the right to participation for all members of the human family. Summarizing the teaching to date, they state, “*Pacem in Terris* gives us an authentic charter of human rights. In *Mater et Magistra*, international justice begins to take first place; it finds more elaborate expression in *Populorum Progressio*, in the form of a true and suitable treatise on the right to development.”<sup>17</sup> A hallmark of the synod’s document is its emphasis on education, justice, and solidarity. This education is

15. Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, “Commentary on *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*),” in Himes et al., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 305.

16. *Justitia in Mundo*, in *Catholic Social Thought: the Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 289.

17. *Ibid.*, 297.

not limited to schools or formal learning but is an ongoing process throughout one's life, an education in human dignity and human rights. As Kenneth Himes explains, "This is an ongoing process leading to people becoming 'decidedly more human.' . . . [E]ducation for justice was education in solidarity; it must affirm the unity of humankind and bring people to work on behalf of that affirmation."<sup>18</sup> Human development here is more than mere survival; it is a process of becoming more fully human. Education in justice is an education in solidarity, and the crisis of solidarity is keeping human beings from attaining their basic human and civil rights. On a practical level, there is a deep unity of humanity, which is seen in the example of economic injustice and a lack of social participation, the answer to which is development. The practical application of solidarity, then, involves integral development in justice and participation. Solidarity, however, is not merely a synonym for development.

The right to development is recognized in Catholic social teaching almost twenty years before it appears in secular human rights theory because, as Himes notes, "human rights give specificity to the language of human dignity; they articulate the freedoms, the goods, and the relationships that are expressive of a person's dignity."<sup>19</sup> As stated earlier, *Pacem in Terris* presents a charter of rights, which taken as a whole represent the conditions necessary for the promotion and respect of human dignity. Thus, alongside the incorporation of a Catholic human rights theory emerged a theme of solidarity. Focused on the realities such as interdependence and sociality, solidarity became the recognition of human dignity within the community. In the spirit of solidarity or under the duty of solidarity, all nations and individuals are called to develop their own humanity through the recognition of that humanity in others. This is characterized as well through attention to the common good and the universal destination of goods. The theological and philosophical foundations for locating solidarity in the nature of the human person and communities are largely absent from these texts; in fact, the theoretical connection between human rights and solidarity is missing. What is the relationship between human rights and solidarity? More specifically, what are the implications of claiming that solidarity is a duty (a theme that itself needs greater development)? Here enters John Paul II and the exploration of human rights and solidarity through the lens of personalism.

18. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo* (*Justice in the World*)," 349.

19. Himes, "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo* (*Justice in the world*)" p. 343.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOLIDARITY IN THE PERSONALISM OF JOHN PAUL II

Under both John XXIII and Paul VI, Catholic social teaching developed in accordance with the ethical vision of these dynamic popes. Often considered his last will and testament, *Pacem in Terris* offered a defense of human rights from John XXIII's worldview. In the same vein, Paul VI sought to engage the contemporary scholarship on development and further his vision of a just development and peace. The election of Pope John Paul II, however, marked a transformation in Catholic social teaching's vision and perspective. In Karol Wojtyła, the church found a leader who was a philosopher and ethicist by training, a native of Poland who had lived under decades of an oppressive communist regime and who thus offered a more focused and theoretical defense of both human rights and solidarity. The philosopher pope, as he came to be known, went beyond his predecessors in personally shaping his social encyclicals. While, as pope, he begins laying out his theological and moral vision in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (*Redeemer of Man*), personalism is the ethical framework and contribution of John Paul II's social encyclicals. Central to this personalism is an emphasis on human dignity, human rights, and solidarity, as evidenced in his social encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* (*On Human Work*), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*On Social Concern*), and *Centesimus Annus* (*On the Hundredth Year*).

Personalism, as espoused by John Paul II, "is not primarily a theory of the person or a theoretical science of the person. Its meaning is largely practical and ethical: it is concerned with the person as a subject and as an object of activity, as a subject of rights, etc."<sup>20</sup> While it emerges out of a basic Thomistic metaphysical framework, Wojtyła's personalism is an active philosophy focusing on freedom and responsibility. He explains, "The person, therefore, is always a rational and free concrete being, capable of all those activities that reason and freedom alone make possible."<sup>21</sup> Instead of focusing on value or dignity, his personalism focuses directly on freedom and action. Freedom is the way in which human beings exist; it is the means of self-actualization. Therefore, "freedom is not given to us as an end in itself, but as a means to a greater end. . . . [F]reedom exists for the sake of morality and together with morality for the sake of a higher spiritual law and order of existence—the kind of order that most strictly corresponds to rational beings which are persons."<sup>22</sup>

20. Karol Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 165.

21. *Ibid.*, 167.

22. Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism," 172.



All human beings have this capacity, even if they cannot at a given moment demonstrate it. This theory does not exclude in any way those who have not yet fully developed their rationality or those who can no longer exercise self-determination. Insofar as they are human beings and exist as human beings, they possess this human dignity and personal nature.<sup>23</sup> The human being is not simply an individual substance of a rational nature; he or she is a free agent, simultaneously subject and object of deliberate action.

Without continuing with an extensive philosophical investigation into the personalist philosophy of John Paul II, there are a few elements that are central to understanding the approach to both human rights and solidarity in his social encyclicals. As stated, he is highly concerned with the person as both the subject and object of activity. The person self-reveals in and through action. The starting point is an “experience of the human being in two senses simultaneously, for the one having the experience is a human being and the one being experienced by the subject is also a human being. The human being is simultaneously subject and object.”<sup>24</sup> The human person, then, exists independently; however, it does not and cannot exist in isolation. For Wojtyła, the human person can only exist in relation to every other human person; thus, “one has to recognize everyone’s fundamental right to act and thus everyone’s freedom to act, through the exercise of which the self fulfills itself.”<sup>25</sup> John Paul II’s personalism, which borrows much from Kant, is a philosophy of the person articulated through an examination of the human act. Taking Kant’s categorical imperative and adapting it to the gospel, he states, “Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but also allow for the fact that he or she too has or at least should have distinct personal ends. This principle, thus formulated, lies at the basis of all human freedoms.”<sup>26</sup> Emphasizing the agent and the simultaneous focus on both the subjective and objective in human interaction, “this Personalism must not be confused with individualism. The human being is not a human person on one hand, and a member of society on the other. The human being as a person is simultaneously a member of society.”<sup>27</sup>

Maintaining a balance between the individual and community is a hallmark of all of Catholic social teaching, and more broadly of Catholic

23. W. Norris Clarke, SJ, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 49.

24. Karol Wojtyła, “Person: Subject and Community,” in *Person and Community*, 221.

25. Karol Wojtyła, *Towards a Philosophy of Praxis: An Anthology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 41.

26. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1981), 28.

27. Karol Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality,” in *Person and Community*, 146.

theology itself. While John Paul II's message is in deep continuity with his predecessors, he makes a slightly different and nuanced philosophical argument. In particular, he highlights freedom and agency and places them necessarily within the context of the common good. Participation is the key. Thus, he defines what it means to be *neighbor*, explaining that "as human beings we are capable of participation in the very humanity of other people, and because of this every human being can be our neighbor."<sup>28</sup> Thus, before becoming John Paul II, Wojtyla argues that an authentic community is one of solidarity. He defines this attitude of solidarity, stating: "The attitude of solidarity is a 'natural' consequence of the fact that a human being exists and acts together with others. Solidarity is also the foundation of a community in which the common good conditions and liberates participation, and participation serves the common good, supports it and implements it. Solidarity means the continuous readiness to accept and perform that part of a task, which is imposed due to the participation as member of a specific community."<sup>29</sup> As he examines solidarity in his philosophy, Wojtyla is clear that solidarity with others includes both accepting the duties and responsibilities imposed by the community and opposing unjust forms of exclusion and oppression.<sup>30</sup> While much more is required to do justice to Karol Wojtyla's personalism, the focus on participation and intersubjectivity is the context and background for the ethics of human rights and solidarity in his three social encyclicals.

From the beginning of *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul II's focus on the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God and called to work, is the starting point for his reflection on a theology and ethics of work. In his introduction, he states, "Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons" (LE 1). Furthermore, the person is the subject of work: "Because as the image of God, he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization. As a person, man is therefore the subject of

28. Karol Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?," in *Person and Community*, 201.

29. Wojtyla, *Toward a Philosophy of Praxis*, 47.

30. On one hand, he states, "The attitude of solidarity respects the limits imposed by the structures and accepts the duties that are assigned to each member of the community" (*Toward a Philosophy of Praxis*, 48); however, this is not meant to encourage complacency with unjust systems. Instead, Wojtyla explicitly states that authentic solidarity includes opposition. He explains, "Experience with diverse forms of opposition . . . teaches that people who oppose do not wish to leave the community because of their opposition. They are searching for their own place in the community—they are searching for participation and such a definition of the common good that would permit them to participate more fully and effectively in the community" (49).

work” (LE 6). So begins his treatise on the dignity and rights of workers (LE 1), arguing always that work is for the human person, not the human person for work (LE 6). Lamoureux explains, “At the core of LE and the context for understanding John Paul’s agenda for social ethics is his theological anthropology. . . . The important insight of this encyclical is the integral connection between the person’s self-realization and human labor.”<sup>31</sup> Solidarity and the rise of solidarity movements (in Poland and around the world) provide the context for this encyclical. “It was the reaction against the degradation of man as the subject of work and against the unheard of accompanying exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions and social security for the worker. This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity” (LE 8). Thus, solidarity movements are about both solidarity and human rights. These movements, for John Paul II, emerge because of both the lack of community and the lack of respect for the human rights of workers.

The discussion of rights in *Laborem Exercens* reflects both the understanding of human rights of *Pacem in Terris* and the long-standing focus on the issue of private property from the beginning of the social encyclicals in 1891. While upholding the right to private property, John Paul reiterates that “the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, the fact that goods are meant for everyone. . . . The position of rigid capitalism must undergo continual revision in order to be reformed from the point of view of human rights, both human rights in the widest sense and those linked with man’s work” (LE 14). Throughout this encyclical, the pope is clear that while he is arguing against communism, he is not by default offering blanket support of capitalism, which also has great dangers. While he specifically enumerates the various human rights associated with work (right to a just wage, right of association, and so on), these rights are always to be understood as parts of a greater whole. Referencing *Pacem in Terris*, he says, “The human rights that flow from work are part of the broader context of those fundamental rights of the person” (LE 16). For John Paul II, this is because we engage in self-actualization, develop our own personal freedom through work, and in an even broader sense through this process contribute to building an authentically human community. Within the context of work, the right to a just wage is one clear example of human rights as the necessary conditions of possibility for authentic human community.

31. Patricia Lamoureux, “Commentary on *Laborem Exercens*,” in Himes et al., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 394.

In developing his ethics of global solidarity, human rights are affirmed, but they are not significantly revised or expanded. In particular, John Paul II recognizes the growing awareness and support for human rights as a major positive development since *Populorum Progressio*, in which “the full awareness among large numbers of men and women of their own dignity and that of every human being” (SRS 26) emerged. It is through this form of participation that a human being recognizes his or her right and responsibility to live in the dialectic of solidarity and opposition. For John Paul II, solidarity does not exclude opposition; it can mandate it. Thus, he urges movements of solidarity to be open to dialogue (LE 8). Opposition to the state or other unjust social structures is a confirmation of both participation and the common good. This is because authentic opposition to social structure arises not from a desire to withdraw from the community and thereby deny the common good, but from an attempt to preserve it.<sup>32</sup> In many cases, “They are searching for their own place in the community; they are searching for participation and such a definition of the common good that would permit them to participate more fully and effectively in community.”<sup>33</sup> Recognition of one’s dignity and the dignity of all human beings is evidence of a deepening and fuller understanding of humanity. Thus, he concludes his reflections on the contemporary situation stating, “The awareness under discussion applies not only to *individuals* but also to *nations* and *peoples*. . . . [T]he *conviction* is growing of a radical *interdependence* and consequently of the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to the moral plane. Today perhaps more than in the past, people are realizing that they are linked together by a *common destiny*, which is to be constructed together if catastrophe for all is to be avoided” (SRS 26). Therefore, the dynamics of both authentic solidarity and authentic opposition are included within solidarity.

And so begins John Paul II’s examination of authentic human development, which always includes both solidarity and human rights. This “collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of all towards all and must be shared by the four points of the world: east and west, north and south” (SRS 32). It is a moral imperative that must include both solidarity and freedom to be authentically human. An individualistic, mechanistic, or consumerist development centered only on the individual can never be authentically human, “nor would a type of development which did not respect and promote *human rights*—personal and

32. Wojtyła, *Philosophy of Praxis*, 47.

33. *Ibid.*, 49.

social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and peoples—be really *worthy of man*” (SRS 33). In a truly human ethical framework, human rights and solidarity are always simultaneously present. To be fully human requires both. Promotion of integral human rights is a necessary condition for the very possibility of authentic global solidarity. At the same time, to achieve the substantive mutuality and reciprocity required for universal human rights requires solidarity. Thus, the legal protection of human rights must not be limited to the developed “first world.” The same human rights must be applied on the individual, communal, national, and international levels. Building from an established ethic of human rights, John Paul II turns to the moral dimensions of solidarity, which he characterizes as a reality, an attitude, a duty, and a virtue.

The twenty years between *Populorum Progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* involved a growing recognition of the interdependence of the entire human community. Interdependence, on every level of human society, is simply a reality of human existence. In Catholic social teaching, this reality is the experiential starting point for solidarity.

It is above all a question of *interdependence*, sensed as a *system determining* relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a *moral category*. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is *solidarity*. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people both near and far. On the contrary, it is a *firm and persevering determination* to commit oneself to the *common good*; that is to say to the good of all and each individual, because we are *all* really responsible for *all*. (SRS 38)

Solidarity is the only response to interdependence that allows for authentic development. The desire for power or profit cannot afford true development. The center of this social ethic is always the human person and, by virtue of the human person, humanity itself. Interdependence as a moral category is what leads to understanding solidarity as a duty. The reality of interdependence elicits a response among human persons, who are always individuals in communities, of the personhood of others. Solidarity is a response to interdependence with a deep and abiding commitment to the equality, mutuality, and dignity of every member of the human family. This growing recognition of our human dignity and that of others begins with a natural inclination, an attitude, which for John Paul II can be developed into the virtue of solidarity; however, he does not

specify what the virtue of solidarity is or entails. The closest examination of this is found in his statements on living authentic solidarity.

For solidarity to be authentic requires that it pervade every level of human society. Solidarity is not something that only applies to the poor or oppressed. True solidarity involves a mutual recognition of the equal personhood of all. An attitude of solidarity of the workers or poor among themselves and of the rich and powerful among themselves is not sufficient. “The exercise of solidarity *within each society* is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess” (SRS 39). Living in solidarity on the part of the rich, on the part of those who have participation, requires that they act in accordance with the common good, which ultimately requires the relinquishing of power and control. That is, those in power are required, by solidarity, not only to share materially with the rest of the community but to allow those on the margins to participate. This must include redistribution of power in favor of the authentic participation by all. Furthermore, “interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. That which human industry produces through the processing of raw materials, with the contribution of work, must serve equally for the good of all” (SRS 39). Living in solidarity cannot be relegated to the rich *giving* to the poor. It is a dynamic concept that involves mutual responsibility. Just as the rich and powerful are required to recognize the participation of the weaker, “those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely *passive* attitude or one that is *destructive* of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all” (SRS 39). This is a moral obligation to oppose injustice and through this opposition to demand participation in community. In doing so, they are not acting against the common good but for the good of all.

Thus, John Paul II offers his most extensive and most forceful defense of solidarity as the path to peace and development. Against structures of sin, exploitation, and oppression, “the solidarity which we propose is the *path to peace and at the same time to development*. For world peace is inconceivable unless the world’s leaders come to recognize that interdependence in itself demands the abandonment of the politics of blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into *collaboration*. This is precisely the *act proper* to solidarity among individuals and nations” (SRS 39). Where his predecessors used solidarity as a substitute for love and development as the new name for peace, John Paul II argues that the path

to peace is solidarity. True community and living a truly human life depends on solidarity.

Creation of the human person and the universal destination of goods are repeatedly offered as the foundation for solidarity. This is because “solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’—whether as a *person*, *people* or *nation*—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbor,’ a ‘helper’ (cf Gen. 2:18–20), to be made a sharer, on par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God” (SRS 39). According to Kevin Doran, “When the solidarity of a person is described as an attitude, it has a significance which has to do primarily with its outward direction towards other persons, their needs, and the structures of society within which they are called to be and to act.”<sup>34</sup> The attitude of solidarity, then, is the recognition in the face of interdependence of our common humanity and the importance of the common good: “The attitude aids one to have constant disposition of responsibility and relationship in the community not only because one is a member of the community, but because one is always aware and concerned with the common good.”<sup>35</sup> In its many dimensions, solidarity is emerging as the way to live a truly human life. We become more fully human, in our individual lives and in community, through this solidarity.

Solidarity, then, is as much an integral aspect of the human person as human rights. Theologically, it is integral to how we understand the human person as *imago dei* and as related to our understanding of the Trinity. In his section on solidarity as a *Christian virtue*, John Paul II states, “One’s neighbor is then not only a human being with his own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else; but becomes the *living image* of God the father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit” (SRS 40). John Paul II further expands on this theological importance of understanding solidarity within the context of the Trinity and *imago dei* through the relationship between solidarity and communion. “Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and strong, there is discerned in the light of *faith* a new model of the *unity* of the human race, which ultimately inspires our *solidarity*. This supreme *model of unity*, which is a reflection of the intimate life for God; one God in three persons is what we Christians mean by the word

34. Kevin P. Doran, *Solidarity: A Synthesis of Personalism and Communalism in the Thought of Karol Wójtyła / Pope John Paul II* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 191.

35. Marie Vianney Bilgrien, SSND, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty or the Virtue for an Independent World?* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 48.

communion” (SRS 40). What is at stake is the very *dignity of the human person*, understood as “the indestructible image of God the creator, which is *identical* in each one of us” (SRS 47). Therefore, the only way to overcome structures of sin and have authentic development both nationally and internationally is through solidarity. However, the connection between solidarity and the *imago dei* goes beyond seeing our neighbor as an image of God; it has to be based also on our faith in the Trinity. Not only are we modeling human solidarity on the communion of the Trinity, but in solidarity we see the image of the living God, the Trinitarian God—one God in three persons. This connection between solidarity and the *imago dei* is not developed further in John Paul II but is integral to understanding the connection between solidarity and human rights.

In his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus (On the Hundredth Year)*, John Paul II reflects back on one hundred years of Catholic social teaching and commemorates the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. In doing so, he firmly argues for the centrality of human rights and continues to define solidarity in broad but vague terms, grounding all in the specifics of theological or philosophical anthropology. Both the reflections back to *Rerum Novarum* and the fall of the Berlin Wall are springboards to reaffirming the importance of the rights of the person, now understood as universal human rights. In this holistic view of humanity as persons in community the fundamental error of socialism’s anthropology can be found, “A person who is deprived of something he can call ‘his own,’ and of the possibility of earning a living through his own initiative, comes to depend on the social machine and on those who control it. This makes it much more difficult for him to recognize his dignity as a person, and hinders progress towards the building up of an authentic human community” (CA 13). If one does not have an authentic view of the person, then one cannot have an authentically human personal or social ethics.

On the subject of human rights, *Centesimus Annus* speaks more descriptively than John Paul II’s earlier encyclicals. Instead of focusing on the specific rights and duties defined earlier, this document focuses on actual instances of promoting human rights and the effect of human rights in the historical events of 1989 (CA 22). However, John Paul II does focus on the particular role of the state in protecting the conditions of workers. With reference to *Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Workers)*, the pope does not simply acquiesce to capitalism, as is evident in sections on freedom (CA 17, 25) and the failures of the market (CA 34). He explains that “development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human” (CA 29). Furthering his arguments for the necessity of solidarity, he



moves from a focus on solidarity as a Christian virtue to the language of *the principle of solidarity*. This principle, as applied to states, requires that they defend the weak and poor “by placing certain limits on the autonomy of the parties who determine working conditions and by ensuring in every case the necessary minimum support for the unemployment worker” (CA 15). Given the encyclical’s focus on workers and the state, its use of solidarity references the duties imposed by solidarity.

### FOCUS ON CHARITY: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOLIDARITY IN BENEDICT XVI

A philosopher and ethicist’s voice permeates John Paul II’s trilogy of social encyclicals. Human rights and solidarity are developed with key attention to the dignity of the human person, interpreted through the lens of Thomistic personalism and phenomenology. With the election of Joseph Ratzinger, this emphasis shifted to systematic theology and *caritas* as hermeneutical principle. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI released his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (*God Is Love*), a theological and pastoral encyclical focused on reclaiming the rich Christian theological tradition on *caritas*. An encyclical addressed internally to the church, *Deus Caritas Est* provides an extended theological meditation on the nature of love and Christian charity primarily in dialogue with secular philosophy. Similar to John Paul II, whose theological and pastoral encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* provided a theological context for the theological ethics found in *Laborem Exercens*, Pope Benedict XVI uses the theological focus on *caritas* as a building block for his first social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*). Commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* and responding to the global financial crisis, *Caritas in Veritate* offers further development of human rights and solidarity through the theological lens of *caritas*. Benedict XVI’s contribution to Catholic social teaching, *Caritas in Veritate* enhances the theological foundation for solidarity through vocation and the principle of gratuitousness and expands solidarity through the concept of intergenerational justice. Yet, ambiguities concerning the relationship between human rights and the virtue of solidarity remain.

While it is not a social encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* clearly establishes *caritas* as a controlling concept for Benedict XVI’s emerging contribution to Catholic social teaching. God is love. This at first glance appears quite obvious, and yet in choosing this as his starting point, Benedict’s explicit goal is to complicate, correct, and enrich the Christian use of the word *love*. Love is a word with many meanings and is “frequently used and misused” (DCE 2); however, Christian

love or *caritas* presents itself simultaneously as gift and demand, uniting love of God and love of neighbor. In brief, this recovery of the rich Christian understanding of *caritas* as gift and task, the “unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor” (DCE 16), and the universalizing of *neighbor* provide a theological context for the development of human rights and solidarity found within *Caritas in Veritate*.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI emphasizes that “love can only be ‘commanded’ because it has first been given” (DCE14). The biblical affirmations that *God is love* are primarily statements that the love of God is first and is offered to us as gift. Through creation and covenant, God offers love as gift, and we are called and commanded to respond to it. For Benedict, this is at the heart of the Christian understanding of *eros* and *agape* as well as the distinctive ethical demand within Christian charity. What is charity? Common usage has reduced *caritas*, or charity, to the practice of almsgiving. While almsgiving is one aspect of practicing charity, reducing charity in this way eclipses the heart of the biblical understanding of the love of God as well as the rich Christian theological tradition in which charity is not simply a set of practices but also a virtue and friendship with God.<sup>37</sup> At the heart of this theological meditation is the insistence that *caritas* is fundamentally a relationship of love initiated by God to which we are called to respond. This understanding of the role of gift in the love of God provides the theological foundation for the emphasis on *gratuitousness* Benedict later develops in *Caritas in Veritate*.

36. The final section of *Deus Caritas Est* offers a reflection on the relationship between charity and justice, in particular the role of justice in politics and the social ordering of the state. This section has created significant debate concerning the role of the church, religious groups, and the laity in the pursuit of justice and a just social order. As this is not a social encyclical and is only being examined here to provide theological context for *Caritas in Veritate*, it is not examined in this book. However, extensive interpretations and debate concerning the meaning of the final section of *Deus Caritas Est* can be found in Avery Dulles, SJ, “The Indirect Mission of the Church to Politics,” *Villanova Law Review* 52, no. 2 (2007): 241–52; Samuel Gregg “Deus Caritas Est: The Social Message of the Pope,” *Economic Affairs* 26, 2 (2006) p. 55–59.; Charles M. Murphy, “Charity, not Justice, as Constitutive of the Church’s Mission,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 274–86; and Thomas Massaro, SJ, “Don’t Forget Justice,” *America Magazine*, March 13, 2006, [http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=4669](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=4669).

37. For more on this see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1991); Gerard Gillemann, SJ, *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959); Meghan J. Clark, “The Complex but Necessary Union of Charity and Justice: Insights from the Vincentian Tradition for Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching,” *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 31, no. 2 (2012): 25–39; and Meghan J. Clark, “Love of God and Neighbor: Living Charity in Aquinas’ Ethics,” *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1040 (July 2011): 415–30.

What then is the model of *caritas*? How does the Christian model his or her response to the love of God? The answer is provided in the person of Jesus Christ who is the incarnate love of God (DCE 12) and who concretely reveals the “unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor” (DCE 16). Benedict XVI explains, “Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all who have become or will become his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him and thus towards unity with all Christians. We become ‘one body,’ completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws all to himself” (DCE 14). In accordance with this, love of neighbor is the concrete responsibility of each and every Christian as well as the responsibility of the church as a local and global entity. “As a community, the Church must practice love. Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community” (DCE 20). The clearest model of this was presented in Acts 2:44-45; “within the community of believers there can be no room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life” (DCE 20). *Caritas* as love of God and neighbor, then, is at the very heart of the mission and identity of the Christian community.

This union with Christ as union with the community is important for expanding the theological significance of solidarity; however, it is imperative to address the identity of *neighbor*. Christians are called to be a community of believers in which they are required to organize love of neighbor so as to provide the conditions (material and spiritual) of a dignified life. However, while the purpose of this encyclical is an internal one, the practice of *caritas* within the community of believers cannot be limited to the Christian community. In the unity of love of God and love of neighbor, one cannot understand love of neighbor as an internal command limited to the Christian community. An essential aspect of this encounter with the incarnate love of God, in which Benedict XVI presents the perfect union between love of God and love of neighbor, is that the concept of neighbor is universalized. Through exposition of the parable of the good Samaritan and the last judgment in Matthew 25, he makes clear, “Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help is my neighbor. The concept of ‘neighbor’ is now universalized, it remains concrete” (DCE 15). Love of neighbor is not abstract, cannot be fulfilled simply through internal practices directed at the Christian community, and places a concrete demand upon the believer.

At the heart of Benedict’s exposition of *Deus Caritas Est*, then, is the pragmatic call to solidarity of all with all; “love of God and love of neighbor

have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God” (DCE 15), a framework that will be the foundation for *Caritas in Veritate*. For Benedict XVI, “This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church’s social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society” (CV 5). Thus, he argues that *caritas* “gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbor; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic, and political ones)” (CV2). Thus, *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*) enters into conversation with multiple dialogue partners commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* and responding to a devastating global financial crisis. In keeping with its predecessors, human rights and solidarity play crucial roles in both its theological vision and ethical evaluations.

Where *Deus Caritas Est* created significant controversy for its narrowed understanding of the relationship between charity and justice, *Caritas in Veritate* brings justice back into focus and clarifies its relationship to charity. Leaving little room for confusion, Benedict XVI states, “I cannot ‘give’ what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them” (CV 6). I cannot meet the demands of *caritas* if I do not first meet the requirements of justice; it is a necessary prerequisite for the practice of *caritas*. Thus, we cannot effectively love our neighbor if justice is not present. To provide the theological foundation for his approach, Benedict XVI emphasizes the role of *vocation* in integral human development. Cautioning against placing too much faith in institutions, he argues, “Integral human development is primarily a *vocation* and therefore it involves a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone” (CV 11). While it may appear as if Benedict were weighing in on debates concerning the role of institutions compared to individual responsibility, this interpretation is countered by his insistence on “the institutional path—we might call it the political path—of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly” (CV 7).<sup>38</sup> There is a deeper theology here that is not properly understood within the philosophical and political debate about individuals and structures. For Benedict XVI and Catholic social teaching, *vocation* is a relational category that begins with the transcendent vision of the human person, created

38. This narrow interpretation of *Caritas in Veritate* being rejected here is found in George Weigel’s “Caritas in Veritate in Red and Gold,” *National Review*, July 7, 2009, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/227839/i-caritas-veritate-i-gold-and-red-george-weigel>.

in the image of God, in relationship to God, and responsible to recognize her neighbor as in the image of God. Thus, “a vocation is a call that requires a free and responsible answer. Integral human development presupposes the responsible freedom of the individual and of peoples: no structure can guarantee this development over and above human responsibility” (CV 17). Pragmatically, development cannot happen without just structures. This was an important insight of Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*; however, Benedict is arguing that without the response to God and neighbor on behalf of individuals and peoples, development will not be integral or grounded in solidarity. The crucial point here is not individual freedom but the vocation of *peoples*. The vocation of development requires the free and responsible freedom of *peoples*. In addition, from this understanding of development as vocation, *charity in truth* builds community because “the human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension” as an expression of fraternity (CV 34). On the one hand, emphasizing the free assumption of responsibility by persons, Benedict notes that “solidarity is first and foremost a sense of responsibility of everyone with regard to everyone, it cannot therefore be merely relegated to the state” (CV 38). On the other hand, this free assumption of responsibility is demanded not only of individuals but of peoples. Instead of moving from the community to the individual, the vocation of *peoples* for development in solidarity firmly establishes that development is *our* vocation.

Using the *economic reality* exposed by the global financial crisis, Benedict links vocation with the *principle of gratuitousness* as foundational for solidarity (CV 36). At present, the global situation is marked by a weakening of and attack on unions, which are the “traditional networks of solidarity” (CV 25), as well as a lessening of the basic mutual trust needed within economic markets for regular economic function (CV 35). Thus, “in the global era, economic activity cannot prescind from gratuitousness, which fosters and disseminates solidarity and responsibility for justice and the common good among the different economic players” (CV 38). Through its treatment of the economic sphere, *Caritas in Veritate* uses solidarity in three distinct ways. First, an attitude of solidarity is connected to the basic level of mutual trust needed for the basic function of economic markets (CV 35). Second, using the theology of vocation, Benedict interprets solidarity through a strongly relational theological anthropology—the unity of the one human family as created in the image of God, as neighbors. While it remains somewhat vague, the principle of gratuitousness is central to Benedict’s conception of the human family. So much so that he states, “Today it is clear that without gratuitousness, there can be no justice in the first place” (CV 38), arguing that “both the market and politics

need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift” (CV 39). Once again, *Caritas in Veritate* builds its vision of justice and solidarity in development on the theology of vocation. And third, through the lens of vocation and *gratuitousness*, solidarity is a profound duty for all human persons and communities.

Linking human rights and solidarity through duties, Benedict highlights the problem of *food insecurity* and basic human rights, stating, “The right to food, like the right to water, has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers *food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings without distinction or discrimination*” (CV 27). When the understanding of human rights is divorced from a sense of duty, those rights that are most basic and should have the easiest agreement fall to the wayside.

The link consists in this: individual rights, when detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, can run wild, leading to an escalation of demands which is effectively unlimited and indiscriminate. An over emphasis on rights leads to a disregard for duties. Duties set a limit on the rights because they point to the anthropological and ethical framework of which rights are a part, in this way ensuring that they do not become license. Duties thereby reinforce rights and call for their defense and promotion as a task to be undertaken in service of the common good. (CV 43)

Benedict XVI is attempting simultaneously to hold up the centrality of basic human rights, in particular food security and access to clean, safe drinking water; to argue against the *right to excess* among developed nations; and to forward the duty of all individuals and peoples as members of the human family.<sup>39</sup> Aside from reiterating the duties corresponding to human rights and focusing this around the theology of vocation, *Caritas in Veritate* does not significantly develop or add to the established Catholic social teaching on human rights. The primary contribution is found in its bringing the theology of vocation (and by extension, *gratuitousness*) to the forefront of understanding the corresponding duties associated with human rights.

With regard to solidarity, *Caritas in Veritate*’s significant contribution to Catholic social teaching is found within its focus not on *caritas* but on vocation.

39. Similarly, the universal responsibility for the environment and creation is another example used in *Caritas in Veritate* to demonstrate the vocation of humanity for human rights and solidarity (CV 43–52).

Despite its explicit use of *Populorum Progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, there is not significant treatment of solidarity as a virtue or of concrete practices of solidarity. *Caritas in Veritate* remains much more on the theoretical level, seeking to reframe the discussion anthropologically on the one human family and the human vocation (in response to God and neighbor). In doing so, solidarity is largely treated as a duty and as something lacking in the global financial structure. This anthropological focus is evident in Benedict XVI's argument for the relationship between solidarity and subsidiarity, for intergenerational justice and solidarity with future generations. Using concern for environmental integrity and sustainability, Benedict states, "Consequently, projects for integral human development cannot ignore coming generations, but need to be marked by solidarity and *intergenerational justice*, while taking into account a variety of contexts: ecological, juridical, economic, political, and cultural" (CV 48). Integral human development as a vocation of individuals and of peoples extends to future generations, and so we must strive to foster solidarity with future generations. Thus, "the theme of development can be identified with the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the basis of fundamental values of justice and peace. This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons in the Trinity within the one divine Substance" (CV 54). Ultimately, this theological retrieval of *caritas* and emphasis on vocation is a refocusing of the question of solidarity and development on humanity as created in the image and likeness of God—the dignity of the human person and the dignity of the one human family. Therefore, it is fitting that *Caritas in Veritate* ends with a call for scholars, including theologians, to engage in "a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation . . . if man's transcendent dignity is to be properly understood" (CV 53).

## CONCLUSION

Beginning with John XXIII and Paul VI, Catholic social teaching offers a clear and succinct approach to human rights. Where later encyclicals often seek to correct and update earlier social teaching in the area of human rights, the writings of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI deepen and expand aspects of human rights teaching.<sup>40</sup> The meaning of solidarity, however, is not offered in a clear and comprehensive way. From Paul VI through Benedict XVI, solidarity is referred to as an attitude, a duty, a virtue, and a principle. Each

40. For example, *Quadragesimo Anno* contains a tempering of *Rerum Novarum's* statements on private property.

focus illuminates a different important aspect of solidarity, yet, taken as a whole, this allows solidarity to remain ambiguous. Solidarity is both an integral theme in Catholic social teaching and one whose meaning is difficult to pin down. A clear example of this is found in *Centesimus Annus*. Highlighting continuity, John Paul II states:

In this way what we nowadays call the principle of solidarity, the validity of which both in the internal order of each nation and in the international I have discussed in the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term *friendship*, a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term *social charity*. Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question speaks of a *civilization of love*. (CA 10)

Friendship, social charity, and love all involve social relationships and thus all have something in common with solidarity. However, is it really accurate to state that they are all different words for the same thing? Not quite. While they all appear to be building to solidarity, solidarity goes beyond these earlier terms and cannot be contained by any one of them.

The clearest definition of solidarity comes in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*'s identification of solidarity as a moral category: "When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue,' is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (SRS 38). Like human rights, solidarity is a moral category predicated on mutuality. Only through the mutual respect for the personhood of each and every human person can human rights or solidarity be accomplished. Interdependence is a historical reality, whether recognized or not. It is a reality that applies not only to humanity, but to the entire created world. This can, however, be transformed into solidarity through attitude, duty, virtue, and principle. In the end, solidarity as a virtue may be the most comprehensive way to understand it, as the concept of virtue includes the others. In studying the use of solidarity in Catholic social teaching, Marie Vianney Bilgrien, SSND, admits that, despite the fact that John Paul



II calls solidarity a virtue, he does not write extensively on what that means, and so in developing her own understanding of solidarity, she relies largely on other theoretical writings on the virtue of solidarity, for example the work of Marciano Vidal. After an extensive study of the word and concept of solidarity, Bilgrien offers seven important elements of solidarity:

1. Interdependence is a fact and solidarity emerged through the consciousness of that actuality.
2. Solidarity is based on the reality of our human equality and dignity.
3. Solidarity works for the common good of all.
4. Solidarity must be practiced with an awareness of the poor.
5. Solidarity must be a firm and persevering determination.
6. Solidarity is not just a virtue of individual persons, but also of groups and nations.
7. Compassion, empathy, and mercy move solidarity into action and help sustain the disposition.<sup>41</sup>

Her seven points are helpful in thinking about solidarity and point out key elements that must be present. Yet, they do not remove the ambiguity of what is required to apply solidarity. Simply calling it a virtue is not sufficient to pin down what we mean by calling solidarity a cornerstone of Catholic social ethics. If solidarity is a virtue, what are its principles? How do we make habitual the practices of solidarity? Answering these questions requires looking at the human person and the deeply social nature of both communities and our personal freedom and agency. Theologically, this points to the connection between solidarity and seeing each person as created in the image and likeness of God. However, the implication of our creation in the image of God goes deeper than individuals. It is in solidarity that the human family images the living God, the Trinity, which is a connection indicated by Benedict XVI's emphasis on God and the theological richness of charity.

Where human rights are concerned, we have a set of principles grounded in the dignity of the human person. They have been well established and delineated, even granting that many of them continue to need deeper reflection and much greater implementation. The grounding for solidarity, like that of human rights, is in the human person. Just as Catholic social teaching has attempted to develop human rights in an inclusive way, offering an understanding of the community and duties that go along with these rights, so too solidarity is based on the dignity of the human person, a free, rational,

41. Bilgrien, *Solidarity*, 105–6.

and social being created in the image and likeness of God. Modern Catholic social teaching clearly argues that an authentic moral view of the human person must include both human rights and solidarity. In order to understand the connection between human rights and solidarity, and to gain a clearer exposition of solidarity, one must turn to the human person.