

# On Solidarity Somewhat Theologically

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Translated by Paulina Chołda.

**A**lthough we may create circles of solidarity, a true solidarity must be open to all people, at least potentially. Indeed, solidarity allows for opposition, it even demands it sometimes, but an opposition to defend some values or a protest against some abuse cannot be entangled into hatred towards certain people, nor harm inflicted on anyone.

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1. In common usage the word “solidarity” usually describes morally ambiguous attitudes and behavior, which in reality can be either good or bad. Thus, solidarity may be masculine or feminine, national or religious, one speaks also about family or occupational solidarity, about solidarity of friends, neighbors, companions in misery, but also about solidarity of business or personal interests. Perhaps one could speak about solidarity of thieves or other criminals as well. Solidarity understood in this way implies

86 some, often only momentary, identification with one's own particular community or group.

The above-mentioned way of functioning of this term seems quite close to its legal origin. After all, in its first meaning "solidarity" pointed at a legal capability of every member of a group of people to accept all due benefits or to take responsibility for all its debt.<sup>1</sup>

The need to use the word "solidarity" in order to describe attitudes that are exclusively morally good was felt to be necessary only as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although I myself have encountered extremely interesting research in this field. Many years ago I was greatly impressed by Stefan Wilkanowicz's reflections on Christian mercy. It happened during a lecture in the Catholic Intelligence Circle (KIK) in Cracow, on 21 March 1965 (I put it down exactly!). The speaker drew attention to the fact that authentic mercy requires from us attitudes that our language today is reluctant to call mercy and that are best rendered with the word "solidarity."

2. At least two intuitions, independent from each other, evoked the need for the word "solidarity" in descriptions of moral attitudes and obligations. In France the adherents of de-christianization and of the secularization of morality chose solidarity as the successor to Christian love. Christian love, they argued, is a waste of moral energy as it is divided between God and one's neighbors. Moreover, they claimed that it is marked with egoism and bigotry. Already Kant imputed self-interest to people that are prompted to do good by the hope for their eternal reward. On the other hand, Comte, who perceived as mean-spirited loving others "as one's self" (in addition mediated by the love of God), proposed to the people of the new epoch the attitude of altruism, which he defined as loving others "more than oneself," loving others for their own sake, not for God's. Solidarity then would be love purified from the waste, bigotry and egoism allegedly typical of Christianity.

Such a program of overcoming Christian love was explicitly formulated by August Comte's disciple, Pierre Leroux (d. 1871):

I was the one who first borrowed the concept of *solidarité* from the legal usage so as to introduce it to philosophy, that is, according to my idea, to religion. I wanted to replace Christian *caritas* with human *solidarietas* . . . Christianity is the greatest religion of the past, but there exists something greater than Christianity: humanity. . . Today's society is able to organize the love of one's neighbor with the help of the principle of mutual solidarity, as the love of one's neighbor is, in fact, egoism. So at last from now on society has a religious principle. The Church may cease to exist. . . The age of humanity supersedes the age of Christianity. What is it that this new religion requires? Similarly to the Greek mathematician Archimedes, it requires nothing else but strength, leverage and a place to stand. We

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<sup>1</sup> "Solidarity obligations (*in solidum, pro solido*) occurred when there were many subjects either on the side of debtors (passive solidarity) or on the side of creditors (active solidarity), while there was only one service rendered. Fulfilling the service by one of the debtors freed others of the debt, similarly, accepting the service by one of the creditors meant that the liabilities of the others expired." *Prawo rzymskie. Słownik encyklopedyczny* [The Roman Law: Encyclopedic Dictionary], ed. Witold Wołodkiewicz, Warszawa 1986, p. 142, entry: SOLIDUM.

are the strength, the lever is the idea of progress. Give me an ontological certainty, and we shall have an unfailing place to stand. What is this certainty? It is the interdependence of all people.<sup>2</sup>

No wonder that this first usage of the word “solidarity” caused mistrust toward this concept in francophone Christian circles. As late as the inter-war period, the most important contemporary French theological encyclopedia upheld, from the Christian perspective, the alleged opposition between solidarity and love.<sup>3</sup> However, this usage of the term “solidarity” disappeared, perhaps even in the French-speaking countries.

3. The second source of the need for the term “solidarity” in the field of moral thought turned out to be long-lasting. The growing complexity of social conditions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century caused, on the one hand, the decrease in the consideration for the common good, and on the other, the enlargement of poverty-stricken areas and the accompanying growth of confusion and helplessness (so aptly commemorated in the bitter Polish proverb “you are poor because you are stupid, and you are stupid because you are poor”). Those who did not want to solve the new problems with the help of class struggle, felt that the situation strongly required a rebirth of social awareness and an active involvement for the sake of the poor; one which promotes their initiative and subjectivity as well as truly cares for the common good.

Such an understanding of solidarity and the very need for the word “solidarity” appeared in the circles gathered around the father of Catholic social thought, German bishop Wilhelm Ketteler (d. 1877). The main theorist of the idea of solidarity and the economic-social system called Christian solidarism was Ketteler’s disciple, Heinrich Pesch SJ (d. 1926).

The foundation of this understanding of solidarity is formed by the Greek idea of the common good (christianized by Aquinas with the light that flows from the commandment to love one’s neighbor) as well as Christian teachings on the human person. This twofold foundation protects the balance between interests of an individual and the community, which is so difficult to achieve. For, on the one hand, it is a person, someone destined for eternal life and as such irreducible to his social functions, who is the aim of the community, and not the other way around, so it cannot happen that the good of the community ever justifies trampling on the good of any of its members.

<sup>2</sup> From *De l’humanité* by P. Leroux. I quote after Paul Josef Cordes, *Communio. Utopia czy program?*, [Communio: A Utopia or a Program?], trans. Bogusław Widła, Warszawa 1996, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> “Social solidarity, as secularized and systematically in opposition toward Christian love, is not able to bring the good effectively neither to individuals nor to nations, for it does not take into account their true, eternal aim.” *Dictionnaire de la Théologie Catholique*, vol. 2, Paris 1932, c. 2260, entry CHARITÉ; quoted after P. J. Cordes, *ibid*. It is worth noting that such extreme supernaturalism would have never been promoted by Aquinas who unambiguously valued natural virtues (*virtutes acquisitae*), although in the present state of the fall they do not reach the eternal aim and their ultimate objective is only the earthly common good. (Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2 q. 63)

On the other hand, a community is not some kind of a supra-personal hypostasis, but a gathering of mutually responsible persons, so that the common good to which all members of the community should contribute also consists in: mutual aid, removing both structural and individual injustices, supporting the weak, spurring the poor into greater action, cleansing one's own legitimate demands of egoism, taking responsibility for the shape of the community, etc. It is this kind of care for the common good that is called solidarity.

Solidarity, let us recall this definition from John Paul II, "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."<sup>4</sup> In comparison with H. Pesch, who saw the ultimate circle of solidarity essentially in the national and state community,<sup>5</sup> John Paul II notes the following as the consequence of the progress of civilization:

The growing awareness of interdependence among individuals and nations. The fact that men and women in various parts of the world feel personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights committed in distant countries, countries which perhaps they will never visit, is a further sign of a reality transformed into awareness, thus acquiring a moral connotation.<sup>6</sup>

4. Because of the comments above the following question comes up: is the traditional morality so individualistic that only in the last two centuries it was at last possible to open it to the social dimension?

It is a fact that many advocates and promoters of social and political justice perceived the state of moral awareness in this manner. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in its first half, it was repeated many times that Christ initiated the renewal of individual persons and now we are finally prepared for the renewal of societies. "We cannot obtain the spirit of Christ in the collective spirit", wrote Zygmunt Krasiński in 1841, "otherwise than through the spirit of Christ in individual souls."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> It is even signified by the title of his fundamental work: *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, vol. 1–5 Freiburg i.Br. 1905–1923.

<sup>6</sup> Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *O stanowisku Polski z Bożych i ludzkich względów* [On the Situation of Poland From the Divine and Human Perspectives] in *Pisma Zygmunta Krasińskiego* [Works of Zygmunt Krasiński], vol.7, Kraków-Warszawa, 1912, p.72. Various forms of national messianism constituted the radical expression of this tradition. Polish messianism went as far as to, almost blasphemously, recognize in Poland the Christ of nations, that is, to ascribe to Poland the redemptive mission equally significant or perhaps even more important than the one fulfilled by Christ. This idea was formulated as follows in *Księgi narodu polskiego* [The Books of the Polish Nation]: "For the Polish nation did not die; his body in a tomb, and the soul descended from the earth – that is public life – to limbo to see the nations suffer the yoke of bondage in the country and abroad. And the third day the soul will return to the body, and the nation will rise and free all the nations of Europe from bondage . . . And as with the Christ risen there were no more bloody victims, so with the resurrection of the Polish nation wars in Christianity will cease to exist." Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła* [Works], vol. 6, Warszawa,

There were several causes behind this conviction that Krasiński shared with thousands of his contemporaries that a social morality is yet to be built. First, the utopian mentality that had spread since the times of the Enlightenment easily condemned as evil everything that was not ideal. Second, in the times when class society was falling apart and new, more complicated social structures were growing, structures that led to many outrageous injustices, yet those who were destined to organize the social order did not lose sleep over such matters. Last but not least, morality hardly noticed the social dimension, yet it was not as traditional as it seemed to be, for instance, for Krasiński it was seriously damaged by the several generations of individualism's growth.

Let us once again ask the question from the beginning of this section. Since traditional morality did not know the virtue of solidarity – what's more, it did not distinguish social virtues at all – can one say that it did not deal with social attitudes, actions and duties?

On the contrary! In the moral teaching of Aristotle, as well as Aquinas, it was explicitly stressed that all our behavior and moral attitudes have, whether we want it or not, their social orientation (positive or negative). Both thinkers did not differentiate between individual and social virtues not by an oversight but due to a well-thought-out decision.

The social dimension of all our behavior and attitudes was expressed in Aristotelian-Thomist ethics by means of the hierarchy of virtues, so characteristic for this system, in which the position of a certain virtue was established according to its coherence with reason. Two principles were key here: first, the virtues that put in order the sphere of the will were of higher coherence with reason than virtues organizing the sphere of senses and emotions; second, the virtues that put in order our relations with others are of higher coherence with reason than those that organize ourselves.

The basic meaning of the teaching on the hierarchy of virtues is to reveal the multi-leveled purpose of our moral dynamism. For there is no virtue that would fulfill itself by realizing its own purpose. Each virtue is directed towards the purposes of virtues that are higher than itself. Thus, virtues that organize our senses and emotions also strengthen virtues that organize our will, and the latter enhance virtues that put in order our relations with others, which finally allows us to really dedicate ourselves to the common good. It is not difficult to notice that, according to this description, the common good suffers a loss both due to disorder in ourselves and to the fact that we cannot or do not want to transform our moral order into a tool that would build attitudes of social worth.

So the highest virtue in the hierarchy of moral virtues is the attitude that Aquinas calls, somewhat unfortunately, legal justice. It is not a particular but general virtue in the sense that it embraces all the moral activity of man. Its object is the common good and it is this direction toward the common good that constitutes legal justice as a separate virtue. Its

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1955, p. 17.

90 task is to refer to the common good, the good that is realized by all moral virtues, both those that organize the interior of man as well as those that put in order our attitude towards others. “Thus the acts of all virtues can be embraced by this justice to a degree in which it directs man towards the common good.”<sup>8</sup>

As we see, a deliberate intellectual effort was undertaken so as not to allow the division of morality into individual and social. All our efforts, according to this theory of morality, should have a social meaning and it is not right when they do not have it even indirectly, that is, when they are asocial. Moreover, St. Thomas will say that our sins, even the most individual, always have not only the asocial meaning but antisocial, at least indirectly.

Taking over from Aristotle the concern so as not to divide morality into the individual and the social, Aquinas goes one step further and tries to protect morality from the division into the secular and the religious. Thus, he wants to emphasize that all our moral activity is in the end directed toward God (or is disordered toward God). By completing the ethics of Aristotle and making them Christian, Aquinas places over legal justice the theological virtues, together with the highest – love. In this manner, the social dimension of our moral deeds is, in people gifted with sanctifying grace directed toward eternal life, permeated by our trust in God and mutual love which takes its source and final fulfillment in the love of God.

Therefore, in this moral system there is no room for a separate virtue of solidarity and in general for separate social virtues. For social orientation should pervade all our moral attitude. It suffices to recall Piotr Skarga’s *Kazania sejmowe* [Senate Sermons] or Adam Mickiewicz’s *Księgi pielgrzymstwa polskiego* [The Books of the Polish Pilgrimage] so as not to have any doubts that reflection on solidarity was capable of profundity long before the term “solidarity” appeared in the moral discourse.

5. We should make some remarks on the metaphysical roots of solidarity. First, we should notice that while we may find various forms of local solidarity in almost all human cultures and civilizations, solidarity in its full meaning, universal solidarity, may appear only on the grounds of faith in the one God. Only monotheism can potentially enable us to overcome the conviction that our world is immersed in some inconceivable, unpredictable, and hostile chaos. After all, the worldviews that assumed chaos spawned beliefs in misfortunes allegedly destined for us, as well as pagan superstitions about the space surrounding us being filled with various, and not always sympathetic, spirits and demons. It is only on the grounds of monotheism that there may appear the notions of the one creation as a work of the one Creator and one humanity as children of the one Father.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2–2 q. 58 a. 5.

<sup>9</sup> It is indicated by Karl Jaspers, a thinker not interested in emphasizing the values of Christianity. Cf. especially the second chapter of the book *Nietzsche and Christianity*.

Christians become aware of the solidarity of all creation, first of all, in the truth about angels. Already in the Old Testament it was known that with our faithfulness and glory to God we join the eternal liturgy of angels: “Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts” (Ps 148:2). It was also guessed that angels are kind toward us and try to help us on our way to God. The Holy Scripture depicts their solidarity with us both in the image of angels that present our prayers to God (Tob 12:12; Rev 5:8, 8:3 ff) and rejoice at our conversion (Lk 15:10), as well as in the image of mighty angels that are capable of chasing away our enemies (2Ki 19:35; Ps 35:5 ff), and in its teaching on guardian angels (Mt 18:10; Heb 1:14).

In the Gospel, the angels are the most reliable witnesses of the fact that what happened through Jesus Christ was not only a particular event on this cosmic particle of dust that we have called the Earth, but that the meaning of this Event affects all creation. The care with which the Evangelists underscore the presence of angels in all the significant moments of Jesus Christ’s activity is striking. They are present in the moment of His taking on human nature (Lk 1:26; Mt 1:20), on the night of His birth (Lk 2: 9–14), at the beginning of His public activity (Mk 1:13), during the Agony in the Olive Garden (Lk 22:43), at the Tomb of Christ risen (Mt 28:2 ff; Lk 24:4 ff), on the day of His Ascension (Acts 1:10 ff), they will also be actively present on the day of the Last Judgement (Mt 16:27, 24:31, 25:31). In short, we cannot doubt that our salvation is of concern to the higher world of pure spirits.

Second, the idea of solidarity of all creation is also conveyed in the teaching on our call to be the priests of the lower creatures and to represent them before God. “This world of Yours that passes I love, I love it, oh Lord / Like a living censer I soar it before You!” wrote Beata Obertyńska.

The idea of our mission toward nature and all material universe is probably conveyed already in the truth about our creation in God’s image. According to the outstanding biblicist, Gerhard von Rad, the material references for this truth were images of a ruler in the ancient world, which reminded people about his power and illustrated his majesty. In opposition to these stone images erected by earthly kings, man was put by the Creator in His world so as to be His living image.<sup>10</sup>

The embroidery on the coat of the Old Testament high priest (Wis 18:24), the paintings of trees, plants and animals on the walls of many Gothic churches and their vaults ornamented with stars, express the awareness that our task is to worship the Creator on behalf of all the material universe. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council confirmed the intuition of many Church Fathers, that the Creator thought up man as a microcosm (man, together with animals, is given senses, with plants he is granted vegetative life, and his body is part of the material world), so that we may represent the whole world lower than ourselves, while

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001

92 freely and joyfully worshipping God. (“Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator.”<sup>11</sup>)

The New Testament revealed the ultimate horizon to us at which the history of the universe aims, with which we are bound with the bond of sacerdotal solidarity. Thanks to the Cross of Christ, the spiritual work of the successive generations will surely meet this aim, which is, to use the expression of Cardinal Ratzinger, “making the world a sanctuary and sacrifice for God. To put it another way, so that the world becomes part of the Body of Christ, so that God could be all in all” (Cf. 1 Cor 15.28).<sup>12</sup>

6. Universal solidarity among men is in our culture immeasurably more often the object of reflection than our solidarity with the creatures higher or lower than us. These three truths of the Christian faith give much food for thought: the creation of man, original sin and the redemption of humanity by Jesus Christ.

Let us first notice how much the truth about the creation of man contrasts with various myths on this subject. In myths the creation of man is attributed to some minor gods or heroes. A pagan is not brave enough to aim so high as to ascribe the existence of man to the Highest God. Moreover, usually in a given mythological system there are several different stories about the beginning of man.

The biblical description of the creation of man simultaneously underscores the unity of the family of man (not only created by the one God but coming from the one first couple) and his great dignity – for he was made directly by the Creator of heaven and earth. What is more, God created man, and only man among all the earthly creatures, in His image and likeness, and He created him because He wanted to love him and endow him with gifts. Paul the Apostle writes about it movingly: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:4 ff).

It is obvious that the consequence of this truth about the beginning of man is the obligation of universal love, that is, also social love, which in the recent generations we tend to call solidarity. “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 Jn 4:11).

7. Especially crucial to our attempt to penetrate the truth about our interpersonal solidarity is the teaching on original sin. As is well known, Christianity decidedly opposes collective responsibility and not only on the

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<sup>11</sup> The Second Vatican Council, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 14. Cf.: “For man, created to God’s image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; (1) a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would resound throughout the earth. (2)” (ibid., 34).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Kościół wspólnotą* [The Church as Community], Lublin 1993, p. 83.

grounds of law (the principle of *singulorum proprium est maleficium*), but also morality (Dt 24:16; Eze 16:1–4). Thus both theology and pastoral work have for ages confronted the question: how to reconcile the rejection of collective responsibility with the article of faith that the sin of the first parents actually puts the blame on all their descendants? In the course of research in this field many truths about interpersonal solidarity were realized.

The mere fact that consecutive generations of Christians face this difficult question contributes to our recognizing, again and again, the social consequences of our deeds, both good and bad. For no matter whether we realize it or not, and with the most meticulous rejection of collective responsibility, our good and bad attitudes and deeds really influence other people, and sometimes even social structures, language, public sentiment, etc.

To put it another way, interpersonal solidarity is a fact, whether we like it or not. Although it is a morally ambiguous fact as, unfortunately, it very often takes shape of solidarity in evil. Indeed, we happen to show solidarity also in evil, for example in mendacity, in being aggressive towards the weak, insensitive to the poor, or to the spiritual dimensions of reality etc. Even if we are unaware of it, every evil done by you or I radiates to others – starting with those closest to us. We can console ourselves only with the fact that our good deeds also affect them.

The range of this radiation of our attitudes and deeds, in the good or bad direction, essentially depends on their spiritual intensity, but also on the authority we have, and often on some imponderables. The sacrifice of Father Kolbe radiates immeasurably deeper and wider than the small sacrifices that we make with much effort in everyday life. Similarly, the vile behavior of a gang leader probably causes an avalanche of evil immensely more dangerous than vile acts (Heaven forbid that we should ignore them!) done by you or I.

Let us now refer this reflection to original sin. The sin of the first parents was an evil of such an extraordinary intensity that its comprehension is beyond our capabilities. It was the only sin in the history of man committed by sinless people, and we, after all, draw all our knowledge from observing evil done by sinners. It is then self-evident that the sin of the sinless people exceeds both our understanding and imagination. Thus, its impact must also be uniquely powerful.

Yet, the mystery of the universal solidarity in original sin is more profound than the incomprehensible intensity of its impact. St. Augustine explained, quoting the reflections of Paul the Apostle from Romans 5:12–19, that the real sinfulness of all people caused by this first sin in the history of man comes from the fact that this individual sin of our ancestors encompassed human nature itself, that it became the sin of human nature. Humanity, Aquinas explained, is a oneness to a far greater extent than it can be empirically seen, “All men born of Adam may be regarded as one man.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 1–2 q. 81 a. 1.

8. God’s response to both of the above-mentioned aspects of interpersonal “solidarity” in sin is the redeeming deed of Jesus Christ. It was not right for the Son of God, when He became one of us, to take part in our sin. Yet, He really took part in our human nature humiliated by sin showed solidarity with us as He walked through His earthly life in a world perverted by our sins. The unconditional taking up of this solidarity with us led Him as far as Calvary where He was murdered, with enormous cruelty, for being impeccably just and for sacrificing himself to do good to those that He had chosen for His brothers and sisters.

We have just underscored the exceptional intensity of a unique sin in the history of man, a sin committed by sinless people. We must say the same thing about the greatness of the deed which Jesus Christ fulfilled on the Cross and which is beyond our imagination and reason. Immersed in horrible and unjust suffering, betrayed by friends and publicly excluded from the circle of respectable people, crucified as someone worse than bandits, who were executed together with Him, experiencing the inconceivable abandonment of His Father – Jesus persevered in the absolute trust in His Father and the unconditional love for us who had prepared this lot for Him.

It is needless to say that this Righteous Deed, the opposite of the sin of our first parents, exceeds this sin in its intensity. The good radiation of the redeeming act of Christ is undoubtedly greater than the evil impact of Adam’s sin. Already Paul the Apostle wrote about it in a text that we have quoted here, “For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many . . . But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom 5:15, 20).

The redeeming act of Jesus Christ also reaches our human nature hurt by sin. It not only heals it, but raises it to participation in His Divinity (2Pet 1:4). Thus, coming from the social nature of man the universal interpersonal solidarity, unfortunately ambivalent after original sin, is through the grace of Christ gradually healed and transformed into solidarity in good only. In short, the Savior showed solidarity with us in taking on our humiliated nature (Phil 2:6), to use the expression of the Second Vatican Council, so as to bind “the whole human race to Himself as a family through a certain supernatural solidarity and charity.”<sup>14</sup>

It is best expressed in the New Testament truth about us being shaped into one Body of Christ. In the teaching of Paul the Apostle on this subject (Rom 12:4–8; 1Cor 2:12–30; Eph 4:11–16; Col 2:19) there are many fragmentary views which can help in presenting the purely moral aspects of solidarity.

9. Let us end this reflection with several concrete notes on the realization of the attitude of solidarity. Obviously, I speak not about solidarity as a morally ambiguous condition of our human existence, but about solidarity as a morally unambiguous task which we should take up and

<sup>14</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 8.

which will be ultimately realized only when “we all come . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). 95

First of all, solidarity must embrace the whole of a person, and nobody can be reduced to his social functions, nor needs of one sort or another. Truly human solidarity cannot then be reduced to the uniting of a certain number of people so as to reach specific aims, unattainable individually. Each of us is a unique person and that is why solidarity should be built on respect for the person, for every human person. We may join in the name of various partial objectives that do not directly engage the whole man, but true solidarity does not close itself off to the whole man, it embraces him at least potentially.

Similarly, though we may create circles of solidarity, a true solidarity must be open to all people, at least potentially. Thus, we cannot exclude anyone from the area of solidarity, what’s more, there cannot exist solidarity against some people. Indeed, solidarity allows for opposition, it even demands it sometimes,<sup>15</sup> but an opposition to defend some values or a protest against some abuse cannot be entangled into hatred toward certain people, nor harm inflicted on anyone (including harm done by means of language). Non-observance of these rules deprives solidarity of its identity and distorts it into group egoism which is usually more destructive, and as such, more immoral than individual egoism.

Two circumstances make solidarity especially necessary: when someone needs help immediately and when someone is especially defenseless and with no perspective for effective aid. If today I will not help someone who is ill or hungry, tomorrow may be too late. If we do not focus ourselves more in defense of conceived children or those “ex-people” – to quote the horribly contemptuous term by Peter Singer – that are subjected to euthanasia, tomorrow the legal ways to kill them will multiply. One can never be reminded enough that solidarity which is not going to do anything in defense of the most defenseless loses the value of universality and thus raises doubts as to its moral credibility.

Another test of the moral credibility of solidarity is the attitude towards opponents. We cannot forget that human anger is never so intense as to make one a total evildoer, once and for all; this is what those that hate their enemies forget. Hate toward some person or group, in fact, consists in excommunicating this person from the family of man, when this is what only God could do, and even He does not pronounce irrevocable sentences so long as we are alive (moreover, there are many reasons to think that even damnation consists in one’s own voluntary exclusion from the family of man and a radical closure in one’s egoism).

Man cannot treat anyone among his neighbors as if they were condemned by God. Every man, including a criminal and a wrongdoer, is worthy of help (what kind of help depends on the specific situation) and should be defended if threatened with harm.

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<sup>15</sup> On the topic of opposition as the expression of solidarity cf. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, [The Acting Person], Kraków 1969, p. 313.