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## The Concept of Christian Solidarity as a Path to Peace and Development

Koncepcja chrześcijańskiej solidarności drogą do pokoju i rozwoju

**ABSTRACT:** Throughout the centuries and in modern times the Church in her teaching has interpreted and continues to interpret the events and phenomena occurring in the world in the light of God's Revelation. The question of solidarity is not new and was already grounded in law in ancient times. The concept of Christian solidarity both among people and among nations presented here is every person's duty arising from the Bible. Its implementation on an international and interpersonal level has a positive impact on the lives of individuals and societies. The Church's vision of Christian solidarity helps us to see a person, a people or a nation not as an instrument but as a neighbour in need of support. The solidarity proposed by the Popes is a path to peace and development. According to them, world peace is impossible if the people responsible for it do not recognize that interdependence in itself requires that the politics of the blocs be done away with, all forms of economic, military or political imperialism be abandoned, while mutual distrust be transformed into cooperation.

**KEYWORDS:** Church, solidarity, dignity, society, Pope, development, peace, person

**ABSTRAKT:** Kościół w ciągu wieków i w czasach współczesnych w swoim nauczaniu interpretował i nadal interpretuje wydarzenia i zjawiska zachodzące w świecie w świetle Objawienia Bożego. Kwestia solidarności nie jest nowa i już w starożytności miała podłoże prawne. Przedstawiona koncepcja chrześcijańskiej solidarności zarówno między ludźmi, jak i między narodami jest obowiązkiem każdej osoby wynikającym z Biblii. Jej realizacja na płaszczyźnie międzynarodowej i międzyludzkiej pozytywnie wpływa na życie jednostek i społeczeństw. Nakreślona przez Kościół wizja solidarności chrześcijańskiej pomaga nam dostrzec osobę, lud czy naród nie jako narzędzie, ale jako bliźniego potrzebującego wsparcia. Proponowana przez papieży solidarność jest drogą do pokoju, a zarazem do rozwoju. Według nich pokój światowy bowiem jest nie do osiągnięcia, jeżeli ludzie za niego odpowiedzialni nie uznają, że współzależność sama w sobie wymaga przewyciężenia polityki bloków, porzucenia wszelkiej formy

imperializmu ekonomicznego, militarnego czy politycznego, a także przekształcenia wzajemnej nieufności we współpracę.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Kościół, solidarność, godność, społeczeństwo, papież, rozwój, pokój, osoba

In the human person, who constitutes society and is realized in society, God reveals His image. Man was created in solidarity; he was created to achieve the common good together with others. “Solidarity, which is established between God and man and which has its foundation in human relations (Gen 2:7), is constituted by overcoming pure dependence and recognising human responsibility in the context of mutual cooperation.”<sup>1</sup> In her social and moral teaching, the Church helps Christians to interpret the events and phenomena which appear and develop before his eyes in the course of the changes of history and time, in the light of the Gospel message. The Church’s social teaching, in particular, does not provide practical solutions to the problems that arise, about which she makes statements and which are considered by her. Instead, the Church points out that “Christian revelation is a very helpful means for the development of this community among persons and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has inscribed in the spiritual and moral nature of man.”<sup>2</sup> In this time of the coronavirus epidemic, it is of great importance to remind ourselves and the world of the evangelical approach to solidarity in its broadest sense.

This article reminds us of the teaching of the Church and the popes of the last century who, at various stages in the history of the world, in this case from the industrial revolution to the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, took up an important topic for the social life, related to the presentation of the concept of Christian solidarity, sometimes called “Catholic,” as a way to build both peace in the world and the development of individuals and societies in the broadest sense.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Piana, *Solidarietà*, [in:] *Nuovo Dizionario di teologia morale*, F. Compagnoni, G. Piana, P. Privitera (eds.), Cinisello Balsamo 1994, p. 1266. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are by the WTR.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et spes* (hereinafter: GS).

<sup>3</sup> These threads are also present in the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI and Francis, and may be the subject of a separate article. The Italian texts quoted in this article have been translated by the author into Polish; the Polish texts are the source for the translation into English.

## The importance and value of solidarity in making peace

The concept and terminology of solidarity derives from the ancient beginnings of private Roman law, in which “duty in solidarity” (*in solidum*) marked an undivided legal bond that brought together the various co-liabilities in a deep, stable way, so that each party was obliged to answer for the whole, not just its part. In the post-revolutionary France, a legal concept was transferred to the public sphere, which stated that the bond of solidarity is based on an indivisible and common heritage of knowledge, moral and social values, which had been taken over in solidarity from previous generations, and is intended for use by the current and transmission to future generations. A new phenomenon appeared in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Catholic solidarity. It was proclaimed by German Jesuit H. Pesch (1854–1926), who saw in his theory the possibility of effectively counteracting the immoderate aspirations of socialism and liberalism. A part of this theory was accepted by the Social Magisterium of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of Christian solidarity was revived at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the work of German philosophers and social theologians H. Pesch, O. von Nell-Breuning and G. Gundlach. The term “Christian solidarity” was seen in the holistic view of solidarity as a “secular” social theory, which was clear in its message and at the same time consistent with the requirements of the Christian faith. This new form of solidarity, rooted in the Thomistic theological and philosophical tradition, was, in turn, intended to constitute not only an intermediate path between socialism and individualistic liberalism, but a proposal of socialist personalism in which man is strongly and inextricably linked to all the other natural, ontological and moral bonds which an individual or an intermediate group must recognize and transform into active participation in public life, contributing through solidarity and subsidiarity to the common good. Its foundations are primarily at the centre of the human person, in his or her relationship with society defined by the “principle of solidarity.”<sup>5</sup> Both religion and reason make this sense of human solidarity mature in order to be dynamic and closely linked to freedom and social justice.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See: E. Combi, E. Monti, *Fede cristiana e agire sociale*, Milan 2001, pp. 118–119.

<sup>5</sup> E. Combi, E. Monti, *Fede e società. Introduzione all’etica sociale*, Milan 2005, pp. 132–133.

<sup>6</sup> “The term ‘solidarity’ expresses in a synthetic way the need to recognize, in all the bond that binds people and social groups together, the space offered by human freedom to ensure common growth, common to all,” Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Il principio di solidarietà*, [in:] *Compendio della dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Vatican 2004, no. 194, p. 106.

The term solidarity was known in ancient times; not in today's meaning of the word, but already St Thomas of Aquinas, discussing friendship, pointed out the perception of solidarity in its various nuances. Saint Thomas distinguishes four types of friendship: natural, domestic, civil and divine. Of these, two types of friendship: domestic and civil are, according to him, essential for social coexistence. He uses the expression "political friendship" "as a synonym for consent: political friendship, both between inhabitants of the same city and between different cities, seems the same thing as consent."<sup>7</sup> Political friendship, or solidarity, is not about the identity of ideas.

Concord belongs to the genre of friendship (...); it follows that consent is not the unity of ideas, which means unity of opinion. In fact, it can happen that even those who do not know each other and between whom there is no concord or friendship are of the same opinion.<sup>8</sup>

Saint Thomas calls for solidarity for reasons inherent in social groups, above all for the common good. This is because where there is no orientation towards the good, that is, where there are no moral and political virtues, there can be no real political friendship. In fact, groups for which solidarity is only apparent and transitory, because it is based on *a bonum honestum*, easily fall apart.

The reason why they cannot agree – notes the angelic doctor – is that everyone wants to have an abundance that goes beyond what is necessary in any undertaking that is associated with profit, and vice versa, has defiled himself and would like to have a small share in the efforts of the group (...). Thus, the common good of justice is not respected and the concord between them is destroyed. Therefore, quarrels arise and each of them forces the other party to do what serves his own interests.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commento all'etica Nicomachea di Aristotele*, L. Perotto (ed.), part 2, book 6–10, Bologna 1998, p. 374.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 374–376.

<sup>9</sup> The angelic doctor explains the relationship between concord and political friendship. The author reveals how political friendship, "both the one that exists between citizens of the same state and the one that exists between different states, can be equated with reaching agreement. Moreover, people also have a habit of confirming this principle, namely that states or citizens also come to terms with each other through mutual friendship. In fact, political friendship has as its object what is useful and what benefits human existence, and everything we say is the object of consent," Thomas Aquinas, *Commento all'etica Nicomachea di Aristotele...*, op. cit., p. 377.

Therefore, the realization of the common good and its achievement must take place in an atmosphere of peace. St Thomas, after St Augustine, teaches that peace is “a state in which there is no contradiction, nothing resists and nothing is against it.” St Augustine explains that this concept contains perfection, and therefore all those who seek and desire peace, especially spiritual peace, form the kingdom of God, in which all things are subject to the One who is the peace giver. St Thomas also emphasizes that the giver of peace is God, through his Son, because he brought peace and left it as one of the fruits of reconciliation with the Father.<sup>10</sup>

For people and societies to be able to realize God’s idea of “paradise on earth,” it is necessary to build a civilization of love based on the concept of Christian solidarity. Over the centuries the overall meaning and value of solidarity has changed and developed not only as a result of legal but also political and social changes. Leo XIII contributed significantly to the development of the meaning and value of solidarity through his encyclical *Rerum novarum*, in which he presented a concept of solidarity. The Pope, taking into account the difficult situation of workers, stressed the need for solidarity between employers and the working class, on a social and political level, pointing out the risks that may affect the future of society. Already in the introduction to the Encyclical and in the supplement to the whole document, he noted a lack of solidarity which led to social conflict. In this encyclical, Pope Leo spoke about the role of the state and its tasks in the harmonious promotion of cooperation between all concerned in order to solve the most urgent problems.

Leo XIII’s observation of societies shaken by the conflict between workers and employers and by the lack of state intervention, referred repeatedly to charity and fraternity. In his encyclicals before and even after *Rerum novarum* he repeatedly called for the reciprocity and fraternity, which had its source in the Bible. With his encyclical, the Pope did not seek to solve the problems, but rather to offer society a harmonious collaboration to solve them, including the most urgent ones presented in the encyclical: the right to private property, disputes between workers and employers, the union of all members of society in a spirit of fraternity, the intervention of the state above all for the benefit of the weakest.<sup>11</sup> The love of the neighbour must be at the heart of all this because

<sup>10</sup> Cf. term: “Peace,” [in:] B. Mondin, *Dizionario Enciclopedico del pensiero di San Tommaso D’Aquino*, Bologna 2000, pp. 478–479.

<sup>11</sup> E. Monti, *Solidarietà*, [in:] *Dizionario di dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Centro di Ricerche per lo Studio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa dell’Università Cattolica del s. Cuore (ed.), Milan 2004, p. 81.

only through the solidarity that flows from this commandment can people of good will resolve many social problems.

Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, returning to the questions concerning the economic and social reality, reaffirmed the validity of the Church's social teaching, in accordance with the concept of Leo XIII. This concept indicated that the evangelical architecture of the social and economic order, which was based on cooperation and solidarity between the parties, should be used to resolve social conflicts. The Pope sought to restore a proper social order based on the moral values of the Church.

Pius XII, in his message for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, delivered during the Second World War, called on the world to open its consciences to social responsibilities and reminded of the need for solidarity between people in a broad sense and for the creation of Catholic associations that could defend human rights. Referring to the Encyclical of Pius XI, he said that already Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum* developed the idea of Catholic social doctrine, which

offers the children of the Church, priests and laity guidelines and means for social reconstruction (...); so that numerous and diverse charitable institutions and developing centres of mutual assistance can be established in the Catholic field. Catholic associations have endowed workers and their families with material and natural goods as well as spiritual and supernatural fruits. All manner of effective and needy contribution by trade unions and pro-agricultural and middle-class associations to alleviate their suffering, to provide them with defense and justice, and thus to mitigate their passions, to preserve social peace from disruption has not been shown!<sup>12</sup>

This concept of Christian solidarity was developed by his successors.

John XXIII in his social encyclical *Mater et magistra* emphasizes the Church's double task of "giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them – both as individuals and as nations – with maternal care. Great is their dignity, a dignity which she has always guarded most zealously and held in the highest esteem."<sup>13</sup> This task can be accomplished with full cooperation of people and nations. In the chapter on new aspects of social issues, the Pope points out the tasks to be carried out by international society: he speaks of the

<sup>12</sup> Pius XII, Discorso *La solennità della Pentecoste* per il 50° anniversario dell'enciclica *Rerum novarum* (1 giugno 1941), [in:] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1941), vol. 33, pp. 195 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Mater et magistra* (hereinafter: MM) I.

agricultural sector, basic public services,<sup>14</sup> insurance and social security, and calls on all those in power to solidarity and cooperation.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, in *Pacem in terris*, when speaking about the order of social relations, he draws attention to the dignity of every human person. The rights and duties of the person, which according to the Pope are closely linked, must be considered universal, inviolable and inalienable. The dignity of the person gives rise to the right to participate actively in public life and to contribute personally to the common good. Man as such, far from being an object and a passive element of social life, is and must be and remain its subject, its foundation and goal.<sup>16</sup>

The subtitle of the same encyclical says that relations between political communities must be regulated in truth, in justice, in labour solidarity, in freedom. It points out that solidarity among people has become one of the necessary foundations for establishing peace on a universal scale.

During the Second Vatican Council the concept of solidarity was presented, among other things, in the Decree on the *Apostolate of the Laity*, in which the Council fathers emphasized the realization of Christian solidarity as a sign of the times of global reach.<sup>17</sup> The observations of Pope John XXIII, Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council, which are contained in the encyclicals and post-conciliar documents, are reflected in the documents of John Paul II, who continues the struggle for peace and the restoration of human dignity to all societies subject to various conflicts and political regimes.

John Paul II in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* points to solidarity as an instrument of great importance. As the history of the 1980s shows, solidarity has transformed the hearts of thousands of people and has become an effective instrument of liberation:

those historical events nonetheless taught a lesson which goes far beyond a specific geographical location. For the non-violent revolutions of 1989 demonstrated that the quest for freedom cannot be suppressed. It arises from

<sup>14</sup> "(...) the road network, means of transport, communication facilities, healthy drinking water, housing, health care and medicines, primary, technical and vocational schools, conditions conducive to religious practices, cultural entertainment and, last but not least, equipping rural homes with the aesthetic equipment and modern installations required today," MM 115.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. MM 132–161.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Pacem in terris* (hereinafter: PT) 3 and 13.

<sup>17</sup> "Among the signs of our times, the growing and unstoppable sense of solidarity of all peoples deserves special attention, which the secular apostolate's task is to promote with care and transform into a sincere and authentic feeling of brotherhood," *Apostolicam actuositatem*, [in:] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1966), vol. 58, no. 14, pp. 850–851.

a recognition of the inestimable dignity and value of the human person, and it cannot fail to be accompanied by a commitment on behalf of the human person. Modern totalitarianism has been, first and foremost, an assault on the dignity of the person, an assault which has gone even to the point of denying the inalienable value of the individual's life.<sup>18</sup>

Later in his speech, the Pope said that

A decisive factor in the success of those non-violent revolutions was the experience of social solidarity: in the face of regimes backed by the power of propaganda and terror, that solidarity was the moral core of the "power of the powerless."<sup>19</sup>

The Pope in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* calls for the awakening of the religious conscience of people and nations in order to achieve a society that is worthy of man. To build it, one must see in man the image of God the Father, redeemed by Jesus Christ, placed under the action of the Holy Spirit. His vision of Christian solidarity shows that in every society it is important that its members recognize each other as persons.

"Solidarity" helps us to see the "other" – whether 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 (...). One's neighbour must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: "to lay down one's life for the brethren."<sup>20</sup>

The Pope continues to stand up for the weakest and most marginalised, and on behalf of all those who are subject to the regime, calling on those responsible and wielding power to create a world of peace and respect for the dignity of every human being. The very rapid proliferation of 'real time' ways and means of communication, such as those of telecommunications, the remarkable advances

<sup>18</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Messaggio all'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite per la celebrazione del 50° di fondazione*, "L'Osservatore Romano" 136 (6.10.1995), no. 231, p. 6; no. 4; English translation form: John Paul II, *Address of his Holiness John Paul II United Nations Headquarters* (New York) Thursday, 5 October 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_05101995\\_address-to-uno.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_05101995_address-to-uno.html) [access: 20.05.2020].

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (hereinafter: SRS) 39–40.



in information technology, the increased volume of trade and information exchange, are testimony to the fact that for the first time since the beginning of human history it is possible, at least technically, to establish relations even between very distant or unknown people. On the other hand, in the face of the phenomenon of interdependence and its constant expansion, very strong inequalities between developed and developing countries remain worldwide, driven also by various forms of exploitation, oppression and corruption, which negatively affect the internal and international life of many countries. The process of accelerating interdependence between people and nations should be accompanied by an equally intense ethical and social commitment to avoid catastrophic consequences of injustice on a global scale.

In practice, charity, or even Christian solidarity, strengthened by the religious sense, leads people to make courageous and even heroic choices for the benefit of others, especially those who are excluded from society, leads them to help the poor. The Church is convinced that only the solidarity that flows from the commandment to love God and neighbour can be the cement of the most just and fraternal society that everyone wants.

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.<sup>21</sup>

As John Paul II explains to us in SRS, solidarity is the foundation of social harmony, both in every society and in international relations; so much so that, just as yesterday we could describe peace as the fruit of justice, so today we can say that peace is the fruit of solidarity.<sup>22</sup>

The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> SRS 39.

<sup>22</sup> B. Sorge, *Introduzione alla dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Brescia 2006, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> SRS 39.

The new relationships of interdependence between people and nations, which are in fact forms of solidarity, must be transformed into relationships aimed at true ethical and social solidarity, which is a moral requirement inherent in all human relationships. Solidarity therefore has two complementary aspects: a social principle and a moral virtue.

In today's societies, where it is difficult to find social peace, it is very important to be able to rely on the virtue of solidarity to help others.

## Solidarity as a path to development

Development, in the common sense, is any change for the better; it is a movement forward, not backward; any improvement in one respect or another. According to St Thomas Aquinas the foundation of development, based on Scripture, is the teaching of salvation. The world is the fruit of God's love, and its material resources are destined for man, they are subordinated to him, so that he can secure his own existence and that of others by working with his own hands. In this sense man is also the creator of culture because he creates and develops it for the good of all. All human progress is inherently ambiguous and impermanent, given the volatility and fragility of human will. If we can count on a certain restraint with regard to the material order, we cannot do the same with regard to the moral and spiritual order. St Thomas teaches that material things serve two main purposes: the maintenance of the body and progress in consciously turning to God. This second purpose is, according to St Thomas, much more important than the first. Material progress does not automatically provoke any spiritual progress; indeed, as history shows (e.g., the Tower of Babel), it can be the opposite.<sup>24</sup>

In the interest of the spiritual and material development of man and society, the Catholic Church points out a whole complex of principles, teachings and guidelines which deal with fundamental points and social issues, in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. "The Church cannot abandon man, for his 'destiny,' that is to say his election, calling, birth and death, salvation or perdition, is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ."<sup>25</sup> Man is the author, the centre and the goal of all social and economic life.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See: art. *Progresso*, [in:] B. Mondin, *Dizionario Enciclopedico...*, op. cit., pp. 553–554.

<sup>25</sup> *Redemptor hominis* 14.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. GS 63.

Every person creating his own life story is invited to open his spirit not only to the different needs of his body, but also to the different situations that connect him to other people, especially the needy.

Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being – in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people (perhaps still only that of his clan or tribe), and in the sphere of the whole of mankind – this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption.<sup>27</sup>

Starting with Leo XIII, popes have often pointed out the importance of social doctrine, emphasizing that the human person endowed with spiritual and supernatural dignity is at the centre of the economic, social and political order. Therefore, he has the undeniable right to profess his faith, a right to work and just pay, to the family, and with it to procreate and educate his offspring, to enjoy material goods, a right to property, to freedom, to participate actively in the life of the state, to be educated justly according to his possibilities and to cooperate in the production of goods. The value of Leo XIII's first great social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* cannot be overestimated. In it the pope wrote that the inalienable dignity of the human person is an inspiring principle of the whole social question.

According to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers – that is truly shameful and inhuman.<sup>28</sup>

The Pope points the way to the development of man and society, not only materially but also spiritually.

An important issue, which Pius XI sees in his time in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, is the issue of private property, which is the fruit of better pay and greater remuneration thanks to the economic development of individual countries. The Pope speaks of human solidarity with regard to private property,

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<sup>27</sup> RH 14.

<sup>28</sup> RN 20.

which should be characterised by a wider social dimension. The abolition of such property would lead to the ruin of the lower classes. The Pope stresses that “the natural right itself both of owning goods privately and of passing them on by inheritance ought always to remain intact and inviolate, since this indeed is a right that the State cannot take away: ‘For man is older than the State.’”<sup>29</sup> Pius XI, examining the issue between those who own private property and the State, expresses concern about the very high taxes and charges that can lead many owners to impoverishment. “The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether.”<sup>30</sup>

Pius XII added some new elements to these concepts: for example, the Second World War, during which many of human weaknesses became apparent, which completely deny his dignity. In this situation the Pope, more than his predecessors, exalts the human person and his dignity. He shows that society must act in the service of man. This doctrine of Pius XII at the practical level is fulfilled in the principle of subsidiarity of society in relation to people. Subsidiarity means that society is at the service of the human person.<sup>31</sup>

In his speech at Pentecost, Pius XII recalled the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, repeating that:

If the future is rooted in the past, if the experience of recent years is our teacher of the future, we think that we will use today’s commemoration to give further moral guidance on the three fundamental values of social and economic life; and we will do so in the same spirit as Leo XIII, and by realising his true, more than prophetic, announcement of the nascent social process of our time. These three fundamental values, which are interlinked, connected and help each other, are the use of material goods, work, family.<sup>32</sup>

He also emphasized that the goods created by God for people belong to everyone, according to the principles of justice and love, and that the possession and use of these material goods is intended to bring peace, development and stability to society, not to provoke the struggle and envy of the strong against the weak:

<sup>29</sup> *Quadragesimo anno* (hereinafter: QA) 49.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*; cf. *Rerum Novarum* (hereinafter: RN) 47.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. R. Rybka, *Le origini della dottrina sociale della Chiesa e il suo sviluppo nel corso dell’ultimo secolo*, [in:] “*Angelicum*” 80 (2003), pp. 901–902.

<sup>32</sup> Pio XII, *Discorso di Pentecoste*, Radiomessaggio, 1.06.1941, [in:] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (1941), vol. 33, no. 11.

The goods, created by God for all people, should flow equally to all, according to the principles of justice and love. In fact, every human being has, by nature, the fundamental right to enjoy the material goods of the earth, even if this is left to the human will and to the legal forms of nations to regulate in greater detail its practical realization. Such an individual right must not be suppressed in any way, even by certain other and peaceful rights to material goods.<sup>33</sup>

John XXIII, in publishing his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* on changes in social issues in the light of Christian doctrine, also bearing in mind the different directions of development, raised the issue of solidarity. He recalled that relations between workers and employers must be governed by inspiration from the principle of human solidarity and Christian fraternity. He reminded that relations between workers and employers must be governed by inspiration from the principle of human solidarity and Christian brotherhood. He also stressed that relations of cooperation between peoples: cooperation that allows and promotes the flow of goods, capital, people, in order to eliminate or reduce inequalities must be built on the foundation of human solidarity and Christian fraternity.<sup>34</sup> John XXIII warned that solidarity, which unites all people and makes them members of the same family, imposes an obligation on political communities to help persons and families in difficulty to exercise their fundamental rights. And this is one of the tasks and duties of the state, which having financial means must intervene. On the other hand, when speaking of peace between peoples, he makes it clear that it never becomes solid because of imbalances in their economic and social conditions. He condemned the fact that solidarity between peoples does not function sufficiently.<sup>35</sup>

In the later encyclical *Pacem in terris* on peace between all peoples in truth, justice, love and freedom, with a view to stable and sustainable development, the Pope dealt with the rights and duties of men and women, private property with an inherent social function, subsidiarity of public authorities and political cooperation. Reaffirming the teaching of his predecessors, he stressed that relations between political communities must be governed by truth, justice, labour solidarity and freedom. "The same law of nature that governs the life and conduct of individuals must also regulate the relations of political communities with one another."<sup>36</sup> He sensed in an extraordinary way the future of

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, no. 12–13.

<sup>34</sup> See: MM, no. 15, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, no. 144, 177.

<sup>36</sup> PT 80.

the migration of peoples in search of environments more suitable for a decent life. He took this opportunity to welcome the initiatives raised and promoted by human solidarity and Christian love so that the transplantation of people from one social body to another is less painful.<sup>37</sup>

The Second Vatican Council also dealt with the social problems of modern man in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, speaking among other things about the vocation of the person and life in political society.

Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition. True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honoured. (...) For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.<sup>38</sup>

The Pastoral Constitution defends those whose rights have been violated.

Later, Paul VI also dealt with social issues in the encyclical *Populorum progressio*, in which he condemned the differences in living standards between rich nations, which enjoy rapid growth, and poor nations, which are slow to develop. According to the Pope, "while some nations produce a food surplus, other nations are in desperate need of food."<sup>39</sup> This lack of solidarity between peoples creates enormous inequality. The Pope stressed that private property is not an unconditional and absolute right and that a lack of solidarity with the poorest is a serious moral problem: no one is entitled to reserve for exclusive use what exceeds his needs, while others lack the necessities of life. In a word, the right to property can never be exercised to the detriment of the common good, according to the traditional doctrine of the Church Fathers and great theologians. In the event of a conflict between acquired private rights and the

<sup>37</sup> Cf. PT 103–107.

<sup>38</sup> GS 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Populorum progressio* (hereinafter: PP) 8.

basic needs of the community, it is up to the public authorities to resolve it with the active participation of individuals and social groups.<sup>40</sup>

In 1971 Paul VI, in his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens*, continued his social teaching, dealing with people's desire for a more economically just society and the unacceptability of materialistic ideology. The Pope writes this encyclical on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, whose message is always valid and which "continues to inspire action for social justice, prompts us to take up again and to extend the teaching of our predecessors, in response to the new needs of a changing world."<sup>41</sup> He affirmed that the Church not only observes people's lives, but is committed to the implementation of the Gospel message and seeks to enlighten their "activity with the light of the Gospel, thus helping them to respond to the divine plan of charity and to the fullness of their aspirations."<sup>42</sup> Finally, he invites lay Christians to renew in the world the moral principles in their communities.

John Paul II repeatedly dealt with social problems and solidarity widely understood among people and nations of the earth. From the beginning, his voice has been heard in various international institutions, such as the United Nations, International Labour Organization, UNESCO, FAO and many others. In 1979, almost immediately after his election to the papal throne, at the Puebla Conference, he reminded us that the Church evangelizes and will continue to evangelize in the name of love and truth, and that she will always be at the service of man – every human being.

If the Church is becoming present in the defence or promotion of human dignity, she does so in accordance with her mission, which, although religious and not social or political, cannot fail to recognise man as an integral being (...). The Church's action in areas such as the promotion of man, development, justice and human rights wants to remain always at the service of man and man as she sees him in the Christian vision of her anthropology. In fact, she does not need to resort to systems and ideologies to love, defend and cooperate in the liberation of man: it is at the heart of the message, of which she is a repository and outlawed, that she finds inspiration for fraternity, justice, peace, against all domination, slavery, discrimination, violence, attacks on religious freedom, aggression against man, and how attentive he is to life.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 23.

<sup>41</sup> *Octogesima adveniens* 1.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> John Paul II, Discorso *Audacia di profeti e prudenza evangelica di pastori*, III Conferenza Generale dell'Episcopato Latinoamericano, [in:] *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, 2/1, Vatican 1979, pp. 188–230.

The Pope gave clear indications on the implementation of the concept of Christian solidarity, which is aimed at integral human development.

In 1980, during his trip to Brazil, he spoke with great authority about the need for fraternal cooperation. In his talk about the gospel blessings, he taught that the removal of injustice among people must be strived after, and for this it is necessary to involve Christians.

The Church wants to draw from the teachings of the eight Beatitudes everything that applies to every human being: to the needy, to those who are poor, those who live in poverty, to those who live in abundance and prosperity, and finally to those who have surplus and live in affluence. The same truth about the first blessing applies to every person, but in a different way. (...) To those who live in abundance, or at least in relative prosperity, so they have the necessities of life (though perhaps a little may be redundant!), the Church who wants to be the Church of the poor, says: Enjoy the fruits of your work and diligence, but in the name of the words of Christ, in the name of human brotherhood and social solidarity, do not distance yourselves from others. Think of the poorest! Think of those who do not have enough, who live in chronic poverty, who suffer from hunger! And be with them!<sup>44</sup>

In 1981, in his speech to the workers in Terni, he said that we must fight for justice, but never against another man.

I particularly appreciate, dear employees, the strong and unbreakable will to continue, with determination and wisdom, to defend your work and dignity. The Church's call to conversion, like that of Jesus, is based on the certainty that nothing will improve, even the structure of human co-existence, if it man does not improve from within; and in practice this means that it is impossible to achieve justice by creating new injustices, establishing peace by resorting to violence, creating a greater area of freedom by using physical or moral coercion.<sup>45</sup>

In the same year, on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum novarum*, he recalled the true importance of human work in the encyclical *Laborem exercens*. The exploitation of the worker, the injustice against him, the fact that

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, Discorso *La Chiesa dei poveri con Cristo proclama le beatitudini*, [in:] *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, 3/2, Vatican 1980, pp. 24–31, no. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, Discorso *Vi sono vicino, vi capisco con piena coscienza vi rendo onore*, [in:] *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, 4/1, Vatican 1981, pp. 696–705.



human dignity is often violated, led the Pope to speak of a vision of Christian solidarity between men and women at work and of a just fight for workers' rights. Against the background of this statement we can see the difficult situation of workers, especially in Poland, and their protests.

The call to solidarity and common action addressed to the workers-especially (...) was important and eloquent from the point of view of social ethics. 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.<sup>46</sup>

In 1987 John Paul II, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Populorum progressio*, presented the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, in which he expressed for the first time the Church's concern for the promotion of the human person in society. He demanded that the human person be respected and promoted in all his dimensions.

The social concern of the Church, directed towards an authentic development of man and society which would respect and promote all the dimensions of the human person, has always expressed itself in the most varied ways. (...) The Church (...) seeks to lead people to respond, with the support also of rational reflection and of the human sciences, to their vocation as responsible builders of earthly society.<sup>47</sup>

With these words he confirmed that concern for man and his dignity, love and solidarity come from Revelation and are the most important concerns of the Church in the name of the truth, the Church following the Gospel and the teaching of Jesus Christ. There is a need to intensify efforts to promote and strengthen every human being, especially those who live in conditions of marginalisation, trouble and exclusion from society. It is necessary to recognize and promote the dignity of every human person because everyone has the right to live as a hero and not as a slave, and in solidarity with others. Only when each person has the opportunity to recognize and express his abilities and potential will it be possible to build and live meaningful human relationships in solidarity.

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<sup>46</sup> *Laborem exercens* 8.

<sup>47</sup> SRS 1.

In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedom, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext. The moral character of development and its necessary promotion are emphasized when the most rigorous respect is given to all the demands deriving from the order of truth and good proper to the human person. (...) None of what has been said can be achieved without the collaboration of all – especially the international community – in the framework of a solidarity which includes everyone, beginning with the most neglected.<sup>48</sup>

The social environment in which each of us lives must contribute to the development and dissemination of a culture of solidarity and hospitality, participation by all, without exclusion, in community life. As the Church teaches us, all forms of marginalisation of human dignity must be prevented; a new social coexistence based on justice and solidarity must be fostered, in the name of truth and evangelical love. All people, rich and poor, both politicians and trade unionists, must be committed to the common human good.

One would hope that also men and women without an explicit faith would be convinced that the obstacles to integral development are not only economic but rest on more profound attitudes which human beings can make into absolute values. Thus one would hope that all those who, to some degree or other, are responsible for ensuring a “more human life” for their fellow human beings, whether or not they are inspired by a religious faith, will become fully aware of the urgent need to change the spiritual attitudes which define each individual’s relationship with self, with neighbor, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself; and all of this in view of higher values such as the common good or, to quote the felicitous expression of the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, the full development “of the whole individual and of all people.”<sup>49</sup>

The Pope proposes to the modern world the concept of Christian solidarity as an antidote to evils in social and political life. Solidarity is authentic when people recognize themselves as people and not as tools.

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

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<sup>48</sup> SRS 33, 45.

<sup>49</sup> SRS 38.

weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. 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. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.<sup>50</sup>

John Paul II confirms that in this way the principle we call solidarity today, both in the internal order of each nation and in the international order, turns out to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian concept of social and political organizations. Solidarity is a Christian virtue which comes from love and which must be present in the lives of Jesus' disciples. It tends to go beyond itself, to take on specific Christian dimensions of total gratitude, forgiveness and reconciliation. Human and Christian solidarity must lead people to spiritual as well as material development and to the merciful reception of those in need. One of the preambles to the Eucharist in the Roman Missal confirms Christ's example for the weakest: he never closed himself off to the needs and sufferings of his brothers and sisters.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusions

The conclusion derived from the presented teaching is that it will not be possible to develop the Creator's intentions, nor will it be possible to have peace if man does not seek Him who is the giver of all that lives. The concept of Christian solidarity presented by successive popes, depending on the historical events in which they lead the Church, is still being updated and implemented. Christian solidarity as a fact of *interdependence*, understood as a *system that determines* relations in the modern world, in its components – economic, cultural, political and religious – interdependence adopted as a *moral category*, is not only an indeterminate compassion or superficial disillusionment towards the evil that affects many people, close or far away. “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

<sup>50</sup> SRS 39.

<sup>51</sup> Italian Episcopal Conference, *Gesù modello di amore*, [in:] *Messale Romano*, Prefazio V/C, Vatican 1983, p. 908.

for all.”<sup>52</sup> It is necessary to work for development in the name of human and Christian solidarity and the obligation to subdue the earth. This teaching makes a fervent call, especially to economically developed countries, to respect the dignity of each person, so as not to create artificial barriers between those better off and those worse off. The building of peace and external order in the world and internal order in societies and in every human being must relate to the fact that we are created one for another and not against another. The implementation of the concept of Christian solidarity in the life of all and everywhere would be the way to realise the civilisation of love.

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