

SOLIDARITY OF NATIONS VS. NATIONAL EGOISM

Solidarity the Way to the Future

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I wish to thank very warmly the organizers of the *Ukrainian Social Week* for the kind invitation to celebrate together the 10th anniversary of the Event. I remember very well the 1st Social Week in which I also had the pleasure to participate. At that time my participation was in the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and today it is in the name of the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development*, organism of the Holy See created one year ago by Pope Francis, which is a global point of observation, a privileged point of observation and my presentation will be influenced by this fact.

The title given to this panel discussion is eloquent: on one side there is solidarity, on the other egoism. In fact, it is a snapshot of very common feelings existing in Europe nowadays. Globalization has brought about an economic and trade interdependence but also the growing of inequalities, an increased pluralism with, at the same time, a risk of cultural homogeneity. This is a mixture of aspirations and interests that occasionally explode in violent conflicts with destructive consequences. If the pursuit of peace and the development of a constructive society are the goals, ***solidarity, then, is not an option, but a necessity.***

I will try to argue in favour of solidarity on the basis of the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church and I will develop my short presentation in 5 points: the unity of the human family; the importance of the institutions for the maintenance of peace, mainly of international institutions; development is the new name for peace; globalization requires an authority; the model of the polyhedron.

The unity of the human family: as Christians, working for peaceful coexistence in our post-modern globalized world, we must present the world community, with ever increasing clarity, as the concrete figure of the unity willed by the Creator. Indeed, the peoples tend to unite not only because of various forms of organization, politics, economic plans or in the name of an abstract ideological internationalism, but because they freely seek to cooperate, aware “that they are living members of

the whole human family”¹. The Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, in a significant way, states at its very beginning: “One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth”².

The unity of the human family has always existed, because its members are human beings all equal by virtue of their natural dignity. This is this very human dignity which is fundament of the human rights which are universal and determine that the human community is wider and precedes the political community because “there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity”³. This is why the States have duties also towards whom although not being a citizen is still a human person.

Because of this unity, it also exists, for the human family, the objective of promoting “the *universal common good*, which is the common good of the entire human family”⁴.

The importance of the institutions for the maintenance of peace, mainly of international institutions

To realize the Unity of the Human Family, dialogue between Nations, cooperation towards goals represented by universal common good and peaceful coexistence are needed. At this end, a system of international Institutions has been realized at the end of the bloody 2nd World War.

The Church considers herself to be a companion on the journey towards an authentic international “community”, which has taken a specific direction with the founding of the United Nations Organization in 1945. In fact, the United Nations Organizations “has made a notable contribution to the promotion of respect for human dignity, the freedom of peoples and the requirements of development, thus preparing the cultural and institutional soil for the building of peace”⁵.

In particular, intergovernmental structures must effectively perform their functions of control and guidance in the economic field because the attainment of the common good has become a goal that is beyond the reach of individual States, even if they are dominant in terms of power, wealth, and political strength. International agencies must moreover guarantee the attainment of that equality which is the basis of the right of all to participate in the process of full development, duly respecting legitimate differences⁶.

¹ Cfr. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 432

² Vatican Council II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, n.1.

³ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, n. 34.

⁴ Cfr. Pontifical Council... op. cit. N. 432.

⁵ John Paul II, *Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace*, n.7.

⁶ Pontifical Council... op.cit. n. 440.

In general, the Church's social doctrine views positively the role of intergovernmental organizations, especially those operating in specific sectors. In fulfilling its specifically spiritual and moral mission in the international community and within the framework of its status of Observer in the United Nations, the Holy See closely follows its activity to combat poverty and promote development culminated in the Millennium Development Goals. The Holy See also actively participated in the negotiations over the course of nearly two years and an half, of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the 2030 Agenda on 25 September 2015. In this respect, a few months ago a *Note of the Holy See Regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the Holy See's Reservation on a certain number of points have been published⁷.

Development is the new name for peace. My third point is based on this well know affirmation that can be found at n. 76 of Pope Paul VI encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*. In fact, considering that “the social question ties all men together, in every part of the world”⁸, Pope Paul wanted to address the root causes of bellicose conflicts, especially those connected with structural situations of injustice, poverty and exploitation, which require intervention so that they may be removed. In fact, *Populorum Progressio* was written in a time of accelerated decolonization in a world where the quest for justice of the South of the world was progressively growing. In this context, the Church took definitely the parts of the poor and the weak.

Twenty years later, Pope John Paul II deepened and enriched this thought developing the principle of solidarity. He reflected on the question of interdependence, identified as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. As Saint John Paul II puts it: “ 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”⁹.

Indeed, solidarity in society does not only consist in giving to those in need, but in feeling responsible for one another: if we see others as our brothers and sisters, then no one can be left out,

⁷ Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, *Note of the Holy See Regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017.

⁸ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* n. 3.

⁹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n.38.

no one can be set aside¹⁰. Moreover, in the words of Pope Francis, “solidarity...means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform. Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history”¹¹. He was addressing the participants in the first World Meeting of the Popular Movements.

Globalization requires an authority

The concern for an ordered and peaceful coexistence within the human family prompts the *magisterium* to insist on the need to establish “some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights”¹². This is an idea already present in the Vatican Council Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* taken up by the main following social documents.

Pope Benedict XVI came back with more details on this issue and clarified the necessity of a well-functioning system of international governance: “In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence – he wrote in *Caritas in Veritate* -, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the *United Nations Organization*, and likewise of *economic institutions and international finance*, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity.[To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago.] Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth”¹³.

¹⁰ Cfr. Francis, *Meeting with Economic and Civic Leaders*, Quito, 7 July 2015.

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Address to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*, 25 October, Vatican, 2014.

¹² Pontifical Council...op. cit. N.441.

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 67.

The model is the polyhedron. The idea of a “true world political authority”¹⁴ was frequently misunderstood because confused with the idea of a “Super State” which is not. In addition, in the face of the phenomenon of globalization, another danger is often felt, the one of cultural homogeneity.

I think, then, that in respect of these two “risks”, the words of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he explains in which sense “the whole is greater than the part”, are most welcomed. He writes: “The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.

Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness”¹⁵.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 235-236