Solidarity

The 10 second Summary:

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY ABOUT SOLIDARITY?
Solidarity is an essential stance of faith and a feature of moral consciousness recognizing that we belong to one human family. One demand of such membership is the responsibility to participate in the building up of community and the fostering of unity. Solidarity invites such participation and awareness at all levels and across all borders. We have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across communities, nations, and the world, irrespective of national boundaries. Solidarity is a way of “being with” our sisters and our brothers around the globe.

WHERE DOES THIS TEACHING COME FROM?

- **Scripture**—Biblical source: rooted in scripture
- **Tradition**—Moral source: located in the Catholic tradition, shaped by the past and the present.
- **Teaching**—Ecclesial source: expressed in the Pope’s Encyclical letters, Apostolic letters, Apostolic exhortations, and the Bishops’ Pastoral letters, which respond to the issues of the day. (This source is often what is referred to as Catholic Social Teaching.)

How does this teaching connect with my life?

**It provides:**
- Principles for reflection;
- Criteria for judgment;
- Guidelines for action;
- Tools for conscience formation.
**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE HISTORICAL THREATS TO SOLIDARITY THAT CAUSED THE CHURCH TO TAKE NOTE AND RESPOND?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was the reality?</th>
<th>Document &amp; Year</th>
<th>What was presented?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The world is in the midst of the Great Depression. Communist world revolution and 20th century nationalist reactions (Fascism, Nazism) to capitalist international finance change the political form of governance.</td>
<td><em>The Reconstruction of the Social Order (Quadragesimo Anno)</em>, 1931</td>
<td>Workers were encouraged within nations to stand together. This document highlighted cooperation and harmony in the social and economic spheres—not competition and conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many African nations are struggling for independence from colonial rule. Space exploration, nuclear energy and advancing technologies continue to highlight the growing gaps between rich countries and poor countries.</td>
<td><em>Christianity and Social Progress (Mater et Magistra)</em>, 1961</td>
<td>Solidarity was expanded from workers within nations to a broader sense of global solidarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican II has just ended. There exists extreme poverty and global hunger. Gaps are widening between rich and poor nations. The U.S. is engaged in the Vietnam war, the Civil Rights movement and the advent of the women’s movement.</td>
<td><em>The Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)</em>, 1967</td>
<td>This document focused more than any previous encyclical on the “spirit of solidarity” needed for integral human development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movements against authoritarian communist governments are emerging. Worker union movements, especially in Poland, are confronting such authoritarian regimes.</td>
<td><em>On Human Work (Laborem Exercens)</em>, 1981</td>
<td>John Paul II acknowledges the importance of the historical movements that promoted worker solidarity. He advances an understanding of solidarity as that which is gifted by God in creating and redeeming the human species. He places the call for solidarity within the framework of striving for the common good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problem of International Debt is becoming more serious and more urgent. The gap between rich countries of the “North” and poor countries of the “South” is increasing. Growing awareness of the extent of the arms trade, growing terrorism and a massive rise in refugees worldwide are calling for a response.</td>
<td><em>The Social Concerns of the Church (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)</em>, 1988</td>
<td>Solidarity receives significant attention in this document and is referred to as a “virtue,” further advancing its centrality within the body of Catholic Social Teaching. It is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.” Solidarity among and with the poor is seen as both a human and a gospel imperative. Ecological solidarity is treated for the first time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT DOES THE CATECHISM SAY ABOUT SOLIDARITY?
See paragraphs 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942.

HOW HAS THIS TEACHING DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS?

- Leo XIII raises up the principle of “friendship” in *Rerum Novarum*. The concept implied by this term will later be referred to as “solidarity.”

- Pius XI first invoked solidarity as a principle in *Quadragesimo Anno*.

- The application of the principle was expanded from a local “national” perspective to a global perspective in *Mater et Magistra*.

- Paul VI moved solidarity to locate it as a tool of discovery in problem solving (that is to say, within a heuristic framework) treating the “spirit of solidarity” in *Populorum Progressio*.

- John Paul II makes a “turn to the subject” in his treatment of solidarity in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Human solidarity is an aspect of the nature of a person’s own being given by God in creating and redeeming the human species. This is referred to as an ontological argument.

---

**Did You Know . . . ?**

Our culture is tempted to turn inward, becoming indifferent and sometimes isolationist in the face of international responsibilities. Catholic Social Teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world. This virtue is described by John Paul II as “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” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38).¹

¹ [http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.htm](http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.htm)
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Where do you see disregard for solidarity, in your communities, in your region, state, country and in the world?

2. Think about movements of people in solidarity that have brought about peace and justice in the 20th century. Why was solidarity so important to these movements? What did it accomplish?

3. Christ asked several of the apostles to “be with” Him in Gethsemane in His pain and suffering. What are different ways we can “be with” others in their pain and suffering, that is, in solidarity?
MORE ON SOLIDARITY FROM CST:

Solidarity is a Christian virtue. It seeks to go beyond itself to total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It leads to a new vision of the unity of humankind, a reflection of God’s triune intimate life...

_On Social Concerns, #40_

---

[Solidarity] 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.

_On Social Concerns, #38_

---

To overcome today’s individualistic mentality, a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity is needed, beginning in the family.

_The Hundredth Year, #49_

---

There can be no progress towards the complete development of the human person without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity.

_On the Development of Peoples, #43_

---

The solidarity which binds all humans together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.

_Mother and Teacher, #157_

---

We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family. The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty.

_On the Development of Peoples, #17_
SCORIPTURE PASSAGES FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION:

Then the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He answered, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” The LORD then said: “What have you done! Listen: your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil!

Genesis 4:9-10

Defend the lowly and fatherless; render justice to the afflicted and needy.
Rescue the lowly and poor; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 82:3-4

Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, (namely) “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so it is also with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, “Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,” it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Galatians 5:14-15