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Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

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St. John Paul II and solidarity.
From personal experience to testimony
of service

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3. ST. JOHN PAUL II AND SOLIDARITY. FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO TESTIMONY OF SERVICE

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the concept of solidarity in the teaching of John Paul II. First, we characterize the genesis and development of the various scopes of this concept in relation to the ontological and ethical foundations of individual human existence (the scarcity and abundance of the human person) as well as to the challenge facing every human being - building a community of solidarity and communion in social space.

Solidarity is a virtue, a good habit of individual human beings. Its social character is expressed in cooperating with others, organizing oneself for the common work of justice, and acting for the common good. Cooperation for the good of all produces a synergistic effect, since the common good exceeds the sum of individual goods.

Based on the Christian concept of man and solidarity, the teaching of John Paul II will be characterized in relation to the academic world and universities as a common good. The role of the university is education in the perspective of participation in a community of teachers and learners. The point of studying is, after all, not only to acquire knowledge but also wisdom, and this is achieved by being open to the needy, acting for the benefit of others, serving in solidarity. Next, we show the relationship between solidarity as seen by John Paul II, especially in relation to higher education. Theoretical considerations will be illustrated with examples from the experience of studies conducted, among others, at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, in the spirit of teaching by serving in solidarity.

The last part brings to light the common concepts in the anthropological and ethical dimension of solidarity in the thought of Karol Wojtyła, expressed in the personalistic norm, the theory of participation and the common good, and the main principles of *aprendizaje servicio solidale* pedagogy (learning by serving in solidarity).

Introduction

The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of “friendship” or “social charity”, is a direct demand of human and Christian Brotherhood (CCC, 1992, n. 1939). In this statement from the Catechism of the Catholic Church we find both a reference to the dynamic tradition of the Church teaching solidarity and the essence of John Paul II's understanding of it (see John Paul II, 1991, n. 10).

His three encyclicals deal most extensively with solidarity: *Laborem exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), and *Centesimus annus* (1991). However, many of the themes appearing in these encyclicals have their roots in Karol Wojtyła's earlier writings, such as *Love and Responsibility* (1960) and *Person and Act* (1968)²⁴. Solidarity as portrayed in them is a very broad concept. Wojtyła/John Paul II presents it as a universal value, a natural human predisposition, a virtue and a moral and social attitude, a principle of social life, a manifestation of Christian love or a mission of the Church. It is also widely understood: from interpersonal relations, through family and social relations, work, public – spirited attitude, statehood and economic order to international and global relations. Although the concept of solidarity in relation to the academic world *in explicite* appears relatively

The university is, after all, also a working environment, a community of persons, a place of education, and a space of formation that refers to values and virtues. All those involved in academic life also share a common goal of their commitment - to build bridges between the theory acquired in the course of study and the practice of commitment to social responsibility.

rarely, much of the content concerning solidarity can be applied to it by analogy. The university is, after all, also a working environment, a community of persons, a place of education, and a space of formation that refers to values and virtues. All those involved in academic life also share a common goal of their commitment - to build bridges between the theory

acquired in the course of study and the practice of commitment to social responsibility. Service Learning Pedagogy has much to offer in this regard.

24 The first editions in Polish: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (1960); *Osoba i czyn* (1968). Editions in English: *Love and Responsibility* (2019); *Person and Act and Related Essays (English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II)* (2021).

1. Theoretical and practical dimensions of solidarity

Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II's thought on solidarity follows two mutually supportive paths: philosophical-anthropological and Theological-Christological. On both paths, one can see imprints of in-depth studies combined with life experience. Studies, didactic and scholarly work, articles and books, which - despite censorship applied in Poland at the time (cfr. Wierzbicki, 2021, pp. 64-65) - gained considerable resonance, allow us to reconstruct the stages of Wojtyła's reflection on solidarity. It focuses on two ideas: solidarity is an ontic quality and solidarity is expressed through personalism.

When as a 9-year-old child Wojtyła lost his mother, he experienced family solidarity; when during World War II he became a quarry worker at the Solvay factory, he experienced worker solidarity; as a lecturer, he organized vacation trips for students – he experienced academic solidarity; in times of totalitarianism, both Nazi and Communist, he experienced social and political solidarity; as a priest, he experienced ecclesial solidarity in the face of persecution by the state regime. On this path, he matures in particular the idea that solidarity is a form of social love, that it is intimately connected with the natural and supernatural dignity of man.

Ultimately, John Paul II's mature account of solidarity in the philosophical-anthropological stream consists of two elements: ontological-personalistic and axiological-ethical.

The first emphasizes that solidarity has its source in the ontological essence of man and woman, in the simultaneous scarcity and abundance of the person. The simultaneous "lack and surplus" inherent in human nature enable and oblige man to communicate with others, to exchange gifts. The coexistence and cooperation of man with another man, with many/all people, is the fundamental cause of social life and its ontic reason. It is also the beginning of solidarity - an interpersonal bond of a special kind. Man binds himself to the other as an individual and as a community of persons to form a "we" - a communion. "The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons." (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

The axiological-ethical dimension of solidarity emphasizes that acting in solidarity is the imperative of practical reason. It points to solidarity as a way of "overcoming *natural* obstacles in development" and recognizes the "growing awareness of interdependence among peoples and nations" as a "positive and moral value", "as a virtue". (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38). Embracing and practicing solidarity requires the right way of thinking and acting. For all people,

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 (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

Whereas for Christians, as for all who recognize the precise theological meaning of the word "sin," a change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence is called "conversion," to use the language of the Rihle (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38). This view of solidarity can be applied to three aspects: ethical, institutional, and pragmatic.

The ethical aspect emphasizes that adopting an attitude of solidarity must be a decision of a free and responsible subject. However, being free, he may not make such a decision. This places the whole problem on the level of morality: subjective, that of the human conscience, and objective, that of the moral order which is the condition of integral progress, "populorum progressio". Solidarity, then, is a moral attitude, embodied in human moral and social capacities, which consists in directing the freedom of the individual towards the common good.

The institutional aspect of solidarity is of particular importance when the principle of justice is threatened systemically by

"the desire for excessive profit and power", by "exploitation, oppression, annihilation of others". The "evil mechanisms" and "structures of sin" [...] can be overcome only through the exercise of the human and Christian solidarity to which the Church calls us and which she tirelessly promotes (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

Solidarity takes on the character of a juridical norm when it points to the reciprocal relationships and responsibilities that exist between the person and social structures. It requires structures and people committed to the good of the neighbor (preferential option benefitting the poor), up to evangelical radicalism. In this way the principle of solidarity dovetails with the ideas of justice, charity and subsidiarity.

The pragmatic aspect emphasizes the conditions that must exist for solidarity to be practiced. It reminds us that solidarity is analogous, i.e. it is realized in every society, but by different means and in different ways. As responsibility for oneself and for all, it should go hand in hand with effectiveness. It is therefore a universal value, binding for all levels of society (from the family to the global community) and, at the same time, a particular value that has different concretizations. Of particular practical importance for solidarity are work, dialogue, as well as the basic moral categories of justice and love and the social principles of the common good and subsidiarity. Wojtyła summarizes these elements as follows:

Solidarity is opposed to understanding society in terms of struggle against, and of social relations in terms of uncompromising opposition to classes. Solidarity, which derives its origin and strength from the nature of human work, and therefore from the priority of the human person over things, will create a tool of dialogue and cooperation, allowing for the resolution of contradictions without striving to destroy the enemy. No, the claim that the world of work can be made a world of justice is not a utopia (John Paul II, 1982).

The Theological-Christological current of solidarity is expressed by John Paul II in three ways: in the Trinitarian, soteriological and ecclesiological aspects.

The Trinitarian aspect is most deeply rooted in the Trinitarian mystery, more specifically in the ontological relationship of solidarity: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the supernatural dignity of man and points to God as “the model of the unity of the human race.” The soteriological aspect finds the deepest sense of solidarity in the person and message of Christ. The ecclesiological aspect of solidarity emphasizes its agapic and communal meaning.

This specifically Christian communion, jealously preserved, extended and enriched with the Lord's help, is the soul of the Church's vocation to be a “sacrament,” in the sense already indicated (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

One of the most important sources of experience of the Church and reflection on ecclesial solidarity was for Karol Wojtyła his participation in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962-1965). Its documents recorded the principle:

For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case (GS, n. 92).

Twenty-two years later, John Paul II related it to the concrete context of his homeland:

“Bear one another's burdens” - this concise phrase of the Apostle is an inspiration for interpersonal and social solidarity. Solidarity means one and the other, and if burden, then burden carried together, in community. So never: one against the other. One against the other. And never a “burden” carried by man alone. Without the help of others. There can be no struggle stronger than solidarity (John Paul II, 1987c, n. 7).

Thus, solidarity demands the right moral and social attitude. The path to fraternity and social friendship leads through teaching to serve and serving to teach: respect for every human person; respect for the true values and culture of others; respect for the legiti-

mate autonomy and right of others to self-determination; overcoming selfishness to understand and promote the good of others; personal generosity for progress and development, promoting equality and justice; building structures. Pope Francis will take up this thought when he writes that:

“Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others” (Pope Francis, 2020a, FT, 115).

2. John Paul II on solidarity to the academic world

Solidarity arises from “loving the other’s identity *as much as our own*”, *as did the early Christians, who [...] brought and demonstrated a new way of life, an authentic fraternal solidarity, a new type of society, a community, in which the Trinitarian roots of human coexistence were at work.* At the same time *Christ’s followers, in order to be faithful to their vocation, must give concrete proof that the Gospel is life both for souls and for the whole of society* (John Paul II, 1983, 3-4). Through such solidarity there is unity among the members of the “social body”(Ibid).

Schools, universities, and scientific institutes of various kinds are also such “social bodies.” Their task is not only to teach and research, to develop concrete programs of action and to form wise citizens, but also to shed light on the moral conscience of people. Pointing to the principle of solidarity as the basis of the economy of communion and the just sharing of goods, and to the necessity of sacrifices and dedication on behalf of the needy, is necessary because the development of all humanity depends to a large extent on interpersonal solidarity (cfr. John Paul II, 1997). What does John Paul II propose in this regard?

In the *encyclical Laborem exercens*, the Pope addressed the problem of solidarity in relation to work. He distinguished between work in an objective sense (e.g. tools of work, technical achievements, infrastructure and working environment) and in a subjective sense (it is always man who is the subject of work). At the university, the subjects of work include researchers, teachers, employees in the organization and administration of the university. Because of the natural and supernatural dignity of man, work is for him, not he for work. Giving priority to work over man leads to his alienation. Hence *there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers* (John Paul II, 1981, LE, 8). The action through which the worker can actually be more subject of his work are the trade unions. In Poland the largest of them, founded in 1980 and inspired by the teachings of John Paul II, is called “Solidarity” (*Solidarność* in Polish).

The solidarity of universities towards working people is expressed in activities of an educational, instructional, and self-educational nature, *what are known as workers' or people's universities and the training programmes*. Thanks to the work of their unions and the cooperation of universities with the working - class environment, *workers will not only have more, but above all be more: in other words, that they will realize their humanity more fully in every respect* (John Paul II, 1981, LE, 20).

In this encyclical the Christocentric and eschatological emphasis on work and solidarity of working people is very clear. John Paul II emphasized that Christ *belongs to the 'working world', he has appreciation and respect for human work*. He stands in solidarity with every working man and looks with love upon him, seeing in every work *a particular facet of man's likeness with God* (John Paul II, 1981, 26). It is true that man can find in his work a particle of Christ's Cross, but there is also a glimpse of his Resurrection to "new life" in it. Ultimately, the solidarity of work contained on the pages of *Laborem exercens* has a paschal dimension.

In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II pointed out that the attitude of solidarity is "compelled" by the growing conviction of interdependence and a common destiny to build together if the annihilation of all is to be avoided (see John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 26). Referring to Pope Paul VI's thought that *the duty of solidarity is the moral obligation*, he defined solidarity as *a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue'* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 9).

It is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people" but "is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good"; "with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage. (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

Solidarity, like any virtue, "rewards" the one who practices it.

"Solidarity helps us to see the "other" "as our "neighbor", a "helper" (cfr. Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God" (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

Practicing solidarity in relation to the academic community implies that its members recognize each other as persons. Staff (academic, teaching, and administrative), as persons with greater resources of knowledge and possibilities for action, should feel more responsible towards students and be ready to share with them what they possess. Students, on the other hand, acting in the same spirit of solidarity, should not assume passive, receiving, demanding attitudes, but should also make their due contribution to

the common good. Each group should respect and support the worthy aspirations of the other (cfr. John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

In the light of faith, solidarity among the members of the academic community, as “the art of loving our neighbor for God’s sake and his own,” leads to true communion. If each for each is *the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit*, then conscience commands him to relate to the other 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 (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

In the encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II emphasized even more strongly the relationship between community and solidarity. The emphasis, however, was on arguments from natural law. Man was created by God for a *relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him* (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 41). Accordingly, universities, through the solidarity of teachers and students, should contribute to *enhancing every individual’s dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God’s call* (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 29).

This, of course, requires effort, sacrifice, the practice of the virtues, a willingness to live the “logic of gift and selflessness,” a willingness to make sacrifices. Therefore, in the teaching process, in addition to the knowledge of the humanities and philosophy, which help to understand oneself as a “social being”, the student should have the conditions to assimilate Christian spirituality and the social teaching of the Church, which can help him understand his true identity and recognize his ultimate destiny (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 54).

According to John Paul II, universities are a community of solidarity of different generations with a common goal and task - the service of knowledge, that is truth. It does not refer only to the area of technology, natural or social sciences, culture or art. Knowing the truth makes sense in itself. Pure “scientific theory” is a form of human *praxis*, but a believing professor or student expects the highest *praxis*, uniting him with God through eternal life (cfr. John Paul II, 1980, 5).

Professors build academic solidarity by serving the truth out of love for the truth itself, but also out of love for the students whom they teach and form. In this way, they create a solidary community of people *who are free in the truth - united by love for the truth as well as by mutual love in the truth, a community of people for whom love of the truth constitutes the principle of their unifying bond* (John Paul II, 1987a, 2).

The principle of solidarity between them is therefore the love of truth. Thanks to this, the university has always been an environment of concern for people in need. By reflecting upon their own cognition, people at the university, more easily than outside it, feel obliged to act in defense of the truth and in defense of those who desire it. This means, on the one hand, the ability to transcend oneself in the truth (to demand it of oneself even if no one demands it) and, on the other hand, to form bonds with society, nation and homeland. Every university – serving the universe of humanity – is to serve God and the homeland in the first place (*ordo caritatis*). John Paul II concluded his address to the community of the Catholic University of Lublin, whose motto is *Deo et Patriae*, with the call: *University! Alma Mater! Serve the Truth! If you serve the Truth, you serve Freedom. Liberating man and nation. You serve Life!* (John Paul II, 1987b, 9).

The university is to build its subjectivity “*from within*” – by the professors and students themselves – and “*from without*” – because of the society among which they live and whom they serve (John Paul II, 1987a, n. 4). Therefore, proper cooperation with state authorities is essential. They are to ensure the autonomy of the university’s operation, enable or support the development of infrastructure, and provide students with living conditions that enable them to focus on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of their personalities. It is then that universities can fulfill their developmental, solidarity and cultural mission. Solidarity also entails strategic thinking: it is impossible for students to see no prospects in their own homeland, to leave it in search of work, to fail to complete the studies they have begun because of poverty. The university has always been a place of solidarity in this regard, and the efforts made have been called “brotherly help. The university by its very nature serves the future of man and society, therefore, in the spirit of this solidarity concern, it should “tirelessly and relentlessly” raise the issue of conditions for the education of young people (cfr. John Paul II, 1987a, 3).

The solidarity of the academic community is not about the minimum of justice, but about the optimum of love (Rodziński, 1988). This is possible when everyone in the academic community (regardless of their position) entrusts themselves to the service of the truth and the other person, entrusts themselves to the other without looking for their own benefits, and has the good of the other at heart. This is how *communio personarum* is born.

At the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, an example of such solidarity among academics *ad extra* was the establishment in 1994 of management studies for trade unionists at the bachelor’s and master’s levels. Thanks to this, during the transition period from a totalitarian to a democratic system in Poland, more than 1,500 trade unionists obtained a graduate degree in management. Later they became the intellectual elite

of the macrosystemic changes (e.g. by taking up prominent positions in trade union headquarters, as parliamentarians, managers in their primary workplaces, leaders of entrepreneurship and social integration). Many of them organized small or medium-sized companies in their local communities, providing jobs for people who had lost their jobs as a result of the “savage” privatization of their workplaces. In this way, solidarity activities spread through students and graduates to the wider social circles of the country (Biela, 2018, p. 362).

There are many examples of *ad intra* solidarity between academic staff and students in the history of the Catholic University of Lublin, e.g. reverend professors gave up their salaries for the benefit of poor students; the staff members supported those in need materially, psychologically or spiritually; the Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, the Servant of God Wincenty Granat (1900-1979) risked his life to help students imprisoned by the communist authorities after student demonstrations; to honor the deceased student of the Catholic University of Lublin, Jacek Krawczyk, a foundation was established to support students in need and their families.

One can say that, just as Molière’s Mr. Jourdain (“The Bourgeois Gentleman”) did not know he was speaking in prose, so at the university where Karol Wojtyła was a professor, solidarity activities were undertaken for decades without realizing that they were implementing the program of “teaching through service”. Today, with full awareness of responsibility, students undertake such organizational, media, educational, rehabilitative, and caring activities for the benefit of their immediate environment as part of their internships, projects monitored by professors, and as volunteers. By helping others, they gain knowledge, new skills and competencies. Their involvement supports the UNISERVITATE program for institutionalization of service-learning (SL) as a tool to fulfil its mission of an integral education for social change and for a better society according to the social teaching of the Church.

3. Solidarity as understood by John Paul II and Service Learning pedagogy – common concepts

Understanding of solidarity in the philosophical and anthropological currents, which highlights its ontological-personalistic and axiological-ethical dimensions, presented in the first part, sheds light on three aspects of solidarity, rooted in Karol Wojtyła’s personal, social, and ecclesial experience: the *personalistic norm*, the *theory of participation*, and the *common good*. These aspects can be traced in the major assumptions of Service Learning (SL) pedagogy.

Reference to Wojtyła's thought, in which the philosophical foundations of John Paul II's humanism can be found (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 65), is one of the challenges Pope Francis posed to the St. John Paul II Institute of Culture at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the saint's birth.

The range of experiences that marked his life, especially the momentous historical events and the personal sufferings that he sought to interpret in the light of the Spirit, led Saint John Paul II to an even deeper reflection on man and his cultural roots as an essential reference point for every proclamation of the Gospel (Pope Francis, 2020).

Wierzbicki notices that Wojtyła in the work quoted above, *The Person and Act*, which was and is interpreted by philosophers as a metaphysical text, indicates, as it were, a "shift towards a new paradigm of metaphysics – 'metaphysics of the person,'" which "does not undermine the ontological paradigm, but reveals the person as a distinguished form of being, irreducible to the world of nature due to subjectivity, awareness and freedom, transcending the world of his own products too" (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 66). A debate over this approach suggested by Wojtyła was participated in by, among others, G. Reale, R. Buttiglione, J. Seifert, J. Crosby, M. Burgos and U. Ferrer. Wojtyła himself reveals that the theological intuitions that inspired him came from, among others, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac and Luigi Giussani (cfr. Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 67).

Wojtyła noticed that the knowledge of who a person is can be achieved by examining human activity through an in-depth analysis of human activity. It is worth noting that, in such a mode of analyzing human activity, Wojtyła takes a different path than the one known for centuries and associated with the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, in accordance with the procedure of classical philosophy, followed the basic formulation: *operare sequitur esse*, which should be read in the sense of *praxis sequitur theoriam* (Nowak, 2005, p. 11). This very path (*praxis sequitur theoriam*) from theory to practice – according to Wojtyła – is inevitable not only in ethics, but in all the sciences of action (medicine, technology,

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art, etc.), and therefore also in the sciences of education (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 136). While appreciating such a course of research, he asks the question: Is the direction leading from theory to praxis the only one in the search for the truth about man? He proposes to consider another

possibility, namely starting from praxis to arrive at theory, or, to put it another way, from *operari* to *esse*. In such an approach, knowledge of someone who is acting is shaped to a large extent through the experience and understanding of “that” – and of “how” – the subject works (Wojtyła 1969, p. 136; Rembierz, 2021, p. 141–142).

In the SL pedagogy, the foundation of which is human activity for the benefit of the needy and with them, Wojtyła’s reflection on the sense and meaning of human activity can enrich the theoretical foundations of the model of education in the educational institutions of the Catholic Church.

3.1. Service Learning – main principles

SL pedagogy is historically associated with the educational changes initiated by John Dewey (experiential learning) and some pedagogical trends of the second half of the 20th century, especially those advocated by Paulo Freire (critical pedagogy). SL is defined as *reflection and action taken to change reality; serving in solidarity with the use of teaching content; learning by serving the community* (Tapia, 2019, p. 489).

These basic principles make SL pedagogy similar to such pro-social activities as: (1) *field activities* aimed at applying specific school / university knowledge in the local environment, for example through periodic apprenticeships; (2) *non-systematic solidarity projects*, undertaken occasionally, which are not directly related to the acquired school or academic knowledge; (3) *institutional community service* through voluntary work or partnership projects (Tapia, 2006, pp. 45–49).

A characteristic feature that distinguishes SL from the above-mentioned forms of solidarity activities functioning in the area of formal and informal education is embedding them in education and formation programs. As M.N. Tapia puts it:

“Collecting clothes and food for the injured is help. Studying architecture and designing plans is learning. Studying architecture, designing plans, and contributing to the construction of houses together with those in need is “learning by serving” (Tapia, 2019, p. 489).

According to the approach presented by Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario (CLAYSS), the SL concept is based on three pillars: (1) solidarity in serving activities aimed at concrete and effective satisfaction of the real and pressing needs of a given community implemented together with the community; (2) active leadership of children and youth at all stages of these activities, from diagnosis through planning to

evaluation; (3) integral linkage of activities with the content and process of education or formation of a given educational institution or organization (Tapia, 2019, pp. 493–494; Rossa, 2016, p. 67). With regard to academic education:

Service Learning is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers students' academic credit for the learning that derives from active participation within the community and work on a real-world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the learning process, and the service is linked to the academic discipline (Albanesi et al., 2021, p.12).

3.2. The personalistic norm and serving in solidarity

The *personalistic norm*, the source of which is the dignity of the human being, was developed by Wojtyła based on his reflection on Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which, in his opinion, laid the foundations for modern personalism in ethics (Jan Paweł II, 2005, pp. 44–46; Wojtyła, 1982, 1969).

This norm sets the foundation for a person's relationship with himself and others. It combines anthropology with ethics and, because it is closely related to the act of man, it can serve as an inspiration for the anthropological and axiological foundations of SL pedagogy.

Performing an act – in the light of the integral concept of a human being as a person – is understood by Wojtyła as realization of a conscious and free action of a person (*actus personae*) that brings an external and internal effect. However, he emphasizes that “conscious action” means not only the awareness of the action, but also indicates “the full dynamic entirety of an act performed by a person consciously” (Wojtyła, 1969, pp. 29–33). Such an action is closely related to “self-knowledge” – that is, the knowledge of one's own ‘self’ – and “experience”.

Not only am I aware of my own 'self' - writes Wojtyła - but also, thanks to awareness, I experience this 'self', that is, I experience myself as a subject [...] Only in connection with action, that is, deed, does man live his morality and moral values. (1969, pp. 47–52).

Man in his action, says Wojtyła, always chooses some good, which becomes the goal for this action. Therefore, he warns his readers:

Whenever in your actions a person is a subject of these doings, remember that you cannot use this person merely to achieve your goal, as a tool. You should consider that this person has, or should have, their own goal, too (Wojtyła, 1982, p. 30).

The positive content of this norm is: *a person is such a good that only love constitutes a proper and wholesome reference to him* (Wojtyła, 1982, p. 42). This love in its essence consists of affirmation of the person: *Persona est affirmanda propter seipsam* [The person is affirmed on its own] - the human person should be respected for himself, because he is a person, and not for any other reason (Styczeń, 1983, p. 70).

In the SL concept, this standard harmonizes with a clear distinction between *serving* and *serving in solidarity*. Common forms of help, the purpose of which is to serve, are characterized by: giving, acting “for” the needy, rather than egocentric selflessness focused on satisfaction, paternalism, clientelism, and transferring knowledge and advice from a dominant position. Service in solidarity, on the other hand, based on gratuitousness and selflessness, is aimed at creating fraternal ties that bind the giver and recipient, and therefore it is characterized by: reciprocity, mutualism, empathy, pro-social relations, fraternity, exchange and joint learning, as well as the search for truth and justice (Tapia, 2019, p. 495).

The basis of education in the SL pedagogy is *recognition of the equal dignity of every human person and fraternal bond* (Tapia, 2006, p. 89); therefore, it excludes any use of the other, the needy, as merely a means to achieve specific aims. Any support activities in which the pupil is involved in the SL education process is therefore not the aim in itself, resulting only from the willingness to serve the other. By the giver’s solidarity with the beneficiary, subjectivity is awakened, and the dynamics of reciprocity is activated. All this makes the personal and social reality change. In so understood service of solidarity, *everyone is both the giver and the receiver; some receive better living conditions, others experience and knowledge, but everyone enrich one another in a mutual gift of self* (Tapia, 2006, p. 89).

Serving in solidarity appears as a form of social love. Wojtyła emphasizes, however, that in interpersonal relations “love is not something ready-made”, even if it is their principle or idea. If a man wants to break free from the utilitarian or consumption attitude toward other people, he must raise his behavior to the level of such love that makes him “ready to consciously seek good with others and submit to this good for the sake of others or submit to others for the sake of this good” (Wojtyła, 1982, pp. 31–32).

Indeed, man “cannot fully find himself except through the sincere gift of himself” (GS, 24).

3.3. Participation and youth leadership

The fulfillment of man depends on his attitude towards others and is best realized in action with others – *participation* that allows participation in a concrete existence of

others (Póltawski, 2005). The educational community cannot be reduced to classrooms and libraries but must progress continually towards participation. (Pope Francis, 2018; cf. Kozubek, 2020, p.29).

In the study entitled *Person and Act*, Wojtyła presents his theory of participation as acting “together with others”. *Participation* perceived by him as a property of the human being is expressed in two dimensions: as the ability of man to give a personalistic dimension to his actions and being together with other people, and as a positive relation to the humanity of other people expressed in their uniqueness. By participation, he states,

“We mean [...] the reality that corresponds to the transcendence of a person in his action when this act is performed ‘together with others’, in various social or interpersonal relations” (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 294).

In this sense, the concept of participation is linked with the concept of solidarity (Reale & Styczeń, in: Wojtyła, 2005, p. XCVI).

Participation, therefore, is a human disposition that causes man to assume the attitude of solidarity by undertaking cooperation with another, and thus participates in his humanity. The attitude of solidarity understood in this way:

means a constant readiness to receive and carry out his or her part, because he or she is a member of a particular community. A man in solidarity not only does what belongs to him because of the membership of the community, but he does it ‘for the good of the whole’, that is, for the common good. The awareness of the common good makes him reach beyond the part that has been allocated to him (Wojtyła, 1969, pp. 311–312).

“In this subjective structure, the ‘you’ as the ‘second self’ represents its own transcendence and its own striving for self-fulfillment” (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 296).

Apart from the attitude of solidarity in the community of action or existence, Wojtyła distinguishes an attitude of contradiction. *Both solidarity and contradiction acquire their proper meaning on the basis of a community of action or existence, and through its specific reference to the common good (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 310).* The contradiction is understood here *not as a negation of the common good and the need for participation, but as a confirmation of these two (Ibid, p.313).* In a community, the contradiction that arises on the basis of fundamental solidarity makes constructive implementation of the common good possible.

In a situation of the contradiction, what allows us to bring out what is true and right, leaving aside purely subjective attitudes or dispositions, which can be the source of tensions, conflicts and fights between people, is dialogue. The principle

of dialogue does not avoid difficulties, but *takes up what is true and right in communities, which can be a source of good for people* (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 314).

Development of the community of action and existence is therefore conditioned by the attitude of solidarity, contradiction and dialogue, thanks to which the one who acts matures in his humanity and contributes to it in others (Eckler-Nocoń, 2009, pp. 90–92).

In view of the above, it is possible to recognize the meaning and value of *youth leadership*, which is a feature of SL (Tapia, 2006, pp. 77–86; 2019, p. 494). In solidarity with the needy, starting from the stage of recognizing real needs, through planning specific activities, their implementation and evaluation, the young – in the process of maturing to conscious participation in social life – somewhat give birth to a community of givers and receivers. This capacity to participate in the humanity of each individual is at the heart of all participation.

“Man, acting together with others, preserves everything that results from the community of action, and at the same time – precisely through this – realizes the personalistic value of his own act” (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 322).

“Participation is the property of an act, thanks to which a person participates in the good without limiting or humiliating his personal dignity, living and acting together with others, fulfilling himself as a person” (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 95).

3.4. The common good and the integration of education with service in solidarity

Participation as a personal property is expressed in an attitude of solidarity. Through this attitude, man finds his fulfillment in completing others (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 314). Solidarity means that a person takes up the *common good* of the community in which he lives as his own and involves his whole self in its realization. The common good conditions and triggers participation. Each solidarity action of the young for the benefit of the needy generates a community. Wojtyła calls this type of community the ‘we’ social relationship. “We”, he claims, *are the multitude of individuals who act and live in relation to a single value that can be called the common good* (Ibid, p. 403). He emphasizes, however, that:

“the common good is only the goal achieved in a community (...), but the common good is also and foremost what conditions and liberates participation in people acting together and thus shapes in them the subjective community of action” (Ibid, p. 308).

The common good must therefore be considered in the objective and subjective sense. What is at stake here is both the sum of goods for people and the good of people themselves. The extension of the teleological concept of the common good by the subjective dimension, taking into account the self-teleology of the person, conforms with the personalistic norm, which requires the affirmation of the person for himself, i.e. recognizing him as a goal and prohibiting treating the person only as a means (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 95).

One of the most important issues raised by SL pedagogy is awakening the mentality of “opening out” in educational institutions by integrating curricula with activities of solidarity for the sake of the common good.

One of the most important issues raised by SL pedagogy is awakening the mentality of “opening out” in educational institutions by integrating curricula with activities of solidarity for the sake

of the common good. Studying becomes truly academic if the acquired knowledge is consolidated by applying it to activities for the benefit of the local community (Tapia, 2019, pp. 494–499). Pupils and students who can apply the knowledge gained in the process of education in solidarity activities to solve real problems of the local community not only contribute to the improvement of the situation of this community, but by maturing in the pro-social dimension, they are able to give a deeper meaning to the learning/studying process. By decentralizing themselves by discovering and caring for the common good, they strengthen their sense of self-esteem and subjectivity. *By acting ‘together with others’, a person performs an act and finds his/her fulfilment in it (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 295).*

The principles of SL, presented in the light of Wojtyła’s personalistic norm, his concept of participation and the common good, resonate with Pope Francis’ words of encouragement to the responsible and volunteers of FIDESCO:

Your solidarity activities are truly aimed at the integral development of people, at caring not only for their material goods, but also for their social inclusion as well as intellectual, cultural and spiritual development, so that each of them retains their dignity (Pope Francis, 2021).

In the apostolic constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, *Veritatis Gaudium*, Pope Francis set out four main criteria for the renewal of Church universities: (1) the “*mystique*” of living together to “to give concrete expression to the social dimension of evangelization, the option for those who are least, those whom society discards”; (2) *dialogue* as “as an intrinsic requirement for experiencing in community the joy of the Truth” leading to a *culture of encounter*; (3) inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary

approaches carried out with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation; (4) “networking” between those institutions worldwide that cultivate and promote ecclesiastical studies in order to set up suitable channels of cooperation also with academic institutions in the different countries and with those inspired by different cultural and religious traditions (cfr. Pope Francis, 2017, VG, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d; Rossa, 2019, pp. 608–609).

The pedagogy of the SL becomes, therefore, a part of the direction of the reform of the Church’s academic education and research activities. The presented reflections on human activity based on the personalistic norm, participation in the community of existence and activities for the common good, expressed through the attitudes of solidarity, legitimate contradiction and dialogue, may shed new light on the still deepening theory of SL.

Pope Francis encourages us to extract prophetic intuitions from the wealth of John Paul II’s thoughts, which are not only still valuable and up to date, but require proper study, serious consideration and application in the current context (Pope Francis & Epicoco, 2020, pp. 92–93).

Conclusion

Throughout his pontificate, John Paul II held over one hundred and fifty official meetings with representatives of universities and scientific associations from all over the world. He kept returning to the idea that at a true university there is solidarity among various scientific disciplines in service to man and in discovering ever more fully the truth about himself and

The university, however, is not only a place of discerning and passing on the truth, but also a place of forming man, fighting for man’s humanity, building bridges in order to multiply the good. Therefore, both “thinking ministry” and “ethical sensitivity” are necessary in the daily toil of every academic.

the world around him. The university, however, is not only a place of discerning and passing on the truth, but also a place of forming man, fighting for man’s humanity, building bridges in order to multiply the good. Therefore, both “thinking ministry” and “ethical sensitivity” are necessary in the daily toil of every academic.

Thanks to the ethically sensitive ministry of thinking, the link between truth and good, which is essential for science, is preserved. Therefore: “*Being a scholar entails obligations!*” is the commitment to take special care of the development of one’s own humanity and

that of other human beings entrusted to the educational mission of all academics. This ministry of thought and service is the path to holiness (John Paul II, 1997, n. 5).

The direction of Catholic education for solidarity in serving, determined in this way, is complemented by Pope Francis who emphasizes:

The Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, n.180).

Pope Francis, in the apostolic constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, *Veritatis Gaudium* (Pope Francis, 2017, VG, n. 1–10), developed and updated the position on the role of Catholic universities in the mission of the Church today. He pointed out that Catholic universities should develop in their students: (1) an attitude of sensitivity towards the poor; (2) dialogue in all its fullness; and (3) the climate of inter- and trans-disciplinarity in reaching the truth about man and the world. These guidelines are for academic communion, the landmarks for the pillars of building university solidarity. Synthetically, the priorities of academic solidarity can be understood as the Pope’s call for the so-called option for the poor, for dialogue and for respect for human dignity and for the earth. At the same time, it means that Pope Francis creatively develops the concept of “solidarity” by reading the signs of the times in line with the thoughts of his predecessor, St. John Paul II.

We will now present a concrete proposal – “Solidarity with Graduates Employment Project” – to build academic solidarity within the university and solidarity of the academic community with the local communities of students from which these students will come. The subjects of this project are the BA and MA university students in their final year who believe they may have difficulties finding employment after completing their studies. The second group of participants of this project are teachers who will conduct two-semester classes during their year of study: *Preparation for the first work of X students* (where X denotes each individual study area at the university, i.e. psychology, archeology, preschool education, nursing, etc.).

The presented project has the following stages:

1. Development of the curriculum for the individual fields of study in the interdisciplinary team for the entire academic year.
2. Field studies in local communities of the students in order to determine the structure of the regional labour market.
3. Establishing local contacts to facilitate the employment of graduates.
4. Evaluation of the project's effects.

The “Solidarity with Graduates Employment Project” is intended to awaken solidarity within the university – between lecturers and final-year students who will soon become graduates and will face the problem of finding their first job. This kind of solidarity would undoubtedly build a common good, as it could significantly reduce the stress of graduates wandering alone in the radically more difficult environment, which is the labor market, compared to the familiar academic environment. The success of this project would not only facilitate a smoother transition for graduates from the world of university learning to the world of the labor market, but would also contribute to more effective work of these graduates. On the other hand, a beneficiary of this project would also be the university, which would thus greatly facilitate employment for its graduates. Other beneficiaries of this project would be the local communities from which the university students come, as their compatriots will return there as professionally employed citizens.

The main good commonality of this project is the prevention of long-term unemployment among university graduates. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of unemployment of university graduates in many countries has become very worrying. Solidarity with graduating students can prevent many misfortunes for young people often faced with unemployment or having to leave their homeland to go to work abroad.

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**“We will not change the world,
if we do not change education”**

Pope Francis

2 Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

We are pleased to present the book *Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church*, a polyhedral text, born in different parts of the world, an expression of different voices and an invitation to reflect on Higher Education in view of a greater commitment to the universal human family. Its intention is to contribute to the generation of Higher Education Institutions (university and non-university, Catholic and non-confessional) capable of networking and generating life, of learning and generating meaning in their being and from their knowledge and doing, for others and with others, and not only cloisters that live for themselves. It is a text with a plural, global and diverse perspective, which opens up dialogue and builds bridges that contribute to achieving a more fraternal society.

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