

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE

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### INSERTING THE PERSON INTO SOCIETY

#### *Subjection to the City*

The formation of young people and their preparation for insertion into the life of the polity has long been a human preoccupation. The most celebrated philosophers of Greek antiquity, such as Plato and Aristotle, were concerned to prepare young people to become good *citizens*. In education as they conceived it, a clearly political aim predominated. Plato was inclined to remove the child from the family in order to entrust him to teachers dedicated to the City. Aristotle saw the family as the basis of political society, but ultimately he acknowledged the superiority of the City over the family. The family was supposed to train the child in the civic virtues.

This political manner of envisaging the formation of young people is manifested throughout history. One can find various formulations up to the present time. Numerous strains of thought envision the formation of young people essentially as a pathway that should lead to their insertion in society. One of the most influential representatives of this tendency was John Dewey, but one finds that his work was anticipated by the positivist founders of contemporary sociology.

The priority of society in relation to the individuals of which it is composed has been expressed in different accents. According to one of the *socialist* traditions, the State has precedence over individuals, and individuals are citizens before they are persons.<sup>1</sup> The State thus has a preponder-

\* The Author thanks warmly the President of the Academy, Professor Mary Ann GLENDON, who spontaneously took on the translation of this text.

<sup>1</sup> In this text, we use the word 'State' in its general sense to refer to the public authorities who carry out the functions of political society. The word thus does not denote any particular regime.

ant role in the formation of children. The Marxist-Leninist tradition specifies that the proletarians, incapable of achieving class consciousness by themselves, should be formed, i.e., shaped, by mentors instilled with the only scientific ideology, namely, the Marxist ideology.

### *Subjection to the Cosmos*

A contemporary variant of this tradition has been elaborated by the *ecologist* school of thought. This is the current version of an ancient vision that subordinates citizens to the City, and the City to the Cosmos. To form the human being is primarily to make him understand that he is only one element among others in the Cosmos, that he is not entitled to claim a special place in Nature, that he must learn to subject himself to Mother Earth, or Gaia. The 'Charter of the Earth' is one of the clearest expressions of this strain of thought.

The formation of the child, envisaged as insertion into society, gives rise to other conceptions in which one can recognize the influence of the *liberal* tradition. Under the influence of a tradition that goes back to Hobbes, we are presumed to be in a state of 'war of all against all' and man must be prepared to struggle for self-preservation. This tradition is expressed in the works of Malthus, of Darwin, and above all of Galton. For the latter, in fact, the prerequisite for the formation of human beings is *artificial, voluntarist, selection*. Genius being hereditary, biological determinism is primordial. All education should take as its primary objective to encourage the most gifted to engender the even more gifted and to dissuade the less gifted from transmitting life of a mediocre quality.

The liberal tradition that we have just evoked has continually been modulated and it finds expression today, for example, in the UN current of thought promoting 'reproductive health'.

### *Toward what Finality?*

These different traditions assign various *finalities* to the formation of human beings, and to their education: apprenticeship in respect for society, for the City, for the State, for biological integrity, for the environment, etc. Today, one also encounters new manifestations of an *anarchist* strain, that is, the rejection of all principle, all claim of right, all authority. This current was already evident among the Cynics in the ancient world, but, in its contemporary formulation, it owes a good deal to a double reading of Rousseau. In fact, while the author of the *Social Contract* exalted the

Sovereign and the General Will, the author of *Emile* exalted individual liberty to the point of rejecting the very idea of direction, of principle, of finality and authority. Since man is naturally good, corruption can only come from sources external to him. The Teacher ought to be the first to restrain himself from respecting various norms, and from transmitting them to others. In fact, the child should be self-educated; he should learn to be autonomous. In his *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*, Rousseau specifies that this autonomy implies each person's fidelity to his own individual conscience. One's conscience is in direct contact with a God who cannot appear or arise from a source external to man himself. Rousseau thus had to propose a *deist* concept of pedagogy in order to develop his concept of the Sovereign and of civil religion. Rousseau therefore appears as the precursor of those currents which today contest the family, including conjugal and parental bonds, as well as all authority whatever its nature, in the name of the sacralization of the General Will.

### *The Child: Object or Subject?*

This too brief review leads us to note that it was unnecessary to wait for the rise of experimental pedagogy and psychology in order for the child to be considered as an *object* that one shapes, to the point of programming him or her. Several vivid contemporary examples reveal that this manipulation, this objectification, can lead directly to unimaginable forms of fanaticism. Young people can be alienated in their subjectivity to the point of consenting to their servitude.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, when the child is relegated to his or her own *subjectivity*, he or she is arrested in an infantile stage of development of his freedom and believes he or she ought to invent norms by himself or herself for his or her conduct, norms that are changeable.

Whether the child is considered as a malleable object or as an individual devoted to constantly creating him or herself, there is in either case a loss of memory. But memory is the condition *sine qua non* for the maintenance of the social fabric. In these two hypothetical cases, there is no place at all for the human being as subject, nor for a real solidarity between the generations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See, on this subject, the classic work of Étienne de La Boétie, *Le discours de la servitude volontaire*, texte établi par P. Léonard, Paris, Éd. Payot, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the history of the formation of children, see the following article, which we closely follow here: D. Morando, 'Pedagogia', in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Florence, Casa Editrice G.C. Sansoni, 1957, col. 1234-1239.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The Judeo-Christian tradition has illuminated the necessity to rethink human education by transcending the excessively political, sociological, and biological visions that have existed up to the present time. This tradition develops two axes of reflection that can revolutionize our perception of solidarity among generations.

### *The Generations*

First of all, the Bible is rich in references to *generation* and to *generations*.<sup>4</sup> From to age human beings have remembered the actions of God, His blessings, and also the chastisements that He reserves for those who ignore His law. Successive generations are obliged to record divine actions and to transmit the divine Word. Each generation is called to receive this divine deposit and to faithfully assure the transmission of the tradition to succeeding generations.

One notes therefore that, in the Bible, the word generation contains two inseparable meanings: the word designates the cohort of those who live *together* through the same demographic period, those who are born in the same epoch. But the word also designates the *succession* of cohorts who have had the same experience. Thus a double dimension of solidarity appears: it is *synchronic* or horizontal, in the sense that it is lived at the level of contemporaneity; it is *diachronic* or longitudinal, in the sense that it is inscribed in time.

The Bible specifies that these two inseparable forms of solidarity are lived at two levels: that of the family and that of the community. First in the family, where solidarity exists both in the *conjugal* relationship and the *parental* relationship. However, in the framework of the Old Testament, this solidarity is also considered frequently as being lived at the level of the race whose unity is based on common origin. But little by little the call to solidarity, addressed at first to the Hebrews, the people of God (*laos*), acquired a universal scope, and all the Nations (*ethnè*), all the Gentiles, were invited to participate in it. In the book of *Genesis*, God blessed Abraham by reason of his faith and promised him *descendants* as numerous as the grains of sand of the seashore.

<sup>4</sup> See the article by André Barucq, 'Génération', in *Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique*, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 1966, col. 409-411.

This solidarity, of course, has a religious source; it manifests itself first of all in worship, where thanks are given to God for His blessings. But worship in reality is authenticated only by those who welcome the word of God and put it into practice by entering into solidarity with their neighbors. This vision of solidarity opens out gradually to an eschatological vision according to which God at the end of time will reassemble all the generations and all the Nations to subject them to His judgment.

### *St. Augustine and the Call to Beatitude*

Beyond these *longitudinal* and *transversal* visions of solidarity, the Judeo-Christian tradition also develops an *ontological* conception of the same solidarity. As one can see, these approaches are ultimately convergent. We owe to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas two of the most celebrated thematizations of this conception. Here we will limit ourselves to a brief evocation of the contributions of St. Augustine<sup>5</sup> and St. Thomas Aquinas.

For the Bishop of Hippo, all men without exception are body and soul; all are brothers because issued from the same Father. In their earthly existence, all participate, as persons, in the existence of God, but all are called to eternal life, that is to say toward a blessed life in which we will participate in the beatitude of God.

Solidarity finds its foundation here in the truth that illuminates the heart of all men, and this truth comes finally from the word of God himself. The Master and the disciple are both illuminated by God: they are in solidarity to the extent that they recognize that the truth is already in the one as in the other. To be in solidarity signifies, therefore, to be walking together toward beatitude. Human life has a *finality*: human beings are created for eternal bliss. By reason of the ontological relationship of man to God, a relation revealed by the incarnate Word, the horizon of the world, or of the Terrestrial City is here transcended, it dissolves into the vision of the City of God.

### *St. Thomas and Solidarity*

The concept of solidarity developed by Saint Thomas is grounded in his philosophical anthropology and his theory of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The faculty of

<sup>5</sup> An excellent introduction to St. Augustine is that of Henri-Irénée Marrou, *St Augustin et l'augustinisme*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1955.

<sup>6</sup> The position of St. Thomas Aquinas is explained in detail in our work, *Démocratie et libération chrétienne*, Paris, Éd. Lethielleux, 1985, pp. 141-201.

intelligence is constitutive of the human person, that is, it is an active faculty which is the very principle of knowledge. This faculty permits every human being to form the first concepts and the fundamental principles of cognitive activity.<sup>7</sup> It is the personal agent intellect that permits the acquisition of these concepts and principles. Through his intelligence, man, though wounded by sin, can acquire by himself certain true understandings: this is what Saint Thomas calls *inventio*. Man can also acquire knowledge from external sources. Thus the master collaborates with the pupil in the latter's acquisition of knowledge. In that case, Saint Thomas speaks of *disciplina*.

Just as man can progress in this manner in the acquisition of knowledge, so he can progress in the acquisition of virtue. In his quest for virtue, as in his quest for knowledge, man can benefit from external sources, coming for example from the example of a teacher who cooperates in the moral education of his disciple. In the acquisition of knowledge as well as in the acquisition of virtue, the master should limit himself to *revealing* and activating the cognitive and moral potencies that the disciple possesses.

Saint Thomas thus takes up the augustinian idea according to which God is, in the final analysis, the first, interior, teacher, while human teachers (with parents in the first rank) are His conduits. But, less preoccupied with the struggle against Pelagianism than his illustrious forebear, Saint Thomas held that, even though man is wounded by sin, he is, after all, not wholly corrupt.<sup>8</sup> God is certainly the only teacher, because all science and all virtue are in Him. But Saint Thomas reinterprets the augustinian thesis in the light of his own doctrine of existential participation and analogy. Every man is capable, by himself, of arriving at truths of different levels, even though the longing for truth can be met fully only by the Truth that is revealed to man in Jesus Christ. Just as man is capable, by reason of his intelligence, of giving his assent to *truth*, he is able to order his will to the practice of the *good*.

### *Solidarity and Truth*

It is thus evident that, according to both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, the foundation of solidarity is in God. However, Aquinas provides

<sup>7</sup> We follow here the article by C. Giacon in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Florence, Casa Editrice G.C. Sansoni, 1957, vol. 4, col. 1231-1260; see especially, col. 1257.

<sup>8</sup> Pelagius was a 5th century Breton monk who denied the doctrine of original sin and held that everyone could be saved through his own efforts, that grace was useful but not necessary. In this manner, the difference was blurred between nature and the supernatural.

further philosophical elaboration of the foundation of solidarity among human beings. All men are brothers because they have received existence in common from the same Creator. They are naturally capable of arriving at the true and the good, and they can assist each other in this double quest. The gift of faith, to which human intelligence can give reasonable assent, permits those who accept it, to achieve levels of knowledge that men left to their own devices cannot even imagine. It is through experiencing this solidarity founded in reason and sublimated by grace that the Church appears as the concrete historical location where humanity begins to welcome the call to beatitude. Conceived thus, solidarity is a sign of theological hope in the sense that it serves to transfigure human existence by continually bringing man into the highest participation in the existence of God. Theologians tell us that the guarantee of this transfiguration was given to us historically in the Resurrection of Christ.

The works of Augustine and Thomas thus provide us with an essential teaching concerning solidarity. Solidarity is possible only if it is founded on the assent of all human beings to the diverse levels of objective truth. Subjectivism can only lead to false imitations of solidarity which, for that reason, carry within them the seeds of division and perhaps violence. Solidarity is possible only if it is founded on the inclination of the will toward the good. Moral relativism can only lead to a solidarity built on the shifting sands of consensus. Solidarity is possible only if it is ordered to a finality founded on hope in the faithfulness of God. In the absence of this finality, solidarity is destined to dissolve into in utopia and violence.

#### FAMILY AND SOLIDARITY

These preliminary observations prepare us to understand the connection between the family and solidarity. The family is par excellence the primordial location of solidarity. It is founded on the *solid* bond, the bond of *fidelity*, by virtue of which one man and one woman commit to become 'one flesh', to love each other and to freely transmit life, as they themselves freely received it. The family is the point of culmination of preceding generations, and the point of departure for future generations. It is in the family that the human and religious heritage is received, and where that heritage is transmitted after having been enriched in the course of the generations.

*The Family, Subject of Memory*

The family is therefore the place of living memory, it is the point of exchange between generations, the liaison between them; it is the subject of memory. It is the principal driving element of human society. In human society, the family is certainly an actor at the economic, political and cultural etc. levels; it contributes to social capital. But it is, above all, an actor because those who are its members—adults, elderly persons, children—interact among themselves and beyond that, they are active elements in society.

*Relations of Dependency*

This activity of the family is characterized by *relations of dependency*, often analyzed by demographers. *Children* depend on their parents during the period of their life when they are educated. This education takes place first in the family and continues in the school. *Elderly persons* in their turn depend on their children, and this dependence is organized within the framework of specialized institutions which provide care and retirement pensions. One should add that *adults* also are dependents. They depend on their children to the extent that children provide their parents with the incentive to surpass themselves in making choices that they would not have made if they were not stimulated to do so by their own children. They depend on their elderly parents who provide working adults with the incentive to surpass themselves by caring for their own parents and receiving from them the treasures of wisdom. The *spouses* themselves depend on one another: they are committed to be faithful for better or for worse.

Human love appears here as the source and the exemplary image of solidarity. As for the natural institution that is the family, it is the first *subject* of human solidarity. It is in the heart of the family that persons are recognized, formed, protected and promoted in their inalienable dignity. Christian marriage appears here as the *sacrament of solidarity*.

## THE FAMILY AT RISK OF SHRINKING

*The Increasing Precariousness of Family Bonds*

In order to be the location par excellence of solidarity, the family cannot be reduced to a particular aspect of what it is. The family is sometimes reduced to a simple unit where *reproduction* takes place, reproduction that

must be promoted from a eugenic perspective as in the Nazi ideology, or restricted as in the Malthusian perspective. At times the family is also reduced to a simple production unit, as in certain versions of liberal ideology. From this perspective, the family forms or dissolves according to the opportunities of the market or the dictates of centralized planning. The foundation of the family is sometimes presented as resulting from a simple *contract*, which could be dissolved at the wish of one of the parties.

In all these cases of reduction of the family, the bond among the members becomes precarious; all forms of solidarity between adults, between young people, and between elderly persons are at any moment at risk of being denied or rejected. It is thus impossible to think about solidarity between generations from the point of view of an individualistic anthropology.

### *The Family and Human Capital*

Studies showing, and even proving, that it is within the family that human capital is formed should therefore be evaluated with care. The family is a subject of solidarity. It is not an object, malleable according to individual wishes or ambient hedonism; it is not reducible to a unit of production and consumption. However public authorities generally have a tendency to assist the family by treating it, for example, as an object whose productivity, especially in the economic sphere, must be improved. From that perspective, solidarity between the generations is subordinated to criteria of efficiency and economic utility. A current example could be mentioned here: children, like elderly people, are included or maintained in structures of solidarity *to the extent* that they contribute to the creation of employment.

But to establish an authentic solidarity between the generations, the public authorities ought first of all to aid families as subjects, that is to say as active social organisms, composed of free and responsible persons. It is to the extent that they are recognized as subjects that families can be the prototype of every solidary society, composed not of individuals but of persons. It is as a subject of action in society that the family can contribute to the common good through the interaction of its members.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Most valuable suggestions for improving family policies are discussed by Allan Carlson in *Fractured Generations. Crafting Family Policy For Twenty-First-Century America*, New Brunswick and London, Transaction Publishers, 2005.

### *Recovering Motherhood*

It is thus with reason that celebrated studies have emphasized the essential role of the family in the formation of human capital.<sup>10</sup> But, just as the family cannot be reduced to a production unit, the mother must not be reduced to being primarily a 'teacher', a unit for formation of children, working in the service of productivity and the market. By her very nature, the mother is an active subject of solidarity by reason of the fact that she naturally tends to promote loving relations over and above utilitarian relations or relations of power.

A vision of the family that is too strictly objective thus entails a vision that over-objectifies the woman within the family circle. The woman, if she is reduced to her utilitarian role, is confined within her individuality, whereas she is the human subject who leads the initiative to be in solidarity by freely welcoming the child that she discovers in her womb and that she offers for recognition and solidarity with others. Solidarity between generations thus depends upon a *re-maternalization* of the woman herself.

### *Recovering Fatherhood*

But what further complicates the tightening of the bonds of natural solidarity is the individualistic vision of the father that accompanies the individualistic and utilitarian view of the mother. Already in his *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville noted that democracies privilege an individualistic vision of the father.<sup>11</sup> The father tends to be only a citizen who is older than his son; father and son have the same rights. It follows that democratic society tends to attenuate the solidarity between the father and his children (to whom society today accords individual civil rights earlier and earlier). It follows that when the relation of fatherhood fades under the influence of the 'democratic' conception of society, the period of childhood tends to shrink. During this crucial period, parenthood and paternity are only partial images of solidarity. The parental tasks are carried out to the extent that they are

<sup>10</sup> On this subject, see the classic work by Gary S. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, reprinted 1994.

<sup>11</sup> See Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Collection Bouquins, Paris, Éd. Robert Laffont, 1999, cf. II, III, Chapter 8, pp. 559-563. Tocqueville writes, notably: 'In democracies,...the father, in the eyes of the law, is only a citizen who is older and richer than his son' (p. 560).

necessary for nutrition and hygiene; these tasks moreover can be delegated, and the child can be *deposited* in the nursery or the school. Earlier and earlier, parents are even legally deprived of rights concerning the behavior of their children. In brief, the State is stealing childhood from children.

It follows that the establishment of solidarity not only requires a substantial reconsideration of the identity of the mother; it also requires a reconsideration of the identity of the father, his *re-paternalization*. Daddies must re-learn what it is to be fathers. Solidarity is not possible between a father and his children if the father resigns his authority as father by giving priority to other ends such as productivity, profits, etc. There is no chance for solidarity if the father, together with his wife, is not the first to share fundamental traditional values with his children. There is no chance for solidarity between generations if children do not see that the marriage bond of their parents is of a solidity, a *solidarity*, that is strong enough to withstand all tests.

#### CONTRADICTIONS OF THE VOTE-SEEKING STATE

##### *The State in the Service of the Consensus of Individuals*

Historically, at the institutional level, politically as well as legally, the democratic State in the liberal tradition has constantly striven to favor and promote family solidarities, in spite of its exaltation of individualism. One could even show that concern to respect these solidarities was already inscribed in Roman law. In that realistic tradition, the natural institution of the family founded on marriage is regulated by positive legislation. This legislation organized and protected the transmission and allocation of patrimony, the regime according to which the spouses were married, and distinguished the legitimate from the natural child.

But under the influence of the currents of political democracy, and the individualism that democracy postulates, the State finds itself more and more enmeshed in an insurmountable contradiction.<sup>12</sup> Its legislation gives more and more liberties to individuals, and, as a result, the law no longer

<sup>12</sup> In this section, we closely follow the reference work by Claude Martin, *L'après-divorce: lien familial et vulnérabilité*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997. For a different perspective, see the monograph by Louis Roussel, *La famille incertaine*, Paris, Éd. Odile Jacob, 1999.

has regard for the natural reality represented by the family, the natural institution where solidarity is put into practice. The law is based, or is believed to be based, on the *consensus of individuals*. Law does not merely give the family a legal framework; law claims to define the institution itself!

### *Institutionalizing the Denial of Solidarity*

Among the innumerable examples that one could cite for that proposition, one can mention the tendency to put children born outside marriage on the same footing as legitimate children. Certainly all children have the right to effective legal protection, but they ought not to be taken as hostages in a maneuver (of which they are the first victims) that has for the aim and effect of weakening the family. The same remark can be made concerning work by mothers outside the household. The respect due to their just aspirations for individual professional realization should not be diverted for the sake of an opportunity for paid work entailing risks for family solidarity. The same remark can be made concerning the different kinds of cohabitation, hetero- or homosexual. The facility with which these unions are formed and dissolved recalls that *repudiation*, when it is legalized, is destructive of solidarity. Another example: traditionally, the principal cause of the precariousness of natural solidarities was the death of one of the spouses. Whether the mother or the father died, the children were plunged, for somewhat different reasons, into a situation where the primary form of solidarity, familial, was weakened in its very essence, despite the devotion of friends and relatives. But today, the principal cause of the precariousness of natural solidarities is the increase of divorce and the ease with which the law permits individuals to obtain divorce. This blow to conjugal solidarity has direct repercussions on the solidarity the children enjoyed before their parents' divorce. Last example, and the most tragic: the laws legalizing abortion put an end to the lives of the most vulnerable and most innocent of human beings. Organized by the law, the denial of solidarity vis-à-vis these beings forces one to realize that henceforth all forms of human solidarity hang by the tenuous thread of the consensus of individuals, tending to lead to a purely positive legalization.

### *The Obsequious State*

The effect of these legalized behaviors is to dis-aggregate natural family solidarities. As if bewitched, the State *inevitably* accelerates this disaggregation. In fact, individuals demand that the State multiply its interven-

tions in all sorts of areas in order to palliate the familial precariousness that the State itself, in its obsequiousness, has organized by catering to individuals! The State, turning its back on the natural reality of the family institution, reserves to itself the power to redefine the family and to impose its definition. However, under pressure from those upon whom it has showered individual liberties, the State has to invent substitute forms of solidarity, defined consensually by individuals!

### *Defining the Scope of Solidarity and Exclusion*

As we have noted, the politically democratic and juridically liberal State subjects family solidarity to a double process of *deconstruction* and attempted *reconstruction*. The family is not only de-institutionalized, but its natural reality is denied, and reconstructed, in a voluntarist fashion by the juridical fiction of positive law. This deconstruction-reconstruction encumbers all forms of natural solidarity in their very foundation. The scope for the operation of solidarity is accordingly limited by voluntarist decisions that, by mirror image, also limit the scope of exclusions. The studies on post-divorce situations show moreover that where the conjugal bond has become precarious, other solidarities unravel too, rendering men, women and children all the more vulnerable.

### *Return to the Subsidiary State*

In sum, children as well as elderly persons are the first victims of a crisis of natural solidarities founded on the family. Under the impetus of hyper-individualistic currents, the dependency of these two groups on their families tends to be transferred to the State. But by its nature, the State is not even in a position to provide individuals with a substitute solidarity; in any case this would only be an *ersatz* solidarity. As another name for sociability, for 'care', for 'proximity', solidarity is a disposition inscribed in the human heart. It is prior to the State and to all positive legislation that attempts to regulate its exercise. In this domain, as in others, the role of the State is and must remain *subsidiary*: it should *aid* people and intermediary groups to tighten the bonds of natural solidarity that unite the human community. It certainly must be open to institutionalized solidarity by the competent authorities; history is rich in examples on this score. But this institutionalization has its limits, and in any case it cannot function unless the family provides it with its foundational reference point.

## PERILS FOR SOLIDARITY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Special mention should be made of the repercussions on young people of the increasing number and the proportion of elderly dependent persons. This increase is constant and, greatly simplifying the matter, we will confine ourselves to saying that it results above all, on the one hand, from the decline in fertility, and on the other hand, from the increase in *longevity*, that is the increase in life expectancy due to improvements in living conditions. For young people, the repercussions of this situation are numerous and inextricably interrelated.<sup>13</sup> Here are some of them:

1. Young people are victims of *credit policies*. In fact, by facilitating the access to credit by large segments of the population, governments have opened to these borrowers an enlarged access to consumption. But what are these new consumers going to buy? They often prefer to acquire consumer and/or luxury goods rather than to invest in goods that consolidate solidarity with children such as schools, medical care, better nutrition, etc.
2. The child becomes itself the *object of a choice* between a child and other goods in relation to which the child is not perceived as essentially different. The child is no longer perceived above all as an expression of the couple's that is expected to last for the long term. By the same token, the child is no longer perceived as one who will take his place in the chain of generations. The child is frequently perceived as an object to which one has a right.
3. The transition from the rural mode of life to the urban mode also has repercussions on inter-generational relations. *Rural life* favors solidarities among generations, the sense of duties, reciprocity. One should not forget either that in many areas children are still considered, from their adolescence, as a source of labor. They produce and contribute to family solidarity.
4. The deficiencies, or the absence, of *family policy* penalize couples with children; they privilege individualism to the detriment of solidarity among generations.
5. It also happens that a portion of (often meager) *family allowances* is transferred to social assistance budgets, for example, unemployment, or that the family allowances are subjected to taxation. The principal victims of this maneuver are obviously children.

<sup>13</sup> We treat these questions in more detail in *Le crash démographique*, Paris, Éd. Le Sarmant-Fayard, 1999.

6. The various *contraceptive techniques* produce a double psychological effect that is unfavorable to solidarity. They encourage one to envisage physical union as the good to be sought, and the child as a risk that should be avoided, not to mention an evil that must be removed.
7. Working adults are rapidly becoming aware of the 'burden' that the *growing mass of dependent elderly persons* represents for them. Public authorities tend to pay court to the elderly because their electoral power is considerable. But tensions inevitably arise when, for example, for three or four active persons there will be one or two dependent elderly persons. The former then will seek for ways to be relieved from solidarity. More precisely, these working persons will have responsibility for elderly dependents living longer and longer and costing more and more. Euthanasia is then presented as a cynical and effective solution to reduce the burden of retirement pensions and medical care.
8. Furthermore, these same working people also often have responsibility for their children for whom they must assure education. Thus, these adults are chafing at the idea of paying, via increased taxes, for the retirement pensions and medical care of elderly people, while the elderly people are benefiting, to the detriment of adults and young people, from the demagoguery of political actors. Let us notice once again that this intergenerational tension will be further radicalized to the extent that euthanasia will be legalized and presented as a *final solution* to the impasses of Social Security.
9. Development requires investments. But one cannot invest while indefinitely having recourse to borrowing. In order to invest, it is necessary that the economy generate a surplus. This means that in order to make productive investments possible, *saving* is necessary. Therefore the capacity to produce ought always to be superior to the mere ability to cover needs. In other words, the economy should not simply satisfy needs; it also ought to produce savings. The aging of the population appears here as one of the most formidable perils that threatens intergenerational solidarity in human society. In effect an aging population, that is to say, a population with a large concentration of elderly persons, tends to produce less, to invest less and to *consume savings*. An aging population tends to limit investments in productivity and capacity; it does not encourage productivity. It therefore tends not only to consume savings, but to have recourse to debt whose weight is transferred onto the shoulders of the succeeding generations, which are less numerous.

10. Solidarity between generations is also weakened by the deterioration of the *educational system*. In bad economic times and under pressure from the very problems that they themselves have created, the public authorities cut back on budgets for education, because they estimate that one elderly person costs society twice as much as one child. This tendency to neglect the educational system is even more serious when it comes to the point where many parents abandon their own responsibilities for education and transfer them to the schools. In the age of globalization, this problem is currently producing upheavals in international relations. The dramatic educational deficiencies in the European Union have been pointed out by Andreas Schleicher. These deficiencies are especially noticeable in France and Germany, as well as in Italy. From the point of view of professional education and training, Europe remains far behind the United States and Japan. The respected daily economic paper, *L'Echo*, concludes that the European Union 'is thus losing the decisive battle in the new economic competition with China and India'.<sup>14</sup>

#### WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

At the present time, the most explicit contributions of the Church to the study of solidarity are found in publications bearing on Christian social teaching.<sup>15</sup> Certain magisterial documents, such as the encyclical by John Paul II *On social concern* (1987), are particularly rich in this respect. An impressive survey of the magisterial teaching on solidarity is presented in the precious *Compendium* published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.<sup>16</sup> The teaching of Benedict XVI is particularly original, and we will give it special attention.

<sup>14</sup> The sobering study by OECD expert Andreas Schleicher was published in Brussels on 13 March 2006 by the think tank, The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness, in its *Policy Brief*. This 20-page study is titled *The economics of knowledge: Why education is key for Europe's success*. The text can be found at: <[http://www.lisboncouncil.net/files/download/Policy\\_Brief\\_Economics\\_of\\_Knowledge\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.lisboncouncil.net/files/download/Policy_Brief_Economics_of_Knowledge_FINAL.pdf)> – Serge Vandaele presented this study in *L'Écho* (Brussels) in an article appearing on 14 March 2006 titled 'Education x Financement = Compétitivité<sup>2</sup>. CQFD'.

<sup>15</sup> One should not forget the pioneering work on this subject by Fr. Fernando Bastos de Ávila, *Solidarismo*, 3rd ed., Rio de Janeiro, Éd. Agir, 1965.

<sup>16</sup> See the indispensable *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004. The index includes no fewer than four columns of references to solidarity (cf. pp. 506 et seq.).

After the examination we have just made, we might ask ourselves how the Church can foster reflection and action in favor of solidarity between generations and especially in favor of young persons and their education. We will begin by suggesting three avenues of reflection. The first is of a scientific nature; the second is of a doctrinal character; the third concerns pastoral practice.

### *Scientific Information*

One must begin by sensitizing Christians and persons of good will by helping them to understand the reality of the crisis of the family, of the general decline in fertility, and of the causes and consequences of each of these phenomena. The crisis of inter-generational relations is an unprecedented moral crisis in the history of the human community; it is a crisis of solidarity. Along with many other specialists, demographers, geographers, economists and jurists can contribute everywhere to this process of sensitization.

Special attention ought to be paid to the question of *social capital*, envisaged here as the totality of scientific, technical, moral and legal, etc. acquisitions that we have received from the past. This social capital was accumulated by our predecessors at the cost of great efforts and they transmitted it to us so that we could make it fruitful. We are not the owners of this capital; it is an inheritance that belongs to all human beings in common. The same is true for *moral capital*: we have inherited a patrimony of human wisdom that we ought to memorialize by enriching it. Solidarity presupposes that, from generation to generation, the sense of belonging to the same great human family, the consciousness of our interdependence and our common destiny, should be reanimated.

It is therefore not without reason that one stresses the necessity of respecting the *environment* so that future generations may have a satisfactory quality of life. But this kind of solidarity cannot rebound against the human community, which is what would happen if it were founded on the sole invocation of physical-chemical considerations.

### *On the Doctrinal Level*

The central point of the sensitization that we recommend consists in *reviving awareness of the value of the realities represented by marriage*, elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, *and the family*, which issues from marriage. Every culture that endeavors to obliterate these *natural*

*institutions* will end by compromising all its efforts to structure solidarity, over time as well as in space.<sup>17</sup>

It is also clear that the question of intergenerational solidarity should be taken up in relation to the theology of marriage and the family. These avenues have been evoked in part above, a propos of the biblical theology of generations and a propos of St. Augustine and St. Thomas. It would also be necessary to further clarify this question in relation to philosophical and theological anthropology. Human society is a community of persons, and not an aggregation of individuals. Happily, contemporary philosophy is rich in suggestive contributions on that point.

In addition to these points, any profound study of intergenerational solidarity depends, as we have suggested, on an expansion of the doctrine relating to marriage and the family, two natural inseparable realities situated at the interface between the private and the public.

It goes without saying that Catholic universities should be the first to be concerned by the study of solidarity on the scientific level as well as the doctrinal level. This study, for which we are calling, will find its principal source of inspiration in the most recent expressions of the social teaching of the Church.

Perhaps our Academy could ask the Holy Father, who is so sensitive to the condition of young people, to explicitly pronounce – when he judges it good and according to modalities that he will define – on the multiple aspects of solidarity. We respectfully recommend that a forceful *briefing* be prepared on intergenerational solidarity. This document ought to take into account the demographic aspects of intergenerational solidarity, the attacks against the family and against life, and the transmission of the tradition of human wisdom and Christian values.

### *Pastoral Action*

Beyond this action at the doctrinal level, the Church is also remarkably well-equipped to incite, stimulate and coordinate activities promoting intergenerational solidarity. Inaugurated by John Paul II and confirmed by Benedict XVI, who has emphasized their spiritual dimension, innovative initiatives like the World Youth Days and the World Meetings of Families

<sup>17</sup> On this subject, see, for example, the work of Lise Vincent Doucet-Bon, *Le mariage dans les civilisations anciennes*, Paris, Éd. Albin Michel, 1975.

with the Pope are, with many others, prominent sites where intergenerational solidarity is fostered.

We respectfully recommend that an inter-dicasterial working group be constituted with the object of integrating all the efforts of solidarity emanating from the different dicasteries. Let us take the example that concerns us the most: solidarity with young people. It is clear that this question concerns different dicasteries, notably, the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Evangelization of Peoples, for Catholic Education, for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, etc., as well as the Pontifical Councils for the Family, for the Laity, for Justice and Peace, for Health, for the Ministry to Migrants, the Pontifical Academy for Life, etc. In itself, such a working group would already be a witness of internal solidarity within the Church, but completely oriented toward the human community.

One discerns here the role that the episcopal conferences could play in order to channel corporatisms and consolidate initiatives that are too often scattered and sometimes shattered, but whose impact would be increased if they were coordinated and convergent.

Moreover, the Catholic Church possesses a network of agencies that is the most highly developed in the world. No public or private organization has such a worldwide network of universities, schools, youth movements and Catholic Action, charismatic movements, family movements, charitable institutions, hospitals, means of communication, etc. Impressive directories exist. No organization possesses such a large body of members ready to freely commit themselves to projects of solidarity. No organization has such an impressive number of saints who, each according to his fashion, are builders of solidarity.

#### BENEDICT XVI AND 'EDUCATIONAL CHARITY'

The contribution of Benedict XVI to reflection regarding intergenerational relations and solidarity deserves a very special attention. We will focus here on his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, which addresses us directly.<sup>18</sup> In fact, in his first encyclical, the Holy Father brings to the themes that we are debating a substantial clarification that calls out to us for a response.

<sup>18</sup> This encyclical letter is dated Christmas Day, 25 December 2005. We will refer to it in the text by the abbreviation DCE followed by the paragraph number.

### *Charitable Service*

In the second part of his Letter, Benedict XVI explains 'the performance of love on the part of the Church as a community of love'. He explains what charitable service is called to be, the specificity of Christian charitable action. This text appears to be, from now on, an essential document for the social teaching of the Church. Certainly, within the framework of this Letter, the Pope has in view above all the social engagement of Christians. But what he writes in this respect applies fully to engagement in educational service. It is not just a question of an analogy between the two forms of engagement: the educational service of the Church is well and truly one of the most important elements of its service to society.

'Love', writes the Pope, 'needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community' (DCE, 20). From its origins, the Church organized the *diaconia* (cf. DCE, 23). Every monastery includes an 'institution...responsible for all works of relief'. To the *diaconia* can be added educational service. This bundle of organizations in the service of charity contributes importantly to making the message of the Church credible.

Evoking the neo-pagan actions of the emperor Julian the Apostate (d. 363), Benedict XVI recalls that the 'system of charity' of the Church, 'organized charity', preceded the similar activities established by the new paganism of the fourth century. Contemporary secularism does not proceed differently:<sup>19</sup> it seeks to discredit the Church by mimicking its organizations and, more radically, by instituting processes that would disable them in order finally to bring about their extinction. Christian educational institutions would thus be deprived, a priori, of all reason for being. The education organized by the Church would thus be reduced, as the Holy Father always suggests, to nothing but 'a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others', whereas the educational charity that we envi-

<sup>19</sup> In the French language, according to current but recent usage, the word *laïcité* is often used in the sense of *laïcisme*. However, for authors little known for sympathy toward the Church, such as Renan, the word *laïcité* denotes the distinction and the separation between political society and the Church. As for the word *laïcisme*, in one sense it signifies a wholly rationalist *doctrine* that battles for the elimination of all Christian and religious belief. But this doctrine gives rise to *programs of action*. *Laïcisme* thus connotes militant movements aimed at the victory of anti-religious rationalism among individuals and in society. It is evident therefore who has an interest in perpetuating the confusion between these two words. Cf. the discussion on this point in our work, *La face cachée de l'ONU*, Paris, Éd. le Sarmant-Fayard, 2000; cf. in particular pp. 82-85.

sion here 'is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being, which she cannot renounce' (DCE, 25).

Historically, the Church devoted herself with enthusiasm to educational charity. Well before 'circles, associations, and unions' were born in order to meet the 'concrete needs' that arose in the nineteenth century, the Church instituted organizations where she also engaged herself 'against situations of failure in the educational sector' (DCE, 27). It was not by accident that, in the nineteenth century above all, there was a concomitance between the engagement of Christians in social questions and the flowering of Christian educational institutions. Exemplified by figures like Don Bosco, this activity was recognized and celebrated by John Paul II who canonized a great number of educators among whom several were cited by Benedict XVI (cf. DCE, 40). In the spirit of this great tradition, the Holy Father insists on the necessity of a continuous reaffirmation of the foundational principles of society: 'Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which each generation must take up anew' (DCE, 28a).

### *Forming Consciences for Justice*

*Reactivating* the charity-justice problematic, Benedict XVI shows that the parallelism between social engagement and educational engagement does not end there. There is even room to speak of connection, inter-wovenness. Educational engagement should *refine the sense of justice* and *contribute to forming consciences* so that human beings are capable of realizing justice 'here and now' (DCE, 28a). But the question of justice is not of a purely pragmatic nature; it is of an ethical nature. It is necessary therefore to educate one's reason. Reason 'must undergo constant purification, since it can never be free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests' (DCE, 28a).

The specific contribution of the Church to education (DCE, 29) flows from the fact that faith 'is a purifying force for reason itself' (DCE, 28a). Catholic educational institutions therefore justify themselves more than ever through the fact that, by purifying reason, they refine the perception of the demands of the virtue of justice and promote the translation of this virtue into practice under concrete and very variable circumstances. Through its network, unique in the world, of educational institutions, the Church is better equipped than any other organization to call young people in the world to commit themselves to the service of justice. Furthermore,

Christian educators will have numerous possibilities to be the salt of the earth and the yeast in the dough by working in public educational institutions, private institutions that are not denominational, and in every sort of activity open to benevolence (cf. DCE, 30).

The inter-relatedness between the social doctrine of the Church and the Christian conception of education is underlined by Benedict XVI in another fashion. The social doctrine is not aimed at pushing the Church to act politically (cf. DCE, 28a). This social doctrine 'wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest' (DCE, 28a).

The educational commitment of the Church in the frame of adapted institutions, therefore has nothing optional about it, although its modalities vary according to the circumstances. It is necessary for the Church to form capital that is fully human, the complete person, that is, the person called by God to the practice of social charity and invited for that very reason to the purification of one's reason and one's sense of justice. Because 'love, *caritas*, will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love' (DCE, 28b).

This conception of education, and putting it into operation as a service of charity, is therefore the Church's distinctive offering to all the members of the human community, but above all to young persons. As useful as it is, the system of public education cannot suffice at this highest level of education. 'The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself...(is) incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person – every person – needs: namely, loving personal concern' (DCE, 28b). Paraphrasing, respectfully, the Holy Father, one does not hesitate to write that the affirmation according to which the State system of education would render Christian educational institutions superfluous 'masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live 'by bread alone' (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3), a conviction that demeans man, and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human' (DCE, 28b).

It is therefore urgent for Christian educational institutions to loyally establish an accounting of their engagement in the service of educational charity, to redefine their projects, and to reconsider the public that they address. What the Holy Father has written concerning charitable organizations of the Church in general is valid in particular for educational organizations. All of them 'constitute...a task agreeable to her, in which...she acts as a subject with direct responsibility' (DCE, 29).

Contemporary paganism is reforming itself, the Pope has warned, just as ancient paganism reformed itself under Julian the Apostate. Having seen the effectiveness of the Christian social system, whether it concerns forming the use of reason clarified by faith, or the 'formation of the heart', today's pagans want to dissolve the educational system of the Church into 'just another form of social assistance' (DCE, 31).

*Conjugal Love, Educational Charity*

Finally, the fundamental teaching on love, set forth by the Holy Father in the first part of his Letter, permits one to see that the clearest engagement of the Church in the service of education would ultimately involve the reinforcement of the institution of the family. It will become obvious that the social service of love cannot take place without the support of the family, nor without supporting the family. It is in fact in the family that the experience of intergenerational solidarity primordially resides: in the place where faithful love of husband and wife is sublimated in generous service of educational charity.

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Up to the present time, our Academy has produced works of the highest value on essential themes such as inequality, work, democracy, and globalization. For several years, it has devoted its attention to the difficult question of intergenerational solidarity. With the study of this theme, the time has come to ask ourselves how we can improve, so that our works are more perceived as a service of the Church, as a service proposed to the human community, in brief, as a practical exercise of solidarity.