

SOLIDARITY AND SUBSIDIARITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

MINA RAMIREZ

Solidarity and subsidiarity relationships aim at a social order that respects the dignity of the human person.

A social order on an international level is a system of relationships that is premised on the philosophy of part and whole. No part is a part unless it is inserted into the whole.

People who are not recognized as parts of the whole become marginalized. The poor are people who cannot take part in society because they are excluded from the whole.

Each person is a related being. S/he is independence and dependence and thus possesses a capacity both to give and to receive. S/he is related to his or her Creator, the Source and End of all creation. To his/her *Creator*, s/he is absolutely dependent. S/he is related to *humankind* on whom s/he is primarily dependent and secondarily independent. S/he is related to the *State* and to other higher bodies, to society/institutions with which s/he is primarily independent and secondarily dependent. This means that the state, institution or society is there for the good of the person, family and community and not the other way around. S/he is related to *nature* of which s/he, the most conscious of all, is a part. S/he is to live in harmony with other elements of nature. As the peak of God's creation on planet earth, s/he has to be respected in his/her dignity, in his/her inner gifts, as s/he in turn protects, preserves and enhances the integrity of all creation to be cared for and nurtured for the good of the person, family and community.¹

¹ 'Philosophy of Part and Whole – Foundation of the Socio-Political Order' by the late Francis Senden, CICM – Founder of the Asian Social Institute (ASI) Manila, Philippines – unpublished material. This philosophy served as a basis in ASI for expounding on the principles of Christian Social Teachings. The philosophy, however, over the years is continually being reinterpreted in the context of the changing times by Mina Ramirez.

When a person lives his/her relationships in the right proportions of independence and dependence, s/he grows to be a personality.

Society, a social order which includes political, economic, ecological, social and cultural systems, and all institutions, is supposed to create conditions for the person to become a personality. These conditions are premised on love which in an ontological sense means persons relating in independence and dependence as personalities. Law could be the objectivation of this love. Law is humankind's way to facilitate the quality of relationships to create the social order (political, economic, and communication order) on various levels of society – local, national, regional and international.

In an increasingly globalizing world, every human person as a partial whole realizes his/her dignity when s/he, aware that s/he is a part of the whole, contributes to it in solidarity with other partial wholes. S/he relates in a beneficial mutuality with peers to bring about the appropriate social order conducive to the promotion of *life* of persons and all life-forms in a sustainable way for the present generation and for future generations as well.

Each related human being needs to be conscious that s/he is called to be in *solidarity* with peers. Solidarity is expressed in movements of families, of people within a sector, ecological movements, youth movements, etc. They move towards personal and collective becoming inviting higher social bodies to support their cause for organizing care, instituting law for the welfare and well-being of all, including all life forms so that the cycle of life and life support systems will flourish. When higher forms respect the initiatives of lower bodies or lower bodies appeal to higher bodies to assist them when necessary, this process, is what I understand by *subsidiarity*.

In our roles as educators, researchers and advocacy groups we promote the basic right of humans to love and be loved, to make them think for themselves which is the beginning of self-reliance, although not necessarily self-sufficiency. The process is first an education of the heart. The science of the heart animated by Faith enlightens the mind, enlightens reason which makes meaningful training in skills and competencies and in technology – a total human capability building. In effect, we educate and form people in the notion of the common good and social justice, how to be part in a total process of organizing care so that the basic universal aspiration of the person is fulfilled towards enhancement of personal, and family and/or community welfare.

I would like to present to you a case by which fisherfolk have been educated towards solidarity and subsidiarity on local, national and international levels through the Asian Social Institute (ASI) in Manila – a social grad-

uate school of transformative praxis established in 1962 to implement the Christian social teachings of the Church. The graduate school facilitated the self-empowerment of a great part of the fisheries sector in the Philippines by way of accompanying them in participatory action research, organizing and mobilizing resources for resolving human rights issues. We trained them in research, in vision-mission-goal setting, in communication for development using their own cultural symbols, also in family enhancement and in resource management. ASI as partner institution of the movement of fisherfolk owes largely its dynamism to such accompaniment while the movement of fisherfolk owes its stability as a movement through ASI's practice of subsidiarity.

ASI accompanied the fisherfolk in sectoral organizing on local and national level, in drafting a bill that will enable them to take part in coastal resource management, supported them in lobbying for the bill. After years of struggle (1986-1998) the fisherfolk sector was able to have the Republic of the Philippines (RP) Fisheries Code 8550 approved. At present the national federation of fisherfolk is independent from but still related to ASI. In 1992 a fisherman was appointed by the President of the Philippines to represent the fisherfolk in the implementation of the Social Reform Agenda of the government. The fisherfolk are also represented in an international organization – International Collective of Fisherfolk and their Supporters (ICSF). In fact in 1997 one of the fisherfolk, who did not even finish college but was formed in the philosophy of part and whole and trained in leadership by ASI, represented the fisherfolk of the Philippines in a U.N. body – FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) meeting to take part in drafting the International Code of Ethics for Fisherfolk. Today, fisherfolk are participating in implementing the Fisheries Code by helping the Philippine Government's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in organizing Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARM-Cs) to protect the municipal waters fifteen kilometers from shore from being encroached upon by commercialized fishing vessels that could destroy marine resources. Fisherfolk leaders have also realized that their lives are interconnected with the lives of other sectors, with upland farmers (mostly indigenous groups) and lowland farmers – for all of them each has a role to play in preserving the forests and preventing soil erosion that could stifle the development of algae in the lakes, the rivers and the seas; the same is true with farmers who have to see to it that chemicals from fertilizers will not pollute the waters and the air. The fisherfolk are also aware of their interconnectedness with the academy, with business, and with gov-

ernment. They have imbibed the philosophy of part and whole and see themselves as part of the whole creative life cycle.

In March, 2008, ASI was visited by fisherfolk from South Africa accompanied by representatives from some of their South African government units. They were given a lecture on how fisherfolk have been formed and trained in ASI to take active part in initiatives towards their well-being in coordination with the Philippine government's pertinent bureaus like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the Anti-Poverty Commission Office of the government. Representatives from Filipino fisherfolk in collaboration with BFAR arranged the exposure program of South Africans to immerse them in fisherfolk communities where social initiatives were on-going in relation to socio-economic projects in line with a development paradigm on the mezzo level, titled, 'Co-Creating Sustainable Bio-Regional Community (CSBcom)'.² South Africans had a dialogue with a Regional Director of BFAR. There they learned how the fisherfolk leaders assist the government in implementing the law on fisheries. Due to the fisherfolk's initiatives, selected fisherfolk leaders are appointed to be the Directors of regions of BFAR every month of May while the directors go to the field.

It is to be noted that fisherfolk leaders would communicate to others that ASI formed first their hearts prior to forming their minds.³ This leads to the realization that solidarity and subsidiarity principles are best understood by a process of cultivating compassion – a 'formation of the heart' as necessary to or integral complement of 'practical reason', a theme expounded by our Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclicals *Deus Caritas Est* (n. 28 & 29, 31, 2005) and *Spe Salvi* (n. 26-29, 39 2007).

² The ASI Option, January to April 2007, C-Creating Sustainable Bio-Regional Communities [CSBcom] for Integral Development and Wellbeing by Dr. Gina A. Yap, PhD.

³ The ASI Option, May – December 2007, CSBcom Diary: October 2007 by the Social Development Department, pp. 32-33.