Friendship with God and One Another:
The Consistent Ethic of Solidarity in Historical, Political, and Theological Perspective

Steven P. Millies
Associate Professor of Public Theology
Director, The Bernardin Center
Catholic Theological Union
5401 S. Cornell Ave.
Chicago, IL  60615
(o) 773-371-5435  (f) 773-371-5566  (m) 803-979-5658
smillies@ctu.edu

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In a 2017 address at Loyola University Chicago, Chicago’s Cardinal Blase Cupich proposed “an ethic of solidarity, consistently applied” as an approach to how the Church should offer its public witness to the world. Conscious of his predecessor, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin who proposed a consistent ethic of life, Cupich names Bernardin as an influence even as he also draws from Pope John Paul II’s *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’* as well as other public statements and homilies to reach farther than Bernardin’s ethic. Like Bernardin’s consistent ethic, Cupich’s consistent ethic of solidarity aims to stress how “Catholic social teaching would not and could not be fitted into a partisan political framework.”\(^1\) The Catholic moral perspective that informs the Church’s public witness is something other than a political opinion or an ideological commitment. Yet Cupich’s consistent ethic of solidarity both encompasses and goes beyond the political and ethical dimensions engaged by Bernardin to address an additional deeper and newer dimension. In an even more polarized time, this is a meaningful development.

Cardinal Cupich writes that, “the challenge for us today is not only that the issues are in silos, separated from one another,” as was the problem in the 1980’s and the 1990’s when the consistent ethic of life was in development.\(^2\) Even worse today, “people in their social networks and through the media they consult, are in silos.”\(^3\) In other words, although Cardinal Joseph Bernardin found his message difficult to get across, it is comparatively easy to be in solidarity with the unborn, the poor, and the vulnerable. It is far harder today, after decades of polarization and the emergence of new social media technologies, for neighbors, fellow citizens, and sometimes even Catholics to be in solidarity with one another. The consistent ethic of solidarity embraces

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
these challenges to approach the world with solidarity as our guide. This encompasses our solidarity with one another, as it also embraces solidarity with those who are threatened by war, abortion, poverty, or any of the other social afflictions humanity has conceived.

Yet no matter how apt the development of a consistent ethic of solidarity might seem to us, both for its effort to rise to the new challenges posed by our increasing polarization and for its potential for escaping some of the charges of false equivalence that dogged the consistent ethic of life, the fact remains that solidarity itself has been noted for its “ambiguity” and “nebulous usage in theological and ethical discourse.”

In order to advance a consistent ethic of solidarity, we first must establish the meaning of the term in a way that locates it within the Catholic tradition and defines its definite meaning for theological, ethical, and political reflection. With that accomplished, we will be able to explore the comparative advantage found in a consistent ethic of solidarity when we contrast it with a consistent ethic of life. Finally, we can explore how the consistent ethic of solidarity expresses an emerging social and political theory the Catholic Church has been articulating fitfully since the Second Vatican Council (and, which includes the contributions of Joseph Bernardin), and now is taking positive shape in the teachings of Pope Francis along with Cardinal Cupich, Bishop Robert McElroy, and others who, perhaps, at long last are succeeding to address the Catholic tradition to the modern world.

“For remember” (Deut. 24:18)

Solidarity is among the least well-defined features of Catholic social teaching for several reasons, but forgetfulness must be among them.

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Scripture tells us of our common beginnings and of our common relationship to a loving Creator. These common characteristics not only are found in the Genesis Creation account or in the injunctions of the Gospels that send Jesus’s disciples to the nations and to the margins because no one is to be excluded. They are found also throughout Scripture in those passages that remind us of the real nature of our relationships to one another. Not only in The Golden Rule as it is expressed in Matthew 7, Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 6, or as Paul takes it up in the epistles, but we find this theme also throughout the Hebrew Bible, too. It is at Leviticus 19:18 (“Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”) and Leviticus 19:34 (“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God.”), as well as Tobit 4:15 (“Do to no one what you yourself hate.”). When Jesus says that, “This is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12), He calls our attention to the constancy of this teaching throughout the Scriptures. All human persons are related indissolubly to one another in the way that all are related to their Creator who is among us and “remains” in each of us (Jn. 15:5). As we are related to God, we are related to one another. As we owe devotion and faithful service to God, we owe devotion and faithful service to one another. For believers, to live another way is dishonest. It would overlook and ignore the real implications of what we profess to believe.

Matthew 7:12: “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”; Matthew 22:37-40: “He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.’”; Mark 12:29-31: “Jesus replied, ‘The first is this: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” The second is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’”; Luke 6:31: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”; Romans 13:9: “The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’” and; Galatians 5:14: “For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”
Despite that overwhelming evidence for our mutual co-responsibility for one another, of course, the facts of present human life and long human history tell us that we too often have been forgetful. We tend to forget what we owe to one another, which is why the words of Deuteronomy resonate among the Scriptural sources that we cite to describe solidarity: “For remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt; that is why I command you to do this” (Deut. 24:22), to care for the poor (24:12-14) and the “alien or the orphan” (24:17). The connection of the two ideas is important—“you were slaves,” and, “that is why I command you to do this.” The second statement is a natural and direct consequence of the first. Those freed from bondage should hear most clearly the cry for justice, and certainly they owe a debt to respond to that cry. The debt is owed to the God who freed them, and who is present among those who are suffering today. The debt is paid to God in service to those who are in any way afflicted or vulnerable, and that debt must be paid. Perhaps most essential of all, Scripture tells us to “remember.” God knows how prone we are to forget.

The word “solidarity” has entered our lexicon comparatively recently. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the usage of “solidarity” to the early nineteenth century. Its earliest appearance comes in the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers* of Denis Diderot (1713-1784). The *Encyclopédie* was both a product of and an inspiration behind Enlightenment thinking. Diderot and his fellow encyclopedist Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717-1783) set as their task nothing less than the categorization of human knowledge according to human reason, avoiding entirely any inspiration that might owe to theology or other variety of pre-modern thought. It is ironic to note, given the role solidarity plays in Catholic social teaching, that Diderot was seeking to wrestle the authority of the Church out of French society.
In this first extant recorded formulation of solidarity, the *Encyclopédie* tells us that, “it is the type of obligation where multiple debtors agree to pay a sum that they have borrowed or owe, such that the total debt is required from all of them, without the creditor having to consider them separately, or consider one above the others.” All share an obligation equally and mutually. The *Encyclopédie* categorizes “solidarity” as “commercial” for its usage, which the description we find in the entry certainly seems to confirm and which seems also to affirm a connection to the concept in civil law referred to as “solidary obligation.” The solidary’s deepest roots are found in Roman law, where contract law originated as the law of obligations. (Of course, “obligation” shares a Latin root—*ligare*, “to bind”—with religion.)

This connection between contractual obligation and religion, or contract law with solidarity, could seem strange. In fact, as the earliest covenants recorded in Scripture describe the obligations between humanity and God in terms like suzerainty, much of the social thinking of the Enlightenment was contractual. We draw a metaphor for our intangible obligations from what exists in life to solidify more tangible obligations. Diderot and d’Alembert wrote after the social

6 “Comm., c’est la qualité d’une obligation où plusieurs débiteurs s’engagent à payer une somme qu’ils empruntent ou qu’ils doivent; en sorte que la dette totale soit exigible contre chacun d’eux, sans que celui au profit duquel l’obligation est faite, soit obligé de discuter les autres, et l’un plutôt que l’autre,” at: Diderot and d’Alembert (eds.). *Encyclopédie*, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers. Tome XXXI. Lausanne: Chez les Sociétés Typographiques, 1781, s.v. “solidarité.” Author translation with assistance from Laura Carlin and Richard McCarron.

7 “A term of civil-law origin, signifying that the right or interest spoken of is joint or common. A “solidary obligation” corresponds to a “joint and several” obligation in the common law; that is, one for which several debtors are bound in such wise that each is liable for the entire amount, and not merely for his proportionate share. But in the civil law the term also includes the case where there are several creditors, as against a common debtor, each of whom is entitled to receive the entire debt and give an acquittance for it,” at: Black’s Law Dictionary, 2nd ed., s.v. “solidary.” See also the *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “solidaire”: “Jurisprud. Is said of that which carries an obligation to pay the totality of a common debt to several people; the obligation is solidary, when each of the obligations can be a constraint upon the whole. It is the same with a guarantee of solidary, that is to say, when it has been stipulated that each bond will be held for all” (author translation).


9 It is interesting to observe here, as well, how the development of civil rights in the American legal system has grown from the Constitution’s commerce clause. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1875, the laws of the United States have sought to prohibit discrimination in any public accommodation which, almost always, means a place of business.
contract theory of English writers like Richard Hooker and John Locke had appeared in the
seventeenth century, and just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *du Contrat Social* appeared in 1762.
The social contract theorists of Diderot’s time were attempting to resolve a problem that was not
so different from the one Roman law addressed when it gave rise to the law of obligations. Roman
law divided its attention separately between matters which concerned property, and so, and public
matters between private persons. The law of obligations and contracts emerged to solve a problem
when breaches of trust between persons affected their property, which complicated treating them
merely as private affairs. When personal bonds of trust and legal relationships between persons
failed, contracts entered the picture. Similarly, in the world of Enlightenment, social and political
unity in Western Europe had become fragmented since the Reformation. Where the social and
spiritual bonds that once had sustained political life had failed, Enlightenment thinkers introduced
a new sort of contract that obligates us to honor commitments. Contracts emerged as a solution to
a kind of problem of forgetfulness. Solidary obligations bind (*ligare*) us to our commitments
against the possibility that we will forget our mutual co-responsibility for one another that forms
the basis for our civilization and our common life.

This is different from the solidarity that Cardinal Cupich speaks about, of course. Commercial
contracts are different from the moral recognition that we are profoundly responsible
for one another in the way that Catholic social teaching long has described. Yet, when we read
Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* carefully, perhaps they seem not so different. Diderot speaks of how “the
total debt is required from all,” and how a creditor need not “consider them separately, or consider
one above the others.” In this way that they pose a radical equality of debt and duty, commercial

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We can observe how it seems to be a natural characteristic of a commercial environment that it must be a place where people come together, act together, and bear with one another together. In this way, it is a natural source from which our description of solidarity should have grown.
contracts and solidarity are not so different after all—except that we all are creditors and debtors, and our solidarity expresses an indissoluble, primeval contract between all persons, and between humanity and God.

In this way, solidarity appears to have entered the language of Catholic social teaching as a metaphor, a way drawn from the familiar language of commercial, transactional relationships. As John Paul II called for “an integral and solidary humanism,” and as Paul VI promulgated a vision of solidarity in the constitutions of Vatican II, our Christian relation to one another and to God is a constraint and an obligation that accompanies us at all times. No matter how much reminding we need about it, these are relationships that do not go away. They have inevitable and unavoidable social and political implications.

“Comprehensive and Consistent”

Had a reporter from the New York Times not been at Fordham University to hear Cardinal Joseph Bernardin offer the Gannon Lecture where he first proposed the consistent ethic of life in 1983, that ethic might have enjoyed a different reception and history. As it was, Kenneth A. Briggs reported an unscripted response Bernardin made in reply to an audience question after his speech. Bernardin referred to a “seamless garment” of life.10 The name stuck, and the metaphor distorted the consistent ethic’s reception. From its beginning, the consistent ethic of life would be embroiled in an argument about whether it proposed false equivalence among threats to human life, ‘seamlessly’ interchanging abortion with poverty or the death penalty. That contretemps was

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10 Bernardin’s choice of a phrase in his reply to an audience question reflected a longer association of the “seamless garment” with the consistent ethic of life. Bernardin had used the phrase “seamless garment” in public remarks going back to the 1970s, and the phrase also was used by Rev. J. Bryan Hehir when he was a theologian working at the bishops’ conference in the 1970s, when Bernardin was the president of the conference and when Hehir first formulated the consistent ethic. See:
beneficial, in that it forced Bernardin to refine the consistent ethic continuously and to make it more theologically sophisticated. But somehow, the public conversation never got beyond the theological permissibility of agreeing with the consistent ethic of life. The consistent ethic never quite graduated into an acceptance that could shape the Catholic engagement with public affairs in the way Bernardin hoped.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has adopted the consistent ethic of life, at least in a formal way. The bishops write that, “Rightly understood, this ethic does not treat all issues as morally equivalent; nor does it reduce Catholic teaching to one or two issues. It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life and other human rights, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental obligation to respect the dignity of every human being as a child of God.” The second sentence of that quotation, of course, betrays its authors’ preoccupation with equivalence when it all but names two issues (abortion and euthanasia), elevating them practically above others simply by invoking them. The USCCB’s long preoccupation with abortion as a political issue and their recent emphasis on a campaign for religious freedom have attested further to the way that some concerns have been emphasized subtly at the expense of others. Having proposed an ethic that emphasized the primacy of human persons always in all circumstances, Bernardin desired neither equivalence nor to elevate a few

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12 U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizens: A Call to Political Responsibility (2015), no.40. Also: “Faithful Citizenship not only embodies the concept of the Consistent Ethic of Life by its broad treatment of the relevant issues, it also expressly references the concept as it initially characterizes its overall approach,” in: Anthony R. Picarello, Jr. (Associate General Secretary and General Counsel to the USCCB) to author (29 December 2016).

13 For a treatment of the interaction between abortion as a political issue and the public witness of the USCCB, see: Steven P. Millies, Good Intentions: A History of Catholic Voters’ Road from Roe to Trump (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), esp. chapters 2 and 3.
privileged issues. With some seizing on the consistent ethic to make easy equivalences while others reject the consistent ethic entirely so as to elevate some issues, Bernardin got both of those things he did not want and his consistent ethic stalled for how it could not be disentangled from quarrels over the priority of particular issues.

If the consistent ethic of solidarity has any one advantage over the consistent ethic of life, it is that it has sunken a deep root into a principle of Catholic social teaching—solidarity—to anchor Cardinal Bernardin’s method. Even if solidarity is a comparatively less well elaborated principle of Catholic social teaching than others, its recognition in Catholic social teaching can keep any conversation about our ethical response to vital issues concerning the human person focused on our mutual co-responsibility to and for one another, rather than on a comparative argument about particular ethical questions. As Cardinal Bernardin proposed it, the consistent ethic is about the person before me and how I respond to her or his concrete situation. By setting the focus on solidarity, Cardinal Cupich has improved the argument by shifting its emphasis. Solidarity is not easy to define abstractly away from concrete questions. But once we are dealing with a concrete situation, solidarity’s demands on us snap into a clearer focus quickly. As Cardinal Cupich put it, “I suspect [Cardinal Bernardin] would have liked” the “pithy phrase” of Pope Francis—“realities are greater than ideas.”

In his final statement of the consistent ethic, Cardinal Bernardin did not call attention to particular issues or the questions of priority and equivalence. Instead he focused on how we approach threats to the human person, emphasizing that “we desperately need a societal attitude

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14 Several times, Bernardin observed that each issue "requires its own moral analysis" and they are "distinct problems, enormously complex," such as he said in his 1995 Helder Camara Lecture at the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Nevertheless he did insist that all of those issues are "linked." See: Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, “The Consistent Ethic of Life,” Selected Works of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, volume 2, ed. Alphonse P. Spilly, C.PP.S. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 131-139.

15 “Cardinal Cupich on the Signs of the Times.”
or climate that will sustain a consistent defense and promotion of life….Ultimately it is society’s attitude about life—whether of respect or nonrespect—that determines its policies and practices.16 This is where Cardinal Cupich begins his consistent ethic of solidarity. “We need in our day to mine the church’s social teaching on solidarity,” he writes, “as a means of uniting humanity through a reawakening of our interdependence as a human family.”17 And, as he begins to mine that teaching, Cardinal Cupich quotes language from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church that seems to recall the language from Diderot’s Encyclopédie. He writes that the first demand of solidarity will require

men and women of our day [to] cultivate a greater awareness that they are debtors of the society of which they have become a part. They are debtors because of those conditions that make human existence livable, and because of the indivisible and indispensable legacy constituted by culture, scientific and technical knowledge, material and immaterial goods, and by all that the human condition has produced.18

The message is clear, and it contradicts directly the central message of modernity. Like Diderot’s seeking to annul the authority of church and history with the Encyclopédie, modernity’s central conceit is that no one of us owes anything to history. The individual imagined by modernity is a self-created and self-constituted creature. There have been movements of resistance against this idea, of course.

The Roman Catholic Church has opposed these ideas stalwartly for centuries, even if sometimes to its own detriment and to the detriment of the Church’s relationship to the world. The Catholic Church’s discomfort with it has set the Church in lengthy opposition to modernity for


17 “Cardinal Cupich on the Signs of the Times.”

centuries from the time of Reformation and Gregory XVI’s *Mirari Vos* down to the sometimes-skeptical reception of the Second Vatican Council and even in some ways, still, today. The Church’s opposition has not always been thoughtful for how it has exposed the Church to charges that it opposes modern freedoms, and there have been costs for how the Church has been able effectively to spread the Gospel. Yet opposing modern freedoms never has been the important part of the Church’s opposition to modernity. Instead, the Church has opposed these foundations of modernity—the denial of history, the isolation and elevation of the individual who owes nothing, and the way modern ideas have cultivated a kind of socially acceptable indifference to the suffering of the poor or the sick, anyone who is vulnerable. Modernity has, in varying ways, created a disrespect for persons and so for life by insisting we are isolated individuals, cut off from one another. In contrast to that perspective, an orientation to solidarity was the central inspiration of Cardinal Bernardin’s consistent ethic of life. He simply did not name it. Cardinal Cupich has named it.

This way that Cardinal Cupich has joined solidarity to Cardinal Bernardin’s consistent ethic corresponds to how Pope John Paul II utilized solidarity in his magisterial teachings. In

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19 For example, “Those people and societies that go so far as to absolutize the role of property end up experiencing the bitterest type of slavery. In fact, there is no category of possession that can be considered indifferent with regard to the influence that it may have both on individuals and on institutions” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 181), and, “Unfortunately, there is a gap between the ‘letter’ and the ‘spirit’ of human rights.[332] which can often be attributed to a merely formal recognition of these rights. The Church’s social doctrine, in consideration of the privilege accorded by the Gospel to the poor, repeats over and over that ‘the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others’ and that an excessive affirmation of equality ‘can give rise to an individualism in which each one claims his own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good’” (*Compendium*, 158).

20 It should be noted that much more can be said about the personal and theological kinship between Bernardin and John Paul II. In the familiar dichotomy that too much dominates conversation in the Church, Bernardin is cast as a ‘liberal’ while John Paul II is cast as a ‘conservative.’ The labels conceal more than they reveal, such as the personal closeness between both men that dates to the mid-1970’s and saw John Paul determined to appoint Bernardin to Chicago. As well, we can identify continuities between the Bernardin’s consistent ethic of life and John Paul II’s Gospel of Life. See especially: Steven P. Millies, *Joseph Bernardin: Seeking Common Ground* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), at pp67-69, 75-76, 100. See also: Steven P. Millies, *Good Intentions: A History of Catholic Voters’ Road from Roe to Trump* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), at pp102-103.
Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), John Paul begins from the “originality”(9) of Pope Paul VI’s teaching in Populorum Progressio (1971) and then, affirming the newness of solidarity in Catholic social teaching and the lexicon, examines what Paul described as a “duty of solidarity”(9) in the light of the global nature of our moral obligations to one another as the means by which we recognize and act on our “worldwide” and “universal interdependence”(10, 9). In Pope Paul’s more specific context, this duty of solidarity centers on development which is understood to have economic, social, political, cultural, and moral dimensions. In a lengthy treatment of solidarity in this light, John Paul becomes more specific:

Solidarity helps us to see the "other"-whether a person, people or nation-not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbor," a "helper" (cf. 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. Hence the importance of reawakening the religious awareness of individuals and peoples. Thus the exploitation, oppression and annihilation of others are excluded (39).

“Civic and Political Love”

Solidarity is an inevitably political concept. Even as its elaboration in Catholic social teaching draws its original inspiration from Scripture, solidarity emerges as a social concept from the most dry and mundane practicalities of law that are the foundation of governing. As the inspiration of Scripture enlivens a legal concept of solidarity with a deeper dimension of meaning, solidarity now expresses our mutual co-responsibility for one another and, the Church teaches us, this should inform the way that we live. Certainly, that must encompass our political decisions.
In 2018 remarks at a meeting of the Chicago Jewish-Catholic Dialogue Group, Cardinal Cupich offered some thoughts about the nature of a social and political community that widen our understanding of the consistent ethic of solidarity. It was significant and it should seem unsurprising that these reflections came in a context of interreligious encounter. Interreligious encounter is characteristic and a fact of our modern social and political circumstances where our neighbors often believe quite differently from us, and yet we must all live together in peace. Cardinal Cupich speaks of this situation in terms of relationships, but this only is a means to embark on a serious and revealing meditation on the role played by friendship. Cupich called on us to emphasize “what we share in common” as a way to begin and maintain relationships with one another.21 The phrasing is perhaps more evocative than it may seem at first.

The Romans of the ancient world built a republic before they built an empire, and one of the heritages we owe to their legacy is the word, ‘republic,’ which we use today to describe our own form of government in the United States. Historically, a republic has been somewhat difficult to define and many different sorts of republics have existed. But our best clue about what the word intends to convey to us can be found in the same way that we also found a useable meaning in the word ‘solidarity,’ in its etymological origins. When we speak of a ‘republic,’ in its original Latin sense, we speak of the res publica—as unwieldy as it is in direct translation, we refer to ‘the people’s thing.’ To put it into a perhaps more fluent phrase, a republic is “what we share in common,” it is our common life and its orientation to the common good.

What makes a republic somewhat difficult to describe is that it does not imply a set of procedures or institutions in the way that democracy or monarchy do. Instead, ‘republic’ describes an attitude toward the political community, a way we live with one another. It was not unique to

the Romans. The Hellenic polis also shared this attitude of civic commitment to what is shared in common, which was the reason why Aristotle could recognize it with the value he attributed to friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Such communities, Aristotle notes, give rise to friendships as the citizens who share this attitude are equals because of all they share in common.

The imprint of this way of thinking about the political community is set deeply within the Catholic Church and the Catholic imagination, having drawn a long inspiration from the Greeks and having entered the world through a Roman society that, while it was imperial, yet retained a sense of its republican origins as a civic myth that sustained its community. The republic as an ideal for the political community sustained even late Romans, and that inspiration lives in the Catholic teachings that touch politics and the state. Of course, that inspiration also lives in the American political community where the Constitution guarantees a “republican form of government.” As in the case of the Romans, the American political tradition has wandered somewhat away from this republican inspiration. Americans have embraced the values of democracy and individual liberties more closely than the somewhat more diffuse concept of the republic. This shift emphasizes the strand of the Enlightenment in the American tradition, its debt to thinkers like Locke and their preference for more individualist values. It also corresponds to those tendencies in American politics that have tended to render the vulnerable a little less secure because of a deeply-grounded reluctance to embrace the obligations of community and solidarity that would limit the choices that can be made by individuals who imagine themselves as self-creating and self-constituting.

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This is the way in which a consistent ethic of solidarity offers a remedy not only for problems that Cardinal Bernardin attempted to solve with the consistent ethic of life, but also for the querulous relationship between the Church and the culture of modern freedoms that surround it in modern, developed, constitutional republics. It must be remembered that the status of the relationship between the Church and the modern state remains theologically unresolved. John Courtney Murray recognized in 1966 that, “No formal document on the relations between Church and state issued from Vatican Council II.” Murray recognized the fact that the fundamental assumptions about the state contained in the Church’s theology had originated in the ancient world, been mediated through the experiences of the medieval world, and concretized in the canons of Trent. Since that time, Reformation and a Thirty Years War had given rise to a new way of understanding the state under the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The modern constitutional

23 See: John Courtney Murray, S.J., “The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II,” online at: https://www.library.georgetown.edu/woodstock/murray/1966h.

24 The theology of the Roman Catholic Church that addresses the state incubated in circumstances that precede the advent of modernity. A quick review will illustrate the point. From Pope Innocent III in the twelfth century, through Boniface VIII whose 1302 bull Unam Sanctam asserted that “spiritual power precedes any earthly power” to Popes John XXII in the fourteenth century and Pius IX in the nineteenth century, who both asserted the power of the Church to dole out temporal punishment for violations of law, we see a pattern that sees the spiritual power of the Church intertwined with the temporal power in a way that is familiar to anyone who has examined the medieval world. This was not the Church’s original approach to the state, as John Courtney Murray pointed toward fifth century Pope St. Gelasius I, who taught that the spiritual power and the temporal power are distinct, and whose ideas survived at least through the Council of Rome in the ninth century. But regardless of whichever of these two approaches we consider, neither sees the civil authority as an expression of popular will or as an independent body of civil laws applicable to everyone, accessible to all. Mary Ann Glendon touches on this point, noting that, “History has provided plenty of support for that brutal dictum [the argument made by the Athenians to the Melians in The Peloponnesian War, that ‘the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must’], from the enslavement and massacre of the Melians down to the present day. Yet centuries later, in the wake of atrocities beyond Greek imagining, the mightiest nations on earth bowed to the demands of smaller countries for recognition of a common standard by which rights and wrongs of every nation’s behavior could be measured,” at: Mary Ann Glendon, A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (New York: Random House, 2001), xv. Glendon describes nothing more than the rule of law, as we find it in the constitutions and political cultures of modern states, applied to international relations. Pope St. John Paul II also offered “a distinctly different historical and philosophical view” from the past in Centesimus Annus (Russell Hittinger, “The Pope and the Liberal State,” First Things (December, 1992), accessed in February, 2015 at: http://www.firstthings.com/article/1992/12/004/-the-pope-and-the-liberal-state.) In CA, St. John Paul II pointed toward “radical changes which had taken place in the political, economic, and social fields, and in the areas of science and technology”(§4) that required the Church to respond to new circumstances and “specific human situations, both individual and communal, national and international”( §5). Thus, Russell Hittinger wrote that, “For John Paul [in CA], the main problem is not the stress and strain of either religious pluralism or economic markets.
republic with all of its civil and social implications developed over centuries that followed, and even Vatican II really had not taken up the challenge of re-imagining the state in the light of theology. The lacuna has been observed in theological literature, and John Paul II has made an initial contribution in *Centesimus Annus* toward a new beginning for the theology of the state.\textsuperscript{25} But the work remains, in the main, undone. This theological oversight is the source of many of the difficulties that trouble the relationship of church and state, and which also bedevil the consciences of Catholic citizens who are faced with choices in ways that earlier generations of believers never faced. They never lived in a state like the United States.

The consistent ethic of solidarity in Cardinal Cupich’s formulation corresponds to Pope Francis’s admonitions about the political community we find in *Laudato Si’* (“Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world,” 228) and *Evangelii Gaudium* (“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good,” 205) to suggest a way that citizens accustomed to modern freedoms can

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\textsuperscript{25} The principal treatment of this lacuna in the theological literature to date was in a published discussion moderated by David Hollenbach, S.J. in: David Hollenbach, S.J. (ed.), “Theology and Philosophy in Public: A Symposium on John Courtney Murray’s Unfinished Agenda,” *Theological Studies* 40 (December, 1979), 700-715. In his *First Things* essay, “The Pope and the Liberal State,” Russell Hittinger thoughtfully explored the differences between how Leo XIII presented the state (“a kind of prodigal child of Christendom that needs to be summoned once again by the Holy See to its proper responsibilities”) and John Paul II (who refused “to drape any kind of theological mantle over the state,” and described the state “in forbidding terms”), at: https://www.firstthings.com/article/1992/12/the-pope-and-the-liberal-state. Hittinger may have been off the mark in his understanding of how John Paul saw the state, but his analysis affirms that the situation of the state in theology is unresolved.
welcome an ethic of solidarity as a way to embrace the demands of a civic community that obligate us to one another within a context that both welcomes and protects the freedoms we have grown used to in modern constitutional republics, the freedoms that the Church has struggled for so long to accept because they came from a flawed, modern inspiration. The mutuality embedded in an ethic of solidarity assures me the protection of my freedoms because I also must respect and defend the freedoms of others.26

A bond of friendship among citizens, one of “civic and political love,” is the greatest guarantee of personal freedom and the highest aspiration of a free people to be equal, recognizing that they share things “in common.” As a consistent ethic of solidarity draws this relationship into a firm connection with the range of political and social issues that Cardinal Bernardin engaged with the consistent ethic of life, the Church now is very near to a resolution of its understanding of the state in a way that recognizes the vast political changes that have taken place since the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

If a consistent ethic of solidarity understood in the light of Scripture and history as a friendship with God and one another is the conclusion these reflections have brought into focus as a remedy for the political and theological problems posed in the Church for its relationship to the world since the advent of modernity, a few words are in order to make some careful distinctions about friendship. Friendship surely is a familiar concept. Yet, familiarity can blur distinctions and confuse us. On this vital point, we must be extremely clear.

26 This approach to freedoms has been taking shape in the magisterium for quite a long time, though it has not yet been formulated in a way that sets it within an understanding of the state that accepts the premises of a modern, constitutional republic. See, especially: John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, 30 (“in human society one man's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right”).
We do well to take a cue from Cardinal Cupich and turn to the ancients to orient our understanding of friendship. Particularly, as Cupich did, we turn our attention to Aristotle whose analytical distinctions concerning types of friendship are unsurpassed for their influence or their scrupulousness. In particular, we turn our attention to *sunaisthetic* friendship which is the highest and the most virtuous form of friendship in which “the thinking subject simultaneously beholds the good, beholds the friend, and beholds oneself and one’s friend beholding the good.” In the complexity and the completeness of this single act, which primarily is intellectual even as it includes the “full engagement of the emotions and the activation of their corresponding moral virtues,” we discover the fullest expression of all that we mean by the deceptively simple and familiar phrase, ‘the common good,’ which is the aim of any republic and which also is the goal for political life most consistently recognized in the theology of the Church. *Sunaisthetic* friendship is not simply a long relationship or a friendly familiarity. Strictly speaking, we can experience this friendship with someone whose name we do not even know for, finally, in that act of beholding we recognize a fellow human person, one like me, in our mutual contemplation of the same good. In this sense, whether two friends both enjoy the same leisure activities or share a common history is somewhat less relevant. This friendship, beholding in this way, is the stuff of political life for any good civic community.

Josef Pieper and other Catholic philosophers have recognized that this *sunaisthetic* form of friendship is cultivated amid “festivity,” which is more than having a good time or celebrating. Festivity implies ritual action. It is public work done together toward a common object. As the

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political community is what we share in common, festivity is what we do together when we evoke the existence of a corporate identity among us that arises from our common beholding of the same good. Festivity can take many forms. A patriotic parade can be festive in this sense. So also can a graduation ceremony. In fact, though perhaps the ‘goods’ beheld are of a lesser order, the phenomenon of crowd psychology found in rallies and rock concerts also represents a type of festivity. Those who experience such things together know their transformative power and the sense of fellow-feeling that arises in the event.

If the point is not yet clear enough, festivity and the cultivation of sunaesthetic friendship are the work of the Eucharistic assembly each time the Mass is celebrated and the People of God gather to behold one another beholding the Source of Goodness through Word and Sacrament. The most elemental action that Catholics undertake as Catholics is productive of solidarity when we behold the same good together, and this habit of beholding one another beholding the good in this way is productive of the same virtues of citizenship demanded by life in modern constitutional republics which, though they be plural in the highest goods contemplated by citizens of different faiths (or, no faith), share the same practical, political common good as much as any polis or Roman republic. Catholics can be at home in such a political community, and are suited to be leaders who foster and encourage the sunaesthetic friendship necessary to engage difficult issues with a consistent ethic of solidarity.

Cardinal Bernardin knew that Catholics fail to manifest solidarity as much as Cardinal Cupich also knows it. No consistent ethic can be (or, should be seen as) a pat answer to resolve the human condition. The Church fails at this task as the political community also fails. Everyone knows. There is much in the world and in the Church that frustrates solidarity, much that must be overcome. Yet, especially as Catholics, we do believe these things together. We do believe in a
good together, and we are surrounded by opportunities to behold one another beholding that good. The place for beginning to overcome those things, for building an ethic of solidarity that we can bring to bear through our faith and our citizenship on vital problems of our day, is in that beholding. The place for beginning must be in beholding myself as I behold my friends who behold the good. I must see them, and I must see that I am with them. Finally, it rests with me—each of us. I must remember that this is who we are.