



Chapter II

Micro-Brew and Mother Teresa

UNDERSTANDING

(for your preparation as a leader)

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DISCUSSION

(to use with your group)

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UNDERSTANDING

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

Main Thing: The primary purpose of this Bible study is to introduce students to two principles of Catholic Social Teaching: (1) Subsidiarity and (2) Solidarity. This chapter will look closely at the following points:

- *The Principle of Subsidiarity* urges governments, communities and other groups to keep as much power as possible at the lowest level of authority. The contemporary impulse to “go local” finds fulfillment in subsidiarity.
- *The Principle of Solidarity* calls us toward unity and to recognize that we are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. Every human being desires interpersonal unity because we are all ultimately made for perfect unity with the Trinity.
- We are all called to live both solidarity and subsidiarity, but doing so is a radical paradox.

Subsidiarity: Re-Stringing the Social Fabric

The number of breweries in the U.S. has more than doubled in the last five years. The lion's share of that growth is in micro-breweries and local brew-pubs. To date, the United States boasts more than 7,000 breweries!¹ Growth in the micro-brew industry has taken place in lockstep with farm-to-table dining, interest in local businesses and movement to smaller cities. There's no doubt about it: Today's young people are going local! It is interesting to note that many of the young people who are attracted to local industry are also opposed to organized religion, especially Catholicism. For many, any religion as organized as the Catholic Church runs counter to their organic intuitions. The purpose of this chapter is to flip that mindset on its head. In reality, the 21st-century impulse to "go local" finds fulfillment in Catholic Social Teaching.

Most young people today have an impression that their human fabric has been violated. They want a sense of wholeness and connection in their lives, the sort of thing built from healthy relationships, responsibility and an identifiable role within a group. Whether by their disconnected families, social media or transient lifestyles, young people today are starved for genuine, person-to-person relationships. Thus, millennial and Gen-Z Americans are turning to the local community to repair their damaged social fabric. Local community has exactly what young people crave: genuine conversations in real-time, homemade dinners around actual kitchen tables and heart-warming relationships with familiar neighbors. All of these are things which most people desperately want, but which most young people rarely experience. The search for community is at its root a search to reclaim the genuinely human — or, one might say, the genuinely

¹ Brewers Association. Stats and Data: National Beer Sales and Production Data. Accessed July 1, 2020. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/national-beer-stats/>.

social dimension of the human experience. For this reason, it's not surprising that Catholic Social Teaching has something to say about this 21st-century impulse.

The Catholic Church has always sought to defend the natural expressions of community, most especially the local community. In fact, the Church has articulated the principle of "subsidiarity"¹ in part as a means to cultivate and protect natural, local community. Listen to these words from Pope Pius XI:

*"Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time **a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.** For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them."*²

At its core, the principle of subsidiarity recognizes that man is a social being in need of making real contributions to his community. It is one of the most "constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine," and it encourages everyone in positions of power to adopt a stance of help (Latin – *subsidium*) towards people and institutions under their domain.³ Further, the principle recognizes that individual people need their individuality to be recognized. People need to participate and make a difference in a concrete group that they can see and feel. Human "companionship produces the primary form

² For a very good and very concise explanation of the Principle of Subsidiarity, go to paragraphs 185-188 of the Compendium.

³ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*: AAS 83 (1991), 854 – 856; John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 15: AAS 80 (1988), 528 – 530.

⁴ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. 185-186.

of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.”⁵ Young people know what happens when their ability to relate in their local community is taken away — for example, when power is constricted to international agencies and stolen from local governments. When this happens, people begin to feel like cogs in a wheel, playing no meaningful role in the life of the people around them. Today’s young people are very familiar with faceless, powerless anonymity, and it is for this reason that they so passionately crave community. The Catholic Church encourages this desire with the principle of subsidiarity.

The principle of subsidiarity is meant to offer empowerment and dignity in a world which often limits power to the elite. The principle has value for all levels of society, including families, neighborhoods, corporations, cities and nations. In the family, parents must avoid stealing their children’s genuine freedom while nevertheless retaining their role as educators and disciplinarians. In a corporation, managers need to make sure they don’t micromanage; after all, micromanaging deprives employees of the opportunity to use their freedom, skills and creativity. It frustrates employees, demoralizes them and demotivates them. In short, it steals their individuality. In nations where everything is handled by the top tier of government, people feel as though “big brother” is infringing on their space. In all such cases, whether it’s the family, the corporation or the nation, the principle of subsidiarity is the antidote to the problem.

⁵ United States Council of Catholic Bishops. Call to Family, Community, and Participation. Citing Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World*. Gaudium et Spes. no. 12. Accessed July 20, 2020. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/call-to-family-community-and-participation.cfm>

Solidarity: A Heart for All

Young people crave community, and it's not just a millennial and Gen-Z thing. Humanity has always sought close-knit groups. Ancient Greek philosophers posited that man is a fundamentally social animal; and since the beginning of their evolutionary history, *homo sapiens* have consistently lived in groups. But why, you might ask, do human beings crave community so intensely?

There are a variety of answers to this question — sociological, biological, even philosophical — but today we're interested in the theological answer to this question. The theological answer to the question of community, or the ultimate reason why people crave interpersonal relationships, can be summarized in one word: Trinity. As Catholics, we believe God is three Persons united in an intimate exchange of love. This communion of Persons created the whole universe, including every human being. And, perhaps most importantly, every human being is called to join the Trinity in heaven. We were created by the Trinity and are ultimately called to return to it. Yes, as human persons, we are called to join the divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in their heavenly relationship of love. This is our destiny, the final goal of our lives.⁶

What does the Trinity have to do with Catholic Social Teaching? Well, Catholic Social Teaching is the Church's wisdom applied to social realities — things like justice, community, the poor and the common good. The Trinity has everything to do with social realities because the Trinity is the fulfillment of all social realities. In fact, every earthly social relationship is meant to give human persons a little glimmer into the Trinitarian life of God!

⁶ Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. 14 – 16.

This prompts the question: What is the Trinity like? What are we shooting for? Many theological treatises have been written on the beauty of the Trinity, but here we will make one very simple observation. The Trinity involves both unity and distinction. Let's unpack that a bit. On the one hand, the Trinity involves unity — namely, the Trinity is a *union* of three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the Persons of the Trinity are distinct. While the Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God, neither the Father, the Son nor Holy Spirit is the same as one another. Thus, the Persons of the Trinity are both united and distinct.⁷

There is an analogy between the divine communion of Persons (the Trinity) and human communities. In a distant but still relevant sense, human communities involve distinction and unity. Healthy human communities recognize both the individuality of each person and the connections that individuals have with each other. While the principle of subsidiarity preserves individuality, the principle of solidarity calls us to unity. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states, the principle of solidarity calls us to recognize that “we are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be.”⁸ Solidarity calls people to the unity they so desperately desire.

Nevertheless, within that unity, individual people possess their own unique identity, something which subsidiarity helps to uphold. Solidarity and subsidiarity help us affirm this seemingly contradictory reality. On the one hand, the principle of subsidiarity calls us to recognize the uniquely distinct role that each person

⁷ Most theological errors concerning the Trinity involve a violation of this principle, either saying that one of the Persons is not really God (violating unity) or that the Persons are not really distinct (violating the distinction of the Persons).

⁸ United States Council of Catholic Bishops. Solidarity. Accessed July 11, 2020. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/solidarity.cfm>

plays in society. On the other hand, solidarity calls us to recognize the paradox that every person is part of a common humanity. Recall these famous words from St. Paul:

“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”⁹

In a sense, this chapter is about the paradox of individuality and community. Our faith tells us that we are unique individuals, but it also tells us that we are all part of a single body: the Body of Christ. The first section of this chapter called us to recognize the unique role that each person and each level of community plays in society. Millennials want to go local because they recognize that small communities matter, distinct from the larger community. The second section of this chapter called us to recognize a paradox: that while the small community possesses value, we should not lose sight of the larger community of which we are all members. The wisdom of Catholic Social Teaching is once again calling us to recognize a paradoxical reality: the value of both the individual and the common, the distinction and the unity, the local and the global. If we do not

⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 20

build our communities in a way that recognizes all dimensions of our social existence, we might deny ourselves the fullness of the human experience, an experience that is ultimately oriented towards the Trinity.

Application: Living the Paradox

In the first chapter, we spoke about paradox and about being radical, two traits which animate the lives of most saints. Recall that a paradox involves two things which in appearance seem contradictory, but which in actuality exist in harmony. To be radical (from the Latin *radix*) is to live in concert with the root or nature of things. To live both subsidiarity and solidarity is to live a radical paradox. It requires one to live in accord with two truths: first, that one should feel a certain sympathy at the global level (solidarity); and second, that one should respect the fabric of the local (subsidiarity). These two realities may seem contradictory, but in actuality they are merely paradoxical.

As fallen human beings, it is difficult to live in accord with subsidiarity and solidarity. Fortunately, the Church has given us examples of people who lived both. Mother Teresa is just such a person. She not only felt the pain of the whole world, she also loved those on her doorstep. On one occasion, when someone asked her what to do to fight global poverty, Mother Teresa said, “Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely, right where you are — in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools. You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have eyes to see. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are unwanted, unloved, uncared for, just rejected by society — completely forgotten, completely left alone.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Murdock, William. *Find Your Own Calcutta: Living a Life of Service and Meaning in a Selfish World*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2017. 2.

Mother Teresa made a difference in alleviating poverty on an international scale, but she did so in such a way that respected the local fabric. Like Christ, Mother Teresa took the time to work with the poor in her midst. After all, there is no way more certain to encounter the body of Christ:

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I do not need you.' Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy."¹¹

There is a relationship between the parts of the body and the body on the whole. The call to recognize both solidarity and subsidiarity is the call to work on both levels. These principles are more than just academic considerations. Pope St. John Paul II says that solidarity is not a "feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good."¹² Christ calls us to both feel the suffering of all humanity and work towards its alleviation, and likewise to recognize the poor on our doorstep. Christ calls us to fight for the world at large, but sometimes the best way to do so is to find a mission in your backyard. So, ask

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:21 – 26

¹² Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. 85.

yourself some questions: What are you doing to live radically? Are you living in both the local and the global? Are you living in accord with both solidarity and subsidiarity? Are you fighting for your planet and for your town? And in so doing, are you striving to catch a glimpse of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

DISCUSSION

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For deeper preparation for this section, please consult the Vatican's Compendium on Catholic Social Teaching, most especially the references to the Trinitarian nature of CST (paragraphs 28 – 37), subsidiarity (185 – 188), and solidarity (192 – 196).

Subsidiarity

1. Have you ever felt like young people today are obsessed with all things local? Why do you think young people are so interested in the local?

Response: Discuss things like micro-breweries and other examples from your own experience. Whether conscious or subconscious, most young people today feel as though their social fabric has been violated. Whether by wrecked families, the alienating effects of social media or transient lifestyles, young people today are starved of genuine, person-to-person relationships.

2. Do you sympathize with the impulse to “go local”? Why or why not?

Response: Discuss.

Note to leader: Please read aloud.

For our discussion today, we're going to be looking at two more principles of Catholic Social Teaching: subsidiarity and solidarity. We'll talk about each of these in turn. First, subsidiarity is the principle that recognizes humanity's social nature and its need to make real contributions to his community. Consider these words from Pope Pius XI:

*"Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time **a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.** For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members ... and never destroy and absorb them."*

3. How would you explain subsidiarity in your own words? What do you think the Catholic Church would have to say about the millennial and Gen Z impulse to go local, in light of this definition of subsidiarity?

Response: Discuss. The goal here is to show that Catholic Social Teaching actually affirms this contemporary impulse.

4. What might the principle of subsidiarity look like as it is lived out in various levels of society -- families, businesses, the government, etc.?

Response: The principle has value for all levels of society, including families, neighborhoods, corporations, cities and nations. In the family, parents must avoid stealing their children's genuine

freedom while nevertheless retaining their role as educators and disciplinarians. In a corporation, managers need to make sure they don't micromanage; after all, micromanaging deprives employees of the opportunity to use their freedom, skills and creativity. It frustrates employees, demoralizes them and demotivates them. In short, it steals their individuality. In nations where everything is handled by the top tier of government, people feel as though "big brother" is infringing on their space. In all such cases, whether it's the family, the corporation or the nation, the principle of subsidiarity is the antidote to the problem.

5. How have you experienced subsidiarity positively, in your job, classes, or family? How did it help you flourish in your individual role? Or, how have you experienced a lack of subsidiarity, and how did that affect you?

Response: Discuss.

Solidarity

Note to leader: Please read aloud.

Now that we've looked at subsidiarity, we're going to look at another principle, the principle of solidarity. Remember from our first study – some principles of Catholic Social Teaching seem like contradictions, but they're actually paradoxes. Subsidiarity and solidarity are like that. The wisdom of Catholic Social Teaching is once again calling us to recognize a paradoxical reality: the value of both the individual and the common, the distinction and the unity, the local and the global.

Solidarity can be difficult to define, but at its core it is a call to recognize

the interdependent nature of local and global communities.¹ Much more than a vague feeling of compassion, it is a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good” at every level of society, including the local community, the city, the country and the world. Solidarity recognizes that “we are all really responsible for all” and feel a certain sense of kinship with the global human family.²

6. How do you see people of today striving for solidarity in our world? How do you see Catholics or Christians striving for it, in particular?

Response: Discuss.

7. Every human being has a desire to be understood, sympathized with and unified. Why do you think this is the case?

Response: We are made in the image and likeness of God, and God is Trinity. The Trinity is three Persons in perfect union. We are made for union.

8. How is the relationship between solidarity and subsidiarity a reflection of the Trinity?

Response: The Trinity involves three Persons in a perfect relationship. This relationship involves distinction and unity. As Catholics, we believe that God is three Persons united in an intimate exchange of love. This communion of Persons created the whole universe, including every human being, and every human being is called to join

¹ Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.

² Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. 193

*the Trinity in heaven. Yes, this is our ultimate calling, our ultimate destiny. As human persons, we are called to join the divine Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in their heavenly relationship of love. This is our destiny, the final meaning of our lives.*³

9. The Trinity is both unity and individuality. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are perfectly united. There is a no division between them, so much so that there is only one God! That said, their unity does not negate their individuality. That is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each their own person. In an analogous and far lesser sense, we are called to pursue something similar in our own lives. That is, we are called to exist in our families, cities and businesses as both unique individuals and united communities. How are you realizing this reality (or struggling to realize it) in your own life?

Response: Discuss.

Application

Note to leader: Please read aloud.

Now that we've explored the relationship between subsidiarity and solidarity, we're going to turn to Scripture to see how we can apply these to our lives.

(Read 1 Corinthians 12:21 – 26.)

10. St. Paul's one-body image is often quoted as an explanation of

³ Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005. 14 – 16.

solidarity. Why do you think this passage is often used?

Response: Think about the final verse: "If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." This verse clearly highlights the interconnected nature of society.

11. Unfortunately there is division in society, but St. Paul issues a challenge regarding this division: "God has so constructed the body as to give honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concerns for one another." Who are the less honorable members of the body today? Who in society is "less honorable" and is set aside (divided) from the main body?

Response: Discuss. Make sure to give mention to the poor.

Note to leader: Please read aloud.

As fallen human beings, it is difficult to live in accord with subsidiarity and solidarity, but the Church has given us examples of individuals who model both. Mother Teresa is just such a person. She not only felt the pain of the whole world, but she started by serving those on her doorstep. That is, she felt a kinship and compassion for the entire world, but she recognized the importance and individuality of people and communities. On one occasion, when someone asked what to do to solve global poverty, Mother Teresa said:

"Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely, right where you are — in your own homes and in your own families, in homes and in your workplaces and in your schools. You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have eyes to see. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are

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unwanted, unloved, uncared for, just rejected by society — completely forgotten, completely left alone.”⁴

12. How is Mother Teresa an example of both solidarity and subsidiarity, and how can we imitate her in our own lives?

Response: Discuss.

⁴ Murdock, 2.

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