

God keep our land glorious and free¹

Homily for June 30th –July 1st
13th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Canada Day weekend.

I appreciate that our National Anthem is a prayer where we address God directly as we sing:

God keep our land glorious and free.

Today I want to talk with you about a perspective of the Church's catechesis that is called "Catholic Social Teaching". I want to propose to you that the best way for us as Catholics to cooperate with the prayer: "God keep our land, glorious and free", is to understand one dimension of this teaching spelled out in two words: Solidarity and Subsidiarity.

A way to show the relationship between this two words is by saying Solidarity refers to the whole of Canadian Society and subsidiarity to all diverse parts that make Canada the country we are. Solidarity is like viewing the Map of Canada as a whole from Google Earth. Subsidiarity is like zooming in on a neighbourhood and viewing the detail.

Let me explain the meaning of Solidarity this way.

St. John Paul II stated:

"God has created us to live in solidarity. This means to live in union with one another, supporting one another, committed to the common good, the good of all and each individual, because we are all responsible for all."²

We are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We are one family. This leads to choices that promote and protect the good of all. There is an intimate bond between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal sharing of goods, between solidarity and peace in the world. Pope John Paul's description of solidarity tells us what a family, parish, school or any organization should be like: the members supportive of one another, concerned for the needs and good of all. They will have a feeling of belonging together.

The compendium of the Catechism defines solidarity this way:

Solidarity, which springs from human and Christian brotherhood, is manifested in the first place by the just distribution of goods, by a fair remuneration for work and by zeal for a more just social order. The virtue of solidarity also practices the sharing of the spiritual goods of faith which is even more important than sharing material goods. (Paragraph 414)

¹ I'm appreciative to this online resource in compiling this homily:

<http://www.acbo.on.ca/englishdocs/Principles%20of%20Catholic%20Social%20Teaching%20Jan%202013.pdf>

(John Paul II: Sollicitudo rei Socialis (Concern of the Church for the Social Order) 38.4)

Now with this in mind listen again to St. Paul's words from 2 Corinthians, read moments ago.

***For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*³**

Paul is saying that the greatest society of all, the one existing within the Trinity – where Jesus Christ is immeasurably rich, is extended to us who are poor, so that through his generosity we can become eternally rich. If the Trinity didn't live out the principle of Solidarity, Jesus would not have come to earth. But because he has, we are then inspired to create, in St John Paul's words: "a civilization of love".

Paul then enunciates the principle of solidarity explicitly when he then writes:

***I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.*⁴**

That there may be a fair balance is at the heart of Solidarity. But here is the thing, if Solidarity is left alone, it can easily become a form a communistic collectivism that no longer sees the individual because all that matters is the whole. The sum of the parts become a hindrance as was witnessed by the genocides exacted by collectivist regimes in the Soviet Union under Stalin and Community China under Mao, to name the two most egregious.

To keep Solidarity from becoming totalitarian it requires the counterbalance of Subsidiarity.

The principle of subsidiarity means that every group or body in society must have the freedom and the means to do what it can best do for itself without its activity being taken over by a higher body or level of government. In other words:

"Don't take over what others can do for themselves".

We see the principle of subsidiarity at play in today's Gospel when Jesus, after raising the 12 year old from the sleep of death instructs her parents to give her something to eat. He doesn't take responsibility for the child but entrusts that care to where it belongs at the level of the family.

Returning to the Compendium, its concise definition of subsidiarity reads:

The principle of subsidiarity states that a community of a higher order should not assume the task belonging to a community of a lower order and deprive it of its authority. It should rather support it in case of need. (Paragraph 403).

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (2 Co 8:9). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (2 Co 8:13–14). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Okay now let's use the rest of our time together to think about the relationship between Solidarity and Subsidiarity within Canadian Society. As I reflected on these principles as they are enacted in Canada, I think we are fortunate because these principles are well balanced in some areas of our social life. However, there are also influences at work that are usurping the place of subsidiarity leading to an ideological collectivism that is jeopardizing religious liberty.

There are three dimensions of our social fabric, I am thinking of today where we can be grateful for the healthy relationship between solidarity and subsidiarity. Universal health care allows for all Canadians to receive medical services. The solidarity of Medicare is most appreciated when people have to go for major surgery and don't have the added stress of mounting medical bills on top of contending with the illness.

In Alberta we are fortunate to have a Catholic School System that is publically funded. Here we see enacted the relationship between the State's financial support – solidarity-which then allows for local school boards to shape a curriculum incorporating Catholic values that help to form the 160,000 Alberta Children attending Catholic Schools according to the Church's teaching. This is subsidiarity.

Here in the City of Calgary, one of my favorite walks takes me through St. Mary's Cemetery. It has just been renovated with the inclusion of a beautiful Marian Statue, extensive columbarium and a Cross with stairs inscribed on them the promises related to the Seven Sorrows of Mary. This is a Catholic Cemetery supported with local tax dollars and is the most vivid example I can think of how the interrelationship between solidarity and subsidiarity does make Canada "Glorious and Free".

But there are causes for concern that this balance between the two is under threat. There are voices calling for abolishing public funding for Catholic Schools which could be threatened if we are complacent. Find out from candidates running in the 2019 election their party's stand and their personal stand of publically funded Catholic Education. Share with them why as a Catholic this needs protection.

As many of you know, the Federal Government required of organizations applying for summer job money attest their support for reproductive and abortion rights that would violate the prolife conscience of religious groups requesting funding for summer camp programmes, intern placements and a myriad of other job opportunities for summer employees.

In both of the cases I have cited, an ideological value trumps and therefore dictates what can happen at the subsidiary level. The school example is hypothetical and summer job programme is actual.

There is something practical you can do to state your concern with the attestation requirement. Next weekend at all Masses there is a petition you can sign requesting the Federal Government to remove this requirement from next summer's application. There will also be a way you can sign the petition on line, which will be explained in the electronic bulletin you will receive this week. Please sign it.

In conclusion, I am so grateful for being a Canadian and an Albertan. I love this country, province and city. We live in one of the most free jurisdictions in the world. However we cannot be complacent, believing it will always be this way. Recent world history is replete with examples of ideologies usurping the rights, and even lives, of citizens who think differently from the ruling class. May Canada never become such a nation.

As Catholic Canadians our Church's teaching on the relationship between Solidarity and Subsidiarity is a way for us to live what we pray:

God keep our land glorious and free. O Canada we stand on guard for thee. O Canada we stand on guard for thee.