

Marquette University

e-Publications@Marquette

---

Theology Faculty Research and Publications

Theology, Department of

---

7-2020

## Everyday Solidarity: A Framework for Integrating Theological Ethics and Ordinary Life

Conor M. Kelly

Marquette University, [conor.kelly@marquette.edu](mailto:conor.kelly@marquette.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo_fac)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kelly, Conor M., "Everyday Solidarity: A Framework for Integrating Theological Ethics and Ordinary Life" (2020). *Theology Faculty Research and Publications*. 830.

[https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo\\_fac/830](https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo_fac/830)

Marquette University

e-Publications@Marquette

***Theology Faculty Research and Publications/College of Arts and Sciences***

***This paper is NOT THE PUBLISHED VERSION.***

Access the published version via the link in the citation below.

*Theological Studies*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (July 2020): 414-437. [DOI](#). This article is © SAGE Publications and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](mailto:e-Publications@Marquette). SAGE Publications does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without express permission from SAGE Publications.

# Everyday Solidarity: A Framework for Integrating Theological Ethics and Ordinary Life

Conor M. Kelly

Department of Theology, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

## Abstract

As moral theology responds to the pastoral emphases of Pope Francis's pontificate, more work must be done to facilitate the integration of theological ethics and ordinary life. In order to pursue this goal in a consistent fashion, this article proposes a new form of "everyday solidarity" as a framework for linking Catholic theological convictions with everyday moral choices. The article clarifies the often-ambiguous notion of solidarity found in Catholic social teaching and describes how the new species of everyday solidarity can function as both a principle and a virtue to transform discernment in ordinary life.

## Keywords

Catholic social teaching, conscience, Pope Francis, moral discernment, moral principles, moral theology, structural sin, virtue

In recent years, the question of how moral theology should respond to the leadership of Pope Francis has been a driving force shaping the field. Work in this journal in particular has propelled the conversation.<sup>1</sup> These efforts included my own suggestion that moral theologians ought to help cultivate “a culture of moral discernment” among the people of God.<sup>2</sup> Among my practical recommendations for achieving this end, I argued that moral theologians should respond to Pope Francis’s vision for moral theology “by attending to the ethical questions that arise in people’s ordinary lives.”<sup>3</sup> I simultaneously emphasized the need for renewed “attention to the process of moral deliberation,” so that the faithful might have more guidance in their attempts to habituate a practice of ethical discernment.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, this proposal amounted to my plea for the expansion of theological ethics into ordinary life, ideally in a fashion that would pull from the rich resources of moral theology to help the faithful build a closer connection between their theological convictions and their day-to-day experiences. Here, I would like to advance the pursuit of that goal by articulating an overarching ethical framework for the integration of theological ethics and ordinary life.

In more specific terms, this article proposes “everyday solidarity” as the foundation for a theological approach to ordinary life. This proposal is rooted in the idea of solidarity found and developed in Catholic social teaching, but it moves beyond that notion in order to adapt it to the context of personal moral discernment in ordinary life, creating what amounts to a new species of solidarity. The end result is a twofold account that understands everyday solidarity as both a principle, which guides ethical discernment, and a virtue, which prompts a commitment to structural change so that the principle can be employed more realistically by more people in their ordinary lives. With these two elements, everyday solidarity can serve as the basis for a holistic approach to ordinary life that allows the fundamental convictions of Catholic theological anthropology to shape ethical reflection in a consistent fashion. To achieve this end, the article proceeds in two parts. The first defends the selection of solidarity as the appropriate source of this ethical framework, combing through the often-ambiguous presentation of solidarity in Catholic social teaching to distill three key features that make solidarity a valuable and viable resource for everyday ethical discernment. The second part outlines the adaptations necessary to generate a new species of everyday solidarity that can translate this broader genus, with its three distinctive characteristics, for practical application in ordinary life. The result is an ideal resource to bridge Catholic theological ethics and ordinary life, promoting more careful deliberation for moral agents and creating a common vocabulary for a collaborative culture of moral discernment in the church.

## The Three Key Features of Solidarity: Insights from Catholic Social Teaching

The notion of solidarity found in Catholic social teaching has been subject to much ambiguity, in large part because the term has been used in official documents without much attempt at standardization over the course of six pontificates. Obviously, this ambiguity poses problems for any attempt to use solidarity as a coherent ethical resource, but they are not insurmountable, for it is possible to

understand the Catholic notion of solidarity as a singular concept defined by three key features, all of which demonstrate the value of using solidarity to strengthen moral discernment in ordinary life.

First, solidarity highlights the relational and social account of the human person that is at the heart of Catholic theological anthropology and illustrates the ethical implications of this view. This connection makes solidarity a helpful resource for ethical discernment in ordinary life because it creates an inherent link between the practical concerns of moral discernment and the theological presuppositions of moral theology that often go overlooked. Second, solidarity provides a calculated alternative to individualism, both critiquing and correcting this problematic trend. Since a unique form of atomistic individualism pervades ordinary life in the United States today, relying on solidarity as the basis for everyday ethical discernment helpfully provides the guidance to reprioritize Catholic commitments over the default assumptions of a powerful US culture. Third, solidarity insists that moral change requires converting not only personal agents but also social structures. Consequently, solidarity indicates that an ethical approach to ordinary life cannot succeed by appealing to the formation of individual moral agents in isolation but must also encourage moral actors to take responsibility for the challenges and limitations of the social context that surrounds them. By focusing on these three key features, the essence of solidarity emerges from its multifaceted, and sometimes convoluted, presentation in Catholic social teaching, generating a clearer description of the idea that can then inform the creation of a narrower species for everyday ethical decisions.

### Solidarity as the Moral Extension of Catholic Theological Anthropology

According to the magisterial tradition of Catholic social teaching, solidarity is both a descriptive reality and a prescriptive force. More precisely, solidarity underscores the actuality of human interconnectedness (i.e., the sense of a shared humanity that unites all human beings into one human family) and simultaneously reveals that ethical obligations unavoidably follow from this fact of life. This twofold balance has been evident since Pope Pius XII's 1939 encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, which was the first papal document to mention solidarity.<sup>5</sup> Pius XII aligned "world-wide Catholic solidarity" with the "supernatural brotherhood of peoples around their Common Father," showing that as a descriptive concept, solidarity points to human interconnectedness as an incontestable fact.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, he also appealed to "the law of human solidarity and charity which is dictated and imposed by our common origin and by the equality of rational nature in all men, to whatever people they belong, and by the redeeming Sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ . . . on behalf of [all] sinful mankind."<sup>7</sup> By thus emphasizing solidarity as a law that emerges from humanity's shared history of creation and salvation, Pius XII pointed to a prescriptive interpretation as well, revealing that normative obligations accompany the descriptive reality of humanity's interconnectedness. Both of these elements were especially pertinent in Pius's immediate historical context, which included the rise of Nazism and other eugenics-based social movements that sought to exclude certain racial and ethnic groups from the interconnectedness of humanity, denying both the unity Pius XII championed and the moral obligations derived from it.<sup>8</sup> Pius's concerns were hardly limited to the circumstances of 1939, though, so subsequent interpretations of solidarity in Catholic theology have never forgotten his two emphases, and in many ways the entire magisterial evolution of solidarity amounts to a specification of these two elements.<sup>9</sup>

Significantly, the true nexus of solidarity's descriptive and prescriptive elements in Catholic social teaching is the theological account of the human person found in the Catholic tradition. Building on the scriptural belief that human beings were created in the image and likeness of a trinitarian God, Catholic

theological anthropology asserts that the human person is by nature a relational creature, whose full flourishing can only be realized in a relational context.<sup>10</sup> The ethical significance of this relational nature is then amplified by faith in the Incarnation, for the conviction that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine entails the corollary conclusion that Jesus' life reveals the fullness of human flourishing.<sup>11</sup> This fullness of flourishing, as exemplified in the cross, points toward selflessness, prompting the Second Vatican Council to declare, in one of the most succinct and authoritative accounts of Catholic theological anthropology, that the human person "who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself [or herself] except through a sincere gift of [self]."<sup>12</sup> The prescriptive features of solidarity are rooted in this descriptive background, calling all moral agents to see themselves in others' shoes so that they might make moral decisions in a spirit of selflessness instead of self-interest. In this way, solidarity requires a greater awareness of the inherently relational nature of the human person, allowing the basic convictions of Catholic theological anthropology to shape ethical discernment.<sup>13</sup>

In the concrete context of ordinary life, a spirit of solidarity ensures that the personal moral agent has the proper perspective in mind. By emphasizing the relational nature of the human person, solidarity reorients specific moral choices to what Catholic theology understands to be the most fundamental aspect of the human condition: creatureliness before a trinitarian God. This underlying theological conviction may seem somewhat basic, but that is an asset rather than a liability, because the best way for faith to inform something as broad as ordinary life is through the general and the universal rather than the narrow and the particular. At the same time, the prescriptive dimensions of solidarity reveal that this general belief has moral implications. By deriving moral responsibility from Catholicism's relational anthropology, solidarity insists that even seemingly individual choices have social consequences because human beings are innately social creatures. This reminder is essential because one of the reasons everyday decisions so often escape ethical analysis is that people assume ordinary life is simply a matter of personal preference and therefore beyond moral scrutiny. The message of solidarity, though, is that there is no such thing as a personal choice that has no effect on other people. Relational beings always exist in a relational context, and if one takes this theological anthropology seriously, then one must consider the relational ramifications of even the most mundane decisions.

### Solidarity as an Effective Antidote to Individualism

The second key feature of solidarity in Catholic social teaching is the presentation of solidarity as an effective antidote to individualism. In some respects, this is an obvious extension of solidarity's roots in Catholicism's relational anthropology, for that conviction naturally leads to a more communitarian vision for social life.<sup>14</sup> In the papal tradition of Catholic social teaching, though, there is also a more precise account of how solidarity responds to individualism, and the particular features of this vision make solidarity an especially useful tool for connecting Catholic theological commitments and ordinary life in the United States, where a distinctive brand of individualism is one prominent feature of the broader cultural landscape.

Rather than simply decrying individualism and paving the way for deficiencies in the other direction, the Catholic notion of solidarity specifies the insufficiency of this ideology and points toward a more nuanced alternative. The nuance emerges from *Gaudium et Spes's* promotion of solidarity, which appealed to the unifying image of the Body of Christ to assert that "everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each."<sup>15</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* thus rejected the unencumbered assertions of individualistic ideologies, but the pastoral

constitution also developed this point further by insisting that the orientation to mutual service did not eliminate personal autonomy, but instead assumed and preserved the compatibility of “personal initiative with the solidarity of the whole social organism.”<sup>16</sup> In this way, the Second Vatican Council offered a vision of solidarity as a sense of mutual concern that still respected the dignity and difference of each individual. Hence, Meghan Clark has presented solidarity in Catholic social teaching as the virtuous mean between excessive individualism and “any form of collectivism in which persons are subsumed by the whole or subverted to it.”<sup>17</sup> The notion of solidarity presented in *Gaudium et Spes* therefore responds to the pitfalls of an overly individualistic interpretation of the human person in a way that avoids swinging the pendulum to the opposite extreme. Consequently, the Catholic view of solidarity is a genuinely helpful response to individualism and not simply a reactionary rejection of it.

Subsequent accounts of solidarity in magisterial sources have only made the nuanced contrast with individualism more pronounced and more precise. Pope John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus*, for instance, argued explicitly that “in order to overcome today’s widespread individualist mentality, what is required is a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity.”<sup>18</sup> The clearest explanation of how solidarity challenges individualism and proposes a more useful alternative, though, has come from Pope Benedict XVI, who described solidarity as a moral force capable of refuting those who “would claim that they owe nothing to anyone except themselves” by highlighting “how *rights presuppose duties*.”<sup>19</sup> This latter claim, in particular, drives home solidarity’s contrast with individualism because individualism, especially in the form that is most common in the United States, prefers to use rights as a buffer against responsibility, maximizing license and minimizing accountability. In contrast, Catholic social teaching presents solidarity as a reminder of the human person’s relational nature, and thus her or his relational responsibilities, promoting a mindset and a way of proceeding that assumes mutual moral obligations and looks for ways to fulfill them. Significantly, because solidarity emphasizes the unity of the entire human family and not just the connections of those who look alike or think alike—as Pope Pius XII was quick to insist in his initial presentation of the term as a partial reaction to Nazism—solidarity broadens the range of these relational responsibilities not only beyond the narrow strictures of individualism but also beyond the confines of in-group bias.

Solidarity’s expansion of moral responsibility makes it particularly useful as the basis for a new link between theological ethics and ordinary life in the United States because individualism, and its concomitant suggestion that one can independently decide to whom one has responsibilities, has a powerful influence on everyday decisions in this country.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Benedict’s presentation of solidarity’s vision for social responsibility seems to be targeted directly at the unique brand of *atomistic* individualism that pervades US culture. This distinct species of individualism appeals to the scientific notion of the atom as the basic building block of the material world, adopting the Greek metaphysical assumption that the atom was “indivisible” to assert the inherent completeness of the individual on his or her own.<sup>21</sup> This approach does not prohibit links between individuals, it simply qualifies their conditions and minimizes their necessity. Just as atomic theory imagines the possibility of molecular bonding but still insists that every atom can exist independently, so atomistic individualism argues that the individual can create bonds, but that they do not have to because each individual is sufficient alone. According to atomistic individualism, then, “our obligation to belong to a society, or to obey its authorities, is seen as derivative, as laid on us conditionally, through our consent, or through its being to our advantage.”<sup>22</sup> The real defining characteristic of atomistic individualism is therefore the conviction that every human person is an individual who is capable of fulfillment on his or her own and

thus “unencumbered” by all external responsibilities except for the responsibilities the individual has freely chosen to create through voluntary consent.<sup>23</sup>

Over time, an atomistic form of individualism has been on the rise in the United States, and today it functions as a kind of shared language that frames public discourse by informing decisions about which issues need to be addressed and constraining the options presumed to be available to address those concerns.<sup>24</sup> This development has had profound effects on the shape of ordinary life. To give just one example, consider leisure, a quotidian sphere of life that is seldom subject to critical scrutiny and therefore especially susceptible to the influence of broader cultural trends. Whereas leisure was once an opportunity for communal engagement, today it is typically experienced as a break from community. The most common free time activity in the United States is watching television, a decidedly atomistic pursuit that the sociologist Robert Putnam identified as “strongly and negatively related to social trust and group membership.”<sup>25</sup> In Putnam’s estimation, the rise of television during the latter half of the twentieth century accounts for roughly one quarter of the nation’s dramatic loss in social capital, the informal reciprocal bonds that hold a community together.<sup>26</sup> The impact stems from the unique way in which television keeps people alone in the home. Normally, participation in one leisure activity correlates with increased engagement in other free-time pursuits throughout the community; in the case of TV, however, the more time people spend with this medium, the less time they spend in other activities, especially social ones.<sup>27</sup> The impacts are palpable, as communities rarely have the critical mass of people mingling informally to support the “sandlot” baseball games or pick-up soccer contests that are regular staples of free time in less individualistic contexts.<sup>28</sup> Instead, people in the United States rely on individualized and isolated leisure activities, like watching television (and increasingly surfing the internet) to fill their free time, at once presuming the atomistic vision of the individual and reinforcing it, to the detriment of Catholic theological anthropology.

Free time, of course, is but one example of atomistic individualism’s manifestations during ordinary life, but given the way leisure now supports atomism, it becomes easier to see how theological ethics will need a comprehensive framework that can directly counter the influence of individualism in order to respond to the realities of this sphere. Solidarity is therefore an especially valuable resource because it directly challenges the insufficient assumptions of atomistic individualism and presents a nuanced alternative.

## Solidarity as the Simultaneous Summons to Personal Conversion and Structural Change

The third key feature of solidarity speaks to how it can operate as a corrective to the insufficient anthropological assumptions it identifies and critiques. This feature emerges from the work of John Paul II, “who develop[ed] a much more vigorous usage of the term [solidarity]” than any of his predecessors had done.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, he gave sustained attention the way solidarity’s descriptive reality translates into concrete ethical demands, ultimately arguing that earlier treatments of solidarity as a principle needed to be complemented by a new understanding of solidarity as a virtue.<sup>30</sup> In the process, he expanded the application of solidarity to the realm of social structures, articulating an essential third feature of solidarity that adds to its potential as an ethical guide for ordinary life.

The most thorough resource for understanding John Paul II’s reinterpretation of solidarity as a virtue is his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. A feature of that encyclical was the overt treatment of

“structures of sin,” which created a new connection between solidarity’s prescriptive role as a virtue and the moral agent’s responsibility to transform social structures. Specifically, John Paul II argued that the path away from structural forms of sin lay in “the growing awareness of interdependence among individuals and nations . . . sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world . . . and accepted as a moral category.”<sup>31</sup> In effect, he advanced solidarity’s descriptive and prescriptive functions as the appropriate counterweight to structural sin. While advancing this claim, John Paul II shifted solidarity’s normative function by identifying it explicitly as a virtue rather than a principle. He then defined the virtue of solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all,” and directly connected this pursuit of the common good with structural reform by asserting that structures of sin “are *only* conquered” by the “commitment to the good of one’s neighbor with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other” that defines the virtue of solidarity.<sup>32</sup> In the process of elaborating this operation, John Paul II also aligned the magisterial interpretation of solidarity with another prominent concept in liberation theology—the preferential option for the poor—by arguing that solidarity’s orientation to the common good and pursuit of structural change was to be manifest “in the love and service of neighbor, *especially of the poorest.*”<sup>33</sup> Consequently, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*’s presentation of solidarity as a virtue became not simply a commitment to the common good but a commitment to interpreting that common good in light of the experiences of the poor.

John Paul II’s vision of solidarity as a virtue adds an essential dimension to ethical discernment in ordinary life because the influence of social structures is unavoidable in this realm. The unavoidability is apparent when one understands the function of social structures, especially sinful ones, in more detail. Daniel Finn has proposed a compelling account of how social structures function in ordinary life, drawing on critical realist sociology to add precision to what is often a vague idea in Catholic theology.<sup>34</sup> Although critical realists have multiple ways of describing social structures, Dave Elder-Vass has offered one pithy definition, asserting that “social structure is best understood as the causal power of social groups.”<sup>35</sup> Finn follows another critical realist, Margaret Archer, to identify the mechanism of this causal power in “the restrictions, enablements, and incentives which are built into the relationships among social positions.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, social structures are the means by which collective entities affect personal choices, chiefly by ascribing benefits (i.e., enablements and incentives) to the actions they want to encourage and by attaching costs (i.e., restrictions) to the things they want to discourage. As Finn repeatedly stresses, this is not a deterministic effect, since personal agents are always free to ignore the incentives and restrictions accompanying their social positions. Yet the pressures are real nonetheless, and if a social group truly desired a particular outcome, it could make the benefits so strong or the costs so steep as to minimize resistance.<sup>37</sup> When the outcomes that are enforced in this way are morally problematic, they begin to look like structures of sin.

The power of these sinful social structures can be quite significant, for moral psychology has suggested that human beings are evolutionarily preconditioned to adopt the ethical judgments of their immediate social group as a way to facilitate social bonding, which improves the group’s ability to protect itself and its members from threats.<sup>38</sup> When structures of sin validate dangerous moral judgments with incentives or other enablements, they effectively encourage personal moral agents to adopt this same perspective, skewing consciences and normalizing sin. As a result, doing the right thing often becomes more difficult (but notably not impossible) in an environment of structural sin.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, such structures are

ubiquitous, especially in today's complex, globalized world. Ordinary life is thus colored by structures of sin, and so solidarity is particularly appropriate as an ethical resource in this context because, as both a principle and a virtue, it simultaneously calls attention to personal moral responsibility, which preserves agency in the face of structural sin, and structural accountability, which demands awareness of the corrosive effects of structural sin and a commitment to do something about them. Just as importantly, by orienting action to the common good and defining the common good in light of the preferential option for the poor, the Catholic notion of solidarity has the ability to shift one's perspective, allowing one to see some of the morally significant features of an ordinary decision that are easy to miss when immersed in the influence of various structures of sin.<sup>40</sup>

## Solidarity in Sum: Synthesizing the Insights of Catholic Social Teaching

Taken together, the magisterial tradition of Catholic social teaching yields three key features of solidarity that make it the proper foundation on which to construct an ethical framework for ordinary life. First, the basic presupposition that solidarity is both descriptive and prescriptive attaches the ethics of solidarity to the fundamental convictions of Catholic theological anthropology, ensuring that any prescriptive practices for ordinary life are tied to central faith convictions, thereby creating a robustly theological approach to ordinary life. Second, the description of solidarity as an antidote to individualism establishes a clear direction for the normative applications of solidarity in a cultural context defined by atomistic individualism. Finally, the presentation of solidarity as both a principle and a virtue gives further guidance for the incorporation of solidarity into ordinary life, indicating that solidarity's commitment to the common good must be defined in reference to the perspectives of those who suffer poverty and pursued through both personal change and structural reform. In essence, then, solidarity provides the framework for empowering theology to inform a whole new way of life and not just a new way of thinking. The major challenge, though, is to figure out how solidarity can be put into practice in the concrete reality of ordinary life. The solution requires adapting the traditional understanding of solidarity in Catholic social teaching, with all three of its key features intact, to create a distinct new form of everyday solidarity that has direct relevance in quotidian situations.

## Everyday Solidarity: Refining the Insights for Ordinary Life

In order to move from solidarity as it appears in the magisterial tradition of Catholic social teaching to a more immediately practical form of everyday solidarity, there is one more ambiguity that needs to be addressed, which concerns the exact nature of solidarity's prescriptive function. One scholar notes that solidarity is variously referred to as a "duty," a "principle," an "attitude," and a "virtue," each of which connotes a different interpretation of solidarity's operation as a normative force.<sup>41</sup> In order to explain solidarity's implications for ethics in ordinary life, then, this final ambiguity needs to be untangled. Then, with a clearer sense of how solidarity is supposed to function in the moral life, a distinct form of everyday solidarity can be developed as a genuine new species.

## Clarifying the Prescriptive Function of Solidarity

The various magisterial descriptions of solidarity as a duty, a principle, an attitude, and a virtue all point to competing explanations of solidarity's normative function. Duty places solidarity in a deontological paradigm, strengthening the moral obligations emanating from its descriptive reality, but revealing little about the rationale behind these responsibilities.<sup>42</sup> Framing solidarity as a principle, meanwhile, presents solidarity as an overall guide rather than a single norm since principles are "general

frameworks of moral consideration by which particular decisions about action are to be governed."<sup>43</sup> To describe solidarity as a principle, then, suggests that it should not be limited to a finite number of situations where a specific rule might apply, but instead should be used to direct the moral life as a whole. Linking solidarity with an attitude points to similar emphases, but with a less clearly established ethical force, because this term is not a central component of any ethical system the way duties, principles, and virtues are. Finally, the language of virtue introduces another method of ethical analysis, focusing more on the character of the agent and implying a proper moral disposition that is both formed by and embodied in corollary practices.<sup>44</sup> By employing all four of these interpretations simultaneously, the magisterial account of solidarity limits its prescriptive potential, leaving it too ambiguous to inform concrete choices in a consistent fashion. In order to move from the general idea of solidarity to a specific account of everyday solidarity, then, this substantive ambiguity needs to be addressed. The best solution is to treat the diverse magisterial perspectives on solidarity as complementary rather than competing. After all, as Kevin Doran has observed, there may be four different descriptions for the ethical operation of solidarity, but "each reflects an aspect of the reality of solidarity."<sup>45</sup> By seeking overlaps that might pull all of these aspects together, a simpler twofold account of the prescriptive functions of solidarity emerges, and the path to a specific form of everyday solidarity becomes clearer.

First, the notion of solidarity as a principle can helpfully incorporate the understanding of solidarity as a duty. While principles are not always deontological in scope, they nevertheless imply a force of duty in practice. Consider what is perhaps the most famous application of principles as an ethical system, Tom Beauchamp and James Childress's *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. Summarizing the principles approach years after it was first proposed, Beauchamp insisted that although principles were not simply reducible to rules or narrow codifications of one's moral duties, they nevertheless entailed moral duties in operation.<sup>46</sup> Hence, he described the principle of beneficence as "express[ing] an obligation to help others further their important and legitimate interests by preventing and removing harm" and associated the principle of non-maleficence with the "injunction *primum non nocere*: 'Above all [or first] do no harm.'"<sup>47</sup> Unsurprisingly, scholars have noted that the principles approach of Beauchamp and Childress is not antithetical to a deontological system, but at times actually draws upon this ethical theory (among others).<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the principle of solidarity can encompass the duty. If this were not the case, then the principle would have no ethical force because principles cannot operate as general guides governing specific actions if they never entail specific actions in practice. The duty of solidarity is therefore legitimately conceived as an extension of the principle. Focusing on the principle, then, reduces some of the ambiguity surrounding solidarity's prescriptive functions without losing sight of solidarity's role as a duty.

A similar form of subsuming is possible with regard to the magisterial presentations of solidarity as an attitude and a virtue. There is a natural affinity between these two terms as a result of the classic definition of virtue as a "disposition."<sup>49</sup> As a disposition, virtue affects an agent's character by informing her or his moral evaluations and priming certain moral actions. As a moral concept, attitudes similarly affect an agent's character through habituation, helping "to ensure that evaluative commitments are embedded in behavioural cognition sufficiently to withstand temptation to act against them."<sup>50</sup> One distinction seems to be that attitudes are more explicitly affective than the dispositions of virtues, since observers note that "solidarity as an attitude has a cognitive and emotional component along with a thrust toward praxis."<sup>51</sup> Given the increasing recognition of the role of the emotions in virtue ethics, though, even this separation founders because virtue ethicists stress that virtue too must influence both

the affective and cognitive aspects of an agent's moral character in order to have a real effect.<sup>52</sup> Hence, attitudes and virtues have much in common, and their true distinctions reside in nuance rather than substance. One can therefore resolve some of the confusion surrounding solidarity as an attitude and solidarity as a virtue by combining these two aspects together. This is readily justified by the fact that John Paul II, who introduced both the idea of solidarity as an attitude and as a virtue, presented the two terms with a kind of functional equivalence, at least with respect to their moral operation.<sup>53</sup>

Given these observations, the fourfold account of solidarity can be distilled into a twofold interpretation that emphasizes solidarity as both a principle and a virtue without denying the insights implied by the alternative presentations of solidarity as a duty and as an attitude. Although this might seem to be just as problematic as saying variously that solidarity is a duty, a principle, an attitude, and a virtue, it is not. On the contrary, precisely because principles and virtues are not reducible to each other, there is added value in preserving solidarity as a principle alongside solidarity as a virtue, especially if solidarity is going to turn into a framework for ethical action in everyday life. The value is most apparent in light of a famous aphorism from the philosopher William Frankena, who insisted "principles without [virtues] are impotent and [virtues] without principles are blind."<sup>54</sup> His claim reveals that virtues and principles need each other in the moral life, for principles provide the guidance while virtues provide the means. To envision solidarity as a principle on the one hand and as a virtue on the other is not dangerously inconsistent, but emphatically necessary. In fact, solidarity's potential as both a principle and a virtue is the strongest argument in favor of constructing a general ethical framework for ordinary life around this concept. Unlike most other moral resources, solidarity has the potential to resolve Frankena's tension on its own, ensuring comprehensiveness without sacrificing unity. Given that the entire argument for building an ethical framework before moving to specific applications is to create a consistent approach capable of integrating faith and life into a coherent whole, this asset is indispensable. The central implication of this vision is therefore that the general idea of solidarity will most effectively inform the ethics of ordinary life if it is transformed into a form of everyday solidarity that operates as both a principle and a virtue. The last task, then, is to specify what the more specific principle of everyday solidarity and the narrower virtue of everyday solidarity mean in practice.

### The Principle of Everyday Solidarity

As a principle, the new species of everyday solidarity can serve as an overarching guide that directs moral discernment in ordinary life to account for the theological reality of humanity's interdependence. In this sense, everyday solidarity is a principle in the same way that the four principles of bioethics are principles, setting the priorities moral agents ought to pursue and helping them to identify the most appropriate actions in particular situations. Just as the principle of beneficence calls health-care professionals to put the well-being of their patients at the forefront of their clinical judgment, and then, more concretely, helps them adjudicate potential conflicts of interest that can arise from certain reimbursement models, so the principle of everyday solidarity can dictate the commitments that should be central during moral discernment, effectively spelling out the factors one needs to consider to arrive at a suitable solution to a specific dilemma. By functioning this way, the principle of everyday solidarity also has parallels with the traditional principles of discernment in Catholic moral theology, like the principle of cooperation or the principle of double effect, which indicate the specific elements that an agent must evaluate to make a sound moral judgment in a given case. Naturally, these established principles have much more clearly delineated criteria, but the principle of everyday solidarity nevertheless seeks a similar end in the refinement of moral judgment. It simply adds a more precise

orientation in the process, directing agents not only to do good and avoid evil in general, but also helping them discover how their relational anthropology creates obligations that define this primary moral objective.

Given its role in moral judgment, everyday solidarity primarily functions as a principle when it shapes the way personal agents evaluate the ethical significance of their actions in conscience. This could occur after the fact, in what James Keenan calls the “judicial conscience,” wherein one evaluates prior decisions and actions in order to determine whether he or she has made the correct moral choice.<sup>55</sup> This type of conscience is commonly, though not exclusively, experienced as a guilty conscience, since the discomfort of an *ex post facto* indictment tends to be more immediately recognizable than the satisfaction that accompanies correct choices. Certainly, the principle of everyday solidarity has a role to play in the judicial conscience, helping agents examine their past actions to find the decisions that failed properly to account for the reality of human interdependence, and which therefore embodied the “failure to bother to love” that Keenan designates the hallmark of sin.<sup>56</sup> When everyday solidarity functions in this capacity it is not merely an idle critique, though. It is instead an illuminating analysis that reveals how one might act differently in the future.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the principle of everyday solidarity can contribute to a faithful examination of conscience that compares past choices against the descriptive dimension of solidarity, bringing the relational convictions of Catholic theological anthropology into contact with the ordinary choices of everyday life in a way that promotes a change of heart going forward.

Despite these helpful operations in the judicial conscience, everyday solidarity’s chief function as a principle should be to guide moral agents before they act, which means that its most important work is in the reflections of the “actual conscience.”<sup>58</sup> The actual conscience refers to the moral deliberations that allow an agent to determine the right thing to do in a particular situation. Whereas the judicial conscience offers a retrospective analysis, the actual conscience presents a preemptive assessment, ultimately yielding a judgment that is experienced as a binding command telling an individual what he or she must do.<sup>59</sup> Richard Gula describes this aspect of conscience as a “process,” and Timothy O’Connell identifies it as “conscience/2,” the particularization of the innate desire to do good (which is classically defined as “*synderesis*” and labeled “conscience/1” in O’Connell’s typology) in a fashion that examines a person’s immediate context and enables a decision about what it means to do good and avoid evil in the concrete.<sup>60</sup> In order to answer this question, conscience/2 “searches for what is right through accurate perception, and a process of reflection and analysis.”<sup>61</sup> As Russell Connors and Patrick McCormick explain, one important aspect of this process is the identification of the ethical issues that are at stake in a given decision, so that agents can accurately weigh their options in light of the appropriate moral values.<sup>62</sup> This evaluation, like all the considerations involved in conscience/2, is particularly prone to error, making the process of conscience/2 “an aspect of human nature that needs all the help it can get.”<sup>63</sup> The principle of everyday solidarity ought to be understood as one indispensable form of help for this “fragile reality.”<sup>64</sup>

As an essential contributor to the process of conscience/2, the principle of everyday solidarity hedges against error by helping an agent accurately determine which moral values are at stake in a potential course of action. Since it presumes the descriptive fact of the human person’s relational anthropology, this principle reminds the agent that other persons are invariably impacted by every human choice, even the ones that seem the most personal or independent. In practice, then, everyday solidarity is the

principle that obliges moral agents to prioritize the impact of their actions on others as the principal criterion of discernment in conscience/2.

The result is an analysis that asks not merely whether the benefits of a proposed course of action outweigh its costs for the individual actor, but also for the broader community as well. This latter point is particularly important, for the principle of everyday solidarity is not ordered to a simple utilitarian maximization of benefit to the greatest number, but instead, like all forms of solidarity, is aligned with the common good. Since the common good is defined as “the good of all and of each” in the Catholic tradition, the principle of everyday solidarity asks agents to pursue the course of action that will best contribute to the full flourishing of all, not just the most.<sup>65</sup>

While the principle of everyday solidarity thus provides a general commitment to help direct moral discernment, it is not restricted to serving as an overarching priority alone. Like other principles, it has corollary expectations that emerge from and support its broad vision. More specifically, there are three logical extensions of the principle of everyday solidarity that conscience/2 should embrace.

First, a person’s very capacity for relationality must become a priority in his or her moral calculus. Although agents in the US context of atomistic individualism are often encouraged to evaluate their choices in light of a rational desire to maximize self-interest, the relational perspective of everyday solidarity asks each person to examine his or her options in order to choose the actions that will provide the maximum benefits for his or her relationships. Thus, to return briefly to the example of leisure, the principle of everyday solidarity would call into question the reliance on television, given that medium’s negative impacts on both social capital and social interactions, offering a critical voice to challenge default leisure patterns and encourage more relationally fulfilling activities.<sup>66</sup>

Second, this relational evaluation requires a sincere examination of other people’s needs in order to assess what would benefit the relationship from their perspective. After all, the theological basis for solidarity is the Incarnation, a form of radical accompaniment manifest most profoundly in God’s willingness to share in the experience of suffering through the cross.<sup>67</sup> Following the model of Christ, one can embrace the obligations of everyday solidarity by sincerely trying to imagine how others might assess the options one considers in conscience/2.

Finally, following solidarity’s close connection with the preferential option for the poor, this task of moral imagination must give special weight to what Jon Sobrino calls the “view from the victims,” meaning that agents will need to evaluate the impacts of their actions on the most vulnerable and least well off.<sup>68</sup> This analysis must account for not only direct effects, but also indirect ones as well, since the latter are often much more significant.<sup>69</sup> Each of these three corollaries thus reveals specific implications of everyday solidarity, and collectively they reaffirm the central demand of the principle by encouraging the moral actor to evaluate options as an inherently relational being.

To offer just one concrete illustration, the principle of everyday solidarity’s overarching emphases and its corollary demands can promote effective discernment in the case of pediatric vaccines, which create one of the most ordinary health-care decisions parents have to make. If one approached this question with the assumptions of atomistic individualism exclusively, a parent might be tempted to avoid vaccination in order to eliminate the risks (both real and imagined) of possible side effects. The principle of everyday solidarity, however, would call this calculus into question by shifting the analysis to include the impact of this choice not just on one’s own children but on other people’s children as well. By

reinterpreting this decision as the choice of an inherently relational agent, for example, a father begins to ask how other parents would assess his decision to minimize the risks for his own children even though this will increase the risks for other children. Additionally, by incorporating the preferential option for poor, this father will find it especially problematic that those in poverty and those whose health conditions make it impossible to receive vaccines bear a disproportionate share of this increased burden. From the principle of everyday solidarity's relational perspective, then, the dynamics of the decision change as one's responsibilities to the common good become a much more pertinent feature of the moral analysis.<sup>70</sup>

In this way, the principle of everyday solidarity has the potential to reshape the ethical evaluation of ordinary decisions, bringing the presuppositions of Catholic theological anthropology to bear on concrete choices in a consequential fashion. As a result, the principle is a useful resource for the integration of theological ethics and ordinary life. A full integration will require more than just the principle of everyday solidarity alone, though, and must be supported by the virtue of everyday solidarity as well.

### The Virtue of Everyday Solidarity

Given the existing connections between solidarity and virtue in Catholic theology, the specific form of everyday solidarity can be defined as a virtue in relation to social reform. Significantly, this does not exclude personal conversion. After all, virtues affect agents, and thus entail some form of personal transformation. Indeed, the restoration of virtue ethics in theology during the last forty years was premised on the need for more attention to the moral character of personal actors and not just the rightness or wrongness of their acts.<sup>71</sup> To conceive of everyday solidarity as a virtue, then, is to associate this form of solidarity with personal formation, even when it is oriented to the transformation of social life. This association is entirely reasonable, for although the goal may be social change, the means to that end remain personal actors, so there can be no disconnect between personal conversion and social reform in the key of virtue. Moreover, as discussed above, solidarity's response to structural sin has always been connected to the personal conversion of moral agents, so there must be a personal dimension to the virtue of everyday solidarity as well.<sup>72</sup> These points add appropriate nuance to everyday solidarity's operation as a virtue, but they do not negate its ultimate focus. As a virtue, everyday solidarity must include personal formation, but this formation must in turn be ordered to social transformation.

Notably, everyday solidarity's function as a virtue is directed at a particular kind of social transformation: the correction of structures of sin. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* justifies this description when it identifies solidarity more generally "*as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions,*" and asserts, "*on the basis of this principle the 'structures of sin' that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome.*"<sup>73</sup> These sinful structures are, again, the restrictions and enablements used by social groups to promote problematic actions that undermine the common good. In practice, then, the virtue of everyday solidarity entails a commitment to the transformation of social structures so that they can instead serve the common good, just as John Paul II suggested in his initial definition of solidarity as a virtue.<sup>74</sup> Following Finn's critical realist account of sinful social structures, this means targeting the causal power of social groups in two distinct yet related directions: first by reforming the enablements and incentives that encourage personal agents to undermine the common good, and second, by challenging the restrictions that limit

personal agents' abilities to promote the common good when they want to do so. At times this will require reworking existing structures of sin so that their enablements, incentives, and restrictions are reoriented to the common good. At other times it will entail working proactively to construct new structures that are inherently ordered to this end. Either way the goal remains the emergence of "structures of grace" to counterbalance existing structures of sin.<sup>75</sup>

Given the aforementioned notion of the common good as the good of all and of each, one can say further that the virtue of everyday solidarity must promote not merely structural reforms in general, but structural reforms specifically designed to facilitate the full flourishing of each human being.<sup>76</sup> That flourishing, in turn, must be defined by the presuppositions of theological anthropology, especially the assertion that the human person is only properly fulfilled through the agapic gift of self that imitates Christ's own selfless love on the cross. Everyday solidarity's commitment to flourishing therefore entails transforming structures so that each person has "relatively thorough and ready access" to opportunities for self-gift, not just through occasional peak experiences, but in all aspects of his or her ordinary life.<sup>77</sup>

Significantly, this description of the virtue of everyday solidarity and its operative features narrows its function as a virtue. This is an intentional and essential element of the definition of everyday solidarity as a distinct species of solidarity. Thus, while the thoughtful accompaniment of someone in need might represent an act of solidarity in its general sense, the specific virtue of everyday solidarity requires a different kind of action in light of its role in combatting structural sin. It must operate with elements of both an intellectual virtue, insofar as it can inform an agent's perception of the world so that she or he is more attentive to the structural roots of moral problems, and a moral virtue, insofar as it can empower an agent to take action to correct the structural injustices he or she sees more clearly. Of course, these actions are not divorced from the more general form of solidarity, as the removal of structural obstacles makes genuine accompaniment more feasible and the process of accompaniment with the marginalized makes it easier to see structures of sin. Nevertheless, the virtue of everyday solidarity operates in a distinctive fashion through its pursuit of structures of grace.

Ultimately, the narrowness of the virtue of everyday solidarity is reasonable because its restricted scope puts it more directly at the service of the principle of everyday solidarity. Cast in terms of flourishing and the common good, the principle represents a form of self-gift, because it asks all moral agents to turn their reflections in conscience/2 toward others, and thus (at least in part) away from their own self-interest. This is not an easy goal for someone to achieve consistently in her or his ordinary life. Certainly, there is the challenge of concupiscence as a kind of moral inertia that plagues any effort at moral improvement, but this is not the only obstacle. In addition, there are also systemic forces that variously make it easier or harder for personal agents to cultivate the powers and dispositions necessary for acting rightly. Philosopher Lisa Tessman has appealed to the idea of "moral luck" to explain that systemic forces always influence an agent's ability to do the right thing and thus to construct the kind of personal character that is constitutive of full human flourishing. In some instances, a person's social situation of privilege enables this endeavor, but in other cases, the structural weight of an agent's immediate context results in "moral damage," making the task of personal conversion exponentially more difficult.<sup>78</sup> Applying these insights to the issue of everyday solidarity, one can say that the incentives, enablements, and restrictions of social structures will apply differently, and unequally, to different people based on their social positions. In some cases, these social positions will make it easier for agents to employ the principle of everyday solidarity in their deliberations of conscience/2, but in many situations the social positions will actively frustrate efforts to evaluate moral choices from a

relational perspective. These discrepancies are rightly understood as a form of moral luck because their origin is outside the agent's control. As such, the vagaries of these structural restrictions are inherently unfair, because, according to the criterion of flourishing, all persons should be empowered to analyze their moral choices in the self-giving way that the principle of everyday solidarity facilitates. The virtue of everyday solidarity therefore examines the structures influencing ordinary life in order to determine what would need to change to allow more people to evaluate their everyday decisions through the lens of relationality and to act accordingly. Once the answer is found, the operative aspects of the virtue commence, prompting action to reform the enablements, incentives, and restrictions that create the negative forms of moral luck currently limiting opportunities for self-gift.

Here, a third aspect of ordinary life, work, provides a helpful illustration of how the virtue of everyday solidarity can operate in practice. The Roman Catholic view of work champions both the inherent value of the worker as a human being made in the image and likeness of God and the human fulfillment that comes from contributing to a project (like a job) that is necessarily larger than oneself.<sup>79</sup> Theologians have asserted that this theology of work justifies a vocational approach to one's working life, arguing that the question of how a person might be able to use her or his talents (and passions) to make the world a better place should serve as the criterion by which a person judges a potential job offer.<sup>80</sup> While such an ideal accords nicely with the principle of everyday solidarity's emphasis on relationality, it is not equally feasible for all. The virtue of everyday solidarity calls attention to this fact, inviting agents to consider how existing restrictions, enablements, and incentives might make it more difficult for certain workers to embrace this ideal. The most obvious structural impediment is an economic one, as workers are often driven to the jobs that provide the best remuneration, even though the highest-paying jobs are not the ones that produce the best social outcomes.<sup>81</sup> Concomitantly, many of the jobs that would allow workers to contribute to the common good offer lower pay and fewer benefits, frequently prompting people to reject the jobs they would rather accept if vocational discernment were their primary motivation. If different structures were in place, however, workers might find it easier to prioritize their vocational visions. For instance, the living-wage floor advanced in Catholic social teaching represents a structural reform that would counteract some of these economic discrepancies by ensuring that workers would at least be able to support themselves and their families with any job they might choose.<sup>82</sup> As a virtue oriented to structural reform, the virtue of everyday solidarity can strengthen one's commitment to the creation of a living minimum wage and the expansion of structures that ensure employee participation in business decisions, ultimately prompting one to take action in pursuit of these ends so that more people will be able to embrace the principle of everyday solidarity while they discern their moral responsibilities at work.<sup>83</sup>

Obviously, there are other structural impediments to a vocational approach to work, and other structural reforms to counteract them, but this simple example demonstrates the central point, namely that the virtue of everyday solidarity works to make the principle of everyday solidarity a more realistic resource for everyone. It pursues this goal with a particular attention to the sinful social structures that incentivize self-interest or otherwise make it more difficult to evaluate one's moral decisions from a relational perspective. Although this process of structural reform will inevitably take a long time to succeed, the fight itself is just as important as the victory, for the desire to transform social structures in order to help others achieve their full human flourishing is a fine illustration of the principle of everyday solidarity at work. The pursuit of structural reforms according to the virtue of everyday solidarity thus encourages more people to live the kind of life that Catholic relational anthropology demands.

## Conclusion

The twofold operation of everyday solidarity as both a principle and a virtue creates an ideal ethical framework for approaching ordinary life in a more richly theological fashion. As a principle, everyday solidarity brings the relational anthropology of Catholic theology to bear on ordinary life in a meaningful fashion, reshaping the way moral agents think about themselves and their responsibilities through a process of personal conversion and conscience formation. As a virtue, everyday solidarity highlights the Catholic theological understanding of the common good, promoting a commitment to that common good through a critical examination of the systemic forces of oppression that require structural reform. In this way, everyday solidarity reflects the fullness of solidarity, which is properly oriented to the salvation and liberation of the oppressed, “both as a theory and as a strategy.”<sup>84</sup> To the extent that people embody everyday solidarity in their ordinary lives, they can more fully realize Pope Francis’s depiction of solidarity itself as “a new mindset which thinks in terms of the community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.”<sup>85</sup> For Catholics, this would mean, simply, living out their faith in their ordinary lives. For moral theologians, this would mean another way to promote moral discernment as a regular practice for the faithful, strengthening the development of more informed and well-formed consciences, and offering a fitting response to the leadership of Pope Francis and his reorientation of the church to pastoral concerns.

## Notes

1. Conor M. Kelly, “The Role of the Moral Theologian in the Church: A Proposal in Light of *Amoris Laetitia*,” *Theological Studies* 77 (2016): 922–48, <https://doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0040563916666824>; Cathleen Kaveny, “Pope Francis and Catholic Healthcare Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 80 (2019): 186–201, <https://doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0040563918819806>; and Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, “*Amoris Laetitia*: Towards a Methodological and Anthropological Integration of Catholic Social and Sexual Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 79 (2018): 634–52, <https://doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0040563918784772>.
2. Kelly, “The Role of the Moral Theologian in the Church,” 945.
3. Kelly, “The Role of the Moral Theologian,” 947.
4. Kelly, “The Role of the Moral Theologian,” 945.
5. Gerald J. Beyer, “The Meaning of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching,” *Political Theology* 15 (2014): 7–25, at 9, <https://doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1179/1462317X13Z.00000000059>. Outside of papal works, this twofold notion of solidarity has its roots in the thought of Heinrich Pesch and Oswald von Nell-Breuning, whose defense of “solidarism” in the early twentieth century was familiar to Pius XII. Beyer, “The Meaning of Solidarity,” 13.
6. Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus* (October 20, 1939), 15, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_20101939\\_summi-pontificatus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html) (hereafter cited as *SP*).
7. *SP* 35.
8. Kevin P. Doran, *Solidarity: A Synthesis of Personalism and Communalism in the Thought of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 81.
9. On the importance of solidarity’s descriptive and prescriptive elements in Catholic theology, see Beyer, “The Meaning of Solidarity,” 15. For an outline of the Magisterium’s subsequent usage of solidarity, see Marie Vianney Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty? Or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 4–12.

10. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), 110, 149.
11. Michael J. Buckley, "The Catholic University and the Promise Inherent in Its Identity," in *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 3–25, at 17–18.
12. *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 24, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html). (hereafter cited as *GS*).
13. For more on the close connection between the relational concerns of Catholic theological anthropology and the normative implications of solidarity in *Gaudium et Spes* in particular, see Christine Firer Hinze, "Straining toward Solidarity in a Suffering World: *Gaudium et Spes* 'After Forty Years,'" in *Vatican II: Forty Years Later*, ed. William Madges (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 165–95, esp. 168–74.
14. Kristin E. Heyer, "Catholics in the Public Arena: How Faith Should Inform Catholic Voters and Politicians," in *Catholics and Politics: The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power*, ed. Kristin E. Heyer, Mark J. Rozell, and Michael A. Genovese (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 61–72, at 62–63.
15. *GS* 32.
16. *GS* 75.
17. Meghan J. Clark, "Anatomy of a Social Virtue: Solidarity and Corresponding Vices," *Political Theology* 15 (2014): 26–39, at 34, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1179/1462317X13Z.00000000060>; see also 31–35 more generally.
18. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), 49 (original emphasis), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html).
19. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009), 43 (original emphasis), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html).
20. See Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind; Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), 93–95; and Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 18–19. For a critical take on Lipset's historical arguments, see Edward Grabb, Douglas Baer, and James Curtis, "The Origins of American Individualism: Reconsidering the Historical Evidence," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24 (1999): 511–33, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.2307/3341789>. Notably, Grabb, Baer, and Curtis merely challenge the pervasiveness of a certain type of individualism at the founding of the United States. They do not dispute its subsequent influence.
21. Tibor Machan, "Liberalism and Atomistic Individualism," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 34, no. 2–3 (Sep. 2000): 227–47, at 227, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1023/A:1004774206577>; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 115. On the classical Greek roots of the term "atom," see Andrew G. Van Melsen, *From Atomos to Atom: The History of the Concept Atom*, trans. Henry J. Koren (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004), 19, 131–32.
22. Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 187–210, at 188.
23. This description builds on Michael Sandel's notion of the "unencumbered self." Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 11–13.

24. For a summary of the historical development, see Christopher D. Jones and Conor M. Kelly, "Sloth: America's Ironic Structural Vice," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 37 (2017): 117–34, at 118–22, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1353/sce.2017.0036>. Atomistic individualism aligns with the category of "liberal individualism" in that article. See also Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, which on the whole argues that in the United States this liberal (here atomistic) form of individualism has triumphed over a more "republican" strand, especially since the twentieth century. On atomistic individualism's functions as a "first language" in public discourse, see Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 20, 23.
25. Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning in, Tuning out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, no. 4 (1995): 665–83, at 678. For data on how people use their free time, see Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Average Hours Per Day Spent in Selected Leisure and Sports Activities by Age," *American Time Use Survey*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.bls.gov/charts/american-time-use/activity-leisure.htm>.
26. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 283.
27. *Ibid.*, 237.
28. Jay C. Kimiecik, "Play Ball? Reflections on My Father's Youth Baseball Experiences and Why They Matter," *American Journal of Play* 8, no. 3 (April 2016): 379–95; Joseph M. Ellis and Hemant Sharma, "Can't Play Here: The Decline of Pick-up Soccer and Social Capital in the USA," *Soccer & Society* 14, no. 3 (2013): 364–85, at 364–69, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1080/14660970.2013.801266>.
29. Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 25.
30. Since John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, the Magisterium had been describing solidarity's prescriptive functions by identifying it explicitly as a moral principle. Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961), 23, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html).
31. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), 38, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html) (hereafter cited as *SRS*).
32. *SRS* 38 (emphasis added). See also *SRS* 40.
33. *SRS* 42, 45 (emphasis added).
34. Daniel K. Finn, "What Is a Sinful Social Structure?," *Theological Studies* 77 (2016): 136–64, at 142–54, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0040563915619981>.
35. Dave Elder-Vass, *The Causal Power of Social Structures: Emergence, Structure and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 115.
36. Finn, "Sinful Social Structure," 154.
37. *Ibid.*; see also 152, 153.
38. Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* 108 (2001): 814–34, at 821, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1037//0033-295X.108.4.814>; see also Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog Does Learn New Tricks: A Reply to Pizarro and Bloom (2003)," *Psychological Review* 110 (2003): 197–98, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1037/0033-295X.110.1.197>.
39. For more on this process, see Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin: Additional Insights from Theology and Moral Psychology," *Theological Studies* 80 (2019): 293–327, at 313–23, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0040563919836201>.

40. Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 410–36, at 423–24, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/004056391007100207>; and Kenneth R. Himes, "Social Sin and the Role of the Individual," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 6 (1996): 183–218, at 193, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.5840/asce1986610>.
41. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle*, 1; see also Doran, *Solidarity: A Synthesis*, 191–93.
42. Richard Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1989), 21.
43. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 209.
44. James F. Keenan, "Virtue Ethics," in *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, ed. Bernard Hoose (London: Cassell, 1998), 84–94.
45. Doran, *Solidarity: A Synthesis*, 191.
46. Tom L. Beauchamp, "The 'Four-Principles' Approach," in *Principles of Health Care Ethics*, ed. Raanan Gillon with Ann Lloyd (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), 3–12, at 3.
47. *Ibid.*, 4, 5.
48. See Louise A. Mitchell, "Major Changes in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*: A Review of Seven Editions of Beauchamp and Childress," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 14 (2014): 459–75, at 460–65, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.5840/ncbq20141438>.
49. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II 1–2, q. 55, a. 2, ad 1; see also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1108b10–15.
50. Jonathan Webber, "Character, Attitude and Disposition," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (2015), 1082–96, at 1087, see also 1087–89, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1111/ejop.12028>.
51. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle*, 53.
52. See Michael G. Lawler and Todd Salzman, "Virtue Ethics: Natural and Christian," *Theological Studies* 74 (2013): 442–73, at 450–56, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/004056391307400209>; Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, "The Moral Significance of Religious Affections: A Reformed Perspective on Emotion and Moral Formation," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 28, no. 2 (2015): 150–62, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/0953946815570590>; and Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2009), 248–54.
53. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle*, 52.
54. William K. Frankena, *Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 65.
55. James F. Keenan, "Who Are We to Judge? How Scripture and Tradition Help to Form Our Consciences," *America*, March 23, 2016, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/examining-conscience>.
56. James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 55–58.
57. James F. Keenan, "The Arrested Development of the American Conscience in Moral Decision Making," *America*, December 22, 2016, <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2016/12/22/arrested-development-american-conscience-moral-decision-making>.
58. Russell Connors and Patrick McCormick, *Character, Choices, and Community: The Three Faces of Christian Ethics* (New York: Paulist, 1998), 124.
59. *Ibid.*, 124–30.
60. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 131–33; and Timothy E. O'Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 109–11.
61. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 132.

62. Connors and McCormick, *Character, Choices, and Community*, 126.
63. O'Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, 111.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *SRS* 38.
66. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 238; John P. Robinson and Steve Martin, "Of Time and Television," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625 (September 2009): 74–86, at 75.
67. This aspect of solidarity is highlighted in the work of Jürgen Moltmann. See, for instance, Jürgen Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 38–40.
68. Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).
69. For instance, environmental degradation is seldom viewed as a direct effect of one's choices, but it has an outsized impact on those who are in poverty throughout the world. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015), 48, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).
70. For a more substantive defense of this application of solidarity, see Conor M. Kelly, "On Pediatric Vaccines and Catholic Social Teaching," *Horizons* 45, no. 2 (2018): 287–316, esp. 310–14, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1017/hor2018.69>.
71. James F. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 709–25, at 709–10, <https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1177/004056399505600405>.
72. See, for example, *SRS* 38.
73. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 193 (italics in original).
74. See again, *SRS* 38.
75. See Kevin Ahern, *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015), 130–36.
76. *SRS* 38.
77. See *GS* 26.
78. Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11–31. Significantly, Tessman also critiques the traditional interpretations of "moral damage," cautioning that the uncritical use of this idea might result in a kind of victim shaming that further reinforces the conditions of oppression that limit moral freedom. She ultimately uses this caution, however, to reclaim a more nuanced account of moral damage. *Ibid.*, 33–52.
79. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (September 14, 1981), 6, 9–10, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html).
80. See Michael J. Himes, *Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations about God, Relationships, and Service*, with Don McNeill, Andrea Smith Shappell, Jan Pilarski, Stacy Hennessy, Katie Bergin, and Sarah Keyes (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1995), 57–58.
81. Michael Sandel, "The Moral Economy of Speculation: Gambling, Finance, and the Common Good," *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 33 (2014): 333–59, at 337.
82. See Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891), 45–46, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html).
83. Frank J. Dewane, "Just Wages and Human Flourishing," September 3, 2018, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/labor-employment/labor-day-statement-2018.cfm>.

84. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 92.

85. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 187, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

## Author Biography

**Conor M. Kelly** (PhD, Boston College) is an Assistant Professor in the department of theology at Marquette University. His research focuses on the ways theology can provide resources for ethical discernment in everyday life. His most recent articles have appeared in the *Journal of Moral Theology*, *The Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, and *Theological Studies*.