


# Foreword by Piotr Duda, President of the Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność”

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Your Excellencies, Honored Professors,

At the outset, on behalf of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity,” I wish to express my joy and gratitude for participating in this unique event. The International Conference “Solidarity as a community and fraternity of working people,” organized by the International Center for the Study of the Phenomenon of Solidarność and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, addresses important questions facing “Solidarity” today with its theme.

I would like to thank the organizers for inviting such unique personages to the various panels. At the same time, I would also like to thank all those who devoted their time to share their experience and knowledge with us. Please allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to begin by offering our perspective on the subject matter of this two-day conference. As a Christian entity, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność,” basing its activities on the social teachings of the Church, is an exception among trade unions, not only in Poland but also in Europe and the world. For us—contrary to the majority of trade unions—the Gospel is the foundation of those values on which we are based and often determines which decisions we should make on specific issues. It also determines the hierarchy we use to approach these issues: from the dignity of the human person to the fraternity of working people, while trying to put into practice the teachings of the Church.

We, the unionists of Solidarity, who are, above all – Christians, are constantly looking for answers on how to conduct our union activities in the spirit of the Gospel and according to the social teachings of the Church. Therefore, when engaging in our numerous undertakings, both within the framework

of the “International Center for the Study of Phenomenon of Solidarność” and various congresses, conferences, and events, we listen to the views of philosophers and theologians, Christian economists, prayer communities, in order to better understand these teachings and practically implement them in our everyday activities.

We live in the times of large and evolving problems that need to be solved. Threats – not only related to pandemics, globalization, the growing power of multinational corporations – but also to the growing revolution of ideologies that are destroying societies, including those composed of working people. Hence, once again, please accept, on behalf of the National Commission, our gratitude for this conference.

Firstly, let me start with a few thoughts from myself, resulting from our experiences, daily practice, and participation in the numerous conferences, summer schools, and meetings which I have just mentioned. The social teaching of the Church, which we learn primarily through papal encyclicals, very clearly delineates the order that should characterize the relationship between the world of labor, employers, the State, and the Church. This was perfectly expressed by Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum* encyclical, often referred to as the encyclical of trade unions, although we more often use the phrase: “the encyclical of collective bargaining.” Leo XIII taught us that the place where social stresses arise is found in the relationship between the worker and the employer. It turns out that the main source of problems is not the state, various social movements, or the increasingly prevalent harmful ideologies that are preached today. Despite the fact that communism and fascism were being born at the time of the encyclical’s writing, the Pope has nevertheless indicated the relationship between the worker and the employer. In order to resolve these tensions, the Pope taught that it is necessary to have an ongoing dialogue, one that involves constant reminders of both parties’ rights and duties.

In Pope Leo XIII’s view, the role of the country is to create the conditions and legal framework necessary for such a dialogue to occur and to ensure the maintenance of what the dialogue produces. What place, then, does the Pope allocate for the Church in these circumstances? The Church is to teach one another, workers and employers alike, what moral code and what values are to guide this dialogue. Today, through this conference, we are listening to such teachings. Dialogue, of course, cannot always take place on an individual basis, especially when dealing with large workplaces, and even more

so with large global corporations. Here, it is necessary to have an organized representation of workers, which is precisely what trade unions are. And it is here that the first big problem arises. It is becoming increasingly more difficult, thanks to large multinational corporations, to have an employer in this direct sense – and to put it simply: there is no one to talk to. There are companies and there are employees, but it is impossible to identify the owners and the people who actually make the decisions. Often, these are influenced by unspecified funds, complicated shareholdings, and institutions that are hard to even link to specific companies. What we have here is a dehumanization of employers. What's worse, this has global consequences in the form of phenomena that destroy entire societies. I am referring here not only to cultural and social revolutions but also to a kind of “economy of desires” – global engineering that builds up widespread consumerism, which drives entire communities into slavery to credit, among other issues. We discussed this phenomenon three years ago at the Granada Summer School. In the conclusions formulated there, we pointed out that such phenomena, financed by big international business, can only be opposed by another globalism: the universalism of the Gospel. Only two things are equally universal: workers and the Church of Christ. Hence, we also postulated that an explicit voice of the Church is necessary. A voice that, on the one hand, has the knowledge and wisdom to name these phenomena, assess and point out the dangers, and, on the other hand, to spread them.

„Solidarność” understands the social teaching of the Church in a very practical way – indicating the relationship between employees and employers as a mutual concern. This is a simplification, of course, but it gives a good understanding of the essence. A Christian employee is not only to work honestly; he should also refrain from cheating, not steal, and not work against his employer. He has an obligation to care about the good of the company and to use his talents for the good of the company. In following this line of reasoning, it becomes apparent that intentionally inefficient work is a sin. However, the employer also has an obligation to care for his employee: to pay him honestly, not to exploit him, and not to act knowingly in such a way as to cause him harm. He also has a duty, as far as he can, to take an interest in him and help him and his family outside of work. When there is no employer on the other side of the phone, when there is no one to talk to, when there is no human being behind the company's signboard, it is difficult to talk about reciprocal care.

The relationship between the worker and the employer, from the perspective of Pope Leo XIII as well as our Holy John Paul II, is becoming less visible and sometimes even impossible to realize. If this relationship cannot be defended, or even rebuilt, then these very bad global phenomena will worsen, leading entire societies to experience disaster. The prescription is a creative alliance between the world of labor and the Catholic Church – with its social teachings flowing from the Gospel. A great support here would be another encyclical, that which was written by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who – in his previous teaching contained in *Fratelli Tutti* – deeply touched on social issues and the dangers of the globalization of indifference. What is needed during these times is a voice against the globalization of the “economy of desire.”

Let us pray for such a creative alliance to form, first through the intercession of the patron of the Solidarity Trade Union, Blessed Father Jerzy Popieluszko, as well as the spiritual Father who awakened Solidarity in us – Saint John Paul II.

I sincerely wish you a fruitful discussion, one to which I will listen with great attention. Again, I would like to thank the organizers, speakers, and participants of this symposium. I hope that the materials of this important conference will appear in the form of a separate book publication and will serve those who see the idea of solidarity as a community and fraternity of working people.

**Piotr Duda** – Polish trade union activist, since 2010 chairman of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity.” From 1980, he was an employee of Huta Gliwice as a turner. In the years 1982–1983, he served in the 6<sup>th</sup> Pomeranian Airborne Division. He took part in the Polish Military Contingent in UNDOF in Syria. Then, he returned to work in Huta Gliwice. From 1980, he was a member of NSZZ “Solidarność,” and in 1992, he was elected chairman of the factory committee. In 1995, he was on the presidium of the Śląsko-Dąbrowski Region management board, and two years later, he became the treasurer of the region’s management board. He also became the treasurer of the AWS Social Movement in the Katowice district (he was in the initial period of the party’s activity). In 2002, he won the election for the chairman of “Solidarity” in the Śląsko-Dąbrowski Region. In 2006 and 2010, he was re-elected. He also became a member of the National Committee of Solidarity. On October 21, 2010, he was elected the chairman of the National Committee of NSZZ “Solidarność,” defeating Janusz Śniadek, who was seeking re-election. In 2014 and 2018, he was re-elected to the position he held. He was also the president of the board of the Foundation for the Health of Children and Youth in the Śląsko-Dąbrowski Region. Grzegorz Kolosa. In October 2015, on behalf of NSZZ “Solidarność,” he became a member of the newly established Council for Social Dialogue; he entered the presidium of this institution as one of its seven vice-presidents.