


# Foreword by Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow

 <https://doi.org/10.15633/9788383700274.00b>

At the beginning of this Foreword, I would like to thank all the participants of the International Conference “Solidarity as a Community and Brotherhood of Working People” for their participation, as well as for their contributions to the development of the idea of solidarity—which is close to our hearts. I would also like to thank the conference’s organizers: the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the International Centre for the Study of the Phenomenon of Solidarity, which is a research center composed of two entities: the National Committee of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” and the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

The conference is an important event due to the message and topicality of the idea of solidarity, which assumed a physical form in the testimony of the Polish workers 41 years ago. The Solidarity movement of the working people, which was founded at that time, was a new chapter in the history of labor movements in Poland and abroad. By opposing the Communist system in 1980, the workers, who regained themselves and their dignity, contributed to the collapse of Marxist ideology and, a few years later, in 1989, to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the “Solidarity” movement, the most important values of the members—human subjectivity, the sovereignty of the whole nation, and faithfulness to tradition—were inextricably linked with Christianity. It should be emphasized that the source of solidarity was a community of values that surpassed any political divisions. This community, which was rooted in the Christian tradition of the nation and in the values that emerge from the Gospel and from truth, has remained for us an important goal.

The phenomenon of “Solidarity” found its source in the hope its members placed in God. The Eucharist, which is the wellspring of Christian life, played

a significant role in the formation of the Polish experience of solidarity among the working people. The photos of the Gdańsk Shipyard taken in 1980 amazed the entire world and defied the Marxist dogmas that claimed the working class had renounced God. They bear witness to the truth in the best viable way. The experience of Eucharistic communion in the Shipyard had an impact on the Polish experience of solidarity, on the formation of community and fraternity among workers, as well as among members of various social and professional groups. It was a community beyond divides and the particular interests of individuals.

In September 1981, during the First Congress of “Solidarity” in Gdańsk Oliwa, the Program of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” was established. It emphasized that the new movement was inspired by the values of Christian ethics, national tradition, and the democratic tradition of the world of labor. In the Program, one could read that the Union emerged from the rebellion of Polish society, whose human and citizen rights were continuously violated, and that its main goals were freedom, justice, democracy, truth, and human dignity. Based on those values, “Solidarity” was to become a “movement of the moral rebirth of the nation.” It is worth recalling one of the postulates of the aforementioned Program: “Respect for a human must be the fundament of any action. The state is to serve the human being, and not to rule over him.”

After the political and economic changes that have taken place in the world in the years following August 1980, the idea of Solidarity undoubtedly needs to be rethought. A deeper and renewed understanding of the idea of solidarity, expressed in the light of Catholic social teaching, still has the immense potential to solve the crises that working people are struggling with all over the world. It is worth remembering that the movement of Solidarity was directed not only against Marxist communism, but also against any form of economy that treats man in a purely instrumental way.

In modern times, when more and more poor people are becoming even poorer, and when the increasingly less – numerous rich are becoming richer and richer, when the fight for respecting fundamental human rights and human dignity is taking place all over the world, it is truly time to renew the idea of solidarity. After years of “the small capitalist stabilization,” it is time to awaken the conscience that must hear the cry of the wounded and underprivileged. It is time to shoulder the burdens that are the result of wars, climate

change, and social exclusion, and which the weakest cannot bear alone. In this aspect, the Conference refers to Pope Francis' new encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

An attempt to universalize the Polish experience of solidarity and renew its spirit during this conference, both in the national and global dimensions, seems to be a fully justified task. It is one that is aimed at reminding all of us that we participate together in the creation of the common good and together, we are responsible for its strengthening and transmission to future generations.

With my pastoral blessing  
Marek Jędraszewski  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow  
Great Chancellor of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

**Abp. Marek Jędraszewski** – a Polish Roman Catholic prelate who has been Archbishop of Kraków since 8 December 2016. He served as the Archbishop of Łódź from 2012 to 2017. He has also been Vice-President of the Polish Episcopal Conference since 2014. He is known for being an orthodox defender of the faith, and is also known for being open to ecumenical efforts and dialogue. His selection for the Kraków archdiocese was perceived as a surprise in some quarters. Jędraszewski then studied philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University, where he earned a doctorate. In 1974 he earned a bachelor's degree in theological studies in Poznań, and from 1973 to 1975 served as a parochial vicar at Saint Martin's parish in Odalnow. He received his bachelor's degree philosophy 1977. On 20 December 1979, he defended his doctoral dissertation and Pope John Paul II awarded it a gold medal. From 1980 until 1996, he served in Poznań as an assistant professor and as the prefect of seminarians from 1980 until 1987. From 1987 until 1996, he served as the editor (chief editor since 1990) of the Catholic Guide paper, and in 1996 he did his habilitation degree in Kraków on Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas. In 1996, Jędraszewski was made an associate professor in Poznań and was also made a visiting professor to the Pontifical Lateran.

