

# A Balkanized Africa? A Free and United Africa? Your Choice

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*[Jesus] lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "... Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one...Sanctify them in the truth... And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:1, 11, 17).*

*Surely, one would have expected that if we have a chance to undo part of the harm that has already been done by this balkanization of our continent, we would not hesitate in taking that chance...*

*Peoples of East Africa, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!*

*"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Mwl. Nyerere, 1964).<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

My experience with the constellation of hatreds and hostilities in two quite disparate regions of the world, Sierra Leone and the Balkans, together with my appreciation, respect, gratitude, and adoration for the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, who died that all may form a unity, that is to say, a communion, and who arose again from the dead to share the peace of that communion with us for all eternity – all of this opened my eyes to the prophetic foresight that the reliably thoughtful Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere manifested in his proposed schema for East African unity and his necessary warning against the balkanization of the region.

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<sup>1</sup> J. NYERERE, "Freedom and Unity," *Transition*, Vol. 0, Issue 14 (1964). Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 40-45. "The Articles of Union between the Republic of Tanganyika and the Peoples' Republic of Zanzibar" constitute an appendix to the article.

Anticipating Pope (St.) John Paul II's convictions about international solidarity, Mwl. Nyerere gave public voice to his convictions in the 1964 article just footnoted above, "Freedom and Unity," published by Duke University Press in the journal *Transition*. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April in that same year, 1964, Mwl. Nyerere and Abeid Karume signed the Articles of Union between the Republic of Tanganyika and the People's Republic of Zanzibar.

With an oblique reference to what has happened from time to time in the region of the Balkan mountains among the ethnic groups living in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, and the European part of Turkey, Mwl. Nyerere speaks of balkanizing. Balkanizing is a sustained effort to disrupt unity, to maintain one's own position and prowess as a member of a group of privilege by disdain, humiliating, oppressing and rejecting those who do not belong to the group.<sup>2</sup> Balkanizing may occur on an individual level, on the level of an ethnic group, on a regional level or on a national level. Individuals or groups balkanize when they make an effort to align themselves with the forces of deception and division in order to attain their own ends.

Balkanizing is a particular form of aggravating disunity. Pope (St.) John Paul II used one of his General Audiences as a forum to remind the world that the very word devil signifies a fallen angel who does not want unity. The devil is, by definition, one who

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<sup>2</sup> See V. PESIC, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*. Volume 8 of *Peaceworks*. Washington, DC: The United States Institute of Peace 1996. The long-term social critic of authoritarian Serbian regimes, Vesna Pestic, cites V. Gligorov's definition in the notes that follow her text, no. 99: Balkanization is "a process and possibly a cycle of empire disruption, small countries creation, local instability, and a new (or old) empire moving in. ... The balkanization process was characterized particularly by the attempts of the Balkan nations at autonomous state creation and by wars erupting between them." V. GLIGOROV, *Why Do Countries Break Up?*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis 1994, 18. My explanations of the term balkanizing are more or less syntheses of everything Pestic says in *Serbian Nationalism* about the resentment, hostility, division and destruction that ensue when ethnic groups subscribe to the dominate-or-be-dominated mindset. Especially informative is the summary that she offers as an introduction to *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*.

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strives to provoke mistrust: he calumniates, deceives, divides and destroys.<sup>3</sup>

It is not an exaggeration, then, to say that balkanizing is diabolical in scope.

The present essay integrates ethical insights that Mwl. Nyerere and Pope St. John Paul II have introduced into the public forum in order to harmonize the human race with the intention of the One who created it: God. God has intended the human race to live in unity as a human family. It is God's intention that, regardless of our age, ethnic group, nationality, skin colour, or religious affiliation that we all relate to each other as if we were living under the same roof. We are to be a human family destined to live eternally within the purity of its origins and within the eternal love that redeems and sanctifies. Pope John Paul's successor puts it this way:

The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together a new family. But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one human family: "All peoples" – as the Second Vatican Council declared – "are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26); they also have one final end, God."<sup>4</sup>

No matter where we are in the world, we are to be as a single family. In this way we strive to be who we are: an image and likeness of the one God. Mwl. Nyerere's convictions and insights about the need to obviate balkanizing and to exercise freedom responsibly in the manner of a family for the cause of unity interlock quite meaningfully with Pope John Paul II's articulations about God's call to human persons to discover their identity, their irreplaceability, and their dignity through the experience of togetherness, through their joint commitment to solidarity. How

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<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *General Audience*, "The Fall of the Rebellious Angels" (13 Aug 1986), 7.

<sup>4</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 1. The citation is from the Vatican II Declaration *Nostra Aetate* 1.

may we synthesize concisely and convincingly the principles that guided these two major figures from the 20<sup>th</sup> century? We may simply state without hesitation: all are responsible for all.

Drawing from John Paul II's insistence on fidelity to the truth in love, the present paper specifies the requirements that the spirit of unity/solidarity must meet in order to fulfil what Mwl. Nyerere envisioned and hence to immunize this unity from all species of human degradation, insult, humiliation, indifference, contempt, betrayal, jealousy, resentment, and treachery.

The essay then proceeds to rely on divine revelation to substantiate the truth of two dimensions to the reality within which we live: (1) only with the help of God's grace can humanity achieve the solidarity anticipated by Mwl. Nyerere; (2) God makes this grace available to the human family when he loves us to the point of redeeming us by means of an unfathomably painful death on the cross. God pours forth the love capable of unity and freedom into our hearts by giving us the Holy Spirit.

But what is divine love? It is the love that moves the eternal Word of God to accept onto himself the contempt and disdain of those who prefer themselves over God and hence collaborate with the devil. When God, the Word, unites hypostatically to himself a full human nature, He – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity – makes it possible for the human suffering occasioned by alliances with diabolical deception and division to become inseparably united to his divine love. This suffering-motivated-by-absolute-love enables us to become a “family” in the sense that Mwl. Nyerere conceived.

In the course of this essay, the reader makes his or her acquaintance with Sister Lucy, whose personal suffering in the coercive grasp of a sexually aroused Serbian gives definition to the term “to balkanize,” namely, to perpetuate division and to exalt one's status as a member of a group of privilege by degrading those who do not belong to the group. Sr. Lucy's response to the Serbian's attempt to balkanize sheds light on the place of God's suffering and redeeming grace within the human pursuit of freedom and unity.

The present essay forthrightly considers the shocking developments between men and women in the Republic of South

Africa – every 8 hours a woman succumbs to the number one cause of death for young females in South Africa, namely, intimate partner violence (IPV). The men seem to balkanize the very women they have purported to love. Those who should be finding their happiness in a unifying, creative love with each other are suffering the betrayal, the treachery and the violence that can only lead to division, to the collapse of the family. This essay suggests that Mwl. Nyerere's convictions about responsibility, unity and freedom can help to safeguard male-female relationships in Tanzania. Finally the essay plants its gaze on a horizon of heavenly peace and joy with an explanation of how God removes the human race from the clutches of balkanizing opportunists and establishes humanity within the grace of freedom and solidarity by his manner of creating the family.

## 1. Who Balkanizes?

It was the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1999. During many months leading up to this day, Archbishop Joseph Ganda of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and I had shared many a meal together in a multi-ethnic parish on the east side of Manhattan in New York City. The Archbishop's country was immersed in a balkanizing process provoked by those who had lost their foothold in basic human ethics. Sierra Leonean rebels and their powerful associates from Liberia were trying to muscle their way into the corridors of power by showing everyone that they could do whatever their greed, lust and disdain invited them to do: kill innocent people, frighten families and drain the children of any hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.

During those meals, the Archbishop manifested a keen interest in my activities of peace, justice, faith and compassion within the war-torn Balkan region, specifically, in the part of Albania that bordered Kosovo. Hence it was not a surprise for me when he issued his invitation: "Gibson, come to Freetown... come to Sierra Leone."

So, now it was the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1999. I was supposed to be in Sierra Leone. I was to learn a bit later from the lips of Francis Freeman, the driver for the Missionaries of Charity in Freetown, how the events of the 29<sup>th</sup> would leave an indelible imprint on the

lives of those who aspire to show everyone that they can do whatever their compassion, purity and humility inspire them to do: forgive the guilty, give courage to families, and open the hearts of children to a new hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.

The rebels had already cut down in cold blood Sr. Maria Aloise Ansama Antony, M.C., an Indian by nationality, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January.<sup>5</sup> Freeman was present at the National Stadium where the rebels held the Sisters hostage on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Freeman was present when the rebels accosted the Sisters and said to them, “You are women; we are men. You are going to permit us to do what men do to women.” The Superior of the community reminded the rebels what the rebels would have known from the religious clothing the Sisters were wearing, “We are consecrated to Jesus, heart, soul and body. God has a purpose for you: to respect us because God has given you to us to be our brothers. We are your sisters. You are not going to touch us.” The rebels did not appreciate this uncompromising refusal in the face of their desire for sexual sin. Freeman was on hand as a witness when the rebels sprayed the Sisters with machine gun fire. Amazingly the bullets whizzed by the Sister Superior without touching her.

Her two Sisters, however, Sr. Maria Carmeline Nzemi, MC, from Kenya, and Sr. Maria Sueva Sujila Asakra, MC, from Bangladesh, succumbed immediately to the lethal impact of the gunfire. Sr. Maria Indu Anastasia Xalxo, MC, from India suffered grievous wounds that occasioned her birth into heaven in a Conakry Hospital eight days later.

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<sup>5</sup> In many countries, the Missionaries of Charity do not drive their own vehicles; they accept the volunteer service of local altruists who have proven themselves to be reliable. These drivers accompany the Sisters everywhere they go. All of my information about the Sisters’ courageous, outspoken witness to Jesus to whom they were espoused by the vow of chastity comes from Francis Freeman, the driver of the Sisters in Freetown, who lived in the Sisters’ compound, was always at their disposition, and at the time of their capture followed them – in a somewhat stealthy manner – to the National Stadium, a five-minute walk from St. Anthony Parish on the West Side of Freetown. (Francis was also my driver when I arrived in Sierra Leone.) I add that during these events of January, 1999, I had daily access to detailed information about what was happening in Freetown through a BBC hotline: Freeman’s descriptions cohered perfectly with what BBC reported.

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The Sierra Leonean rebels (the Revolutionary United Front, RUF) could not have accomplished their insidious purposes without the help of powerful Liberian government officials. Under the auspices of ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States), Nigerians and other ECOMOG forces were lending their military capability to the anti-RUF effort.<sup>6</sup> The RUF, however, were slow to capitulate. During the 1990's continuing into the new millennium, both in Liberia and Sierra Leone, even teenagers and children were engaged in acts of brutality that only intensified ethnic antipathies. Control of the diamond mines seemed to be only a trigger issue. West Africans were balkanizing each other.

I myself was supposed to be in Freetown in that fateful month of January. The rebel takeover of Freetown's international airport precluded my ability to land there. In an ironic twist of events, Archbishop Ganda, captured by the rebels at more or less the same time as the Sisters, was able to escape with the help of the Spiritan Fathers. The Archbishop then proceeded to come to the United States and live with me and the Albanian Catholic community of Hartsdale, New York, until his return to Sierra Leone in October, 1999.

Archbishop Ganda and I were soon to learn that Sierra Leone did not hold exclusive rights to rape, atrocity, and treachery. In March, 1999, I squeezed into a New York restaurant booth with four friends. Having come in from the cold, I was considering with a respectful and appreciative glance these four women. There were Julie and Esther from the Philippines. Charlene was an immigrant from Puerto Rico. And the fourth was from... the restaurant owner, a man from the Balkans, interrupted my moment of loving appreciation for my friends when he said, in Albanian, with a tone of excitement and exhilaration in his voice, "Atë Gibson, the Americans have really helped the Albanians – they bombed the hell today out of the Serbians in Kosovo." The man was happy at the violence taking place on that very day in the Balkans. He believed it was a day of glory for the Albanians at the expense of an ethnic

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<sup>6</sup> ECOMOG is the acronym for the Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group.

group that he considered ruthless, namely the Serbians. In his thinking, he was a balkanizer.

His remark left me feeling very awkward and ashamed. The man had spoken as someone who intended to be loyal to his ethnic group, it is true; but he also said it to me at the very moment when I was feeling appreciation, gratitude and friendship for the fourth woman who was sitting at my side, nestled up against me in the cool of the evening: her name was Milanka, and she was Serbian. I turned to her and said, "Milanka, I had no way of foreseeing what the Albanian man was going to say: please forgive me."

Milanka consoled me: "I understand perfectly what happened... and I know your convictions only too well... you have nothing to be sorry for."

Then the five of us, the four women and myself, proceeded to do what motivated us to come to this restaurant in the first place: prepare a pilgrimage involving a sizable group of people from the Philippines, a good number of people from Albania, and a noteworthy number from other ethnic groups. All intended to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land in preparation for the year 2000.

Yes, Albanians would be in the group; and their facilitator and guide would be Milanka, an intelligent, practical, warm-hearted Serbian, who would be doing everything necessary to make the pilgrimage memorably joyful and meaningful for the Albanians. Milanka was entirely free of balkanizing attitudes. Do I need to add the very sad note that the parish priest of these very Albanians, the priest who was hosting Archbishop Ganda, did not enjoy Milanka's freedom? In a characteristically balkanizing fashion, the priest had joined his signature to that of prominent Albanian leaders endorsing a solemn request to Pope (St.) John Paul II that the Catholic Church voice herself in favour of the bombing and so crush Milanka's family and the other Serbs. Needless to say, the Pope absolutely refused their request.

Milanka was deliberately oblivious to the balkanizing attitude of Albanian leaders, Serbian leaders, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombing spree organizers. She and I, with the help of our three friends who were coming from cultures that were dramatically different from ours and from the Balkanizers, concentrated our planning on a number of sites in Judea and

Galilee; but there were two that riveted our attention more than the others: (1) the Garden of Olives, where consumed by a deeply interior suffering provoked by the malice, treachery, pride, lust, greed, anger, gluttony, laziness, and jealousy that give rise to a culture of sin, Jesus chose to surrender himself to the Father's divine plan to pour forth his forgiving, redeeming love into the hearts and souls of all, especially the most treacherous and the most self-centred; and (2) Calvary, where after an excruciating day of relentless torture and humiliation, Jesus uttered an ineffably painful, human cry from within the limitless compassion of his divine Personhood, a cry of thirst that concealed within itself the relentlessly unflagging search on the part of God for each prodigal son and daughter – in other words, for all of us – and with that cry, having accomplished our redemption, he died. Nearby was the empty tomb where by the power of that same redeeming love, Jesus arose from the dead on the third day and began a new phase of his mission: together with the heavenly Father, he began to pour forth his Holy Spirit as a gift of love into the Church and into the hearts of human beings and so render himself wondrously present, always and everywhere, as a Eucharistic gift of peace.<sup>7</sup>

Archbishop Ganda returned in October to Sierra Leone. One month later, I accompanied the pilgrimage as planned to the Holy Land; and then I accepted the gifts that Julie, Esther, Charlene, the Serbian Milanka, and a number of Albanians and others were giving me to build small chapels of adoration in Sierra Leone, specifically, at the sites of Freetown's Sacred Heart cathedral, St. Anthony parish, Holy Cross parish, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Cathedral in Bo. In Sierra Leone, Archbishop Joseph Ganda from the Mende tribe was providing sanctuaries for people from 16 ethnic groups so that God's eternal Word could draw all to Himself in a spirit of thoughtful love, ardent adoration, and a solidarity without frontiers. In the adoration chapels of Sierra Leone, Jesus manifested himself as the Eucharistic gift of peace that transforms every human person and family into the eternal Family of God, the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Romans 5:5. The epiclesis of each Eucharistic prayer highlights the Trinitarian involvement in the transubstantiation of bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood.

communion of saints. Unity would replace the tendency to balkanize.

I myself finally arrived in Sierra Leone after completing my work with pilgrimages: I took special notice that one of these sanctuaries, St. Anthony, was a very short walk away from the grounds where Mother Teresa's Sisters had defended their chastity and their honour as consecrated women. These Sisters had died with the name of their closest friend, Jesus, on their lips.

It did not take me long to discover that what Francis Freeman had related to me about atrocities was barbarically true. It was my duty and the duty of the youth of Holy Cross parish to take care of the poorest of the poor that the Missionaries of Charity had left in their house. The people who prayed in the Holy Cross adoration chapel zealously participated in this daily and nightly work of love. The poorest among us were little street children whose parents had uttered their last sigh in surrender to the cruelty of the rebels. My guests at my house during my first days on the east side of Freetown were young women who came with either their own children or street children they had adopted.

The children were all missing hands or feet or both. At our parish of the Holy Cross in Kissy Mess-Mess, the rebels had assembled all the women of the neighbourhood with their children and then treacherously teased them to voice their wish for their children: would they want long-sleeve or short-sleeve? Each mother was soon to find out that long-sleeve meant the amputation of her baby's hand; short-sleeve meant the hacking off of her child's arm at the elbow. The rebels did not wince at slicing off the feet and legs of little children. Because I am not a medical doctor, I could not do anything to directly alleviate their pain: I left that to my colleague and friend, Dr. Lwanga Williams, the local physician and the president of the Holy Cross parish council.

## **2. Unity Not Possible Without Solidarity**

Whatever the atrocity may happen to be, a mass bombing, a fire set to a church filled with people who have no exit because the doors are locked, a shooting spree, an abortion or a rape, the tragedy involved is not calculable by numerical statistics. It is not the number of cases that constitute the tragedy. An RUF rebel

severs a baby's hand from her little body: this is the tragedy. In Sierra Leone, this particular tragedy was repeated tens of thousands of times. A man from Rwanda knows that the woman who is trembling with panic in her eyes is not from his tribe: he takes up his machete and cuts apart the body of the woman. This is the tragedy. In Rwanda and Burundi, this tragedy was repeated tens of thousands – hundreds of thousands – of times. Each particular instance of the tragedy is a form of balkanizing and pulls individuals, groups, tribes and nations towards the diabolically divisive.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere wished to foreclose all possibilities of such a tragedy. He foresaw the intricate psychological and ethical link that must join together two principles that are fundamental to human development: one is freedom; the other is unity. Freedom and unity are necessary for individuals, families, villages, regions, countries, and even continents so that they may stabilize themselves as continuing sources of encouragement for every brother and sister within their purview. Freedom and unity are the atmosphere that today's human beings must breathe in order to engage in the universal pursuit of the authentic happiness for which God created them.

Mwl. Nyerere was convinced that people are free when they are able to accept the responsibility of choosing/electing who is going to govern them.<sup>8</sup> He believed that this freedom and this responsibility cohere with the human pursuit of happiness when all exercise their freedom for the purpose of seeking and constructing unity with their neighbours. When freedom and responsibility coalesce with concrete efforts to unify, the consequence is what Pope (St.) John Paul II called "solidarity". The consequence of solidarity is peace.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's argument for a Federation of East African countries highlights the principle of solidarity, i.e., that all are responsible for all.<sup>9</sup> Mwl. Nyerere expressed it this way:

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<sup>8</sup> J. NYERERE, "Freedom and Unity", 40.

<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis"* (30 Dec 1987), 38.

The balkanization of Africa is a source of weakness to our continent. The forces of imperialism and of neo-imperialism will find their own strength in this basic weakness of our continent. Surely, one would have expected that if we have a chance to undo part of the harm that has already been done by this balkanization of our continent, we would not hesitate in taking that chance. My contention is that our best chance of removing this balkanization of East Africa is a few months from now, after all countries have got elected governments.

... We have always been advocates of unity. In our Nationalist Organisations we have constantly warned ourselves against the snares of the imperialists whose policy is “divide and rule.” Whenever we have asked for our right to govern ourselves it has been the imperialist who has told us that we are not ready because we still have tribal, religious, communal and other differences. At the same time it has been the imperialist who has encouraged these divisions in order to continue to rule a weak and divided people. It is the fellow who fell into this snare of the “divide and rule” apostles whom we rightly regarded as a stooge of the imperialists.

When did this rule change? Are we now going to regard as true African Nationalists those who say we are not ready to unite? Are we now to regard them as our true heroes those who join the imperialists and the neo-imperialists in perpetuating the balkanization of East Africa? Are we going to regard as stooges those who are now carrying the battle for unity beyond those artificial boundaries created by the imperialists to more natural boundaries of our own creation?

The answers to these questions are obvious... Those of us who want to see a united East Africa as soon as a free choice can be made are being absolutely consistent. We have nothing to explain or apologize for ...

If we have a chance to bequeath to our children a free and united East Africa, should we treat that chance lightly, or take it seriously as all true patriots should?<sup>10</sup>

Mwl. Nyerere, therefore, looked forward with prophetic vision at an Africa that could live within the matrix of the family. As I have already indicated, he published this article in 1964; but the content of the article gives a prominent place to his noble-hearted plea to make 1961 the Year of Independence in Unity. This suggests that he crafted the article well before 1964.

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<sup>10</sup> J. NYERERE, *Freedom and Unity*, 41-42.

### 3. St. John Paul II and Mwl. Nyerere: Unity of Conviction

Even if 35 or 37 years separate the publication of his convictions from Pope St. John Paul II's incisive pleas for solidarity in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, it is not difficult to see that the Pope was enunciating ideas necessary for the implementation of the unity that Mwl. Nyerere envisioned. It had only been two years that Mwl. Nyerere put aside the reins of government, but his heart still burned zealously not only for Tanzania, but for Africa and for the world at the moment that the Pope published this encyclical. We may surmise that Mwl. Nyerere perceived with brotherly affection the Pope's staunch support of his desires for freedom and unity; and perhaps the Mwalimu's eyes even sparkled with profound joy when he acquainted himself with the Pope's elucidations concerning the marvellous array of grace and blessing that God infuses into the hearts and minds of those who take solidarity seriously, that is to say, as a top priority in their lives.

Throughout his pontificate, the Pope manifested to the world by his spoken and written words, by his decisions and by his daily actions, that there was one all-embracing conviction that anchored him in everything God revealed about the human person. He expressed this conviction when he was a bishop in his 1960 publication *Love and Responsibility*. He first stated it in a negative way: "The person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end."<sup>11</sup> In positive terms, he formulated his conviction as follows: "The person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love."<sup>12</sup> He consistently referred to this conviction throughout his life, both in its negative and positive expressions, as the "personalistic norm."

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, then, the Pope made some observations about actions and attitudes that are hostile to the will

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<sup>11</sup> K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willetts. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981 (originally published in Polish in 1960), 41.

<sup>12</sup> K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

of God, violate the personalistic norm and hence can become both absolutist and imperialist. Here is what the Pope said:

... Among the actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God, the good of neighbour and the “structures” created by them, two are very typical: on the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one’s will upon others. In order to characterize better each of these attitudes, one can add the expression: “at any price.” In other words, we are faced with the absolutizing of human attitudes with all its possible consequences...

Obviously, not only individuals fall victim to this double attitude of sin; nations and blocs can do so too... If certain forms of modern “imperialism” were considered in the light of these moral criteria, we would see that hidden behind certain decisions, apparently inspired only by economics or politics, are real forms of idolatry: of money, ideology, class, technology.<sup>13</sup>

Having specified the problem, the Pope hastens to point out that there is only one true foundation of an absolutely binding ethic: God’s will. Even if people, regions, or nations were not to live with an explicit faith, it would be hoped that they could understand the urgent need for responsibility in securing a more human life for their fellow human beings, in other words, in ensuring a full development of each individual and of all people. The Pope bears witness to a growing awareness of the interdependence among individuals and nations: it is this growing awareness of interdependence that stirs within the hearts of many people emotions, convictions, and a readiness to act upon hearing the news of injustices and violations of human rights committed in distant countries, countries which perhaps they will never visit and will always lie outside the range of their immediate experience.

It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is **solidarity**. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit

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<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 37.

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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. This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and "structures of sin" are only conquered – presupposing the help of divine grace – by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt. 10:40-42; 20:25; Mk. 10:42-45; Lk. 22: 25-27) ...

Solidarity helps us to see the "other" – whether a person, people, or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbour," a "helper" (cf. Gen. 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. Hence the importance of reawakening the religious awareness of individuals and peoples. Thus the exploitation, oppression and annihilation of others are excluded. These facts, in the present division of the world into opposing blocs, combine to produce the danger of war and an excessive preoccupation with personal security, often to the detriment of the autonomy, freedom of decision, and even the territorial integrity of the weaker nations situated within the so-called "areas of influence" or "safety belts" ...

The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.<sup>14</sup>

Both Pope John Paul II and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere were quite aware that individuals, peoples, and nations were going to have to change habits deeply imbedded in their cultural and religious mindsets if Africa and the world were to move towards the freedom and unity – the togetherness in peace – that both envisioned.

The alert reader will notice that among the words the Pope chose to explain his notion of solidarity are "neighbour," "helper," and "sharer... in the banquet of life." At the time of the writing of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Pope had already explained to the

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<sup>14</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38-39.

Church and to the world that the word “helper” designates the gift that God had in mind when he created the woman to be a companion for the man. Having made the decision, “I will create for him a helper,” God gave a most precious gift to Adam: that of a woman, Eve, and through her the sacred opportunity of uniting in a love that, full of procreative possibility, could bring forth a new human being, a child, also recognizable as a gift, as one who would grow and develop as a “helper” and a future “sharer” in the heavenly communion, identifiable as a “neighbour” to all his or her fellow human beings. True unity – authentic solidarity – is possible if each human being sees the “other” as a “helper” precisely with the purity of vision that Adam and Eve enjoyed when they discovered each other as a gift.

#### **4. We are to be Helpers and Sharers for Each Other**

In very concise fashion, the Pope cites the very verses of Genesis (2:18-20), that he placed at the centre of the analysis of what a man and a woman should be for each other not only in the state of marriage, but in the state of chaste friendship.<sup>15</sup> Each discovers oneself in the other within the freedom of the sacrificial gift of self. By their mutual self-giving, each becomes a “helper” for the other. When a husband and wife give themselves to each other with the intention of living for each other’s true good, for each other’s eternal happiness, anchoring their family within God’s gracious will, the unifying love that they express in marital intercourse leaves its imprint even physically on the child born of that mutual self-gift. As Pope St. John Paul explained in his General Audiences on the Original Unity of Man and Woman, the nuptial meaning of the human body reveals the person to be a gift for the other, and through union with the other, to be a creative source of life and goodness for the human family.

Pope St. John Paul does not fail to mention another issue that must be studied and resolved if solidarity is to be real rather than

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Original Unity of Man and Woman”, in *Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media 1997, 25-102.

feigned. That issue was also dear to the heart of Mwl. Nyerere. About what issue are we speaking? That of *work*.

Pope John Paul broaches the topic of working conditions that degrade the human person who is the subject of work. Solidarity among workers becomes imperative when the circumstances of employment degrade human subjects rather than affirming them in their dignity as persons. Solidarity is necessary to offset the tendency of the rich, powerful and influential to impoverish their employees not only through substandard wages but even more through long working hours and working conditions that are intolerable to physical and mental health. For some families and societies, unemployment seems to be an unavoidable prospect; and the human person feels his or her unemployment as a scourge to self-worth.

Whatever the condition or circumstance of the worker, there remains the inevitability of toil:

Toil is something that is universally known, for it is universally experienced. It is familiar not only to agricultural workers, who spend long days working the land, which sometimes "bears thorns and thistles", but also to those who work in mines and quarries, to steelworkers at their blast-furnaces, to those who work in builders' yards and in construction work, often in danger of injury or death. It is likewise familiar to those at an intellectual workbench; to scientists; to those who bear the burden of grave responsibility for decisions that will have a vast impact on society. It is familiar to doctors and nurses, who spend days and nights at their patients' bedside. It is familiar to women, who, sometimes without proper recognition on the part of society and even of their own families, bear the daily burden and responsibility for their homes and the upbringing of their children. *It is familiar to all workers* and, since work is a universal calling, it is familiar to everyone.

And yet, in spite of all this toil – perhaps, in a sense, because of it – work is a good thing for the human person... because through work he or she *not only transforms nature*, adapting it to his/her own needs, but he/she also *achieves fulfilment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes "more a human being."

... It is well known that it is possible to use work in various ways *against the human being*, that it is possible to punish the human person with the system of forced labour in concentration camps, that work can be made into a means for oppressing the person, and that in various ways it is possible to exploit human labour, that is to say the

worker. All this pleads in favour of the moral obligation to link industriousness as a virtue with the social order of work, which will enable the person to become, in work, “more a human being” and not be degraded by it not only because of the wearing out of his physical strength (which, at least up to a certain point, is inevitable), but especially through damage to the dignity and subjectivity that are proper to him or her.<sup>16</sup>

It is at this point that the Pope introduces the necessary center of concentration for all who are concerned about the rights and dignities of workers: the human family. It comes as no surprise that the Pope and Mwl. Nyerere fully harmonize with each other when it comes to the place of work in the family. The Pope expresses his convictions this way:

... Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of *family life*, which is a natural right and something that the human being is called to. These two spheres of values – one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life – must be properly united and must properly permeate each other. In a way, work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which man normally gains through work. Work and industriousness also influence the whole *process of education* in the family, for the very reason that everyone “becomes a human being” through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education.

... In fact, the family is simultaneously *a community made possible by work* and the first *school of work*, within the home, for every person.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. The Family: The First School of Freedom and Unity

Mwl. Nyerere’s understanding of the family weaves together in exquisite fashion three fundamental values of human life: love (the personalistic norm), sharing, and work. It is to be noted that these are precisely the values that define who human beings are for each other within the contours of God’s design: they are “helpers” for

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<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter “Laborem Exercens”* (14 Sep 1981), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*, 10.

each other, "gifts" for each other, and sharers both in the common burdens that they suffer together and in the material, educational, intellectual, and moral benefits that accrue from their shared labour.

Mwl. Nyerere espoused precisely the family values that seem to harmonize quite graciously with the lifestyle patterns required by the virtue of solidarity.

Every household in Tanzania is, or should be, well acquainted with Mwl. Nyerere's social ethics for the family:

... African family life was everywhere based on certain practices and attitudes which together meant basic equality, freedom and unity. It was these principles which virtually excluded the idea that one member of the extended family could kill another, or steal from another – it was not any special African virtue. And there were three vital factors to it. There was an attitude of mutual respect and obligation which bound the members together – an attitude which might be described as love, provided it is understood that this word does not imply romance, or even necessarily close personal affection. The property which is important to the family, and thus to the individual members of it, is held in common. And every member of the family accepts the obligation to work.

These three principles weld the family into a unit which is so obviously important to the individual members that each individual thinks of himself, and of others, in the framework of their membership of the unit. A man or woman knows that he or she is a unique person with private desires. But he also knows that his actions must, for his own good, be restricted to those which are consistent with the good of his social unit – his family. The institution of the family, and its procedures, then encourage that attitude of respect and mutual obligation, and through these means there is created a society which can be harmonious and beneficial for all members equally.<sup>18</sup>

Sharing is paramount:

It is, and must be, 'our' house, 'our' food, 'our' land, for only under these conditions can equality exist among the members. Personal property does, of course, exist and is accepted. But it takes second place in the order of things. Certainly no member of the family goes short of food or shelter in order that personal property may be acquired by another member. It is family property which matters, both

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<sup>18</sup> J. NYERERE, *Freedom and Unity: Uhuru na Umoja*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1966, 10-11.

to the family as such and to the individuals in the family. And because it is family property all members have an equal right to a share in its use, and all have a right to participate in the process of sharing – in so far as time has not created its own acceptable divisions. Indeed, so strong is this concept of ‘sharing’ that even in relation to private property there develops an expectation of use in case of need; the distinction, however, remains. In the case of family property each individual has a right; in the case of private property there may be an expectation but there is no automatic right.

... Yet, as it was the right of sharing which served to maintain and strengthen the social unit and make it worth-while to all its members, so there was a corresponding common duty. Every member of the social unity had the obligation to contribute to the pool of things which were to be shared – in other words, every member of the family was expected to work and accepted the responsibility of working... the obligation to work is a recognized part of society, as unquestioned as the right of sharing. If one member appears to be doing less than is warranted by his size and strength, it will be made clear to him in no uncertain fashion that he is not doing enough. He may not agree or he may be discontented with the type of work demanded of him; but he will not question the right of his family to demand work... His equality with other members of the society, his interest in them and their interest in him – all these things he recognizes. And he will accept, at least in theory, that without this universal acceptance of an obligation to work the social unit itself, and he as a member of it, will suffer.<sup>19</sup>

Mirroring Mwl. Nyerere’s conviction about sharing, Archbishop Desmond Tutu offers a concise synthesis of what a human person is from the African point of view – a synthesis that dovetails meaningfully with precious insights that pour forth from the soul of Pope St. John Paul II as he ponders solidarity and its necessity for a person to become human.

This is what Archbishop Tutu has to say:

[Ubuntu] speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu,” “Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu.” Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.” It is not, “I think therefore I am.” It

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<sup>19</sup> J. NYERERE, *Uhuru na Umoja*, 11-14.

says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.<sup>20</sup>

In *The Acting Person*, Pope St. John Paul expresses precisely the same conviction when he discusses solidarity and the notion of "neighbour". I live by the virtue of solidarity when I remain constantly ready to accept and realize my share in the community because I am a member of that particular community. It must be emphasized, however, that when I accept the attitude of solidarity, I do what I am supposed to do not only because of my membership in the group, not only because I belong to the family, but because I have the benefit of all in view: I am doing it for the common good. My awareness of the common good leads me to look beyond my particular share in the community. The Pope explains:

That acute sense of the needs of the community which distinguishes the attitude of solidarity brings out over and above any particularism or divisions its trait of complementarity: this consists in the readiness of every member of a community to "complement" by his or her action what is done by other members of the community. The trait of complementarity is in a way an intrinsic element in the very nature of participation... Complementarity helps explain why we see in the attitude of solidarity an intrinsic manifestation of participation as a property of the person. It is this attitude that allows the human being to find self-fulfilment in complementing others.

...The human person is capable not only of partaking in the life of a community, of being and acting together with others, but he or she is also capable of participating in the humanity of others. It is on this ability to participate in the humanity of every human being that all participation in a community is based and it is there that it receives its personal meaning. This is what is ultimately contained in the notion of **neighbour**.

... Participation is closely associated with both the community and the personalistic value. This is precisely why it cannot be manifested solely by membership in some community but through membership

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<sup>20</sup> D. TUTU, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday 1999, 31.

must reach to the humanity of every man, woman and child. Only because of the share in humanity itself, which is indicated in the notion of neighbour, does the dynamic property of participation attain its personal depth as well as universal dimension. Only then can we claim that participation serves not just the fulfilment of some individual person, but that it also serves the fulfilment of every person in the community, indeed, *because* of his membership in the community. We may also say that this participation serves the fulfilment of persons in any community in which human beings act and exist. The ability to share in the humanity itself of every person is the very core of all participation and the condition of the personalistic value of all acting and existing “together with others.”<sup>21</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II emphasizes the fact that participation involves the efficacious act that a human being chooses to perform according to the norms of truth while integrating his or her own somatic and emotional experience into the choice. The choice involves integrating: the choice, in other words, governs determinations concerning physical activity including eating, drinking, sleeping, manual work, and marital acts of love; and the choice governs the intensity and type of emotions that pull at the person’s heart and nerves. The choice to act, then, fulfils the person. But at the same time this choice and the ensuing action is an “acting together with others.”

Each person is free in his or her choice: the person exists for his/her own sake. Each person is self-determining in the choice: the choice corresponds to his or her vocation and state of life. Yet the choice is also cohering with the aspirations and choices of others to fulfil themselves according to the norms of truth. I am myself when I am with others.

I am fulfilling myself as a free, good human being when I contribute to the group’s fulfilment as a community – a family –

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<sup>21</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Acting Person*, with unpublished corrections by the author. Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University of Steubenville. Because I was using this unpublished manuscript with the Pope’s handwritten corrections, my wording is a bit different from the published version translated by A. Potocki. (New York: Reidel 1979). The Pope actually changed the page numbering but since this corrected manuscript is rather inaccessible to the general public, I kept the numbering of the Potocki translation. This particular citation is from pages 342, 350-351.

of human beings. I find my personal fulfilment precisely in the progress that others in the community are making to fulfil themselves as free human beings worthy of dignity and respect. The consequent harmony of all those who participate in the pursuit of the common good is a harmony that corresponds to the conviction: *I am truly myself when you are truly yourself. I am freely myself when I am indeed 'for you' – i.e., when I freely make of myself a gift for you. When you develop, I develop. When you anchor your life in a thoughtful hope for the future, I live my togetherness with you by anchoring my life in that very same hope.* What the Pope means by solidarity with the one who is a “helper,” a “sharer,” and a “neighbour” harmonizes symphonically with Archbishop Tutu’s explanation of Ubuntu and with Mwl. Nyerere’s transparent emphasis on sharing as a focal fundamental family value.

On the fortieth anniversary of the World Day of Peace, the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI punctuated in a manner that is wonderfully creative the insights of these leaders who preceded him:

The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together a new family. But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one human family...

The social community, if it is to live in peace, is also called to draw inspiration from the values on which the family community is based. This is as true for local communities as it is for national communities; it is also true for the international community itself, for the human family which dwells *in that common house which is the earth*. Here, however, we cannot forget that the family comes into being from the responsible and definitive “yes” of a man and a woman, and it continues to live from the conscious “yes” of the children who gradually join it. The family community, in order to prosper, needs the generous consent of all its members. This realization also needs to become a shared conviction on the part of all those called to form the *common human family*. We need to say our own “yes” to this vocation which God has inscribed in our very nature.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 1, 6.

It must be said at this point that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Pope St. John Paul II are not the only voices that speak of these fundamental values that weave human beings together into a family. There is another voice that offers the criterion for deciding what is human or what is not human, what holds the family together in unity and solidarity and what divides the family. Indeed it is the voice of the One who defines, creates, sustains and fulfils the human family in the full variety of its dimensions. Who is this voice? It is God.

It is the nature of love to give. When a person receives a beautiful gift, a gift that the giver has obviously measured with thoughtfulness and grace, the receiver has no qualms about concluding: I am loved. When the receiver responds with gratitude – whether it is by word, gesture, or a gift in return – the giver may dispel all doubts from his or her mind and conclude: I am appreciated. I, too, am loved. Now let us consider what God has to say about gift-giving.

In the state of original innocence, the human person recognizes himself to be in partnership with God.<sup>23</sup> When God wishes him to seek and choose a being who is “fit for him” – “a helper” – he already understands that God intends to give him a gift that he would be able to appreciate and cherish. He expresses this partnership with God when he accepts as a gift the woman who is “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.” It is obviously a joyful moment for Adam when he sees Eve within the truth, the beauty and the goodness of the God who gave her existence. In their togetherness, the first man and the first woman complete the image and likeness of the Triune God. Just as the Father and the Son live their unity in the Holy Spirit, the first man and the first woman live their unity in the mutual love and joy that they experience in each other’s company.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Original Unity of Man and Woman”, 57-72. Within these pages, John Paul explains not only that fact that the first human beings are living within a milieu that is totally gift, but also that they understand each other to be a gift from God, a gift for each other. They are most themselves when they are in unity with each other. It is this unity that makes them an image and likeness of God.

Adam and Eve live their union not only on the level of physicality but even more so on the level of their interiority. From within their interior life they recognize each other to be truly created "for each other." To think of his existence independently of this "for each other" is not an option that Adam considers. Similarly to think of her existence independently of this "for each other" is not an option that Eve considers. They behold each other in the self-revelation inscribed in their bodies and they recognize each other to be persons.

They recognize each other by means of the nuptial meaning of the body. What does this expression, "the nuptial meaning of the body," mean? The nuptial meaning of the body is precisely this: the body expresses by its very constitution the fact that this is a person "for" the other meant to enjoy a unity of love with the other in the freedom of self-gift to each other. By its nuptial meaning, the body also expresses the fact that the freedom of the mutual self-gift is a creative freedom: the body expresses the maternal potential of the mother and the paternal potential of the father. Genesis 2:24 seems to punctuate a reality where the man leaves his family to cling to his wife – a free decision to give himself so completely to the woman that they both become one flesh. The dynamic of the verse seems to indicate, too, that Eve makes a fully free gift of herself when she clings to her husband in loving unity.

God intends this loving unity to be a creative unity: just as God created them in his image and likeness, they are to procreate a child in their image and likeness. The child not only bears a physical resemblance to each parent; the child also bears an imprint on his or her soul of the love – or lack of it – that the parents expressed towards each other at the moment of marital intercourse. If the parents give themselves to each other as a gift, the child will feel that he or she has entered the world as a gift. The child will feel his or her uniqueness, irreplaceability and irreducibility. The child will feel himself or herself to be a fully living person, intended by God for his or her own sake.

This is the reality that the Neo-Thomist Edith Stein expressed so succinctly:

The child is the fruit of mutual self-giving and, more than that: it is the very embodiment of the 'gift.' Each of the two spouses receives in the child an 'image' of his or her own being as well as the gift of the other spouse's being. The gift (i.e., the child) is a third person, an independent creature and, as a 'creature' in the full sense of the word, a gift of God. Is there a further possibility of knowing what this creature receives, at the moment of conception, immediately from God, and what it receives mediately from its parents? Does the new structure, which owes its corporeal existence to the common generative will of the parents, receive from them also the form of its soul, a form that corresponds to the particular individuality that is alive in the generative act and to the particular nature of the parents' oneness [*Einssein*]? Or with the soul of the child, does God *give* to the parents a gift proportionate to their nature, in the manner he gave to the first male a proportionate female companion?

... Like Mary, every human mother is called to be mother with her whole soul, so as to pour the abundant riches of her soul into the soul of her child. And the more of the nature of the spouse she has in loving self-surrender received into her own self, the more the individuality of the child through her mediatorship, will be co-determined by the individuality of the father.<sup>24</sup>

If the parents were not expecting or wanting a child, the child can feel unwanted even years later. If the parents were using each other and not giving themselves to each other in the free, mutual gift of self, the child may grow with the utilitarian attitude that the

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<sup>24</sup> E. STEIN, *Finite and Eternal Being, An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*. Washington, DC: ICS Publications 2002, 515-517. This particular citation finds its way into many articles that discuss the human person as a gift proceeding from love – God's love and the parents' love. See, for example, J. GIBSON, "Philosophy's Point of Closure: Kadiatu and Mama Princess as African Progenitors of Hope", *Africa Tomorrow* 17/1 (2015) 23-54. The citation derives its impact from the growing awareness that the attitudes of love and self-gift that motivate the unitive dimension of marital intercourse exercise a mysterious but real influence on the soul of the child even from the moment of conception. Similarly, and tragically, a utilitarian attitude on the part of the man or the woman that seeks to enjoy the other person as a sexual object and so disgrace the other person (usually the woman) can exercise an impact on the child who may feel that he or she is an unwanted side effect of an act of sexual intercourse. This observation becomes extraordinarily meaningful for the case of Sister Lucy that I will discuss shortly.

human person, if apparently an obstruction to one's longing for self-satisfaction, is dispensable.

## **6. Are We Living Within God's Vision of the Human Family?**

In the state of original innocence, Adam and Eve were not utilitarians. The fact that they were living entirely within the ethos of mutual self-gift, a self-gift that was complete in its transparent love and trust... the fact that they were a mutual self-gift for each other justified the peace that they enjoyed within the hidden recesses of their hearts. When they saw each other in their nakedness, they knew they were destined to be a free, lifelong gift of creative love for each other. They were to become one flesh within the freedom and the creativity of the gift, and so they were feeling no shame (cf. Genesis 2:25). They were living within a state of holiness that placed them within God's vision: God beheld them in their nakedness, and he was not ashamed that he created them. They were very good.

Is he ashamed that he created us? That depends upon our fidelity to the personalistic norm in everything that we are sensing, feeling, thinking, understanding, willing, deciding, and doing. The love that Adam and Eve manifested fully in their communion with each other – the love and the grace that came forth from God – is the same love that acts in a supremely redemptive manner to free us from our reluctance to entrust ourselves to God and to each other with freedom, peace and joy.

The human person cannot give God strict justice because everything that the human person has received – the existence of the universe, the existence of the natural order, his or her own existence – remains in the nature of gift. To give God "his due" is impossible for the human person. Justice, however, is not the foundation upon which God relates to the human person. God's justice proceeds from his love: he is the eternally creative Being, whose goodness is diffusive of itself. His very essence is to be active love. The very notion of "gift" alerts the human person to the fundamental reality that his or her relationship to God is a love that is always in act. The personalistic norm does not originate with Pope St. John Paul II but rather originates with God. Love is the

only appropriate attitude towards a person; and, as a Trinity of Persons eternally in communion with each other, God is the absolutely perfect Personal Being.

The person who is really human loves God; his or her very existence as a gift requires the human person to give himself in love to God the Creator by living the vocation appropriate to him or her in the order of persons. Living one's vocation is to participate in God's vision of what the human person is supposed to look like: someone who participates in God's own creative power. To love is to create: and to love creatively is to accept the natural order, including and especially the order of persons, as God's precious gift. To be in solidarity with every person, i.e., with the wholehearted conviction that each and every person is someone whom God has given to me to be my brother, my sister – to engage myself fully in a lifestyle of solidarity is to become a truly human person.

The originator/designer of the order of persons is God. If we were to probe the word of God that reveals to us our origins, our beginnings, we would not fail to notice that God places a particular emphasis on spousal love. Adam and Eve are an image and likeness of the triune God in their fidelity to each other as spouses.

Spouses participate in God's creative activity by making of themselves a reciprocal, total self-gift to each other. The "self" that the man gives to his wife is one whom God has created as a potential father. Similarly the "self" that the woman gives to her husband is one whom God has created as a potential mother. God exercises his love by creating, redeeming and sanctifying human persons. Spouses understand by the very nature of their love in its masculine and feminine dimensions that they truly help each other to be who they are when they remain open to their procreative potential and then help to develop the interiority of the children they have created by continuing to love each other in the manner of self-sacrificing self-donation.<sup>25</sup> Through the parents' love for each other, the child begins to see what God's redeeming and sanctifying love looks like.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYLA, *Love and Responsibility*, 224-228.

The parents' very being as a "we," as a united co-subject, becomes a "yes" to the Creator-God when their love expresses itself according to their identity as lovers with the will to create. God does not only give them the will to maintain each other as goods already in existence: they can creatively and freely bestow upon each other new goods. The one who mirrors their mutual love and their mutual self-gift is the one who proceeds precisely from their "we" – from their "one-fleshness", namely, their child.

Whatever the vocation may be, one gives justice to the Creator when one recognizes that fidelity to the natural order as God has intended it, is at the very same time, a continuing act of one's fidelity to oneself and to his fellow human beings as participants in the vision of God, who always beholds that the order he has created is very good. To intentionally obstruct this order – for example, by defiling the procreative potential of marital love through the use of contraceptives – would be an insult to the Love that created it. Because it is a defiance of the Creator's sovereignty, such obstruction probably deserves to be called a sacrilege. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the respect we need to have for the Creator, i.e., the attitude of responsibility we must have before God:

We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters. Consequently, it is essential that we should all be committed to living our lives in an attitude of responsibility before God, acknowledging him as the deepest source of our own existence and that of others. By going back to this supreme principle we are able to perceive the unconditional worth of each human being, and thus to lay the premises for building a humanity at peace. Without this transcendent foundation society is a mere aggregation of neighbours, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family.<sup>26</sup>

You, dear reader, may have been asking yourself, "What is the link between the creative love that a man and a woman share with each other as spouses, on the one hand, and, on the other, the pursuit of freedom, unity, solidarity, and the formation of one

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<sup>26</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace* (1 Jan 2008), 6.

global human family that motivates the social ethics of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Pope St. John Paul II and Archbishop Desmond Tutu?”

One link is this: by the descriptions that the word of God offers us in the Book of Genesis, we may open our eyes to the fact that the social values at play are not unreachable ideals. Quite to the contrary they are the fundamental reality of human society *before* human beings make the choice to mistrust God and each other. This is why Mwl. Nyerere was simply giving a forthright response to those who were inclined to accuse his manner of thinking as “idealistic”. Those who were doing the accusing pointed out that it is quite difficult to be a family if you do not even know the people in your own social groups. How can one expect a realistic fidelity on the part of all men, women and children to perennially traditional African family values if the social groups are so large that people fail to consider themselves to be a family? Mwl. Nyerere’s response:

This criticism is nonsensical. Social principles are, by definition, ideals at which to strive and by which to exercise self-criticism. The question to ask is not whether they are capable of achievement, which is absurd, but whether a society of free men can do without them. Like democracy, they are easier to approximate to in smaller societies than in large ones. But like democracy, they remain equally valid for both small and large societies – for both traditional and modern Africa.

It was not innate goodness which promoted and maintained these principles in traditional Africa. They continued because the whole system of education taught them and supported them. They were, and mostly still are in relation to the family, the basic values which a child absorbs from his parents, his elder relations and the whole social organization. The child is indoctrinated with these concepts in practical terms; he is told ‘that is your share’, ‘go to your brother’ ... And he is criticized and punished if he disregards the courtesies due to other members of the social group, or fails to share the remaining food with a late-comer, or ignores the small duties entrusted to him. The young man and the young woman are taught these principles again in their tribal initiation. The principles, without being analysed, permeate and form the purpose of the whole educational system of the tribal society.

... The ideal has never yet been attained; it may never be. But the fact that murders continue in every society does not prevent every

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society trying to eliminate them, to reduce their causes and discourage the expression of man's violent instincts. Similarly, in regard to the wider purposes of society; we have to organize our institutions and build attitudes which promote universal human dignity and social equality. In other words we have to promote the growth, and encourage the expression, of the attitude which asks a particular kind of question when considering decisions. The question "What profit would I myself get?" must be socially discouraged; it must be replaced by the question 'What benefit, and what loss, will be obtained by the people who make up this society?'

... We have to work towards a position where each person realizes that his rights in society – above the basic needs of every human being – must come second to the overriding need of human dignity for all; and we have to establish the kind of social organization which reduces personal temptations above that level to a minimum.

The spreading of such attitudes and the introduction of such institutions must be an important purpose of the policies of the Government of Tanzania.

Mwl. Nyerere's overriding concern that the self-centred desire for profit and the insistence on services for oneself may eclipse the traditional African respect for human dignity enrooted in the three family principles of love, sharing and work – i.e., his concern that a brash individualist utilitarianism might outshine and even eclipse the personalistic norm – carries us to a juncture that requires a realistic assessment, on axiological grounds, of the current social trends. In short, in the Africa of today, is balkanizing a threat not to be taken lightly? Or may we face the future with the conviction that balkanizing tendencies are not really intruding upon the depths of the African soul?

It is to be remembered that the tragedy of violating social principles of love, sharing and work – a tragedy that breeds sadness and frustration with direct acts of balkanization – is not to be calculated in terms of numbers. How often? How widespread? These points of interrogation do not measure the tragedy. The tragedy is that one human being has violated the value of love, has scorned the value of sharing, has avoided his or her duty to serve others by working. The tragedy is that the choice to disdain these principles has pushed one African youth into a perverse lifestyle. This tragedy multiplies when many African young people follow the same perverse pattern.

In *The 2<sup>nd</sup> South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008* South Africa's Medical Research Council (MRC), in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Education in South Africa, issued statistics for a number of youth risk-related behaviours including sexual behaviour outside of marriage.<sup>27</sup> Learners from grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 constituted the study sample; all learners were selected from public schools in the nine provinces of South Africa. The total number of schools sampled were 251, which amounts to about 28 schools per province. All in all, 10,270 learners participated.

The Survey reports that 39.5 percent of 16-year-old teenagers already had united with each other in at least one act of sexual intercourse. Those who were 18 or 19 years old who had already experienced an act of sexual intercourse outnumbered those who did not (50.7 percent for 18-year-old teenagers and 57.9 percent for 19-year-old teenagers). If you belonged to the 13-year-old age group, there was an 18.8 percent chance that you had already united yourself with a partner of the opposite sex in an act of sexual intercourse. In all cases the males who reported having an experience of sexual intercourse outnumbered the females. This would seem to mean that the females involved in this kind of sexual activity were giving themselves to more than one male partner. It could also mean that females felt too much shame to disclose that they were sexually active.

How many teenagers had already introduced violence into their intimate relationships? This same survey reports that among 14-year-old teenagers who had experienced sexual intercourse, 11.9% had procured an abortion or had a partner who procured an abortion.

When we put the survey to one side for the moment and probe with more rigour into what is happening between men and women in South Africa, we reach the sad conclusion: there is indeed a severe Balkanizing happening precisely within male-female relationships. The sexual misconduct outside of marriage is not

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<sup>27</sup> S.P. REDDY – *al.*, *Uthente Uhlaba Usamila – The South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2008*. Cape Town: South African Medical Research Council, 2010, especially pp. 30-33. All the data reported here are from this document.

leading to a lifelong commitment of mutual trust and loving fidelity. It is anti-love, anti-sharing, anti-work – a true laziness of the will that does not want to make the moral effort to fulfill one's duty towards precisely the person God has given as a gift.

A man and a woman who may be married, may be cohabiting, may be associating themselves sexually with each other as they meet from time to time, may be saying to each other that they will marry in the future... individuals who are manifesting in their behaviour that for one reason or another they are attracted to each other and want to be with each other... it is precisely this relationship that society calls "intimate" that has become the occasion of violent death for one of the partners, usually the woman.

The most thought-provoking reports are coming from South Africa's experts. I am referring to the reports that concerned, intelligent and forthright forensic and medical experts are promulgating after extremely cautious and rigorous analysis. Shanaaz Matthews, Naeemah Abrahams and Rachel Jewkes of the Gender and Health Research Group in the Medical Research Council (MRC) of Tygerberg Hospital, the second largest hospital of South Africa; Lorna Martin of the Division of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at the University of Cape Town; Lisa Vetten of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation; and Lize van der Merwe of the Biostatistics Unit of the Medical Research Council at Tygerberg Hospital reported in a 2004 MRC Policy Brief that in 1999, 1,349 women were killed by an intimate partner: this is approximately four women per day, one woman every six hours. They defined intimate femicide as the killing of a female person by an intimate partner, i.e., her current or ex-husband or boyfriend, same sex partner, or a rejected would-be lover.

With a new biostatistician, Carl Lombard, on board and without the services of Lisa Vetten, the same researchers reported in a 2012 Research Brief that in 2009 the number of female deaths from intimate partner violence had decreased to 1024, one death per every six hours, but this decrease did not reach statistical significance. In other words, because the decrease was not sizable, it could have been due to factors unrelated to an actual moral improvement within intimate relationships.

In a 2014 article, Lisa Vetten, who had become the Director of the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, the specialist adviser on gender-based violence to the Commission for Gender Equality, and an honorary Research Associate at the University of Witwatersrand indicated that the 1999 statistic meant that the rate of killings of female intimate partners was six times the global average. The 2009 statistic indicates a rate that is five times the global average.

The provocative conclusion: the spousal love for which God had given the woman to the man, the love by which the man and the woman were to entrust themselves to each other as a mutual self-gift, a love that would not fade even if amorous feelings or physical vigor declined with the years, a love replete with the desire to be responsible for the other's happiness, the love that was to be the source of the family, its growth not only physically, but in freedom, wisdom, grace, peace, and harmony, this love had turned into disdain, contempt, resentment, jealousy, rejection, and murder. How can a nation breathe the sweet, life-giving breath of freedom and unity, if precisely those relationships that should enjoy unity and trust – the bride and groom relationship, the relationship between parents, the relationship between two people who promise to love and honor each other for the whole of their life span, the relationship between two teenagers who promise to remain friends – become the milieu for sexual exploitation and coercion, physical and emotional manipulation, lust, sensuality, fornication, betrayal, mistrust, disillusionment, deception, discouragement, and death?

## **7. Balkanizing the Woman**

I offer you a startling example from the Balkans – startling because one human being chose to treat another human being as a throwaway rather than respect her and care for her with kindness.

I am Lucy, one of the young nuns raped by the Serbian soldiers. I am writing to you, Mother, after what happened to my sisters Tatiana, Sandria, and me.

Allow me not to go into the details of the act. There are some experiences in life so atrocious that you cannot tell them to anyone but God, in whose service I had consecrated my life nearly a year ago.

My drama is not so much the humiliation that I suffered as a woman, not the incurable offense committed against my vocation as

a religious, but the difficulty of having to incorporate into my faith an event that certainly forms part of the mysterious will of [Jesus Christ] whom I have always considered my Divine Spouse.

Only a few days before, I had read "Dialogues of Carmelites" and spontaneously I asked our Lord to grant me the grace of joining the ranks of those who died a martyr for Him. God took me at my word, but in such a horrid way! Now I find myself lost in the anguish of internal darkness. He has destroyed the plans of my life, which I considered definitive and uplifting for me, and He has set me all of a sudden in this design of His that I feel incapable of grasping.

Someone... grabbed me one night, a night I wish never to remember, tore me off from myself, and tried to make me his own...

It was already daytime when I awoke and my first thought was the agony of Christ in the Garden. Inside of me a terrible battle unleashed. I asked myself why God had permitted me to be rent, destroyed precisely in what had been the meaning of my life, but also I asked to what new vocation he was calling me.

I strained to get up, and helped by Sister Josefina, I managed to straighten myself out. Then the sound of the bell of the Augustinian convent, which was right next to ours, reached my ears. It was time for nine o'clock Morning Prayer.

I made the Sign of the Cross and began reciting in my head the liturgical hymn. *At this hour upon Golgotha's heights/ Christ, the true Paschal Lamb/ paid the price of our salvation.*

What is my suffering, Mother, and the offense I received compared to the suffering and the offense of the one for whom I had a thousand times sworn to give my life? I spoke these words slowly, very slowly: *May your will be done, above all now that I have nowhere to go and that I can only be sure of one thing: You are with me.*

Mother, I am writing not in search of consolation, but so that you can help me give thanks to God for having associated me with the thousands of my fellow compatriots whose honour has been violated, and who are compelled to accept a maternity not wanted. My humiliation is added to theirs, and since I have nothing else to offer in expiation for the sin committed by those unnamed violators and for the reconciliation of the two embittered peoples, I accept this dishonor that I suffered and I entrust it to the mercy of God.

... In these last months I have been crying a stream of tears for my two brothers who were assassinated by the same aggressors who go around terrorizing our towns, and I was thinking that it was not possible for me to suffer anything worse, so far from my imagination had been what was about to take place.

Every day hundreds of hungry people used to knock at the door of our convent, shivering from the cold, with despair in their eyes. Some weeks ago, a young boy about eighteen years old said to me: *How lucky you are to have chosen a refuge where no evil can reach you.* The boy carried in his hands the Islamic beads for praying the Ninety-Nine Divine Titles. Then he added: *You will never know what it means to be disgraced.*

I pondered his words at length and convinced myself that there had been a hidden element to the sufferings of my people that had escaped me – I was almost ashamed to be so excluded. Now I am one of them, one of the many unknown women of my people, whose bodies have been devastated and hearts seared. The Lord had admitted me into his mystery of shame. What is more, for me, a religious, He has accorded me the privilege of being acquainted with evil in the depths of its diabolical force.

I know that from now on the words of encouragement and consolation that I can offer from my poor heart will be all the more credible, because my story is their story, and my resignation, sustained in faith, at least a reference, if not example for their moral and emotional responses...

That night, when the Serbs terrorized me for hours and hours...

Everything has passed, Mother, but everything begins. In your telephone call... you posed me a very direct question: *What will you do with the life that has been forced into your womb? ...* I had already decided: *I will be a mother.* The child will be mine and no one else's. I know that I could entrust him to other people, but he – though I neither asked for him nor expected him – he has a right to my love as his mother. A plant should never be torn from its roots. The grain of wheat fallen in the furrow has to grow there, where the mysterious, though sinful, sower threw it...

I will go with my child. I do not know where, but God, who dispelled all of a sudden my greatest joy, will *indicate the path* I must tread in order to do *His Will*...

Someone has to begin to break the chain of hatred that has always destroyed our countries. And so, *I will teach my child only one thing: love. This child, born of violence, will be a witness along with me that the only greatness that gives honour to a human being is forgiveness.*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> I received the transmission of the letter in New York in the year 1999 from Fr. Peter Hopkins, L.C. I am citing the letter from a book I published:

A woman ruthlessly severed from her self-identity? Yes. A woman who plots and schemes within her heart to get revenge and so continue the balkanizing of her region and ultimately of the entire human family on the face of the globe? No.

She accepts the gift God has given her: the gift of a child. She does not mince words when she describes how she is going to raise the child whose face probably bears a resemblance to the sexual predator who could have murdered her and yet bears a resemblance to her own face who at the moment of the child's beginning was writhing in agony, resisting with all her might the sexual thrusts of the enemy. She and her child will be God's message to the world that freedom and unity are only possible through a lifestyle of forgiveness.

From where does the power of forgiveness come? It may be remembered that in a recent issue of *Africa Tomorrow*, an article about hope cited a conviction emanating from the heart of Soren Kierkegaard, a conviction reflected not only in the Christian Scriptures but in the ecclesial practice of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the sacrament of reconciliation. The conviction is this: the quality that most distinguishes God from human beings is his power and desire to eliminate our sins through forgiveness: "As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins."<sup>29</sup>

God unleashes this power by accepting on to himself all the suffering that we have occasioned by our sins, not only our sexual sins and sins of violence, but also our sins of arrogance, greed, sloth, envy, lust in all its forms, anger, and the frantic search for quick consolation (e.g., gluttony) at the expense of the neighbour deprived of dignity.

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J. GIBSON – *al.*, *Compassion in the Heart of the World*. New York: Xlibris 2005, 145-149.

<sup>29</sup> S. KIERKEGAARD, *The Sickness unto Death*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1941, 141. Kierkegaard published this book originally in 1849 under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus.

Who is your neighbour? Who is the one who has deliberately chosen to be deprived of dignity, that you may inhale the breath of freedom and unity, the breath that forgiveness restores to the human race? It is Jesus Christ, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. History flows solemnly and gratefully with scholars and saints who have assured us of the truth that in Jesus Christ, God has become our neighbour and has really suffered in his human body and human soul, and that in Jesus Christ, God has really arisen from the dead in his human body in order to restore to us freedom, unity and peace. These saints and scholars wrote with the awareness of what Mwl. Nyerere had been exhorting his people to do: live responsibly by loving with the love that is capable of suffering.

True love does not abide in feelings. Love abides in the will, specifically, in the will that is ready to suffer everything necessary to usher the beloved into the interior peace engendered by a truly intimate, mutually self-giving communion of persons; and a will that is ready to persist in its love until the beloved enters the vestibules of eternal joy.

In order to open the door of the human heart to this responsible, suffering love, Pope St. John Paul II integrated the norms of creative drama and meditative truth in his production, *The Jeweller's Shop*. Within the drama-meditation, there lives a married couple, Stefan and Anna, who suffer estrangement from each other. Anna knows that she cannot find shelter in Stefan's heart; Stefan cannot find a home in her heart. They are in intimate partnership without the intimacy.

Love, however, beckons to Anna from the Truth, Jesus Christ, who has chosen to be the Bridegroom that comes in the lonely, forbidding darkness of the night (Mt. 25:6-13). Just as the virgins in the parable await the Bridegroom's arrival, in the depth of the night of her personal disappointment and loneliness, Anna hears the call, "The Bridegroom has arrived!" Anna is feeling the fresh breeze, full of promise, a night breeze that carries a mysterious joy. She wants to see the face of the Bridegroom. She wants to behold Jesus Christ. A witness to the Truth, Adam by name, reminds Anna that those who really love are the ones who suffer. She is no exception. Ready to suffer but nevertheless quite buoyant in her

expectations, Anna does what she can to catch a glimpse of the Bridegroom's face. *The Bridegroom is the very person who has provoked her painful plight: it is her husband Stefan. Jesus, the Bridegroom, has chosen to visit Anna by opening her eyes to her own husband.*

You do not know how deeply you are mine, how much you belong to my love and my suffering – because to love means to give life through death – because to love means to let gush a spring of the water of life into the depths of the soul, which burns or smoulders, and cannot burn out. Ah, the flame and the spring. You don't feel the spring but are consumed by the flame. Is that not so?<sup>30</sup>

Anna, in other words, experiences Jesus' Final Judgment: "Whatever you did to the least one, to the one who is my brother, you did it to me."<sup>31</sup> When the Bridegroom comes at last, in the dead of night, Anna discovers that the Bridegroom who has come, Jesus, is at the same time the husband, Stefan, who will meet her at the Last Judgment.

Stefan is the one who is hungry for her love, thirsty for her forgiveness, naked from lack of dignity before her eyes, and without a home in the confines of her soul. Jesus, her Redeemer, is the Bridegroom who has chosen to unite to himself Stefan in his hunger and thirst for a new love. "In the Bridegroom's face each of us finds a similarity to the faces of those with whom love has entangled us on this side of life."<sup>32</sup>

What kind of a future lies in store for the men who have balkanized the very women with whom they should have been in mutual love and trust? In *The Jeweller's Shop*, Adam understands the Holy Spirit's power to invigorate within Anna's soul the love that is capable of suffering, and therefore worthy of Jesus.

It is quite noticeable in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus spoke in chapter 25 of the Bridegroom's coming and the Bridegroom's

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<sup>30</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Jeweller's Shop*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 25:40. See J. RATZINGER (Pope Benedict XVI), *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press 1993, 28, for an explanation of the fact that Jesus does not seem to identify himself with the "least ones" as a subset of his brethren; rather he identifies himself with the least ones who comprise the totality of his brothers and sisters.

<sup>32</sup> *The Jeweller's Shop*, 49. Cf. Matthew 25:31-46.

compassionate identification with the least brother and sister from within his anticipation that three days later he would suffer a most painful love on the cross (Matt 26:2). Pope St. John Paul speaks of the love at work in the Passion:

Thus there is a paradoxical mystery of love: in Christ there suffers a God who has been rejected by his own creature: “They do not believe in me!”; but at the same time, from the depth of this suffering – and indirectly from the depth of the very sin “of not having believed” – the Spirit draws a new measure of the gift made to man and to creation from the beginning. In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is in God himself.

The Holy Spirit as Love and Gift comes down, in a certain sense, into the very heart of the sacrifice which is offered on the Cross. Referring here to the biblical tradition, we can say: He consumes this sacrifice with the fire of the love which unites the Son with the Father in the Trinitarian communion. And since the sacrifice of the Cross is an act proper to Christ, also in this sacrifice he “receives” the Holy Spirit. He receives the Holy Spirit in such a way that afterwards – and he alone with God the Father – can “give him” to the Apostles, to the Church, to humanity.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Jeweller’s Shop*, the voice of Truth seems to invite everyone to entrust themselves to the Love that is capable of suffering with the sure conviction that this is the love of the Holy Spirit, the love that drives out all fear, and thus plants its roots in grace and freedom. Hans Urs von Balthasar spoke of this entrustment in a memorably dramatic moment of literary history when he described the mystery of love’s suffering in all its redemptive ramifications:

“Father!”, cries the Heart in its vertiginous plunge, “into your hands – which I do not feel, which opened to let me fall, which will catch me at the bottom of the abyss – into your hands I entrust my Spirit. Into your hands I breathe out my Spirit. My Holy Spirit.”

The Heart became Spirit, and from the travails of the Spirit the New World was born. A great roar filled the house, windows and doors flew open, and eyes and ears as well. The heavy armour was burst open from within and the cover removed from the face. This Heart’s love loved even to annihilation, and since it had become invisible in itself, it now emerged in the hearts of the redeemed. Once

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<sup>33</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 41.

it had been one sun, alone in the cold night of the world; now the light is scattered in a firmament of stars. It had seemed to struggle with the darkness, had seemed to sink down into the mire, overcome by the chaos; but no enemy is mightier and no night more night-filled than the radiant darkness of love.<sup>34</sup>

In *The Jeweller's Shop*, Anna professedly has found love to be a struggle that is both frightening and discouraging; she is afraid of the love that all too often suffers alone in the cold night of the world. Her daughter, Monica, is feeling the disruptive forces provoked by her parents' failure to love each other and so she allows fear to blanket her soul, too. Anna and Monica are afraid of the heart's darkness: they are slow to believe in the radiant darkness of love. Anna and Stefan have not made their home in each other's interior life with the love that rejoices in the complete sacrificial gift of self and hence they have not reflected absolute Existence and Love.<sup>35</sup>

At Adam's beckoning, however, Anna enters into Jesus' darkness, into his agony, into his original solitude with the Father. In her aloneness with God, she confesses the recent years of her withdrawal into self. Adam, the witness to the Truth that suffers and saves, floods her soul with the desire to continue her struggle within the gift of divine courage and ensuing peace.<sup>36</sup>

Anna, in a word, is a woman who has invited God into her interior life. The Holy Spirit that burns as a painful love within the heart of Jesus on the cross is the same Holy Spirit that floods Anna's soul as a refreshing stream of living water (John 7:35-37).

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<sup>34</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Heart of the World*, trans. by E.S. Leiva, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius 1979, 72. In this passage, Von Balthasar refers both to the events of Good Friday and those of Pentecost Sunday.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *The Jeweler's Shop*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> For an explanation of confession as an "aloneness with God," see St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Penance*, PG 49, 277-350. It is to be noted that what Stefan says about Anna's confession on p. 75 of *The Jeweler's Shop* does not necessarily imply a sacramental moment where Anna receives absolution especially since Stefan, her husband, seems to have been present during the confession. It does, however, mean that Anna's self-revelation to Adam, the Witness to the Truth, introduces her to an experience of a new freedom in her choice to love Stefan with "discreet suffering." See Revelation 1:5; 3:14.

It is the love that forgives, the love that frees, the love that unifies, the love that embraces, and the love that draws Anna into the heart of God's own joy.

Dear Reader, live in God's love, be a woman that forgives, be a man who persists in fidelity, be a child that learns how to love tenderly, share generously and work diligently – and you will be precisely the African that teaches the world what it needs in order to be human again.