First of all, my utmost thanks to the organizers of this Conference for having invited me and three other members of Inter-religious Council in Sarajevo to attend this gathering of creative reflection and dialogue. Special thanks for covering the costs of our journey and accommodation because otherwise we would not be able to make it. We come from a small European country with four traditional faith communities: Jewish, Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic. After 45 years of communist regime, which discriminated its believing citizens, we now enjoy full freedom of religion but we have to coordinate our shared values and common needs helping to build a tolerant civil society in our secular state.

In accordance with the theme of this conference, I would like to bring out the general outline of Catholic approach to human solidarity in multireligious society, having in mind my experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In recent documents of Catholic teaching authority the need for solidarity is based on Jesus’ saying: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Lk 6:31; Mt 7:12). This is the principle of positive reciprocity which exists also in Judaism, Islam and other great religions. It extends the command of the love of neighbor to creative actions, regardless of one’s religious or national identity. Catholic teaching and practicing of solidarity is also based on acceptance of international legal guidelines on interdependence of groups, communities, countries and continents in our globalized world.
Solidarity in gestures and writings of John Paul II

Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla was an experienced professor of philosophical ethics when he was elected pope on 22nd of October 1978 and he performed this ministry for more than 26 years. He brought into his office his philosophical and theological preference for ethic questions and his experience of living in communist country where believing individuals and groups were marginalized. He continued the efforts of his predecessor in implementing the program adopted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and an essential aspect of this program is interreligious dialogue and cooperation. In his pastoral journeys to many countries all over the world he asked Catholics to stay open for dialogue and cooperation with fellow citizens of other religious affiliation and looked for encounters with representatives of other faith communities in the respective country. In August 1885 he visited six countries in central Africa and upon the invitation of king Hassan II of Morocco he met at the stadium in Casablanca 80.000 Muslim young people. He spoke of God’s existence, of obedience to God’s will, of respect for all human beings and of reciprocity in all fields: “We are convinced that we cannot truly pray to God the Father of all mankind, if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all mankind is created in God’s image. Therefore, we must also respect, love and help every human being, because he is a creature of God. In a certain sense, every person is God’s image and representative, because he is the road leading to God, and he does not fully fulfill himself unless he knows God, unless he accepts him with all his heart, and unless he obeys him to the extent of the ways of perfection… Respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres”.

On 26th of February 1986 he received in Rome a group of Christians, Jews and Muslims, participants of the Colloquium organized by the Jerusalem Hope Center for Interfaith Understanding and Reconciliation. He told them: “Both the Bible and Qur’an teach that mercy and justice are two attributes most characteristic of God. He, ‘the Just one, the Merciful, the Compassionate’ can bring about these same qualities in mankind, if only we open our hearts to allow him to do so. He wants us to be merciful toward each other.
Along this path there are new solutions to be found to the political, racial, and confessional conflicts which have plagued the human family throughout history”.

In 1989 the Message of John Paul II for Catholic World Day of Peace, on first of January, was entitled: “To build peace, respect minorities”. Since minority groups exist almost in all societies today, fundamental unity of human race requires that the whole humanity, beyond its ethnic, national, cultural and religious differences should strive for reciprocal solidarity. The theme of his Message for 1999 World Day of Peace was: “Respect of human rights: the secret of true peace”. In it he encouraged world governments and institutions to cherish a global progress in solidarity “which will include an overall and sustainable development of society, so as to enable all people to realize their potential”. In concluding this section of my presentation I would like to mention Pope’s visit to Sarajevo in April 1997. In his address to our collegial Presidency he pointed out: “Equality of rights must be granted to the ethnic-religious communities. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a mosaic of cultures, religions and ethnic groups which, if recognized and safeguarded in their diversity, can contribute their respective gifts to the enrichment of the one patrimony of civil society… It is this interior attitude which must be fostered, both within the frontiers of BH and also in relations with neighboring States and the community of nations. But an attitude of this kind can only be established on the foundation of forgiveness. For the edifice of peace to be solid, against the background of so much blood and hatred, it will have to be built on the courage of forgiveness. People must know how to ask for forgiveness and to forgive!” . He received representatives of four humanitarian organizations which particularly distinguished themselves by their active relief work during 1991-1995 war for ethnic territories: the Muslim Merhamet, the Serbian Orthodox Dobrotvor, the Jewish Benevolencia and the Catholic Caritas. He awarded them with “John XXIII Peace Award” and told them: “The work of assistance and human promotion which you undertake, especially on behalf of the weakest and most vulnerable is inspired by the universal principle of the dignity of every person and of solidarity among human beings… On this significant occasion, I invite you to join me in raising mind and heart to heaven, that indispensable support may be granted from on high to all those who, often in difficult and extremely dangerous conditions, daily stand side-
by-side with those who suffer, and thus seek to make an effective contribution to the building of a society in which justice and peace will reign”.

**Roots of Solidarity in Human Nature and in the Fourth Commandment**

We Christians believe that a just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of human person. With Jews and Muslim as monotheistic believers we share the faith that we humans have been created by God and summoned to make our world a place worthy of living for all fellow humans. We also believe that in the exercise of their freedom, men and women perform morally good acts when they are obedient to the truth, that is when they do not presume to be the creators or absolute masters of truth or ethical norms. In its Part III, 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* depicts general moral evaluation of human conduct as individuals and members of social community. In presenting the person and society, it delineates the communal character of the human vocation, the right to participate in social life and social. The Catechism states that “the principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of ‘friendship’ or ‘social charity’ is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood” (n. 1939). Human solidarity is dictated and imposed by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all humans. It is manifested primarily by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. Different forms of solidarity are: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. “International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this” (n. 1941). Solidarity involves sharing of spiritual goods even more than material ones.

The fourth commandment of the Decalogue, beside obedience of growing up children to their parents and teachers, involves also care of adult children for their old parents who are sick and unable to support themselves: “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Ex 20:12). The New Testament recalls the force of this commandment of God (Mk 7:8-13; Eph 6:1-3). In
Catholic tradition, this commandment coordinates not only relations within the family but also relation of families and groups to authorities in civil society and to political community. The exercise of civil authority is meant “to give out expression to a just hierarchy of values in order to facilitate the exercise of freedom by all. Those in authority should practice distributive justice wisely, taking account of the needs and contribution of each, with a view of harmony and peace” (2236). Loyal collaboration of citizens with civil authorities as servants of the common good includes the right and duty of citizens to raise their just criticism of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community (n. 2239). The duty of citizens is to contribute along with civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity and freedom. This also requires to fulfill civil roles in the life of the political community. “The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extend they are able, to welcome foreigner in search of security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him… Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying out civic burdens” (n. 2241). Believing that it is the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person, “the Church respects and encourages the political freedom and responsibility of the citizen” (n. 2245).

Pope Pius XII established in 1952 Superior Council for emigration which was to organize pastoral care of millions of emigrants after the world war II. Pope Paul VI transformed it into Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrant People in 1970 and entrusted it with organizing pastoral service of workers, students, scholars, exiles who live in a foreign country. This Council promulgated on the 3rd of May 2004 its Instruction “Erga migrantes caritas Christi –The love of Christ towards migrants”. It treats migrant persons and groups as the sign of times and proposes pastoral care of welcome for migrants, not only Catholics moving to another country with native Catholic dioceses and parishes, but also of non-Christian new settlers in regions where Catholics have their institutions and organizations. This document accepts phenomenon of religious pluralism as normal mark of modern states where “peoples of different roots, other values and
models of life are knocking at our doors” (n. 36). Catholic migrants should be offered a
sense of belonging to the universal Church, but the needs of others should also be taken
seriously. Purpose of “first welcome” and further assistance is not assimilation but
“progressive integration and self-sufficiency of the immigrant. Let us remember in
particular the commitment undertaken for family unification, education of children,
housing work, associations, promotion of civil rights and migrants’ various ways of
participation in their society” (n. 43).

A section of this document deals with assisting non-Christian migrants by Catholic
bishops, priests and institutions (n. 59-69). Christians are encouraged to help such
immigrants in finding their place in the social and cultural context of their host country.
They are also “called upon to witness of their lives to denounce certain negative aspects
present in the rich industrial countries (materialism and consumerism, moral relativism
and religious indifferentism), which might shake the religious conviction of immigrants”
(n. 59). In this section the Document brings out the importance of the principle of
reciprocity: “It is to be understood not merely as an attitude for making claims but as a
relationship based on mutual respect and on justice in juridical and religious matters.
Reciprocity is also an attitude of heart and spirit that enables us to live together
everywhere with equal rights and duties. Healthy reciprocity will urge each one to
become an ‘advocate’ for the rights of minorities when his or her own religious
community is in majority. In this respect we should also recall the numerous Christian
migrants in the lands where majority of the population is not Christian and where the
right to religious freedom is severely restricted or repressed” (n. 64). In view of Muslim
immigrants in countries with majority Christian population, the Document calls for a
purification of memory regarding past misunderstandings, to cultivate common values
and to clarify and respect diversities, without renouncing Christian principles (n. 65).
Religiously pluralistic societies require of Catholics a convinced willingness for true
interreligious dialogue which involves information on other religions, overcoming
prejudices, rejection of religious relativism and “avoiding unjustified suspicions and fears
that hamper dialogue and erect barriers, even provoking violence or misunderstanding.
Local Churches will take care to include such formation in the educational programs of their seminaries, schools and parishes” (n. 69).

**Solidarity as a Religious and Humane Virtue**

In his dissertation on solidarity in the thought of John Paul II, Irish theologian Kevin P. Doran defines solidarity as “a virtue of persons and communities who, in each human situation, are actively committed to the good of each person and of all. It is the attitude which leads persons and communities to seek together the common good, that is peace, along with the material, cultural and spiritual conditions necessary to live as persons, through engaging in dialogue in a spirit of truth and trust, through seeking justice and respecting rights, through promoting the appropriate participation of all, and through the gradual achievement of authentic human development. Solidarity is a moral duty based on the fact of human interdependence and fundamental human equality. For believers it finds an additional foundation in communion with God. Solidarity comes into being when that interdependence together with its implications, and that communion, are recognized in a spirit of truth, and translated into action through a free and loving commitment which endures over time” (p. 235-236). Such a concept of solidarity has been adopted by the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, prepared by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and published with Pope's approval in 2004.

In presenting the principles of Catholic social doctrine, this document depicts solidarity as a principle and moral virtue which should accept and shape relations of individuals and peoples in our pluralistic world. As moral virtue, solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental social virtue since it places itself in the sphere of justice” (n. 193). While we with pleasure admit that persons and groups of other religious affiliation are able to practice justice and solidarity, we Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth makes connection between solidarity and charity shine brightly before us, illuminating the entire
meaning of this connection. Jesus teaches by his example and words that our neighbors are persons in need whom we meet in concrete circumstances of our life and can help them. Listing truth, freedom, justice and love into fundamental social values, this document points out that to love on the social level means “depending on the situations, to make use of the social mediations to improve other people’s life or to remove social factors that cause their indigence” (n. 208).

In conclusion, solidarity as religious and social virtue involves persons ad groups of different beliefs and convictions who collaborate contributing to the common good. We become ever more religious and humane if we practice solidarity admitting that we need others and they need us.

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