

## Editor's Introduction

Sandra Lynch

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The establishment of *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* had its genesis as a joint initiative between the Institute for Ethics and Society at the University of Notre Dame Australia and the Office of Justice and Peace within the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. It followed the opening of the Institute for Ethics and Society in 2009, which in turn had been preceded by opening of the University of Notre Dame's Sydney campus in 2006. *Solidarity's* aim was to provide an academically refereed online forum for debate of issues of pressing theological and ethical relevance. It aims to encourage discussion of the way in which Catholic social teaching in its interaction with other ethical discourses, can illuminate particular issues.

The first issue appeared in 2011 and this year marks the tenth year of its operation. The journal has been well-served by a highly competent and dedicated Consultative Committee that has generously advised the editors-in-chief and managing editors since the journal's inception. The journal has also been supported since its inception by an interdisciplinary Editorial Board composed of national and international scholars. The names of the committee and board members are listed below. The journal's tenth anniversary issue in 2021 includes a selection of previously published articles. Some of these are the most frequently downloaded among our articles, others were chosen because they serve to indicate the range of content that has appeared in the journal over the past ten years. However, as readers will appreciate, it is not possible in one issue to cover the breadth of particular topics that have been canvassed in the journal.

All the articles in this issue encourage reflection on questions of where our common interest and the common good are to be found. Some focus on questions of care for human persons both as individuals and as relational beings, members of a global human family; others focus on questions of care for the shape of the societies in which we live. Questions of our responsibility to uncover the truth about ourselves as human persons are raised, including from the perspective of sexuality and gender, recognising the equal dignity of women and men and the significant differences between them. Questions of individual and human rights are addressed, and a number of papers call on readers to take seriously the integrity of our relations with one another, whether in relation to our differences, our central commitments or in relation to our just, loving and effective engagement with one another as people of God born in the image of Christ. Finally, questions of the impact of ubiquitous influences on education and the development of human understanding are explored. These influences often serve to undermine rather than facilitate Pope Francis' call to ensure that education "has at its centre the person in his or her integral reality", that it "brings people to the light", "is oriented to the full development of the person in their individual and social dimension"; and that it can "form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and opposition and rebuild the fabric of relationships of a more fraternal humanity."<sup>1</sup>

The first of the articles by Guyette on *The Book of Ruth* (2013) remains as apposite today as it was when first published, given the context of the increasing flow of millions of forcibly displaced persons globally. In 2013, 51.2 million people globally had been forcibly displaced, while six years later in 2019 that number had risen to 79.5 million, many millions of whom

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<sup>1</sup> Address of the Holy Father to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education (of Institutes of Studies):

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2020/2/20/educazione-cattolica.html>

have joined the displaced from previous decades who have been unable to find even an uncertain welcome anywhere.<sup>2</sup> With reference to the Book of Ruth, Guyette explores the view that Ruth's loyalty to Naomi demonstrates the way in which the practices of covenant (*berit*) and lovingkindness (*hesed*: generosity or goodwill) are relevant to the everyday challenges faced by many, including migrant workers and refugees who have no settled home. Guyette notes that the practice of *hesed* calls us beyond generosity or goodwill that might be expected within a culture and fits well with St. John Paul II's definition of Solidarity, in that it requires us to take responsibility for those who are in trouble; to speak out on behalf of undocumented migrants; and challenge our own xenophobic tendencies and prejudices against strangers or foreigners. Guyette reminds us of John Paul II's view that the practice of love serves a unifying and elevating role making reciprocal and mutual what might appear to be unilateral giving. Underlying this call to be guided by the primacy of charity is a commitment to the cause of peace and to the creation of the Church as a place of welcome for migrants.

Michelle Evans (2013) discusses the ability of the principle of Subsidiarity to inform scholarship on and understanding of a range of social and political issues and notes that little has previously been written on this topic. She provides a well-supported justification of the Principle of Subsidiarity and also of its interrelationship with the Principle of Solidarity in helping to promote the common good by dignifying citizens with better social and economic conditions. Evans notes that the Principle of Subsidiarity is a social and moral one, but she also draws attention to the utilization of the principle in the political context, a topic on which she undertakes further investigation in this journal. The work of her colleague Nicholas Aroney comes to mind with his suggestion of the importance of providing help or aid (Latin: *subsidium*) to enable small groups to perform unique functions within a complex social and political context in keeping with the Principle of Subsidiarity.<sup>3</sup>

The third article by Jeffery Nicholas (2011) takes up a distinction between seeing politics as a MacIntyrean practice or as an institution, as Maritain suggests. Nicholas argues that this distinction significantly affects how one conceives of, determines and achieves the common good. He emphasizes Benedict XVI's view – central to Catholic social teaching – that human beings are related to each other as members of a family seeking God, so that interaction within the “human community does not absorb the individual, annihilating his autonomy . . . , but rather values him all the more because the relation between the individual and community is a relation between one totality and another”.<sup>4</sup> His argument is that, despite criticisms of MacIntyre, a focus on politics as a practice is conducive to integral human development given it will be underpinned by recognition of the “defacto interdependence of peoples and nations”, in which ethical interactions guide activity and human persons are related to one another as wholes. This is not to prioritize the individual over the community but to emphasize the relational nature of human beings as constituting one global family. Nicholas he calls on philosophy to provide theoretical and practical conceptualization to support this project.

Sr. Mary Prudence Allen's article (2014) is a sophisticated and topical contribution to this anniversary issue, particularly in the context of current public and intellectual debate on gender identity in the United States and elsewhere. For example, some current debate defends the propriety of banning gender-affirming medical care, including surgery for transgender minors, even those whose parents consent to the provision of such care; while competing debate argues that the greatest threat to the health of gender diverse people is denial of the provision of medical care. The history and philosophy of the conflict between “Gender Reality” and

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<sup>2</sup> *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 18 June, 2020, pp.7-8: <http://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> Aroney, Nicholas. “Subsidiarity: European Lessons for Australia's Federal Balance.” *Federal Law Review* 39, no. 2 (2011): 213–34. <https://doi.org/10.22145/flr.39.2.1>.

<sup>4</sup> *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 53.

“Gender Ideology” is explored in detail, as Allen draws an analogy between gender ideology and the concept of a virus and traverses its mapping. Allen explains the theological foundations that she argues can provide both the intellectual principles and the practical everyday guidance that can serve to “ransom” gender reality so as to retrieve it from its associations with “gender ideology”, thus reclaiming the word ‘gender’ for its true meaning in gender reality.

Rowland’s article (2015) focuses on the significant agreement she recognizes between leading contemporary Catholic scholars and feminist scholars regarding the ontological equality of the sexes, and on what they can learn from one another. Catholic scholars are recognized for the way in which they can articulate a narrative about how the conflict between the sexes arose, and how it might be overcome via models of relatedness open to the grace of the Incarnation; while feminists are recognized for their clear articulation of the pathologies that underlie conflict between the sexes.

Rowland enumerates the list of issues on which there appears to be a surprisingly strong convergence of attitudes and values between some Radical Feminists and current Catholic scholars with regard to: reproductive technologies including in-vitro fertilization and surrogacy; contraceptive practices; population control policies; provision of abortion clinics; end-of-life care and transsexualism. Her list also includes shared rejection of the liberal notion of choice and the commodification and accommodation of violence within sexuality. The power imbalance inherent between those involved in the development of artificial reproductive technologies and associated pharmaceutical products and the end users of their services is also raised. While there would no doubt be a lively conversation between Catholic scholars and Radical Feminists about some aspects of the legalisation and institutionalization of transgender rights, they also appear to agree, as Sheila Jeffries puts it, that “[i]n the practice of transgenderism, traditional gender is seen to lose its sense of direction” and that transgenderism is transgressive of women’s rights.<sup>5</sup>

The sixth article by Finnis (2012) affirms the radical equality of human persons which, along with our understanding of truths about basic human goods, prescribe duties that correlate with human rights and are encapsulated in the normative justice-principle: “Like cases are to be treated alike”. At the same time, Finnis defends the principle that “different cases can properly be treated differently”, arguing that benefits that accrue to citizens when we deliberately discriminate at our borders (as well as benefits distributable to non-citizens, abroad or in genuine asylum) give us reasons for doing so.

Finnis concludes with a quotation from John Paul II, stating that “[b]efore the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal”<sup>6</sup>, which is preceded by a precise, thoughtful and challenging discourse on what we take equality to be and what justice demands of us. He emphasizes equality of concern and respect for individuals, providing the reader with a set of examples that sharpen appreciation of the complexity of well-reasoned decision-making regarding whether and when differentiation or discrimination can be justified. For example, using US migration policy he asks whether equality is more important than self-determination; he criticizes courts that neglect their duty to consider whether the means used to prevent discrimination, e.g. against homosexual people in relation to employment, are not only effective but proportionate; and argues that discussion of issues in which faith and conscience are central is damaged by framing the discourse only in terms of equality and discrimination. In doing so, he calls on the reader to reflect on where our common interest lies in relation to truths about differences and to socio-cultural pre-conditions of sustainable and prosperous communal life.

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<sup>5</sup> Sheila Jeffries, *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* (London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 96.2.

Nicholas Aroney (2017) summarizes tension between two views of the exercise of power in a religiously plural society: on one hand, the view that religious convictions have no legitimate role in public discourse; and on the other, the view that citizens with religious convictions have a right to express those convictions in political debate. He notes the tendency in liberal democracies to think instinctively that the distinction between the public and the private will operate to solve the tension but points out that “the private and the public categorization breaks down”; that deeply held religious convictions of citizens will and in many cases *must* influence the way those citizens participate in public and private life if they are to do so with integrity. Aroney encourages readers to reflect on a number of tensions between the rights of religious communities, constitutional demands and the shaping of public spaces. He does this via an exploration of understandings of the nature and value of ‘reason’ in its encounter with religion in the public space. Aroney concludes that our confidence in public reason is misplaced given that it is either too abstract to help resolve contested political issues or too specific to found a general consensus. He raises questions about what reason can achieve without the input of comprehensive doctrines (e.g., conceptions of human personhood and autonomy) that provide specific guidance in decision-making.

The eighth contribution to this issue by Rowland (2014) quotes from William Cavanaugh to argue that the duty of Catholic educators is to alert students at all stages of their education to the decisions they must make between the humanism of the Incarnation as articulated by the Church on the one hand and materialist cosmologies on the other. Hallmarks of philistine or nihilist forces, materialist cosmologies are indifferent – if not opposed – to “projects of self-transcendence” which, through the gift of grace, enable us to broaden our social horizons and be raised up to the supernatural level of divine life. But as her title suggests, she is also concerned with what she sees as the sanitization of Catholic values within our overly bureaucratic educational institutions and the lack of attention to the relationship between our institutions and the Church. Rowland focuses on self-sanitizing activity that acquiesces to pressure from the liberal state for cultural uniformity, the impact of receiving government funding and the adoption of a corporatized model of administration. She argues that these combine to undermine our capacity to broaden our own and our students’ horizons, to promote and facilitate engagement in spiritual life and to question and move beyond various forms of social conditioning.

Using C. S Lewis’ *Abolition of Man* and Plato’s *Republic*, the final contribution by Ragland (2018) explores an imaginative invitation to students to reflect seriously on the paradigm of integral ecology, as Pope Francis presents it in his Encyclical *Laudato Si’*. He asks readers to consider who is served by the competing technocratic paradigm to which modern individuals often commit thoughtlessly. Lewis’ text is used to explore Pope Francis’s view that the modern way of thinking tends to define right and wrong relativistically; to accept rampant consumerism and environmental degradation; and to impose scientific rationality on reality as a whole. This mentality blinds us to the dignity and value inherent in things themselves, apart from their use to human beings. By comparison, the integral ecology paradigm requires us to come alive to our relationships with nature, with others, with ourselves and with God, from whom we have received the gift of creation.

Ragland uses Plato’s *Republic* to draw an analogy between modern unreflective people in the grip of rampant consumerism and prisoners in the allegory of the Cave whose situation determines that they are unable to see things as they really are. An exacting, arduous but educational journey into the light can shift the cave prisoners’ thinking and awaken them from their misconceptions. Ragland suggests that educators might launch their students on a similar journey to take Pope Francis’ advice in *Laudato Si’*.

A number of the articles in this issue explicitly draw attention to a common and impoverished conception of reasoning and rational reflection, while others do so implicitly.

Rowland's paper on "Feminism from the Perspective of Catholicism" broadens that conception by referring to a distinction explained by Josef Pieper (Rowland, 2015, p. 9) between *ratio*, which focuses narrowly on one dimension of the intellect's capacity (the power of discursive thought); and *intellectus* (the power of "simply looking" where "the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye"). The argument is that knowing involves both these capacities. As Pieper puts it:

The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things in one: *ratio* and *intellectus*: all knowing involved both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the *intellectus*' untiring vision, which is not active but passive, or better, receptive – a receptively operating power of the intellect.<sup>7</sup>

The wisdom of these words seems obvious and relevant to appreciating the debate in which many of the contributions to this anniversary issue engage. I hope that you enjoy reading or re-reading this issue as much as I have enjoyed the editorial process.

Sandra Lynch,

Guest Editor, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, September 2021.

**Solidarity's Consultative Committee** has included: Dr. Michael Casey, Director of the PM Glynn Institute, Australian Catholic University; Honorary Professor James Franklin, University of NSW; Fr. Peter Smith, Promoter of Justice and Peace for the Archdiocese of Sydney; Dr. Michael Easson, AM, Chair of EG Funds Management; Damian Grace, retired Professor of Philosophy at The University of New South Wales; Dr. Steven Lovell-Jones, University of Notre Dame and former Co-editor in Chief with Dr. Sandra Lynch.

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<sup>7</sup> Josef Pieper, *Leisure as the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 10.