

## Lesson 6: Friendship and Solidarity

### PURPOSE

To motivate students to promote solidarity and pursue the common good in their daily lives.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand solidarity as the collective pursuit of the common good.
2. Recognize solidarity as an example of two or more people striving for the common good.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- [Video: What We Need](#) | Tamara Tan Azaña and Aliah Dimaporo
- H. H. Dalai Lama: Our Global Family
- Józef Tischner: The Ethics of Solidarity

### VOCABULARY

- Solidarity: a group of people unified in the pursuit of excellence and the common good
- Common good: the sum of goods needed for both the individual and the community to flourish

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson. Recall how the human person is portrayed in the videos by Disney and the National Film Board of Canada. Note how this Malthusian view of the human person as a problem that needs to be eliminated disregards human dignity and lends itself to the justification of coercion as a means to achieve population control ends. Emphasize how human creativity is the world's greatest resource in addressing the challenges of economic and population growth.

Ask the students if they have completed the [Interim Quiz 1](#). Ask them if some of the questions were difficult and help clarify the answers.

**Step 2:** Explain that today, students will learn about the theme of solidarity as it applies to our global family. Start with the vocabulary definition of solidarity:

Solidarity: a group of people unified in the pursuit of excellence and the common good

To introduce the topic, divide students into groups and ask them to read the text “Our Global Family” by H. H. Dalai Lama. After reading the text, the groups should discuss the associated questions.

After the groups finish their discussions, ask them to share their conclusions with the rest of the class and lead the class discussion drawing from the Answer Key provided with the text. As a follow-up question, ask the students what they should pursue on a social level, beyond merely selfish aims?

Recall that in Grade 10, the class discussed the principle of the common good. Write the definition of the common good on the board:

Common good: the sum of goods needed both for the individual and the community to flourish

Highlight that the common good always includes both the good of the individual and of the whole community. We learned previously that totalitarian regimes subordinate and violate the good of the individual person on behalf of the goals of the collective. The opposite error is also possible: absolutizing the goals of the individual (such as feelings, wishes, goals or personal preferences) over the good of other individuals or society as a whole. The example which the Dalai Lama mentions (the atomic bomb) has the potential of destroying the good of the whole human community in the pursuit of the individual goals of a particular nation. The true common good always integrates and harmonizes both the individual good and the good of the global community.

**Step 3:** Ask the students if they can give some examples of an individual or group that practices solidarity and human excellence on a social level. Help the students recall the example of The Solidarity movement from Poland and the White Rose movement, both of which they learned about in Grades 9 and 10.

**Step 4:** Watch the [video](#): What We Need. Then lead the class in a discussion through the following questions, using the Answer Key provided below.

**QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:**

Development advocate TamaraTan Azaña identifies a number of basic human needs that many people still go without in the Philippines, such as: sanitation, clean drinking water, housing and education. What does she say is the reason why some children don't go to school? What is meant by a "band-aid" solution? What does Azaña propose we first need to recognize before being able to provide any solution?

Congresswoman Aliah Dimaporo recalls how a student compared the people of the Philippines to "dirty bath water" overflowing a tub. Which economic theory underpins this image of people "overflowing"? What does Congresswoman Dimaporo propose instead?

**Answer Key for the teacher**

- 1. Development advocate Tamara Tan Azaña identifies a number of basic human needs that many people still go without in the Philippines, such as: sanitation, clean drinking water, housing and education. What does she say is the reason why some children don't go to school? What is meant by a "band-aid" solution? What does Azaña propose we first need to recognize before being able to provide any solution?** Sustainable development advocate Tamara Tan Azaña explains that the reason some kids don't go to school is "because they don't have food to bring to school for lunch." A band-aid solution is any attempt to fix a problem (one scratch) in isolation from the whole. At best, band-aid solutions may be called short-sighted or unsustainable, but at worst they may stem from a political, social or personal prejudice about what "others" or "poor people" need. Azaña gives the example of how contraception is routinely offered as the answer, when a community may be in desperate need for "something that can help with the water source". Azaña proposes that instead of top-down approaches that tend to reduce people to numbers (reduce the number of poor people procreating to reduce poverty in a country) we need a human dignity approach to development: "You have these beautiful families that need so much more. [...] And a lot of it is just recognizing their humanity." First we need to understand and affirm the dignity and value of every human person - what sets us apart from animals and the reason why we humans must always be treated as subjects rather than objects - if true development through solidarity is to happen. Development without friendship and solidarity can be a form of objectification and exploitation.
- 2. Congresswoman Aliah Dimaporo recalls how a student compared the people of the Philippines to "dirty bath water" overflowing a tub. Which economic theory underpins this image of people "overflowing"? What does Congresswoman Dimaporo propose instead?** The theory underpinning the image of people "overflowing" the capacity of the tub is Malthusian economic theory. This theory views people as problems and mouths to feed, procreating at rates that are unsustainable for the earth's resources. Congresswoman Dimaporo proposes that it's not a matter of "too many people" and not enough resources, but that environmental degradation is a result of mismanagement. "It's a matter of the leaders of the countries knowing how to use that resource, knowing how to save other resources [...] knowing how to manage the country." As for the people of the Philippines, she says, "It's not that there are too many humans and too little resources. But humans are also a resource. And the best resource we can have."

**Step 5:** Reflect with the class for a minute on how you would feel if your family were in need of clean drinking water, a road to get a parent to the nearest hospital more efficiently, or a new roof to protect your siblings from the rainy season. What if family planning was the only assistance offered to you, instead? How would this make you feel? Would you be insulted? Angry? Confused? Or, maybe it would make you feel like your life and your particular struggles didn't matter to anyone in a position of leadership? Give students ten minutes to write a brief reflection based on this prompt, or respond to one of the ideas spoken about in the video by Aliah Dimaporo and Tamara Tan Azaña. Have students volunteer to share their reflections aloud with the class.

If there's time, read with the class [The Ethics of Solidarity](#). Otherwise, provide this handout for students to take home and read on their own.

**Step 6:** Summarize. Recall the definition of solidarity and the common good. Recall how Tamara Tan Azaña and Aliah Dimaporo practice solidarity by fighting to affirm human dignity in the midst of heated debates about population and development. Remind students that it's important to always respect the dignity of the other person as they engage in disagreement and debate about important issues. In this way, even debate can be a form of solidarity with another person, as you strive for the common good.

**H. H. the Dalai Lama: Our Global Family<sup>64</sup>**

When I meet people in different parts of the world, I am always reminded that we are all basically alike. We are all human beings. Maybe we have different clothes, our skin is of a different color or we speak different languages. That is on the surface. But basically, we are the same human beings. That is what binds us to each other. That is what makes it possible for us to understand each other and to develop friendship and closeness.

Because we all share this small planet Earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. That is not just a dream, but a necessity. We are dependent on each other in so many ways that we can no longer live in isolated communities and ignore what is happening outside those communities. We need to help each other when we have difficulties, and we must share the good fortune that we enjoy.

The realization that we are all basically the same human beings, who feel happiness and try to avoid suffering, is very helpful in developing a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood; a warm feeling of love and compassion for others. This, in turn, is essential if we are to survive in this ever-shrinking world we live in. For if we each selfishly pursue only what we believe to be in our own interest, without caring about the needs of others, we not only may end up harming others but also ourselves. This fact has become very clear during the course of this century. We know that to wage a nuclear war today, for example, would be a form of suicide; or that by polluting the air or the oceans, in order to achieve some short-term benefit, we are destroying the very basis for our survival. As individuals and nations are becoming increasingly interdependent, therefore, we have no other choice than to develop what I call a sense of universal responsibility.

Today, we are truly a global family. What happens in one part of the world may affect us all. This, of course, is not only true of the negative things that happen, but is equally valid for the positive developments. We not only know what happens elsewhere, thanks to the extraordinary modern communications technology, we are also directly affected by events that occur far away. We feel a sense of sadness when children are starving in Eastern Africa. Similarly, we feel a sense of joy when a family is reunited after decades of separation by the Berlin Wall. Our crops and livestock are contaminated and our health and livelihood threatened when a nuclear accident happens miles away in another country. Our own security is enhanced when peace breaks out between warring parties in other continents.

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<sup>64</sup> excerpt from The Nobel Peace Prize Lecture by his Holiness the Dalai Lama, Oslo, Norway, December 11, 1989.

So really we have no alternative: We must develop a universal responsibility not only in the geographic sense, but also in respect to the different issues that confront our planet. Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each of us individually. Peace, for example, starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighboring communities, and so on. When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.

Reason, courage, determination and the inextinguishable desire for freedom can ultimately win.

**QUESTION FOR A DISCUSSION:**

Why should we practice universal solidarity with other human beings?

Where does the responsibility lie to make our planet a better place?

What happens if we only pursue our selfish aims? Give examples.

**Answer Key for the teacher**

- 1. Why should we practice universal solidarity with other human beings?** The practice of solidarity rests on the fact that we are all human beings. As the Dalai Lama says:

“Maybe we have different clothes, our skin is of a different color or we speak different languages. That is on the surface. But basically, we are the same human beings. That is what binds us to each other. That is what makes it possible for us to understand each other and to develop friendship and closeness. Because we all share this small planet Earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. That is not just a dream, but a necessity. We are dependent on each other in so many ways that we can no longer live in isolated communities and ignore what is happening outside those communities. We need to help each other when we have difficulties, and we must share the good fortune that we enjoy.” Precisely this, helping each other when we have difficulties and sharing each other’s good fortune is what we call solidarity.”

- 2. Where does the responsibility lie to make our planet a better place?** The Dalai Lama explains where the responsibility to make the planet a better place lies, stating:

“Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each of us individually. Peace, for example, starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighboring communities, and so on. When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.”

- 3. What happens if we only pursue our selfish aims? Give examples.** The Dalai Lama addresses the case in which human beings only pursue their own interest, stating:

“For if we each selfishly pursue only what we believe to be in our own interest, without caring about the needs of others, we not only may end up harming others but also ourselves. This fact has become very clear during the course of this century. We know that to wage a nuclear war today, for example, would be a form of suicide; or that by polluting the air or the oceans, in order to achieve some short-term benefit, we are destroying the very basis for our survival. As individuals and nations are becoming increasingly interdependent, therefore, we have no other choice than to develop what I call a sense of universal responsibility.”



## The Ethics of Solidarity

Solidarity can be described as a heroism of deed, of friendship, and sometimes it requires a heroism of thinking. In *The Ethics of Solidarity*, Józef Tischner acknowledges that to better understand how to pursue solidarity for the common good, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of solidarity:

“Solidarity is not against but towards [...] – these are echoes of times when our thinking was a thinking of open horizons, and our courage was a courage of offering hands to all people of goodwill.”<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, Tischner describes ‘factional solidarity’ as a search for identity:

“Searches for identity [...] cause sharp controversies over ‘everything’ to rage across the country. There is no distinction between less and more important matters, because ‘everything is important’ for the building of identity.”<sup>66</sup>

Rather than practicing solidarity with someone and “towards” someone, Tischner suggests that factional solidarity is distinguished by its stance “against” someone. It is an exchange of personal courage for haughtiness. That is, instead of being the person in the room to bravely raise an objection or ask, “Is that really true?” Factional solidarity is the chorus that haughtily responds, “you can’t ask that question!”

Instead of admitting to any fault or wrongdoing for failing to stand up for the only person asking a question, the person participating in factional solidarity consoles themselves with arrogance, grateful to be aligned with the chorus. Because factional solidarity believes in guilt by association. Whereas solidarity stands with the defenseless, despite loss or social and political oppression.

“Heroism is an essential dimension of human existence”, writes Tischner. “Each time one needs to reach beyond the limits of factional solidarity, we need courage.”<sup>67</sup> First of all, and above all, we need the heroism of thought, deed, and friendship for true solidarity.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What are the two types of solidarity Tischner identifies?

Why does Tischner say that heroism is needed for true Solidarity?

<sup>65</sup> Józef Tischner, *The Ethics of Solidarity Years Later*, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

**Answer Key for the teacher**

- 1. Why does Tischner say that heroism is needed for true Solidarity?** “Heroism is an essential dimension of human existence”, writes Tischner. “Each time one needs to reach beyond the limits of factional solidarity, we need courage.” First of all, and above all, we need the heroism of thought, deed, and friendship for true solidarity.
- 2. What are the two types of solidarity Tischner identifies?** Tischner delineates solidarity from what he describes as ‘factional solidarity’. Rather than practicing solidarity with someone and “towards” someone, Tischner suggests that factional solidarity is distinguished by its stance “against” someone. It is an exchange of personal courage for haughtiness. The example provided in the text is of a person daring to ask a question (personal courage) and being met with a chorus of respondents haughtily responding, “you can’t ask that question!”. Because factional solidarity believes in guilt by association. Whereas solidarity stands with the defenseless, despite loss or social and political oppression.