Caritas
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Community Cohesion and the Church's Social Teachings in Light of the Virus Restrictions[1]

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Abstract

The recent societal restrictions in reaction to the risk of viral spread have cast light upon a number of issues in society, many of which are addressed at least to some extent by the Church's Social Doctrine regarding subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity. This paper seeks to show that by developing the presence of these teachings in understanding and dialogue, so that they can be implemented appropriately at local levels where possible, which may lead to wider discussions regarding community cohesion and development, communities as well as individuals would benefit, thus contributing to society and the common good. The Church's teachings in the three areas are considered in light of the recent restrictions, as well as how we are called not only to develop the Church's teachings but also our preparedness and ability to explain them as well as the source of these teachings when called upon. Therefore, this paper finds not only that it is possible for subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity to help develop and improve community cohesion, but that the calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council to be prepared and to share our beliefs include this area of our lives. These can be developed through a greater presence of the Church's Social Doctrine in wider education, particularly but not only at university level and in clerical formation, and also by these ideas being presented more effectively in dialogue with others in local communities, which would help communities be better prepared for the unexpected in future.

Keywords: community cohesion, subsidiarity, participation, solidarity, common good, education, preparedness, dialogue, Catholic Social Doctrine, apologetics

The effects of lockdowns and restrictions in these times have highlighted fundamental problems in contemporary societies, which tend increasingly towards a more binary structure of state and individuals as postmodern societies. The fact that there is in different societies today varying amounts but nevertheless underdeveloped cohesion at the local community level – in the space between the state and individuals – led to imposed restrictions being placed at the front door of the home during lockdowns. This has contributed to some people experiencing a number of issues such as mental health problems, being forced to stay at home with or without an income, education being heavily disrupted, and the elderly, infirm, vulnerable, and those isolating sometimes

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being left unsupported and alone at times. The underdevelopment of local community cohesion, which is exhibited in different ways and to different extents in different places,[2] shows how today's society is generally lacking in community, and at times neighbourhoods have been more like isolation wards for some in times of stronger virus restrictions. While there have been some localised responses to problems, organised by, for example, town halls, parishes, or even celebrities, the general lack of charity and community cohesion in society has led to avoidable problems during the restrictions and in lockdowns especially.[3]

The general response to the virus in different countries could have considered both the common good and human dignity more instead of using a utilitarian version of the common good, imposed particularly in China or Australia, that is designed to reduce specific statistics at seemingly any other cost. Catholic Social Doctrine (CSD)[4] contains three key elements that contribute fundamentally to both the dignity of the person and the common good. These are subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity, each of which could have been more developed and effective. These ideas work best at a more local level, with subsidiarity being the key thus local communities being important, however, society is not prepared for reacting in such a way that would be a reversal of the generally centralising long-term trend in societies.

The space between the state and the individual is generally under-filled and in some places this is very apparent. This space provides an opportunity to develop local community cohesion, which offers the possibility of sharing ideas and forming bonds with others. For Christians, it is the chance to serve and to display the fruits of the faith as a form of evangelisation – with deeds rather than mere words as a good Christian witness. In particular, the recent societal restrictions were a very good opportunity for Christians to reach out – in appropriate ways – to those around them, but too often the Catholic response in many places has been more focused on restricting access to churches and the sacraments.[5] A more proactive response – reaching out to those in need in our communities – could have taken place had there been a more developed understanding and higher profile of CSD in parishes, dioceses, and local communities in more stable times, which the Church calls the faithful to work towards in learning how to help our neighbour, Christian or not. Through the development of understanding of CSD by clergy, active laity, and with the support of academics, as called for by the Church, there can be a more Christian input into the local community. While this could lead in time to an exploration of how the ideals of CSD can be explored more practically in wider society, especially if the state authority supports such developments, this is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, the aim here is to call active Christians to respond to the problems with recent restrictions by learning about, sharing, and exploring how

2   For example, half of British people polled do not know their neighbour's name: Sarah Lumley, 'One in 20 adults have never spoken to their neighbour - and half don't know their name', *Hull Daily Mail*, 24th May 2022, https://hulldailymail.trem.media/news/uk-world-news/next-door-neighbours-never-speak-7118363.amp.

3   Cf., for example, B. Gilmore, R. Ndejjo, A. Tchetchia, et al., 'Community engagement for COVID-19 prevention and control: a rapid evidence synthesis', *BMJ Global Health* 5, (2020), http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003188.

4   CSD is a whole area of Church teaching in many documents. Much of it is summarised in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC): Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, The Holy See, 2004, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

5   A study of Catholic responses to the restrictions regards mainly themes on restricting church access and on spiritual assistance (various graphs) but the survey's final data regards helping the needy, which shows in a very general way that parish assistance to such people fell a little overall during the restrictions (graph 17), in: Daniel Arasa, Lidia Kim, Jean-Florent Angolafale, and Daniele Murrighili, 'The response of Roman Catholic priests to Covid-19: A case study on the pastoral and communication activities of nine dioceses worldwide during the first months of the pandemic', *Church, Communication and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2022): 238-263, https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2022.2038647. General Internet searches of parish and diocesan websites show under 'Covid response' that the focus was mostly about restrictions rather than reaching out to those in need.

CSD can be used effectively in the local setting to improve local community cohesion.

First, this paper will consider problems highlighted in particular during the recent restrictions. Then it suggests how alternative approaches from CSD could have changed the situation for some people during the lockdowns in particular; here, the three CSD elements are explored and this could contribute to local discussions on their applicability in developing local community cohesion. The final section sets out how Scripture and the Church call active Christians to learn about and share these teachings, which can lead to new or better developed actualisation and development in local communities. Such an exploration of the ideas in CSD can lead to an organic development of their use in supporting the development of local communities and their cohesion as people become more aware of them, particularly in light of recent restrictions.

By improving community cohesion, through local communities having more responsibility (subsidiarity) and enabling people to participate and develop solidarity, Christian charity (caritas) and service (diakonia) can be more effective as well as perceptible: a good Christian witness. In time, by working alongside and in cooperation with others, the active faithful can help others develop their understanding of the Church's teachings, which inevitably leads to questions regarding the faith. Both Scripture and the Second Vatican Council call the faithful to be prepared and respond appropriately in order to participate as a Christian in society and to help others learn, for example, about how to develop the three elements of CSD focused upon here, which can help our neighbour, Christian or otherwise.

Learning from Restrictions

Rather than being a study of any particular society's experience in the virus restrictions, this is a consideration of the general image where the policies of seeking the common good in health statistics regarding the virus did not account for problems in many other areas.[6] Also, there were different experiences for those in urban and rural areas, as well as those with varying levels of existing local structures regarding support, services, etc. There are indeed those who had little to complain about the Covid restrictions, perhaps through relief from stresses at work or commuting, and even those who benefited perhaps from increased family time in the home, or financially from, for example, owning a company that makes respirators.[7] However, in general terms, a significant number of people were affected negatively in many different ways. Examples include being restricted to urban housing designed more for inhabitants being at work or school on most days,[8] or in rural areas where food purchases are difficult,[9] perhaps requiring public transport or the help of others, as well as being unable to pay for food.[10] Other problems included disruption to

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6 This does not include economic issues such as supply chain issues, inflation, businesses and employment disruption, medical issues such as operation waiting lists, and decreased local services, etc., especially in rural areas.

7 Cf., for example, Clare Dyer, 'Covid-19: Unusable PPE worth £4bn will be burned, says spending watchdog', BMJ, 10th June 2022, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o1435.

8 Cf., for example, Dagmar Kutsar, and Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Families: Young People's Experiences in Estonia', *Frontiers in Sociology* Vol. 6, (2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.732984; also, Jenny Preece, Kim McKee, David Robinson, and John Flint, 'Urban Rhythms in a Small Home: COVID-19 as a Mechanism of Exception', *Urban Studies*, (June 2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211018136.

9 Cf., for example, K. Kent, L. Alston, S. Murray, B. Honeychurch, and D. Visentin, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Food Security in High Income Countries: A Systematic Literature Review', *International journal of environmental research and public health* 19, 6 (2022), 3235, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19063235.

10 Cf., for example, F. Eskandari, A.A. Lake, and M. Butler, 'COVID-19 pandemic and food poverty conversations: Social network analysis of Twitter data', *Nutrition Bulletin* 47, (2022): 93–105, https://doi.org/10.1111/nbu.12547.

education,[11] losing businesses or employment,[12] mental health issues (new or an exacerbation of existing problems),[13] or restricted access to necessary services.[14] Also, people isolating or unwell particularly in rural areas may have lost access to food or fuel, such as coal or chopped wood. Currently, much of the binary debate regards lockdowns (and long lists[15] of other specific restrictions) as necessary to protecting general health and health services, while other important debates and considerations are given less attention, such as quality of life, the socio-economic situation, communities, and respect for the law, etc. General reactions tend to reflect entrenched positions already established. An example is one recent metastudy which argues for restrictions having been overly strong and 'ineffective',[16] while proponents of the lockdowns argue that its chosen studies have been selected with a desired conclusion in mind.[17] However, regardless of the accuracy of either of these positions, in order for mankind to move on positively to – hopefully – post-Covid times, it will be necessary to 'look at the science' objectively because a priori positions that lead to selective methods to find desired outcomes make the situation political and subjective, rather than scientific and objective.

However, an important point in the metastudy, which has been somewhat overlooked, is that the level of adherence to rules by the members of each society is important also.[18] This regards not only there being little respect for the law (the state authority), but also for others in the local

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11 Cf., for example, Per Engzell, Arun Frey, and Mark D. Verhagen, 'Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, 17 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2022376118.

12 Cf., for example, Minyahil Assefa, 'COVID-19 Lockdown Restrictions and Small Business Survival Strategy: Government Supporting Schemes', *Business Perspectives and Research*, (December 2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/22785337211045182; also, cf. Robert Anderton, Vasco Botelho, Agostino Consolo, António Dias da Silva, Claudia Foroni, Matthias Mohr, and Lara Vivian, 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the euro area labour market', ECB Economic Bulletin, Issue 8/2020, https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/economic-bulletin/articles/2021/html/ecb.ebart202008_02~bc749d90e7.en.html.

13 Cf., for example, Sivertsen B, Knapstad M, Petrie K, et al., 'Changes in mental health problems and suicidal behaviour in students and their associations with COVID-19-related restrictions in Norway: a national repeated cross-sectional analysis', *BMJ Open* 12, 2 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-057492; also, Emily Hewlett, Shunta Takino, Yuka Nishina, and Christopher Prinz, 'Tackling the mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis: An integrated, whole-of-society response', OECD, 12th May 2021, https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/tackling-the-mental-health-impact-of-the-covid-19-crisis-an-integrated-whole-of-society-response-0ccafa0b/. For a worsening of existing mental health issues, cf. Louise Murphy, Kathleen Markey, Claire O' Donnell, Mairead Moloney, and Owen Doody, 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions on people with pre-existent mental health conditions: A scoping review', *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 35, Issue 4 (2021): 375-394, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2021.05.002.

14 Cf., for example, S. Jeste, C. Hyde, C. Distefano, A. Halladay, S. Ray, M. Porath, R. B. Wilson, and A. Thurm, 'Changes in access to educational and healthcare services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities during COVID-19 restrictions', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 64 (2020): 825– 833, https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12776; also, C. Eshareturi, A. Wareham, M. Rattray, M. Haith-Cooper, and R. McCarthy, 'An exploration of the impact of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) restrictions on marginalised groups in the UK', *Public health* 197, (2021): 6–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.05.026.

15 An example is the list of nearly 400 Czech measures, in: Government of the Czech Republic, 'Measures adopted by the Czech Government against the coronavirus', 9th February 2022, https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/measures-adopted-by-the-czech-government-against-coronavirus-180545/.

16 Jonas Herby, Lars Jonung, and Steve H. Hanke, 'A Literature Review and Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Lockdowns on Covid-19 Mortality', *Studies in Applied Economics*, No. 200 (January 2022), https://sites.krieger.jhu.edu/iae/files/2022/01/A-Literature-Review-and-Meta-Analysis-of-the-Effects-of-Lockdowns-on-COVID-19-Mortality.pdf, 2.

17 A media report with responses more in favour of the findings is: Emily Craig, 'So why did the media ignore a shock study that found lockdowns didn't work? MailOnline was one of just three major outlets to report major findings while BBC, Sky and the Guardian looked the other way', *Daily Mail*, 3rd February 2022, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10472321/So-did-British-media-largely-fail-cover-study-lockdowns-didnt-work.html. A media report with responses more against the findings is Yevgeny Kuklychev, 'Did a Johns Hopkins Study "Prove" Lockdowns Don't Work? What We Know So Far', *Newsweek*, 7th February 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/did-johns-hopkins-study-prove-lockdowns-dont-work-what-we-know-so-far-1676724.

18 Herby, Jonung and Hanke, 'A Literature Review…', 42-43. This issue was seen, for example, in the Czech Republic, in reports such as: Lucie Protivanská, 'Karanténu či izolaci poruší každý dvanáctý člověk, ukázaly kontroly [Every Twelfth Person Violates Quarantine or Isolation, Inspections Have Shown]', *Idnes.cz*, 29th March 2021, https://www.idnes.cz/karlovy-vary/zpravy/izolace-covid-koronavirus-karantena-kontrola-hygienici-policie.A210329_601211_vary-zpravy_ba; and also in jkk [sic], 'Lidé venku hromadně odkládají roušky [People Outside Remove Masks En Masse]', *Novinky.cz*, 23rd April 2021, https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/lide-venku-hromadne-odkladaji-rousky-40357892.

community: one's neighbours. For some, rebelling against what is considered an unjust law while not learning about appropriate safe-distancing has facilitated the viral spread, leading to lengthy restrictions (which in turn causes decreased respect for the laws and state). A lack of vertical cohesion can become a dualistic play-off between 'rulers and ruled', leading to two sides facing each other in a battle over authority and adherence;[19] this clearly shows that the structure is not functioning well and the idea of the common good is lacking. But people will generally become more reasonable and responsible and respond more appropriately when treated as such. There-fore, by looking at alternative, better solutions, we can consider how to develop our society, its individuals, and also its local communities.

The idea of the common good was underdeveloped in how the restrictions were carried out, where, particularly in the worst of times, we withdrew (by choice or mandate) behind our front doors and many of us disregarded the needs of our neighbours. Instead of withdrawing into smaller communities, we existed in the smallest possible communities, thus leaving some of our neighbours in problematic situations, even to the point of being fatal. More extreme reports have included specific (but certainly not isolated) cases, such as the abuse and murder of a six-year-old boy[20] and a woman whose body was found at home two years after her death.[21] More general examples include nearly 100,000 British 'ghost children' missing from the education system: those who are not effectively homeschooling are now vulnerable to gang activity, trafficking, abuse, or neglect, etc.[22]

Generally-speaking, there is a clear need in society to emerge from the time of viral restrictions and social upheaval with the desire to stabilise matters in and around our lives, and Catholic Social Doctrine can support this process: 'the goal is the healing of every individual, through a subsidiary and solidary process to which the rest of the social partners are called to contribute.'[23] However, as this takes place, it is important also to learn how to be more ready for any future sim-ilar situations. There is plenty of disagreement over the reaction and decisions of different states to the Covid viral spread since spring 2020, especially as a common policy in the West before 2020, which was to isolate the vulnerable to allow viral spread and develop herd immunity,[24] changed to a general lockdown and other strong restrictions during spring 2020 due to modelling data that predicted an overload on health services and large numbers of fatalities, while few societies minimised restrictions like Sweden. Experts from different fields have had varying success in having their voices heard and the hope is that with the massive amount of data and human life stories to take into account, we will – albeit perhaps only over time – learn best regarding this difficult period by being as objective as possible. CSD could contribute to the debate as it offers

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19   For example, a Czech government minister stated that a reason for restrictions being prolonged was non-adherence, for example, in: David Garkisch, 'Blatný: Opatření nefungují. Kvůli jejich nedodržování i kvůli britské mutaci [Blatný: The Measures Don't Work. This is Due to People's Non-compliance and the British Mutation]', 4th February 2021, https://www.nasezdravotnictvi.cz/aktualita/blatny-opatreni-nefunguji-kvuli-jejich-nedodrzovani-i-kvuli-britske-mutaci.

20   Archie Bland, 'Arthur Labinjo-Hughes: vulnerable children 'slipped from view' in pandemic', *The Guardian*, 3rd December 2021, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10271727/Arthur-Labinjo-Hughes-Ex-commissioner-warns-vulnerable-children-slipped-view-Covid.html.

21   Andy Gregory, 'Mummified body of "lonely" woman dead for two years found sitting at her table', *Independent*, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10498905/Pictured-Woman-mummified-chair-home-TWO-YEARS-death.html.

22   The Centre for Social Justice, *Lost but not forgotten: the reality of severe absence in schools post-lockdown*, January 2022, https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CSJ-Lost_but_not_forgotten-2.pdf, especially p. 4.

23   Emanuele Lacca, 'From "Personal Coping" to "Social Coping". How to React to a Pandemic, a Proposal by Ethics', *Caritas et Veritas* 11, no.1 (2021): 65, https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2021.004.

24   Bill Gardner and Paul Nuki, 'Covid-19 strategies: Britain planned for herd immunity while Asia intended to contain virus', *The Telegraph*, 18th April 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/18/covid-19-strategies-britain-planned-herd-immunity-asia-intended/ (alternatively, https://ghostarchive.org/archive/Ei84I).

a middle-ground between the polar ideas of strong, wide restrictions and a general freedom with targeted isolations: with restrictions being placed which enable local communities to isolate from other local communities, those needing support still receive it within the local community while viral spread from community to community is minimised. However, CSD – whether merely as a set of ideals or to some unknown extent usable in practical ways – is not widely known and understood. Therefore, it cannot effectively be presented in the debate because, theoretically, there is no wider understanding of the basic principles, and, practically, it has not been implemented in any sufficient manner to use as an example of how it would work. It is possible, though, that by developing a wider understanding of CSD, the benefits from both polar policies – wider lockdowns with localised freedom and selected isolation – viral spread could in future be restricted while ensuring less disruption in local communities. This will be explored in the following sections.

Clearly, improvements in our approach to local communities are needed and this paper offers a different approach, navigating between the recent extremes of China's and Sweden's policies. CSD should be amongst the debates and the faithful can make the ideas in CSD more widely known by learning them, sharing them, and employing them particularly in local communities to develop cohesion, as called for at Vatican II.[25] The following exploration of each of the three elements of CSD focused on here can be a starting point for considering the benefits of exploring them locally and how they could have contributed during the restrictions. It can be seen that the first step is to develop some level of subsidiarity and, being the key to developing the other areas, this paper focuses particularly on it.

Subsidiarity

This section explores subsidiarity, which is the key to setting CSD in localised communities with effectiveness, with some reference to the recent restrictions. While overall subsidiarity would be a fundamental change in society, by exploring the ideas, active Christians can learn about the benefits of increased localised organisation, implement ideas appropriately, as well as be able to explain it to others.

The idea of subsidiarity has been developing for well over a century and is '*among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine*',[26] having been first presented in 1891 as a Catholic teaching in Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (RN), albeit never being named in the encyclical. RN's focus was on important contemporary issues, such as workers' rights in relation to the state and capitalists, which was in contrast to non-Christian philosophies and movements of its time. In 1931, Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA) commemorated RN, updating and developing its teachings after four decades of societal change and upheaval, including communism, etc. QA explains subsidiarity as power, responsibility, and authority being held at as low a level and as locally as possible: 'The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly.'[27]

In this context, the relationship between the individual and society is summed up in CSD:

> It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social,

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25   *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 31b.

26   CSDC 185 (all italics in this and subsequent quotes are from the original text).

27   QA 80.

cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth. This is the realm of *civil society*, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings…[28]

The document places man in the socio-historical context of individuals in relation to others making up society in 'intermediate social groupings', which should neither stem specifically from any individual person (cultism) nor be imposed from above (totalitarianism). As Christians, we are called, of course, to love God and neighbour, which means reaching out to others, and therefore society is not merely the aggregate of individuals and their dealings with others but society is man amongst others, in relation to them. The importance of this has become more apparent in these times of restrictions and shutdowns.

While the focus is often between the individual and the state today, CSD teaches that there is space between these two, for individuals, communities, and groups to take more responsibility and hold authority:

> The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community.[29]

For this to be achieved, it is necessary that certain needs are fulfilled:

> In order for the principle of subsidiarity to be put into practice there is a *corresponding need* for: respect and effective promotion of the human person and the family; ever greater appreciation of associations and intermediate organizations in their fundamental choices and in those that cannot be delegated to or exercised by others[.][30]

In other words, duties in society should be carried out at the lowest and most local levels possible as this respects the dignity of the individual and makes the most of each person contributing through being involved in society, leading to self-fulfilment and societal needs being solved, thus society being developed further. People can grow and become more responsible, which is the opposite of systems where the state bureaucratises unemployment, managing and paying for it,[31] which can lead to a dependency culture, and even to multi-generational unemployment.[32]

In the recent restrictions, mass temporary unemployment occurred with many able-bodied remaining at home with little to do, while many were paid by the state through social payment schemes (furlough, etc.). This was because many states had decided to restrict people by drawing a line at the front door of each house, at times even forbidding crossing the threshold without very good reason. In basic terms, general freedom was replaced by restrictions at the most individual

28 CSDC 185.
29 CSDC 187.
30 CSDC 187.
31 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1st May 1991, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html, 48.
32 For more on this, cf. Rakesh Kochhar and D'Vera Cohn, 'Chapter 2: Income and Poverty in Multi-Generational and Other Households', section: Economic Outcomes for the Unemployed of the report titled 'Fighting Poverty in a Bad Economy, Americans Move in with Relatives', *Pew Research Center*, 3rd October 2011, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2011/10/03/chapter-2-income-and-poverty-in-multi-generational-and-other-households/#income-and-poverty-by-demographic-characteristics#economic-outcomes-for-the-unemployed; also, Kevin Ralston and Vernon Gayle, 'Exploring "generations and cultures of worklessness" in contemporary Britain', *Youth and Policy*, last updated 12th October 2017, https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/generations-of-worklessness/.

level possible. While this makes practical sense in terms of a temporary maximum quarantine, it neglected to take into account the human toll on those who were healthy regarding the virus but suffering in terms of, for example, basic human needs (food, etc.), education, mental health, family life, child safety, etc. Many individuals and families have suffered in ways that could have been avoided or lessened.

Instead of enforcing a sort of false subsidiarity, more local community cohesion would have allowed the possibility of the line of restrictions to have been drawn not at the front door but at the end of the street, village, or city block, thus enabling small, local groups to organise their time, resources, and mutual help and support in a wide variety of ways. For example, instead of someone shopping from each household, it would have been more effective if one person had travelled to shop for 10 or 20 households beyond the local boundary, then isolated before virus testing.

Local communities are part of larger communities, up to state and international levels. There is a particular need for local community development in countries which have high levels of historically developed bureaucratic control over the structures of society,[33] for example, in Central and Eastern Europe. To allow local communities to develop, there is a need for the state somewhat to release its hold and allow many aspects in society to be dealt with locally.[34] In general, states should encourage, enable, and monitor smaller groups in society with clear guidelines and expectations: '*Various circumstances may make it advisable that the State step in to supply certain functions*'.[35] For without oversight, a descent into historical problems is clearly probable and CSD explains the importance of effectively delegating to and enabling lower groups:

> In any case, the common good correctly understood, the demands of which will never in any way be contrary to the defence and promotion of the primacy of the person and the way this is expressed in society, must remain the criteria for making decisions concerning the application of the principle of subsidiarity.[36]

And the state benefits also from having a position of oversight rather than complete responsibility:

> Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of 'subsidiary function,' the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.[37]

Thus, it was theoretically possible for the state during restrictions to use the temporarily unemployed (with or without contracts and income) for strongly needed localised tasks and roles. However, organising this at state level would have been impossible due to the time-frame and

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33   Here, this refers to states where citizens are given permission by the state to act in specific ways, rather than citizens having freedom to act until the state intervenes to prevent problems when they arise. For example, in the Czech Republic, for a self-employed person to make and sell something as simple as a shelf, the state requires the woodworker to have received a carpentry qualification from 'middle-school' (i.e., post-compulsory 'college') as a teenager; for non-qualified but capable adults who wish to earn money from their carpentry skills, the required qualifications are difficult and expensive to access, and the would-be carpenter must complete a lengthy course including making staircases, windows, etc. Elsewhere, such as in America, there is freedom to make and sell goods and legislation is minimal but sufficient to protect the consumer regarding quality and safety.

34   Regarding the carpentry example in footnote 33 above, local word-of-mouth will generally prevent an unsafe or shoddy worker from selling goods locally, just as online reviews work in the wider marketplace.

35   CSDC 188. In the carpentry example in footnotes 33 and 34, this regards safety, health and quality of goods.

36   CSDC 188.

37   QA 80.

a lack of local knowledge. For this situation, and for a better developed social order in general, there are two requirements:

> The principle of subsidiarity requires *positively* that all communities not only permit but enable and encourage individuals to exercise their own self-responsibility and that larger communities do the same for smaller ones . . . . It requires *negatively* that communities not deprive individuals and smaller communities of their right to exercise their selfresponsibility. Intervention, in other words, is only appropriate as 'helping people help themselves.'[38]

This means that if people in the recent lockdowns had already understood local limits and responsibilities in such a way, other localised scenarios could have been explored and needs could have been met far better. However, there was no effective space between the macrostructure of the state and individuals and the microstructure of households. While some societies have variously effective charitable groups or voluntary organisations that contribute to society, there was in many places a lack of effective mezzo-structure to fall back on and therefore different societies saw various but generally insufficient reactions to the problems that arose.

To implement a structure more able to respond effectively in problematic times, or help local people and develop ongoing community cohesion, it is necessary not only to educate, organise, and support people to implement it, but also to have the abovementioned oversight and supervision to ensure that intentions and practice are appropriate. Thus, the state can have a more effective role while smaller groups (parishes, charities, community groups, etc.) more locally take responsibility, with local interests catered for, specialisations both protected and allowed to flourish, individuals given opportunities for growth and development, and those who need help in communities being given suitable support rather than blanket measures being implemented that may not actually help.

The current system of top-down authority[39] in some societies can be a platform for developing the capability for subsidiarity in society in general. Clearly, roles and responsibilities would need to be developed appropriately in local communities and this could be developed through educational means, from the theoretical to the increasingly practical. And the practical support of community social workers would be crucial in helping local communities integrate and in implementing support structures for those who need it.[40]

Such new approaches would counter the developments of modernity which have led to fundamental historical and contemporary trends like standardisation and centralisation, which are to the detriment to local communities, especially in more rural areas. Here, local issues are increasingly ignored, local cultures are damaged, and local economies are dragged into wider economic frames, leading to their dilution. An example is when local shops close, more transport is needed for travel to distant supermarkets; in turn, supermarkets and other shops in satellite towns suffer

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38 Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Subsidiarity in the Church: The State of the Question', quoted in: Michael P. Moreland, 'The Pre-history of Subsidiarity in Leo XIII', *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies* 56, No.1 (2018), https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1162&context=jcls, 65.

39 If the majority of decisions in general terms are made in a society at state level, then subsidiarity is very limited and the society is controlled from the top-down. The carpentry example in footnote 33 is a clear example of citizens being able to act only when allowed, rather than having freedom to act unless the state intervenes. This system of state permission for individuals not only restricts freedom but also inhibits creative thinking and adaptation, which leads to a certain amount of dependence on the state to solve problems including how to react to new and difficult circumstances. Thus, individuals wait for others to solve the problems in society while disaffection towards authority grows as seen in footnote 18 above.

40 Cf. Jan Kaňak, 'Descriptive Quantitative Analysis of Support Calls to the #delamcomuzu Project and its Implications for Three Concepts of Community Social Work', *Caritas et veritas no.* 12, 1 (2022): 175-177. https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2022.013.

from shopping centres and retail parks developing.[41] The resulting worker diaspora means the local area loses its localness, and in time people don't even know their neighbour's names.[42] The home becomes merely an affordable location for resting between working, socialising, and free-time activities elsewhere, thus families lose integration, especially as many children grow up and move away due to a lack of opportunity to integrate into and help develop their local community. This trend meant that in the recent restrictions many people had minimal connection to their neighbours and found themselves isolated. Vulnerable people, including elderly and disabled, as well as those with physical or mental health issues and those less comfortable with social contact, were less capable of accessing necessities such as food, fuel, etc. For some with less domestic experience with family members, it was not a welcome break from the world's challenges: families who normally meet briefly in mornings and evenings were suddenly required to be together constantly – perhaps with energetic children in limited space and no access to outside amenities and adults who have not developed the skills to manage this well. Although social media access was helpful for some, its overuse becomes problematic and not everyone has or wants access. Therefore, with what had become the societal norm – travel, work, school, amenities – being forbidden, what remained was the fragments of domestic and local community arrangements that have been neglected for so long.

Through the development of subsidiarity in societies, and the (re)development of local communities by community groups, parishes, or charities, that are encouraged, enabled, and overseen appropriately by the state – seeking a healthy balance between focussing into the local community and out from it – both the common good and the dignity of persons can grow: 'The principle of subsidiarity allows everyone to assume their own role in the healing and destiny of society'.[43] Looking further ahead, more robust and caring communities can respond and adapt far better when unexpected problems occur, such as viruses or other disruptions. The community's boundary can be placed at the end of the street or village or city block, and support within can be given by those who can to those who need it. In the restrictions, those vulnerable to illness could have been in managed isolation, with neighbours assisting with food or distanced social contact. So, by developing subsidiarity in more stable times, those who need support are already known by their neighbours, and when unstable times occur, no one is left isolated and in need, and local communities grow through appropriate participation.

Participation

This section considers the actualisation of the theories and teachings: participation is the activity enabled by subsidiarity, where people act within their communities. Although brief,[44] this section is necessary to CSD as it is the activity or action of the person putting theory into practice in their community.

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41 Cf. QA, 79, where the trend of removing from individuals to give to the community is compared to removing from smaller organisations to give to larger ones: this is a form of centralisation and can be seen socio-economically as local jobs are lost and commutes to more urban areas become the norm. Problems stemming from this are many, from environmental damage due to increased transport to the stripping of local community participation.

42 For example, in the UK: Lumley, '1 in 20'; in the US: Russell Heimlich, 'Do You Know Your Neighbours?', *Pew Research Center*, 18th June 2010, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/06/18/do-you-know-your-neighbors/.

43 Francis, 'Pope Francis: Subsidiarity means everyone has a role in healing society', *Catholic News Agency*, 23rd September 2020, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/45936/pope-francis-subsidiarity-means-everyone-has-a-role-in-healing-society.

44 This reflects the brevity of the relevant part of the CSDC for this study because the CSDC section on Participation focuses more on political participation in democracy; although connected and important, this is beyond the scope of this article, which focuses more on the social (and somewhat also the economic) sense of local communities.

To practise effectively a system incorporating some level of subsidiarity, the participation of people is necessary, however, the modernism of previous centuries has encouraged in many ways a growing individualism that has so easily led to isolating tendencies in postmodernism. These are manifested in, amongst others, the breakdown of families, greater mobility leading to the disintegration of family ties and local communities, and existential themes that have been particularly encouraged by the media and the arts. The traditional bonds in society cannot be effectively replaced by technology such as social media, which has its own destructive tendencies with phenomena like online bullying, trolling, and widespread sexual content, which has even led to increased suicides, especially but not solely amongst the young.[45] CSD, however, encourages a different type of participation, which is integral to subsidiarity:

> *The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation*, which is expressed essentially in a se-
> *ries of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others,*
> *whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social*
> *life of the civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by*
> *all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.*[46]

The common good is a Christian goal that gives guidance to how participation should be approached, carried out, and evaluated. When it is in a situational context consistent with subsidiarity, the focus is person-to-person and person-to-small group or -community. In the situation of a social lockdown, it is reaching out with good intentions and seeking to do good for the second person or group locally. Practically, it can be contacting neighbours, especially the elderly or vulnerable, ensuring where appropriate that food is available, heating is working, laundry is done, etc. And in lockdown, it is spending a little time socially, transcending the box of individualism and reaching the other, while respecting quarantine and distancing, etc.

CSD states that 'Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others […]'.[47] We are called in our humanity to participate, but also to take on responsibility within our community: personal growth occurs and human dignity develops when we participate in 'subsidiarity, suitably planned and managed, aimed at affirming rights yet also providing for the assumption of corresponding responsibilities'.[48] This includes developing social connections, being friendly,

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45 A particular problem generally with social media is that some users 'hide behind their keyboards', which can lead to aggression, bullying, or communicating in ways they would not do in real social situations, although some studies found some users gained support online also. Cf., for example, Rosemary Sedgwick, Sophie Epstein, Rina Dutta, and Dennis Ougrin, 'Social media, internet use and suicide attempts in adolescents', *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 32, 6 (November 2019): 534-541, https://doi.org/10.1097/YCO.0000000000000547. Regarding the link between social media use and suicide during the restrictions, this was found to be exacerbated for students: JM Haddad, C Macenski, A Mosier-Mills, A Hibara, K Kester, M Schneider, RC Conrad, and CH Liu, 'The Impact of Social Media on College Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: a Multinational Review of the Existing Literature', *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 6th October 2021;23(11):70, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-021-01288-y. In general, the additional problem of consuming constantly negative news can be balanced for many by online support being provided by others, as seen in X Yang, BHK Yip, ADP Mak, D Zhang, EKP Lee, and SYS Wong, 'The Differential Effects of Social Media on Depressive Symptoms and Suicidal Ideation Among the Younger and Older Adult Population in Hong Kong During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Population-Based Cross-sectional Survey Study', *JMIR Public Health Surveillance* 2021;7(5):e24623, https://doi.org/10.2196/24623. However, an Australian study found that although social media could support persons feeling suicidal due to external events, that is, news on Covid, those who were supporting them could feel depressed and several felt suicidal themselves afterwards, which highlights the fact that social media users are not necessarily equipped to deal with such issues: E Bailey, A Boland, I Bell, J Nicholas, L La Sala, and J Robinson. 'The Mental Health and Social Media Use of Young Australians during the COVID-19 Pandemic'. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 19th January 2022;19(3):1077, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031077.
46 CSDC 189.
47 CSDC 190.
48 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, Holy See, 29th June 2009, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html, 47. (Henceforth CV.)

organising reserve food and other supplies, or distributing what is needed in the community in a difficult time. Although some have participated in these to some extent during the restrictions, we must ask ourselves whether support has been restricted to friends, family, or fellow parishioners, and not the isolated or lonely of our geographical communities.

Participation regards giving what we can to those who need. This is also in a Marxist slogan that was proclaimed repeatedly through half of Europe for nearly half a century – 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. However, this should be recognised as a Christian concept as it paraphrases the Book of Acts regarding the early Christian community. Acts twice records clearly the experience of the early Church regarding this theme:

> And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. (Acts 2:44-47, RSVCE)

> Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:32-37, RSVCE)

It should be recognised, particularly when explaining CSD to people in societies which have experienced communism to avoid conflation which can lead to automatic rejection, that the differences between the Marxist macro system and the Christian micro system are several, including size and scope, intentions, personal/social connections, and, of course, Christian love and service (caritas, diakonia), and especially God himself. The twin commandments of Christ – to love God and neighbour – were clearly being lived in the early Church, which is in contrast to the infamous caricature of religion as a popular opiate in Marxism.

In the small community of a village, urban area, or parish, those who take on the responsibility of participating, thus also receiving some kind of authority, live amongst the community and are more easily held socially accountable, both by themselves and by others. When there is some distance – geographically or socially – between those who have ability and those who have needs, problems begin to be manifested: we are fundamentally social beings, designed ideally to love. While we may walk past the injured man or we may help him, only by encountering him can we really help him. Of course, those who are not directly active can also participate by strengthening and supporting those who are active through advice, financial support, social connections, and prayers. In any community, there are different roles according to needs, ability, etc., like in the Early Church with the apostles then also deacons, bishops, and priests as well as active laypersons taking on many roles.[49] The Church today can look to this model and adapt it somewhat to play an integral part in developing local communities as it already is founded on the idea of love (including towards neighbours) and service. The Vatican II document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA; for example, 13, 24) can offer inspiration for the active faithful in the Christian founding of activity in the local community to serve and be a witness to the faith, and it explicitly calls for

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49   Cf. Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:7-11, 28.

the laity to 'learn the principles and conclusions of the social doctrine so as to become capable of working for the development of this doctrine to the best of their ability and of rightly applying these same principles and conclusions to individual cases' (31b). For without good intentions in a subsidiary context, there is the danger of disintegration into a system such as those where the communist scriptural paraphrase is used to conceal corruption and self-interest as the strong take power over others.[50] Or, as in any system, those who seek profit or reward will sooner or later cause some level of corruption.

In order to achieve the Church's CSD intentions and avoid exploitation of the system, it is necessary to ensure 'The overcoming of cultural, juridical and social obstacles that often constitutes real barriers to the *shared participation* of citizens in the destiny of their communities' calls for work in the areas of information and education'.[51] Thus, through education, the words of Acts can be reclaimed for many, CSD can be shared, and the benefits of working together to develop this can grow by having a common purpose: solidarity.

Solidarity

While subsidiarity sets the scene of community and participation is individuals taking part in it, solidarity is the adhesive that develops cohesion, giving a clear moral element to community interactions.

From its beginning, CSDC's Solidarity section links the individual to community, highlighting 'the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity'.[52] Understandably, the document frames the importance of solidarity in the ever-growing distances within relationships which our technology-based society enables. However, as in our recent experience, when this is fundamentally affected, such values apply all the more to the mezzo level, our local communities. Thus, it is the task of Christians – who already have some level of togetherness in parishes – to be an example and help influence others in developing solidarity, making it both a social task and a form of evangelisation by example.

CSD explains that more than just interconnections in socio-politico-economic terms are needed: '*The new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are* de facto *forms of solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical-social solidarity*'.[53] It states that more than the standard of 'distribution of goods and remuneration for work'[54] is required, referencing the Catechism (CCC) to show that 'Solidarity is seen therefore under two complementary aspects: that of a *social principle* and that of a *moral virtue*'.[55] In simple terms, CCC recognises that only by different groups working together (poor, wealthy, employers, employees…) can there be solutions to socio-economic issues, underpinned by spiritual solidarity and the recognition of human dignity.[56] This can be translated into healthy and capable people with access to resources and the ability to organise them locally.

The aim must be to develop such a system with increasing effectiveness and reach. It needs to be open to all to participate, regardless of beliefs or denominations, thus being a means of showing

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50   Cf. CSDC 191.
51   CSDC 191.
52   CSDC 192.
53   CSDC 193.
54   CCC 1940.
55   CSDC 193, referencing CCC 1939-42.
56   Cf. CCC 1939-48.

the inherent goodness of Christianity: evangelisation through action and example. Equally, to prevent the Christian element from remaining only theoretical but to be perceptible initially as well as in the longer term, the moral virtue of the solidarity must be clear. This is achievable only by a clear structure and guidelines because 'the "*structures of sin*" that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome.'[57] For solidarity to be more than just a passing kindness that will deteriorate into self-interest, self-importance, and cliques leading to 'us and them' feelings, the initial charity and service shown by those setting up and implementing local community support must be structured transparently and carried out for reasons of love and service – Christian caritas and diakonia.

While this is fundamentally Christian in nature, a Christian 'closed shop' would be merely a different version of elitism, which would obstruct an important element of caritas and diakonia: we are called to love neighbour, not just Christian neighbour. Benedict XVI states that 'A particular manifestation of charity and a guiding criterion for fraternal cooperation between believers and non-believers is undoubtedly the principle of subsidiarity, an expression of inalienable human freedom.'[58] And as the fruits of such cooperation are seen by others in passive evangelisation, it is also important – as pointed out in Scripture and Vatican II[59] – for Christians involved to develop their preparation for explaining to those who seek more understanding about what – and whom – CSD is based upon.

For it will be perceptible that this is quite different from a mere social policy. In CSD, fundamentality or permanence rooted in love is described and unpacked further:

> *Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue*, 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 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*'.[60]

Thus, to counter scepticism or even cynicism regarding motives, a localised presentation of caritas and diakonia must have no personal profit or benefit other than working to fulfil one's identity as a Christian by having faith, hope, and love in Christ and love for others. For it should be seen that solidary actions are done because they are the right thing to do: 'Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental *social virtue* since it places itself in the sphere of justice.'[61] Indeed, it is a fundamental part of the Christian identity: 'Solidarity with the suffering and serving these people is one of the typical expressions of Christian spirituality.'[62]

Regarding approach, it is important that the Christian both shows and can explain that CSD is neither transitory, nor a quick-fix, and is certainly not an evangelisation drive. The Christian must not be invasive or demanding in any way. By listening to the needs of others, the Christian can show love for the other rather than the desire to implement his own values and expectations on others. This, of course, includes having no expectation of religious conversion or activity, but it should rather be a presentation of the fact that faith leads to higher love. This is because solidarity

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57   CSDC 193.
58   CV 57.
59   Cf. 1Pt 3:15; *Dignitatis Humanae* 14 (henceforth, DH). This is looked at in the next section.
60   CSDC 193, referencing John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 17, 39, 45.
61   CSDC 193.
62   Helena Machulova, 'The Christian Roots of the Philanthropic Concept of Social Work', *Caritas et veritas* 9, no. 2 (2019): 32, https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2019.022.

is a virtue directed *par excellence* to the *common good*, and is found in '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)'.[63]

And it is very important that, regarding longevity, once immediate and more critical needs are met and those in need are in a more stable situation, the help and support must evolve appropriately without a loss of commitment with regard to those in the local community and the exercise of Christian virtues that led to the charitable actions initially. Further, a more robust philosophical awareness of the integral need for solidarity is important for the Christian in order to be able to explain its necessary role in the growth of humanity both locally and in the wider world:

> *The message of the Church's social doctrine regarding solidarity clearly shows that there exists an intimate bond between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal destination of goods, between solidarity and equality among men and peoples, between solidarity and peace in the world.*[64]

The need for a humble approach – a Christian ideal (in the world, not of the world) – is then emphasised in CSD: '*The principle of solidarity requires that men and women of our day cultivate a greater awareness that they are debtors of the society of which they have become part.*'[65] This position is explained, showing that our dependence upon the structures and support provided by society – 'the indivisible and indispensable legacy constituted by culture, scientific and technical knowledge, material and immaterial goods and by all that the human condition has produced'[66] – must be acknowledged. Furthermore, it is a Christian responsibility to participate in solidarity in order to continue in this vein to provide this, and, even better, stability for generations to come. Thus, in the time of restrictions, this means using existing resources and systems – communications, distribution, cooperation – in a virus-aware manner currently, while working to care best for the local community.

CSDC also gives long-term direction to development as it unpacks the theological underpinning of solidarity, thus developing it as an important social narrative and making it diametrically different from worldly attempts such as Marx's 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' in the minds of those who have experienced communist authority. The highest example of solidarity is Jesus Christ – '*God-with-us*' – who joined with us and through grace gives us hope for and the possibility of 'ever higher and more involved forms of sharing'.[67] Article 196 emphasises that regardless of how lacking in goodness a society is, in Christ this can be overcome. It is clear then that in social restrictions, the implementation of an organisational system where each local community (village, street, city block) ensures that those isolating are supported, children are educated, and those in need are helped is possible by means of subsidiary organisation, active participation, and it being held together by solidarity. While this can happen in a time of crisis – virus lockdown, economic difficulty, natural disaster, war – the common purpose either reduces over time or there is a sense of diminished need to participate without a deeper solidarity:[68] responsibility decreases on a personal level. It is clear then that an understanding of the

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63   CSDC 193, referencing various documents by John Paul II.
64   CSDC 194.
65   CSDC 195.
66   CSDC 195.
67   CSDC 196.
68   The transitory nature of social media saw many support groups appear at the beginning of the restrictions but without strong foundations,

common good is needed, and for Christians service and love in God (diakonia, caritas) are the impetus.

By understanding the theological foundation of true solidarity, we can avoid the failure of any worldly attempt at community cohesion which will disintegrate into self-interest and the seeking of power, as has been seen in history and particularly in the last century. Pope Benedict XVI warns of such imbalance: 'The principle of subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need.'[69] For subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity to be developed successfully – in the local community, but also beyond – it is necessary for the social teachings of the Church, including the theological elements, to be explored and shared appropriately, which requires preparation and education in the teachings of the Church in these and related matters.

Preparation and Implementation

The three previous sections consider three key CSD teachings: the benefits of some form of subsidiarity in society are clear, but they require the participation of people and solidarity to bond them together with a common purpose. These are ideas, even ideals, which cannot be implemented or even promoted widely in society at this time, for society in general is neither ready for nor open to such ideas for various reasons. It would be impossible to implement them without significant preparation, and whether they could actually be practically used widely remains to be seen. The above sections, however, being explorations of the theoretical, can contribute to localised preparations and discussions regarding how parishes, charities, and the active faithful in general can use CSD to develop local community cohesion.

It is also clear that localised implementation, or developments of existing examples, to at least some extent as seen above would be beneficial to social cohesion at the local level, with a focus on both the common good and human dignity. But in practical terms, whether in specific time-critical situations such as social restrictions or in wider society more permanently, it would be no small task. Further, isolated and sporadic attempts to develop such systems are more likely to be viewed as eccentric failures, and any successful example could easily be classed as unique to its situation and too difficult to emulate with little chance of success. However, hope should not be lost, as both Scripture and the Second Vatican Council point out clearly.

For favourable circumstances for significant concepts to be implemented in an appropriate way, three elements are necessary: a situation causing an attitude of openness to change, preparation in place to develop understanding of the change, and people who will implement the change. This applies to any change, from minor to major. The recent restrictions are certainly a situation that calls for change particularly at the local level, and although the preparation is not in place to directly implement change, the recent events present an opportunity for developing ideas and spreading the teachings of CSD to enable increased readiness for any future similar situation. Therefore, it is important that various groups begin to develop both the theoretical and practical aspects while memories of restrictions are strong. While development of CSD activities, groups,

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they do not last long: 'Early evidence suggests that highly flexible, volunteer-driven operations have had a better chance of succeeding in places where trust was already high and networks robust.' In: Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan and Aliyyah Ahad, "Solidarity in Isolation? Social cohesion at a time of physical distance", *Migration Policy Institute*, July 2021, https://www.bosch-stiftung.de/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/2022-02/mpie_integration-futures_social-cohesion-covid.pdf, 11.

69   CV 58.

and thinking in parishes and dioceses is called for here, the details of how they can unfold are beyond the scope of this paper.

To develop understanding of CSD and to prepare people for implementing change in an appropriate way, it is important to recognise the calls in Scripture and Vatican II regarding this. The various calls are for groups – clergy, active laity, academics – to help people prepare, learn about, and develop understanding of their faith, which includes that which would lead to looking for appropriate ways of implementing CSD in their communities (AA 31b). This includes both the importance of sharing CSD ideas among fellow faithful but also to be able to explain them effectively to those not familiar with Christian ideas or terminology.

The sharing of Christian ideas is called for in Scripture, conciliar documents, and various encyclicals, including seeking ways of developing their presence in society as part of Vatican II's *aggiornamento*, bringing up to date, so as to participate in the world.[70] Regarding the education of the faithful, the Council's *Gravissimum Educationis* (GE) states that 'aware of their calling, they [should] learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. 1 Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world…'[71] Therefore, Catholics are called not only to be in the world but also to participate in its 'Christian formation', which corresponds with developing CSD practically.

The Scripture passage referenced above in GE 2 refers to interactions integral to developing Christian ideas in the world:

> … Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:15-16; RSVCE)

This is similarly stated in Vatican II documents:

> Everywhere on earth [all disciples of Christ] must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.[72]

> The disciple has a grave obligation to Christ, his Master, to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth he has received from him, to be faithful in announcing it, and vigorous in defending it without having recourse to methods which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.[73]

Regarding the meaning of these words and their use, several elements should be considered. First, the call is we should always be prepared, which involves education, the formation of the person, and a personal readiness to share. Second, the word 'defense' here is translated from *apologia* (from which we have apologetics), which is also translatable as answer, reason, or response; that is, it means to explain. Third, this response is to one who questions – whether directly or indirectly – why a Christian has hope, that is, about their faith. Therefore, the first part of the Petrine quote can be reduced to: always be ready to explain why you have hope in Christianity. The second part has been less focused upon through the course of the centuries, leading to some negative perceptions of apologetics. However, in recent times this has been changing significantly and it can be

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70   Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 43 (henceforth GS).
71   GE 2.
72   *Lumen Gentium* 10.
73   DH 14.

paraphrased: do so in a loving, Christian manner,[74] which is important in developing solidarity. There is, of course, the possibility that others will question more widely the faith through either recognising the fruits and enquiring positively, or negatively accusing the faithful of trying to promote an agenda of religion – the ability to deal with such conversations in an informed and good manner is therefore important also.

The strong words of the Council – 'grave obligation', 'vigorous in defending', 'must bear witness' – indicate the importance of Christian communication that is appropriately robust while being Christian in manner (bearing witness in actions, acting according to the spirit of the Gospel). However, here, the focus should initially be on the above DH call for the Christian 'to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth', which reflects the first part of the Petrine call. In order to prepare for sharing CSD, it is necessary to develop one's understanding of it, be capable of explaining the ideas, and be able to do so calmly and peacefully. This requires education and preparation, of which the Council speaks in GE and AA 28-32. The foremost educators are of course parents – '[parents] are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators' (GE3) – who themselves should learn about the Church's teachings to help long-term, multi-generational understanding of CSD. The second educators are usually schoolteachers, who also need to be trained to pass on the Church's teachings – to include them in social education, history, religious education, economics, etc., at least in Catholic schools. Third, clergy can make a significant and important contribution to the awareness and understanding of the faithful through homilies, parish catechesis, and of course implementing the ideas in charitable and social activities.

Elsewhere, the Council's document on bishops states that '[Bishops] should also guard that doctrine, teaching the faithful to defend and propagate it',[75] which when combined with the Council's 'fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all'[76] is remarkably similar to Scripture's call 'to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3). In bishops' responses to the virus restrictions, there has been much attention on following societal and legal rules regarding Mass attendees, that is, on following society's lead and repeating the message of secular leaders instead of adding the Church's perspective to the general narrative. Recent events have been an opportunity to apply the Church's teachings on Social Doctrine but the focus has been limited more or less to charity appeals and advice on mental health with few exceptions.[77] While these are important, it has also been an opportunity for teaching through homilies, training, and courses on the importance of CSD and how to apply it locally. Other possible initiatives could have been seeking the development of localised groups in conjunction with secular authorities and those in social services to set up and run local support groups and networks focusing on developing understanding and actual support regarding subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity, both short-term and ongoing.

Regarding academics, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) 62 describes their important role in developing ways of communicating the message of Christianity, which includes CSD:

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74 This is explored in Stuart Nicolson, 'The Field of Apologetics Today: Responding to the Calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council', *The Heythrop Journal* LIX, No. 3 (May 2018), 411, 421.

75 *Christus Dominus* 13.

76 *Dei Verbum* 8.

77 Cf., for example, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19)', The Catholic Church Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, accessed 11/3/2022, https://www.cbcew.org.uk/coronavirus/. However, the Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) devised a planning template, found at: https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/03/CSAN-SVP-Pandemic-planning-template.docx. CSAN also created with the St Vincent de Paul Society a Pandemic Response Toolkit, which offers a range of advice, prayers, and tasks with which volunteers can assist those with various needs, such as shopping, dog-walking, and social contact in person or by telephone.

…theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek con-
tinually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times[.]

…the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in
the same meaning and understanding, is another.

In pastoral care, sufficient use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the
findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology, so that the faithful may be
brought to a more adequate and mature life of faith.[78]

The first GS quote calls on theologians to improve how doctrine is communicated contemporar-
ily. In our context, it calls for openness to spreading the Church's social teachings, a readiness to
respond and explain CSD in a Christian manner, and to develop improved ways for the faithful
to learn about these and developing as Christians in the world. The second quote emphasises
that while the Church's teachings exist, care should be taken in how these are communicated to
Christians and then to the world, which for this topic means that the riches in CSD need to be
learned, shared, and implemented appropriately without (de)selection of specific elements. The
third part reminds Catholics to share knowledge and ideas with secular thinking and secular
people in dialogue, which helps implementation while drawing others to the Church's ideas. This
sharing with others – faithful or otherwise, thus, in a sense, catechetical or evangelical – must
have the three elements from the scriptural and conciliar quotes above: to prepare through learn-
ing, to communicate, and to do so in a loving Christian manner. All three are important to avoid
being forceful and authoritative, or unprepared and overly polite, which limit the ability to convey
well the Church's teachings and the reason for one's faith and hope. Therefore, dialogue should be
entered into with a genuine and complete apologetical approach: to communicate Christianity in
a Christian manner; to propose, not impose.[79]
Academic activity focusing on CSD is central to developing its presence in people's minds, through
publishing academically but also more popularly, as well as talks and lectures open to the public
(such as University of the Third Age), and by teaching, for example, course content adapted to
use the recent social restrictions as the context in which the CSD can be explored as Christian
alternatives to secular solutions. Particularly in academic areas such as education and social
work studies, as well as pastoral studies, catechetics, and clergy formation, there can be a more
solid platform for CSD to become part of the wider narrative. As this develops, dialogue with
non-Christian academics in more secular areas can increasingly include CSD concepts regarding,
for example, mental health and the personal and economic effects of lockdowns, etc. And with
growing awareness of CSD at local levels, Christians involved in politics and bureaucracy will be
increasingly encouraged to explore it and its relationship to 'higher' levels.[80]
Therefore, sharing and developing the ideas of CSD is important both for the faithful as part of
their own Christian journey as well as for local communities, which can benefit from a different
or more focused perspective that holds dignity and the common good as valuable. To share and
implement the CSD ideas effectively, it is important to recall the scriptural and conciliar call to be

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78   GS 62.
79   John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7th December 1990, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html, 39.
80   This is described in CSDC's Participation section (190-191) as well as mentioned, for example, in AA 11, but further exploration is beyond this paper's scope.

prepared for engagement and to respond in a Christian manner. In doing so, Christian witness takes place, which can help others become more open to the Christian message in ways that have been otherwise limited or not taking place.

Conclusion

Many have suffered in various ways and to varying extents during the recent virus restrictions, especially the lockdowns, and in many cases this could have been lessened or even avoided by increased social cohesion in local communities. This paper has explored the idea that if there had been more local community cohesion prior to the restrictions – checking on neighbours, reaching out to the lonely, ensuring all had food and other necessities, and assisting with education, etc. – those who suddenly had plenty of time could have helped those in need locally, thus developing the local common good and the human dignity of each person. It is suggested that by isolating in local communities where possible, rather than in households, the needs of many could have been better met. The active faithful are called to explore locally how these ideas could have been implemented or improved during the restrictions, and how they could be used effectively in more general times.

It is important that we learn from the recent experiences which have highlighted the lack of local community in many locations across societies today. Therefore, this paper calls for an increase in learning, consideration, and sharing of Catholic Social Doctrine's three elements of subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity, which can offer alternative ideas and approaches such as those above. By seeking to develop local communities with responsibilities being held as locally as possible and encouraging the participation of those who are able for the right reasons – solidarity, common good – there can be increased local community cohesion. To implement elements of CSD ideas, parishes, charities, and local groups in general can play an important part. This could particularly benefit more rural areas, who have lost their form and character due to centralisation in societies today, but also urban localities where many people have little connection to their neighbours – indeed, local community cohesion could be more developed in general.

However, today's society is not ready to adopt Christian social ideas, and the extent to which they could be implemented practically is not clear. In general terms, Scripture and the Church, including Vatican II documents, call for the faithful to learn about the teachings (as specifically stated in AA 31). By sharing, exploring, and beginning to implement or developing existing CSD-based activity locally, parishes, dioceses, clergy, and active lay faithful can explore ways to develop their use to help others as well, thus offering a Christian witness. For proper use of the ideas, CSD must be discussed, shared, and explored widely, first amongst the active faithful then to others, and the three sections above on the CSD elements could be used in this way. Such an approach is to answer the scriptural and conciliar call to be prepared by having a developed understanding in order to engage effectively in dialogue and to respond appropriately to questions regarding their source and the integral elements that include Christian charity and service. Beyond actual implementation in parishes and dioceses, clergy and active laity can encourage others through homilies and talks. Also, by increasing the inclusion of CSD ideas in various courses and publications, academics can develop the presence of the CSD ideas in the minds of people in general, and specifically those who can or will be able to implement them.

Finally, it is important to allow the organic development of CSD to take shape in relation to local communities – to propose, not impose – for CSD is neither a practical manual nor a manifesto. Instead, it gives direction and serves as ideas to explore in the development of local community

cohesion. In implementing such ideas, it is necessary to recall Benedict XVI's words; while in the context of underdeveloped economies, they apply equally here:

> Development programmes, if they are to be adapted to individual situations, need to be flexible; and the people who benefit from them ought to be directly involved in their planning and implementation. The criteria to be applied should aspire towards incremental development in a context of solidarity — with careful monitoring of results — inasmuch as there are no universally valid solutions.[81]

Therefore, in light of the many who have suffered from strong restrictions which inhibited cohesion at the local level, this is a call for the developed use of CSD through increased sharing of the ideas amongst active faithful, hopefully to lead to their use where appropriate at a local level. This would lead to others developing their understanding, which requires active faithful to be able to explain them, and ultimately their source and origin. Thus, the able have roles and responsibilities and those who need support can receive it, which contributes to more stable societies moving forwards that are also better prepared for the unexpected.

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81   CV 47.