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**Do we need homelands?**

**John Paul II's ideal of the community of nations**

Abstract

Since the 1990s, a discussion on the status, significance and role of nation state has been going on in many communities. In Europe, this discussion generated the opinion that the only hope for the divided world is to create a post-national, multi-cultural and cosmopolitically liberal society. Let us, however, ask: Does not the idea of a strong nation state return with practical force in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the price war between the US and China, as well as the world's superpowers outer space and military plans? In our current context John Paul II's teaching is worth reminding. In the time of difficult challenges, the properly conceived patriotism propagated by the Pope should become a model of a national and civil attitude. True European politicalness is connected with the community of fate, the fruit of which should be solidarity of action in the face of real threats. John Paul II was also aware of this responsibility. Today we know that nobody will replace nation states in this process and no central institutions will substitute a civil community formed by the nation in the execution of difficult tasks. Therefore, we may only repeat after John Paul II that the future of man depends on the family and the nation.

**Key words:** John Paul II, nation, globalization, patriotism, cosmopolitanism, homeland.

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Since the 1990s, a discussion on the status, significance and role of nation state has been going on in many communities – both in lecture halls of renowned universities as well as in the popular press. In Europe, this discussion generated the opinion that the only hope for the divided world is to create a post-national, multi-cultural and cosmopolitically liberal society. These tendencies have been consolidated by European integration that took place in 2004. There have been analyses and opinions that in the atmosphere of freedom of movement and work, traditional and so far strong social and political forces – family, various associations, civilian and religious communities, and ultimately also nations – will be losing their importance.<sup>1</sup> They should be waning in their traditional role of identity formation since the policy of unification strongly accentuates reasons for multiculturalism and European citizenship. Those voices were concordant with the opinions of many media communities which for over a dozen years were warning of nationalism as a real menace of the renaissance of the totalitarian demons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the eyes of many, the concept of a nation has become a dangerous category which – if not taken under control or virtually eliminated from social life – will undermine liberal ideals. Interpreting national reasons in the spirit of nationalism resulted in the conviction that speaking of national interest and its primacy was tantamount to undermining the spirit of universal Europe and dreams about European unity. That is why for many people any theory proclaiming the real force of the community and language of origin, where a binding social factor is its history and tradition, has become

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<sup>1</sup> *Culture and Identity. Selected Aspects and Approaches* (1996); Bauman (2002); Castells (2010); Sassen (2007); Sassen (1996); Jarniewicz (2002); O'Brien (1992).

unacceptable, and all the more so inapplicable in practice. In this perspective, a nation state is perceived as an irrational, romantic and utopian myth which poses the threat of naturalism and collectivism.<sup>2</sup>

Let us, however, ask: Does not the idea of a strong nation state return with practical force in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the price war between the US and China, as well as the world's superpowers outer space and military plans?<sup>3</sup> It has turned out that in order to face the adversities and ensure security the political community needs a nation state. In the situation of the crisis of values, notions associated with nationalism, namely language, tradition and ultimately the nation itself, as the categories striving after good for the ethnic and cultural community of fate, have become a space of mobilization.

### Pilgrim of the world and protector of nations

Therefore, although all over the world nationalism has acquired negative connotations, national topics return today in many debates.<sup>4</sup> Discussions about the role and importance

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<sup>2</sup> Eller (2012), Budyta-Budzyńska (2010); Hall (2000): 29–34.

<sup>3</sup> Global and National Environmental Impacts of the US–China Trade War (2020): 16108–16118; Yu Wu, Turvey (2020); Min-hyung Kim (2019): 30–40; Ushanov, Akhmad Reshad (2020): 273–287; Pancea (2019): 283–298; Carvalho, Azevedo, Massuquetti (2019); Adekola (2019): 125–135; Xua, Lien (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Nationalism – less than 100 years ago this word had a positive sense, whereas today it is unequivocally negatively associated (citing hatred for strangers as a necessary element of nationalism). Let us note that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki claimed that nationalists professed the idea of independence of the nation, national unity, development of its goals or historical mission. Similarly, the Polish Thomist and teacher Father Jacek Woroniecki OP

of a nation state, multi-culturalism and civilizational pluralism are now being held both in the media and in parliamentary chambers. Thus, if the issue of nationality, status of homeland and importance of nation state arouses such emotions, John Paul II's reflection on this subject is worth reminding – on the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of the Polish Pope. Whilst a very few leaders (spiritual and political) deserve the name of citizens of the world, it can be said of John Paul II that he became a pilgrim of the world, visiting during his pontificate over one hundred countries on all continents. This extraordinary man crossed the frontiers, as well as linguistic, cultural and national boundaries. In his religious service he became a voice of many nameless and oppressed people; he was their defender regardless of their religion or geographical location. Moreover, the more time has elapsed since the death of John Paul II, the more we realize the importance of his life and work since they provide us with the opportunity to gain self-knowledge. With his whole life – his testimony, teaching, writing, prayer and suffering – he showed the meaning of being a man: free and responsible. He also pointed to social matters – civil involvement, love for the community, concern for common good, charitable activity, political freedom – as spaces for the realisation of humanity.

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argued that nationalism was a doctrine about the life of the nation, its origins, duties and role. Znaniecki (1986): 71; Woroniecki (1986): 122; Legutko (2008); Bartyzel, (2010): 21; Grott (1999): 53–118. Understood non-ideologically, that is as a conscious sense of continuity and creative settling in the history of one's own community and its religion, nationalism is assessed very critically, delegitimized and pushed to the side. That is why no decent person wants to be called a nationalist, messianist or national megalomaniac. See more: Eriksen (2002): 117–146; Harris (2009): 46–72; Hurlbert (2012): 129–132; Tamir (2019): 3–18; Gellner (2006): 85–98; Lawrence (2005): 123–190; Calhoun (1997); Jaskulski (2012): 14–20; Lorenz (2009): 215.

Although he undoubtedly was a most outstanding figure on a global scale, the Pope attached special weight to describing and presenting the historical importance of nations and homelands. For him those categories were not a politically dangerous phantasm but natural communities, forms of community life which arose from the existential/relational situation of a person, family, and culture. However, being aware of this one should not refrain from asking: Does not his voice now, over a dozen years after his death, when the discussion about nations and cosmopolitan projects has been renewed, become an anachronistic call of a man mentally trapped in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the century of nations and wars, conflicts and atrocities committed in the name of nationalistic ideas? In order to give a sensible answer to this question, let us have a look at how the Pope understood fundamental social notions.

### Community of family, people and nation

Taking up national matters in his texts, John Paul II was aware that the word 'nation' originated from the Latin word *natio*, which in turn comes from *nascor*, *nascere*, *nasci* – "to be born", "arise", "be native", "to be produced", "rise".<sup>5</sup> Ancient Romans used a similar term to designate the goddess of birth and harvest – Ceres, whose name means a 'kernel'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the concept of nation appears in the languages based on Latin; that is why the primary source of English *nation*, French *nation*, German *nation*, Italian *nazione*, Spanish *nación* is the Latin term *natio*. Also the Polish term *naród* has its source in Latin.

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<sup>5</sup> Oxford Latin Dictionary (1879): 1187–1188.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem: 318.

Latin was brought to Central and Eastern Europe by Christian missionaries; the term *nascor* had been unknown earlier, at the initial stages of development of Slavic tribes. In those times it was even difficult to speak about equivalents of such typical terms as *ród* (family, clan), *rodzić*, *porodzić*. In Slavic culture, the name *ród* meant a lucky streak, success, prosperity, growth, but also the god of luck and fortune. It was only at the times of Medieval Latin that the term *ród* started to be identified with giving birth (*rodzić*) and proliferation of the community. Therefore, etymologically *naród* means a concrete community of people connected by the ties of being natural descendants of a single common ancestor. Similar connotations with begetting and giving birth are linked with the Latin word *patria* derived from the word *pater* (father), thus implying the notion of patriotism as devotion to a homeland (fatherland, motherland). Fatherland/motherland is in its content also associated with origin.<sup>7</sup>

And although in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages synonymous to that term were the words *populus*, *gens*, in the Middle Ages Latin *natio* and *patria* explicitly expressed attachment to a nation and homeland more powerfully than their Ancient equivalents.<sup>8</sup>

Despite those linguistic nuances, there is no doubt that *narodzenie* (birth) expressed by *ród* (family) and *naród* (nation) is always connected with language, community of fate, religion, territory, and political activity. That is why John Paul II said:

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<sup>7</sup> Brückner (1927): 459–460; *Etymological Dictionary of Latin* (2008): 400–401.

<sup>8</sup> Thiesse (1999): 67–75.

A dimension of social love is the homeland: the sons and daughters of one nation persist in the love of the common good that they derive from culture and history, finding therein the support of their social identity and at the same time providing this support to their fellow countrymen. This circle of social love has a special meaning in our Polish historical experience and in our contemporary times. Social love is open to all individuals and to all peoples. If it is deeply and honestly formed in its basic circles, whether man, family or homeland, it also succeeds in its widest circle.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Pope was aware that – as Józef Tischner emphasized – there is an inner specific tension in the characteristics of a nation. In a nation what is universal meets in various ways with what is particular. This encounter is frequently a source of various antagonisms.<sup>10</sup> That is why in one of his major addresses – *From human rights to the rights of nations* – delivered in 1995 at the UN General Assembly, John Paul II remarked:

This tension between the particular and the universal can be considered immanent in human beings. By virtue of sharing in the same human nature, people automatically feel that they are members of one great family, as is in fact the case. But as a result of the concrete historical conditioning of this same nature, they are necessarily bound in a more intense way to particular human groups, beginning with the family and going

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<sup>9</sup> Jan Paweł II (2008): 247.

<sup>10</sup> Tischner (1997): 29.

on to the various groups to which they belong and up to the whole of their ethnic and cultural group, which is called, not by accident, a “nation”, from the Latin word “nasci”: “to be born”. This term, enriched with another one, “patria” (fatherland/motherland), evokes the reality of the family. The human condition thus finds itself between these two poles — universality and particularity — with a vital tension between them; an inevitable tension, but singularly fruitful if they are lived in a calm and balanced way.<sup>11</sup>

Let us note that in the essential rather than predicamental sense a nation is to be “from the family and for the family”. At the same time, both categories – nation and family – are not mutually equivalent, but at the same time mutually indispensable. Each of those poles is unrepeatable and irreplaceable. A family tie means at the same time being a member of a larger community which plays a formational role just as the family does. It is the community of the people and the nation with which we are bound by the unity of culture, language and history. For the Pope, this heritage constitutes at the same time a challenge in the ethical sense. It is by receiving a language, tradition, religion and inherited values which constitute the entirety of culture of one’s own society, that individuals get to know themselves and their place in the world.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *The Fiftieth General Assembly of The United Nations Organization Address of His Holiness John Paul II* (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Beyer (2014): 69–72.

### Nation in the service of family

In Latin and in modern languages the very word *patria* suggests, as I have already mentioned, special relations with parents, father and mother. Hence a nation must not be considered an artificially constructed community, set up as a result of an agreement, but has to be perceived as a natural community, just as natural basic human ties and relationships are. That is why neither family nor nation can be constructed and ultimately replaced with anything else.<sup>13</sup> For John Paul II the term “nation” means the community which finds its homeland in a given place of the world and distinguishes itself from others with its own culture.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, it may be said that John Paul II’s reflection on the meaning of the anthropological identity of a nation is based on the following scheme: human person – family – people – nation. A person is the fundamental criterion of all social relations and community life. John Paul II expressed this conviction in the texts from before his pontificate. In his study *The Acting Person* Karol Wojtyła wrote that it is common humanity shared by persons that lies, after all, at the basis of all the other communities.

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<sup>13</sup> Skreczko (2005): 20. Let us make it clear, however, that in the literature on the subject we find many publications showing that a nation is not something natural and primordial, but created – “it is an accidental and unnecessary entity”, as the perhaps best known constructivist Ernest Gellner says – useful at a certain stage of historical development (Gellner 2006). A nation is perceived here as a construct of consciousness created by intellectual elites around certain specific ideas. It is a community created within certain criteria, such as citizenship or rights. See more: Anderson (2006); Hall (1992): 4–6; *Culture, Globalization and the World-System* (2000): 29–32; Kiliyas (2004): 115–225. I have addressed these theses critically in my book on national identity – Grzybowski (2012): 610–620.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Paweł II (2005): 74.

We have concentrated on the common good primarily as the principle of correct participation, which allows the person acting together with other persons to perform authentic actions and to fulfil himself through these actions. Our concern is therefore with the genuinely personalistic structure of human existence in a community, that is, in every community that man belongs to.<sup>15</sup>

For the Pope a nation is first of all wealthy because of its people, opulent with men and their concern for the shape of freedom, community, good, truth. Responsibility for those areas of public functioning gives shape to relationships in a nation. In this perspective, a national community is at the service of a family, as it exists through it and thanks to it. Hence, a family is always superior to a nation – it is a community that enjoys a clear and primary right. That is why, conceived substantively as a family of families bonded by culture, a nation should be perceived as a most important broad community of the spiritual history of man.<sup>16</sup>

It is right to understand the history of the nation through man, each human being of this nation. At the same time man cannot be understood apart from this community that is constituted by the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Let us be clear, however – as a community of people connected by mutual relationships, a nation is not a substantial entity for the Pope. The Polish Pope is in favour of the concept of nation as a real though accidental entity, wherein particular

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<sup>15</sup> Wojtyła (1979): 282.

<sup>16</sup> *Jan Paweł II na ziemi polskiej* (1979): 30.

<sup>17</sup> *Homily of His Holiness John Paul II* (1979).

people and relationships create social ties bonded by the commonly understood, accepted and experienced culture. A nation is neither a mythical substance guiding individual people, nor a simple set of people, but a community in which apart from individuals there is also a reality, the real relationship that is common to them. Defining a nation as a relational community based on broadly conceived culture, which demands continuity and protection causes that extreme monism (individuals are insignificant in relation to the nation, they lose themselves therein) as well as extreme pluralism (individuals are more important than the nation as a whole) in social theory are avoided. The real relationship, directed towards people and national culture, constitutes the nation in its existence and standing. Therefore, in the social vision of John Paul II a nation exists in the subject (in people) and for the subject (for people), and thus cannot be perceived as a substantial entity (independent, existing *per se*).<sup>18</sup>

In the spirit of the above, during his pilgrimages to Poland, John Paul II said repeatedly:

The nation is truly free when it can shape itself as a community determined by unity of culture, language and history. The state is firmly sovereign when it governs society and also serves the common good of society and allows the nation to realize its own subjectivity, its own identity. Among other things this involves the creation of suitable conditions of development in the fields of culture, economics and other spheres of the life of the social community. The sovereignty of the state

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<sup>18</sup> *Religion, Politics and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Countries* (2015): 163–167.

is deeply linked to its capacity to promote the freedom of the nation, that is, to developing conditions that permit the nation to express all of its distinctive historical and cultural identity, being sovereign, that is, through the state.<sup>19</sup>

The question of personal, social and national identity was a key issue for the Pope. That is why in his important address at the UNESCO forum he argued:

The Nation is, in fact, the great community of men who are united by various ties, but above all, precisely by culture. The Nation exists “through” culture and “for” culture, and it is therefore the great educator of men in order that they may “be more” in the community. It is this community which possesses a history that goes beyond the history of the individual and the family. It is also in this community, with respect to which every family educates, that the family begins its work of education with what is the most simple thing, language, thus enabling man who is at the very beginning to learn to speak in order to become a member of the community of his family and of his Nation.<sup>20</sup>

### **Religion and spiritual sovereignty**

It must not be forgotten that one of the major components of the national community described by John Paul II is spirituality and religion. Speaking about the genealogy of a nation

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<sup>19</sup> Mass at Jasna Góra (1983).

<sup>20</sup> *To the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (1980).

the Pope always stressed its spiritual dimension. Let us note that what the Holy Father wrote about the genealogy of a nation harmonized with his lecture on the genealogy of a person in the *Letter to Families*.<sup>21</sup> Such an approach allows for emphasizing two important ideas: first, that the dignity of a nation arises from the dignity of the persons who constitute it, and, second, that this truth and the depth of the genealogy of both the person and the nation are an internal family secret.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the deeply lived faith does not invalidate national loyalties. On the contrary: the experience shows that Christians and Christian communities live their lives profoundly included in the lives of individual nations, being at the same time a sign of the Gospel also in terms of faithfulness to their homeland and national culture, though always in freedom brought about by Jesus Christ. Christianity is open to universal brotherhood for all the people are children of the same

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<sup>21</sup> “Man is a common good: a common good of the family and of humanity, of individual groups and of different communities. But there are significant distinctions of degree and modality in this regard. Man is a common good, for example, of the Nation to which he belongs and of the State of which he is a citizen; but in a much more concrete, unique and unrepeatable way he is a common good of his family. He is such not only as an individual who is part of the multitude of humanity, but rather as *this individual*. God the Creator calls him into existence *for himself*; and in coming into the world he begins, in the family, his *great adventure*, the adventure of human life. *This man* has, in every instance, the right to fulfil himself on the basis of his human dignity. It is precisely this dignity which establishes a person’s place among others, and above all, in the family. The family is indeed – more than any other human reality – the place where an individual can exist *for himself* through the sincere gift of self. This is why it remains a social institution which neither can nor should be replaced: it is the *sanctuary of life*”. John Paul II (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Skreczko (2005): 23.

Father and therefore brethren in Christ. Nationality does not contradict the universality of freedom and dignity of a human person.<sup>23</sup>

In many Papal texts we detect a conviction that in a nation there is a continuous process of passing from the sphere of human nature rooted in the world to the substantive inner sphere. Thanks to this process the nation acquires its own consciousness, its own specific spirit, a set of collective sentiments and a community impulse to act.<sup>24</sup> That is why each nation should enjoy the right to its own language and culture, with which people express and represent what may be called *fundamental spiritual sovereignty*. The right of a nation to shape its life according to its own traditions also constitutes a prerequisite for the right to build its future by ensuring adequate education to the younger generation.<sup>25</sup> That is why peace and rapprochement between nations may be built only on the basis of respect for the rights of a nation, such as the right to existence, to religious freedom, to social and political subjectivity, to creating its own culture.

Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. When this question is eliminated, the culture and moral life of nations are corrupted. For this reason the struggle

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<sup>23</sup> “Christians and Christian communities are very much a part of the life of their respective nations and can be a sign of the Gospel in their fidelity to their native land, people and national culture, while always preserving the freedom brought by Christ. Christianity is open to universal brotherhood, for all men and women are sons and daughters of the same Father and brothers and sisters in Christ”. John Paul II (2001b).

<sup>24</sup> Kowalczyk (2011): 13–19.

<sup>25</sup> Tischner (1997): 45.

to defend work was spontaneously linked to the struggle for culture and for national rights.<sup>26</sup>

### The nation as a subject

While reading social texts of John Paul II we shall find an ethical way of understanding human communities. The Pope sees the nation as a value. Hence its existence and functioning is not based on power (and all the more so is not a way of exercising supremacy of man over man), but arises from the utmost service to the common good – the homeland – wherein everyone ultimately is “from the nation and for the nation”.

The sense of belonging, of having roots in a concrete world, community and culture is offered by the nation as it allows a human person discover and experience their own identity. The Pope wrote about it in the following way in one of his major social encyclicals *Centesimus annus*:

As has been mentioned, this error consists in an understanding of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbour, a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice. This very error had extreme consequences in the tragic series of wars which ravaged Europe and the world between 1914 and 1945. Some of these resulted from militarism and exaggerated nationalism, and from related forms

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<sup>26</sup> John Paul II (2001a): 24.

of totalitarianism; some derived from the class struggle; still others were civil wars or wars of an ideological nature. Without the terrible burden of hatred and resentment which had built up as a result of so many injustices both on the international level and within individual States, such cruel wars would not have been possible, in which great nations invested their energies and in which there was no hesitation to violate the most sacred human rights, with the extermination of entire peoples and social groups being planned and carried out. Here we recall the Jewish people in particular, whose terrible fate has become a symbol of the aberration of which man is capable when he turns against God.<sup>27</sup>

In this meaning, the nation in its constitutive elements the nation appears as a good which helps a person to be the subject of social life. That is why, in this vision, the foundation of the nation as a community of family, culture, tradition and history is the dignity of a human person. More precisely – its solidary participation in the humanity with respect to realization of the common good.<sup>28</sup>

The conclusions following from so formulated theses are, however, very serious: the history of a nation deserves an appropriate evaluation according to what it has contributed to the development of man and family, their minds, hearts, conscience. For John Paul II this is primarily the deepest current of culture, its strongest bulwark, core and might. For the Pope, who looks at the world in the profoundly religious

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem: 17.

<sup>28</sup> Tarasiewicz (2016): 418–420.

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perspective, each person, each nation, each culture and civilization have their role to play and their own place in God's mysterious plan of history of redemption.

### **Risk of absolute loss of identity**

A brief presentation of the understanding of nation and nationality by John Paul II should encourage one to ask once more the previously mentioned question about the timeliness and sense of Papal social reflections. Does it still make sense to talk about the key role of nationality today, in the time of dominating liberalism, whose essential component is conscious loosening of bonds so that everyone becomes their own master paying no heed to the objectives of the community? We all see how in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the process of emancipation has become a feature of our different communities (family, municipality, nation and state) – renunciation of all restriction so as to always act freely and arbitrarily to independently chose and determine their own future.<sup>29</sup> To live so as not to bear responsibility for the others, not to think about community or solidarity. In the time of growing consumptionism and countless technical and digital opportunities everyone wants to create themselves. This, undoubtedly, reinforces the desire to live not where the roots, traditions or family (national) bonds are, but where the life is simply better in terms of money and comfort.

Many observers of our public life show how individualism dominating in liberalism rejects important community values. Today, civic attitudes – such as solidarity and collaboration – have neither support nor a resource base to settle

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<sup>29</sup> Delsol (2016): 45, 90.

in the interpersonal relations. From the viewpoint of liberal economic they are simply “ineffective”.<sup>30</sup> Don’t we see the prevailing delusion that each person can live independently, work, make as much money as possible, enjoy life freely, be occupied with one’s own pleasures and not be bothered with the problems of the community or the nation? A totally emancipated individual does not want to be dependent on the community.<sup>31</sup> Liberal negation of taking roots and settling in homelands and traditions made many people believe in the myth that various social and cultural narrations would bring about a common ground of cosmopolitan cooperation, reconciliation, responsibility, and peace.<sup>32</sup>

John Paul II, a witness to both horrible and magnificent events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seems to tell us that negating people’s identity in order to liberate them from any and all determinations (territorial, religious, moral, ethnic, cultural) is in the final reckoning counter effective. It shall lead to the loss of understanding and experiencing one’s own identity and purpose of existence. This is also confirmed by the great 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>30</sup> Hoppe (2006); Zakaria (2003); Bovens (2010): 946–967; Pappas (2016): 22–36; Szlachta (2012); Szlachta (2016): 57–67; Dahl (2015); Markowski (2004); Stawrowski (2008); Zielonka (2018): 81–156; Safjan (2018): 57–72; Nowak (2018): 31–49; Armingeon, Guthmann (2014).

<sup>31</sup> Król (2012): 134; Król (2016): 125–129.

<sup>32</sup> Kymlicka (2001): 206–208, 254–256. The social discourse is dominated by globalisation dreams for the world to become a free market and all cultures of the world to create a universal civilisation based on liberal and democratic principles, thus overcoming historical and ideological differences. Their utopianism reminds – as John Grey claims – of the Marxist ideology based on understanding history as a progress of the species driven by knowledge and wealth. People will become better thanks to the increasing comfort, while their faults and crimes may be lastingly corrected by both education as well as more efficient and effective political institutions, a higher standard of living. See: Gray (2004): 63.

researcher of totalitarian ideas Hannah Arendt, who warned that the totalitarian idea would survive totalitarianisms wherever the authorities create people who are *absolutely liberated* – people without a home, homeland, roots and traditions.<sup>33</sup>

The lesson John Paul II gives us consists primarily in the understanding that in the difficult times of contemporary challenges the task of character formation continues to be in the hands of determined and non-liberal communities. The communities which are hierarchical and normative, endowed with their own identity, with very explicit ideological and confessional message – family, religious communities, local communities bonded by tradition, nation.

### The homeland as a school of citizenship

Over a decade after the death of John Paul II many people and environments do not want to remember that this giant grew from amongst us and still can – already as the Saint of the Catholic Church – help to realize important and beautiful things. His testimony and teaching lift us, the ordinary people, high so that standing on his shoulders we are able to recognize and discern what is most important.<sup>34</sup> Many a time the Pope tried to show that love of the homeland, of native culture and tradition did not concern exclusively the past but was closely associated with everyday capability of unsparing and solidary building of common good. Immersed in various communities, we should have a real influence on the shape of our future. True national patriotism does not exclude others – it is a basis for love and openness, though in a natural

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<sup>33</sup> Arendt (1976): 267–272.

<sup>34</sup> Karłowicz, Cichocki (2005/2006): 5–7; Karłowicz (2020).

existential and cultural order: family, neighbours, community, nation, Europe, world. Love and openness enable one to acquire the attitude which was so beautifully expressed by a Polish writer, winner of the literary Nobel Prize, Henryk Sienkiewicz: “all patriots should follow the motto: through homeland to humanity.” Well comprehended and lived patriotism is deeply inscribed in the universal commandment of love of neighbour. John Paul II knew that intergenerational solidarity, responsibility for the lives of the weakest, everyday civic honesty, readiness to serve and sacrifice oneself for the sake of the community are the realisation of both natural law and the Gospel message. It is the effort of creating a community which solidarily strives to build its present and its future. At the same time, the Pope did not forget that each love has its boundaries. Especially for the disciples of Christ, love of homeland, although it is a great value as a form of love of neighbour, cannot be absolute. Service to the earthly homeland, just like the love of one’s own family, always remains a stage on the road to the realm in which worldly categories will lose their obligatoriness. The love of God, which the faithful try to emulate, embraces all peoples and nations on Earth. Hence, the love of one’s own homeland is a concretisation of the universal commandment of love of God and man. The desire for good for one’s land and one’s compatriots manifests itself primarily through the attitude of service as well as care and responsibility for the needs and lives of concrete people. That is why – as the Council for Social Affairs of the Conference of Polish Episcopate wrote in 2017 in the document entitled *The Christian form of patriotism* – both in the context of human rights as well as the wisdom of the Gospel all attempts at raising one’s nation to the highest status in hierarchy should be considered inadmissible and

idolatrous. The love of one's homeland must never justify disdain, aggression or violence.<sup>35</sup> Let us see that for John Paul II wherever true patriotism is realised there is no room for hatred of other nations. A characteristic feature of chauvinism is that it recognizes only the good of one's own nation and this is what it strives at without considering the rights of the others. On the other hand, as the love of one's homeland, patriotism grants the same rights to all other nations as to one's own. It is a road to the orderly and peacefully realized social love.

Therefore, in our current context changed by globalisation and the pandemic John Paul II's teaching is worth reminding. In the time of difficult challenges, the properly conceived patriotism propagated by the Pope should become a model of a national and civil attitude. It is a moral obligation to realise good here and now: in particular places, concrete conditions, among concrete people. The state of the pandemic offers numerous opportunities to do that, and there is the number of social and civic attitudes which exemplify it. Patriotism should manifest itself in the life of our families, which are the first school of love, responsibility and service to a fellow man. The citizenship exam is being passed in places where our everyday life takes place – municipality, parish, school, workplace, neighbourhood. It is there that the concern for building common good in kindness, solidarity and honesty is realised. In this context, the idea of global multiculturalism, intensive contacts between peoples, nations and cultures enriches us when we are rooted in the identity and history which define and strengthen us thus making mature cooperation and development possible.

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<sup>35</sup> *Chrześcijański kształt patriotyzmu. A document of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate prepared by the Council for Social Affairs (2017).*

John Paul II always emphasized the fact that Europe played a special role in the history of the world. For centuries, it has been a place of reflection on the phenomenon of various human collectives: from the Greek *polis*, ethnic communities, monarchies and empires, to nations and states. The word “Europe” comes from Akkadian “erēbu”, which means “sunset”.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, keeping to this beautiful metaphor, it may be said that Europe as a whole are the peripheries west of Babylon, a fantastic end of the earth – *Finis Terrae* – the Peninsula of Twilight. Europe is a place where identities become dense and the sole alternative that remains is either war or cohabitation, self-destruction or a synthesis of the spirit and civilisation, wisdom and love. Europe is an archipelago of cultures and tongues, religions and world worldviews, nations and states with differences interlocked to such a degree that if one is missed the others would disintegrate and fell. It has been for centuries a bulging but effective system capable of accommodate a multitude of peoples, nations and cultures, while never turning them into a homogeneous blend. Let us not succumb to the ideologies which claim that Europe suffers from the “neoplasm of identity” the metastases of which may cover the entire continent. True European politicalness is connected with the community of fate, the fruit of which should be solidarity of action in the face of real threats. John Paul II was also aware of this responsibility. Today we know that nobody will replace nation states in this process and no central institutions will substitute a civil community formed by the nation in the execution of difficult tasks. Therefore, we may only repeat after John Paul II that the future of man depends on the family and the nation.

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<sup>36</sup> *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (1958): 258–259.

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