



The Acting Person in Service: A Wojtylian Ontological Grounding for Vincentian Mission

Patricius Neonnub

Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira Kupang, Indonesia

Email: patrisn@yahoo.com

Abstract:

This research addresses a theoretical vacuum within the Vincentian mission, which, despite its profound commitment to serving the poor, often lacks a robust philosophical anthropology to undergird its praxis of systemic change. The study proposes that Karol Wojtyła's personalist ontology, particularly his concept of the "acting person" who realizes their dignity through free action and participation, provides the necessary philosophical foundation. It argues that integrating Wojtyła's thought strengthens the Vincentian mission by grounding its spiritual impulse in a coherent understanding of the human person. This synthesis links personal transformation to social solidarity, offering a framework where service becomes an authentic encounter that affirms the subjective dimension of the poor. The Indonesian context, with its communal ethos and active Vincentian presence, serves as a vital case study for testing this integrated model, demonstrating its potential to renew the theological and practical foundations of the mission.

Keywords: Personalism, Wojtyła, personal dignity, solidarity, systemic change, Vincentian

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini membahas kekosongan teoretis dalam misi Vincentian, yang, meskipun memiliki komitmen mendalam untuk melayani kaum miskin, seringkali tidak memiliki antropologi filosofis yang kuat untuk menopang praksis perubahan sistemiknya. Penelitian ini mengusulkan bahwa ontologi personalis Karol Wojtyła, khususnya konsepnya tentang "pribadi yang bertindak" yang mewujudkan martabatnya melalui tindakan dan partisipasi bebas, menyediakan landasan filosofis yang diperlukan. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa mengintegrasikan pemikiran Wojtyła memperkuat misi Vincentian dengan mendasarkan impuls spiritualnya pada pemahaman yang koheren tentang pribadi manusia. Sintesis ini menghubungkan transformasi pribadi dengan solidaritas sosial, menawarkan suatu kerangka kerja di mana pelayanan menjadi perjumpaan autentik yang meneguhkan dimensi subjektif kaum miskin. Konteks Indonesia, dengan etos komunal dan kehadiran Vincentian yang aktif, berfungsi sebagai studi kasus penting untuk menguji model terpadu ini, yang menunjukkan potensinya untuk memperbarui fondasi teologis dan praktis misi.

Kata Kunci: Personalisme, Wojtyła, Martabat Pribadi, Solidaritas, Perubahan Sistemik, Vinsensian

Introduction

Vincentian spirituality, dating back to the 17th century, has been a driving force behind the Church's service to the poor. Saint Vincent de Paul affirmed that poverty is not merely a social phenomenon but a place of encounter with Christ himself. Therefore, Vincentian work must not stop at charity; it demands transformation of both individual



lives and social structures. In contemporary developments, the Vincentian family emphasizes the need for *systemic change*—addressing the root causes of poverty—for service to be truly liberating.¹

However, a theoretical vacuum remains in the conceptual realm. Many Vincentian studies emphasize spirituality and pastorality, but rarely link them to a solid philosophical foundation. Here, Karol Wojtyła's personalism offers a critical contribution. In his work *"Person and Act,"* he asserts that the human person is a subject that realizes itself through action and participation². This concept finds social elaboration in John Paul II's encyclicals, such as *Laborem Exercens*, which emphasizes the subjective dignity of work³, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which affirms solidarity as an essential social virtue.⁴

Recent literature confirms the relevance of this personalistic framework. Panasiak shows that participation is the core of a personalist community.⁵ Friesen emphasizes the subjective dimension of work in the context of modern capitalism.⁶ Markey interprets the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity within contemporary organizations.⁷ In Indonesia, Armada Riyanto has developed an ethics of relationality that emphasizes recognition of the other as the basis of ethics.⁸ Resonating with Wojtyła's idea of participation.

Thus, this research aims to integrate Karol Wojtyła's personalism with Vincentian spirituality. The goal is to develop a conceptual framework that links personal dignity to social solidarity and the practice of *systemic change*. The Indonesian context, with its communal culture and the concrete work of the Congregation of the Mission (CM) and the Vincentian Family (KEVIN), provides fertile ground for testing this synthesis.

Methodology

This research uses a normative qualitative approach within a philosophical-theological framework. The focus is on the conceptual integration of Karol Wojtyła's personalism and Vincentian spirituality to formulate a philosophical basis for mission theology. This approach was chosen because the data analyzed are not empirical-statistical but consist of texts and praxis containing normative meanings.

This study consciously resists the tendency in recent scholarship to bifurcate Karol Wojtyła the philosopher's thought from that of John Paul II the Pope.⁹ Such a separation artificially severs the necessary connection between the philosophical anthropology of the person, developed in works like *The Acting Person*, and its theological and pastoral application in the social encyclicals. Instead, this analysis proceeds from the conviction that Wojtyła's personalism provides the foundational anthropological structure that John Paul II's theology amplifies and fulfills. This

¹ Vincentian Family International Commission, *Manual for Systemic Change* (Famvin, 2017).

² Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki (D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).

³ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981).

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987).

⁵ Andrzej Panasiak, *Participation and the Person: Wojtyła's Personalism in Contemporary Context* (Lublin Academic Press, 2024); Richard A. Spinello, "Karol Wojtyła on Community, Participation, and the Common Good," *Studia Gilsoniana* 13, no. 2 (2024): 369–98, <https://doi.org/10.26385/SG.130216>.

⁶ Abraham Friesen, "The Subjective Dimension of Work in John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 18, no. 2 (2021): 233–50; Abraham Friesen, *Work and Human Dignity in the Age of Capitalism* (Paulist Press, 2022).

⁷ John Markey, "Solidarity and Subsidiarity in Organizational Ethics: Reading Centesimus Annus Today," *Lumen et Vita* 12, no. 1 (2021): 45–67.

⁸ Armada Riyanto, *Relasionalitas: Filsafat Fondasi Interpretasi* (Kanisius, 2018).

⁹ See William Baran, "The Two Readings of *Laborem Exercens*: Philosophical Wojtyła vs. Theological John Paul II," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 24, no. 1 (2021): 7–23.

integrated perspective is essential for constructing a mission theology that is both rationally robust and deeply rooted in faith.

Primary sources include the works of Karol Wojtyła, especially *"The Acting Person,"* which serves as the primary reference for concepts related to personal dignity, action, and participation.¹⁰ Additionally, John Paul II's social encyclicals, such as *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, provide a foundation for exploring the concepts of solidarity and subsidiarity.¹¹ On the Vincentian side, the *Manual for Systemic Change* and articles in *Vincentian Heritage* are used to understand the praxis of social transformation.¹² Secondary sources include contemporary philosophical and theological literature. Panasiak discusses participation in Wojtyła's personalism, while Friesen analyzes the subjective dimension of work. Markey interprets the relevance of solidarity and subsidiarity in contemporary organizations.¹³ The Indonesian context is enriched by Riyanto's concept of relational ethics, as well as historical studies of the work of CM and KEVIN.

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, conceptual analysis involved elucidating the main categories in Wojtyła's personalism: personal dignity, action, participation, solidarity, and subsidiarity¹⁴. Second, theological hermeneutics entailed reading Vincentian spirituality through personalistic categories, emphasizing the encounter with Christ in the poor.¹⁵ Third, contextualization applied the conceptual synthesis to the praxis of CM and KEVIN in Indonesia, particularly in the areas of education and economic empowerment.

The research aims to produce a synthesis framework: **Personal Dignity → Social Solidarity → Systemic Change**. This framework is not only a theoretical construction but can also be tested in pastoral practice through evaluation indicators such as respect for dignity, community participation, and structural change. Thus, the methodology is both descriptive and normative, with an applicative approach.

Results and Discussion

Personal Dignity as the Foundation of Mission Theology

Karol Wojtyła's personalism is fundamentally grounded in the inviolable principle of personal dignity (*dignitas personae*). This dignity is not conferred by society or earned through merit; it is an ontological reality inherent to every human being by virtue of their nature as a person. In his seminal work, *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła argues against reductionist views of the human person, emphasizing that the person is a "dynamic unity" whose essence cannot be comprehended through mere biological or sociological categories¹⁶. He posits that the person is a unique *subject* capable of self-determination and transcendence through action. As he famously states, "the person is a subject that is not only conscious of its actions but, through these actions, is also conscious of its own self... it is through the will that the person manifests itself most

¹⁰ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*; John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

¹² Robert P. Maloney, "The Heart of Jesus in the Spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac," *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 41–58; Raymond L. Sickinger, "Frédéric Ozanam: Systemic Thinking, and Systemic Change," *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 1–22; Edward R. Udovic, "Conversion and Discernment According to Vincent de Paul," *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 23–40; Vincentian Family International Commission, *Manual for Systemic Change*.

¹³ Markey, "Solidarity and Subsidiarity in Organizational Ethics: Reading Centesimus Annus Today."

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*; John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*; Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*.

¹⁵ Vincentian Family International Commission, *Manual for Systemic Change*.

¹⁶ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 11.

fully"¹⁷. This means that a person's identity is not a static given but is dynamically revealed and constituted through their free and responsible acts. It is through action that the person affirms their subjectivity and their capacity to pursue truth and goodness.

This ontological dignity finds its ultimate validation in the theological anthropology of John Paul II, who, drawing directly from Wojtyła's philosophy, declared that humanity is entrusted with the *dignity of the image of God*.¹⁸ This theological dimension elevates personalism beyond pure philosophy, framing human dignity as a reflection of the divine. The person is not merely an individual but a subject called into a relationship with God and others, a concept Wojtyła explores through the principle of *participatio* (participation).¹⁹

This robust personalistic framework provides a profound philosophical foundation for Vincentian spirituality. Saint Vincent de Paul's axiom—"It is only for your love that the poor will forgive you the bread you give them"—resonates deeply with this principle. Vincentian service, therefore, is not first and foremost about the material gift but about the loving recognition of the person receiving it. When Vincent saw Christ present in the poor, he was, in personalist terms, affirming their irreducible ontological dignity. From this perspective, service to people experiencing poverty is transformed from a sentimental or paternalistic act of charity into a profound act of justice: the recognition of the other as a subject with the same fundamental worth and capacity for self-determination as oneself.

This synthesis moves Vincentian praxis beyond what Pope Francis would later critique as a "facile and graceful generosity" that fails to engage with the real needs and agency of individuals²⁰. For instance, the scholarship programs run by the Congregation of the Mission (CM) in Indonesia can be re-interpreted through this lens. The primary objective is not merely to provide educational access as a form of social upliftment. Instead, it is to affirm the student as a *subject* of their own development. The education provided should enable what Wojtyła calls "integration"—the person's ability to govern their actions according to reason and conscience, thereby achieving authentic self-fulfillment²¹. This approach ensures that the student is an active participant in their own formation, rather than a passive recipient of a benevolent program.

Recent scholarship reinforces this integration. Panasiak notes that Wojtyła's emphasis on participation ensures that community is not a threat to individuality but its necessary fulfillment.²² In a Vincentian context, this means the mission must foster communities where the dignity of each is recognized through mutual participation. Without this foundational recognition of personal dignity, pastoral work risks devolving into a technocratic philanthropy—efficient in distributing resources but ultimately impersonal, reducing individuals to problems to be solved or cases to be managed. It fails to see "people experiencing poverty as historical subjects," as agents of their own destiny and potential contributors to the common good. By rooting itself in Wojtyła's personalism, the Vincentian mission secures a philosophical basis that guards against this reduction and ensures its work remains truly humanizing, always oriented toward the liberation and flourishing of the whole person.

¹⁷ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 100.

¹⁸ "Veritatis Splendor (6 August 1993)," para. 34, accessed September 24, 2025, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

¹⁹ Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, ed. Theresa Sandok (Peter Lang, 1993).

²⁰ Francis, "Evangelii Gaudium," 2013, art. 198.

²¹ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 220.

²² Panasiak, *Participation and the Person: Wojtyła's Personalism in Contemporary Context*.

Solidarity as a Social Virtue

The second dimension emerging from the synthesis of Wojtyła's personalism and Vincentian spirituality is the robust concept of solidarity. Far from being a vague sentiment of compassion, solidarity, in the thought of John Paul II, is a fundamental moral and social virtue essential for confronting the structures of sin that perpetuate poverty. In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he provides a definitive formulation, describing solidarity as "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."²³ This definition marks a critical evolution from emotion to obligation. It is a "virtue," a habitual and firm disposition to do good, which demands a "determination" to act justly. It is fundamentally "social," oriented toward the "common good," and it is "binding" because it flows from the ontological truth of human interdependence.

This personalistic understanding of solidarity finds its roots in Karol Wojtyła's pre-papal work. In *The Acting Person*, he develops the concept of *participatio* (participation) as an essential attribute of personhood. The person realizes themselves not in isolation but through a "responsible relation to the other" and through "authentic dialogue" within a community²⁴. Solidarity, therefore, is the social expression of this participatory nature of the human person. It is the conscious choice to affirm the "we" that is inherent in the very structure of the "I." As Panasiak (2024) clarifies, "In Wojtyła's vision, participation is not an optional addition to personal existence but its constitutive element. The community is not a threat to individuality but its necessary fulfillment"²⁵. A solidarity that does not actively foster this participation is, by this philosophical standard, deficient.

Vincentian spirituality embodies this principle not merely as a strategy, but as a constitutive element of its charism. The Vincentian tradition, from St. Vincent de Paul to the modern *Systemic Change* movement, insists on "**walking with the poor.**" This represents a radical commitment to proximity and shared existence, shifting from a model of assistance from a distance to one of mutual engagement and collaboration. True Vincentian solidarity, therefore, inherently requires the **active participation** of people experiencing poverty. They must be co-agents in their own liberation, involved in the *planning, implementation, and evaluation* of programs that affect their lives. This is powerfully illustrated by the parish-based savings and loan groups (like those developed by KEVIN in Indonesia). The transformative power of such initiatives lies not in the capital itself, but in the participatory structure: instead of receiving passive grants, members become active stakeholders in management. This fosters a sense of ownership, promotes accountability, and concretely embodies the "sense of interdependence" that John Paul II identified as the foundation of solidarity.²⁶ The program's success is measured not only in economic terms but also in the strengthening of communal bonds and the development of individual agency.

The constant danger of paternalism highlights the critical importance of this participatory approach. If people experiencing poverty remain passive recipients of aid, even well-intentioned aid, their dignity as subjects and agents is implicitly denied. This creates a "one-sided dependence" that contradicts the mutual fulfillment found in Wojtyła's *participatio*. The Vincentian mission, when aligned with personalism, must

²³ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, art. 38.

²⁴ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 284.

²⁵ Panasiak, *Participation and the Person: Wojtyła's Personalism in Contemporary Context*.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, art. 39.

consciously reject what Pope Francis has critiqued as a "welfare mentality" that fails to promote the active participation of individuals and groups.²⁷

The synthesis is further supported by the work of scholars like Markey, who interprets the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity in the context of contemporary organizations. Markey argues that solidarity without subsidiarity—without respecting the autonomy and capacity of lower-level communities—becomes oppressive.²⁸ This reinforces the Vincentian model: solidarity calls the community to action, while the principle of subsidiarity (and participation) ensures that the agency of people experiencing poverty is respected and activated.

In conclusion, solidarity, as understood through this Wojtyła-Vincentian lens, is the virtuous commitment to the common good that is actualized through participatory engagement. It serves as the practical bridge between recognizing personal dignity and pursuing systemic change. By ensuring that people experiencing poverty are not objects of charity but subjects of their own development, Vincentian ministry aligns itself with the deepest demands of personalist philosophy, transforming benevolent action into a just and liberating partnership.

Systemic Change as an Expression of Solidarity

The *systemic change* movement within the Vincentian family represents a profound evolution in the Church's mission to the poor, born from the critical realization that charitable acts, while essential, are ultimately insufficient for overcoming poverty. As the *Manual for Systemic Change* asserts, this approach recognizes that poverty is not merely a lack of resources. However, a condition embedded in "economic, political, social, and cultural structures" that are often unjust²⁹. Therefore, addressing poverty requires long-term, collaborative strategies that target these root causes, moving beyond mitigating symptoms to transforming the systems that produce them.

From the integrated perspective of Karol Wojtyła's personalism and John Paul II's social doctrine, *systemic change* emerges not as a mere pragmatic shift in strategy but as the logical and moral consequence of its two foundational pillars: personal dignity and solidarity. Firstly, personal dignity demands just social structures. If every person possesses inviolable ontological dignity, then social, economic, and political arrangements must reflect and protect that dignity. Unjust structures that perpetuate marginalization and deny individuals the capacity to flourish are, in essence, a violation of that dignity. As John Paul II argued, the virtue of justice requires the creation of conditions that safeguard human rights.³⁰ Secondly, solidarity necessitates active engagement in the transformation process. Authentic solidarity, as a "firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good," is not fulfilled by temporary aid but by a committed partnership to dismantle the "structures of sin" and build a more equitable social order.³¹ Thus, *systemic change* is the active, structural expression of solidarity—it is the virtue put into practice at the macro level.

This conceptual synthesis provides a powerful example of applicability in the vocational schools operated by the Congregation of the Mission (CM) in Indonesia. A superficial analysis might view these schools as merely providing technical skills for employment. However, through the personalist lens, their mission is far more profound. These programs are intentionally designed to break the cycle of structural poverty. They

²⁷ Francis, "Evangelii Gaudium," art. 204.

²⁸ Markey, "Solidarity and Subsidiarity in Organizational Ethics: Reading Centesimus Annus Today."

²⁹ Vincentian Family International Commission, *Manual for Systemic Change*, 5.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, art. 39.

³¹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, art. 38.

do not only train individuals to fit into the existing economic system, which may itself be part of the problem, but also aim to empower them as agents who can transform their own realities.³² A graduate who becomes a skilled electrician or a certified nurse is not just an employee; they are an active subject whose economic agency allows them to escape a position of marginalization. This transition—from being an object of circumstance to a subject of one's own destiny—is the core of *systemic change* in a personalistic framework. It represents a micro-level transformation that, when multiplied, contributes to macro-level structural change.

The secondary literature provides strong support for this interpretation. Friesen highlights, in his analysis of *Laborem Exercens*, the encyclical's revolutionary emphasis on the subjective dimension of work over its objective dimension. John Paul II, drawing on Wojtyła's personalism, argues that work is not merely a commodity or a set of tasks (the *objective* dimension) but is fundamentally "an *actus personae*," an action of the person through which they express their humanity, develop their personality, and achieve self-realization³³. Friesen notes that this perspective "expands work's meaning from a means of survival to a means of personal actualization and participation in God's creative activity"³⁴. When vocational education is understood through this lens, its purpose is elevated. It is not simply an economic tool for poverty alleviation; it is a pedagogical process for realizing human dignity. The skills imparted are not just technical competencies but the very instruments through which the person exercises their subjectivity, creativity, and participation in society.

Therefore, the CM vocational schools exemplify how *systemic change* operationalizes the link between dignity, solidarity, and justice.³⁵ The education provided respects dignity by affirming the person's capacity for growth and self-determination. It embodies solidarity by investing in long-term, empowering partnerships rather than short-term handouts. Ultimately, it seeks justice by equipping individuals to challenge and change the structures that limit their potential. In this way, *systemic change* is revealed not as a secular development concept but as a deeply theological and philosophical imperative, flowing directly from the personalist conviction that every individual is called to be an active subject of their own history and a co-creator of a more just world.

Dialogue with the Indonesian Context

The encounter between Wojtyła's personalism, Vincentian spirituality, and the Indonesian context is not a mere application of a foreign framework but a genuine dialogue that enriches the synthesis. The Indonesian cultural landscape, characterized by strong communal values, provides a fertile ground for the concepts of *participatio* and solidarity to take root and flourish in a uniquely local form. The quintessential Indonesian principle of *gotong royong* (cooperation) is not simply a cultural practice but a profound social philosophy. It embodies the idea that individual well-being is inextricably linked to the well-being of the community, and that progress is achieved through collective, reciprocal effort. This worldview resonates deeply with Karol Wojtyła's concept of "participation" (*participatio*), which he defines as the innate capacity of the person to "exist and act together with others" in a way that affirms both the community and the

³² Danny Pilario, "Vincentian Educational Ministry in Asia: Challenges beyond 400 Years," *Studia Vincentiana* 3, no. 1 (2025): 49–63, <https://doi.org/10.35312/qmf02w22>.

³³ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, art. 6.

³⁴ Friesen, "The Subjective Dimension of Work in John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*," 240.

³⁵ James Claffey, "Systemic Change Is Vincentian Evangelization," *Studia Vincentiana* 2, no. 1 (2024): 71–73, <https://doi.org/10.35312/a321d839>.

individual.³⁶ *Gotong royong* can be seen as a socio-cultural instantiation of this personalist principle, demonstrating that the relational nature of the person is not a purely Western philosophical construct but a universal reality expressed in diverse cultural idioms. As such, these local values reinforce the argument that true solidarity is not an abstract ideal or an optional virtue, but a structural necessity of everyday life embedded in the local wisdom of the archipelago.

Philosophically, this dialogue is advanced by Indonesian thinkers like Armada Riyanto, who has developed a robust "ethics of relationality." Riyanto argues that the human self is fundamentally constituted through its relationships with others; the "I" does not precede the "We" but emerges from it. He posits that ethical action begins with the "unconditional recognition of the Other in his/her otherness"³⁷. This perspective creates a significant space for dialogue with Wojtyła's personalism, which similarly asserts that "the person is a being for whom the only proper dimension of existence is coexistence... and thus also the only proper dimension of his activity is co-activity"³⁸. Both philosophies, one emerging from an Indonesian communal context and the other from a European phenomenological one, converge on the fundamental axiom that individuals can only authentically fulfill themselves in relation to others. This philosophical congruence enables the deep inculturation of Vincentian spirituality in Indonesia, ensuring that it is not perceived as an import but rather as a spirituality that resonates with and is strengthened by pre-existing local values of kinship and communal responsibility.

This integration is a core concern of contemporary Vincentian mission theology. The Vincentian tradition itself insists on adaptation and respect for local contexts. Saint Vincent de Paul famously advised his missionaries to "love the poor, but let them be your masters," implying a profound respect for their reality and culture.³⁹ This principle is echoed in modern Vincentian documents. For instance, the *Manual for Systemic Change* emphasizes that effective change must be "contextual and participatory," requiring a "deep knowledge of the local reality" and the involvement of the community in defining its own needs and solutions.⁴⁰ This directive moves beyond a paternalistic model of mission to one of authentic partnership, perfectly aligning with the spirit of *gotong royong*.

The Indonesian context, with its rich communal ethos exemplified by *gotong royong* (cooperation), becomes a fertile ground for this synthesis. Wojtyła's key concept of "**participation**" (*participatio*)—the idea that persons fulfill themselves through self-giving and communion with others—finds a vibrant cultural expression in *gotong royong*. The Vincentian mission, informed by personalism, does not view *gotong royong* as a simple custom to be tolerated, but as a *cultural anticipation of the communion* to which the Gospel calls humanity.

Thus, the Vincentian effort in Indonesia becomes a dialogue between the theological virtue of solidarity and the cultural virtue of *gotong royong*. A Vincentian initiative, such as establishing a community health program, would be evaluated not only by its medical outcomes but by how it leverages and strengthens the local practice of mutual aid. Does the program operate on a model of foreign experts delivering aid, or does it build upon existing community networks, empowering local leaders and functioning as a modern expression of *gotong royong*? The latter approach embodies the

³⁶ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 271.

³⁷ Riyanto, *Relasionalitas: Filsafat Fondasi Interpretasi*, 45.

³⁸ Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 284.

³⁹ Vincent de Paul, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. Pierre Coste, XI, CCD (Vincentian Studies Institute, 1985), 146.

⁴⁰ Vincentian Family International Commission, *Manual for Systemic Change*, 12.

synthesis, respecting the dignity of the community as a subject of its own development (Wojtyła) and practicing solidarity by walking alongside them (Vincentian). It does so through a culturally authentic form of participation (Indonesian).⁴¹

This synthesis shows that the historical inculturation efforts of the Vincentians in Indonesia, when reflected upon through the lens of Wojtyła personalism, reveal a more profound spiritual truth. Inculturation is not merely a missiological technique but a spirituality of encounter. It is the practical application of the belief that God is already present and active within every culture. The Vincentian mission, therefore, is to discover and collaborate with that presence, affirming the dignity of persons *as cultural beings*. By integrating the philosophical depth of Wojtyła with the practical wisdom of the Vincentian charism, the Church in Indonesia can develop a mission theology that is both authentically Catholic and authentically Indonesian, ensuring that the faith does not merely exist within the culture but truly becomes a "leaven of Indonesian-ness," enriching and being enriched by it. This dialogue between faith and culture, guided by personalist principles and Vincentian charity, represents the most promising path for a transformative and enduring mission.

In conclusion, the Indonesian context does not merely receive the Wojtyła-Vincentian synthesis; it actively enriches it. The cultural principle of *gotong royong* and the philosophical insights of relational ethics provide a robust local validation for the personalist concepts of participation and solidarity. This dialogue ensures that the Vincentian mission in Indonesia is both authentically Catholic in its foundation and authentically Indonesian in its expression, leading to a more profound and sustainable embodiment of its goal to serve the poor in a spirit of justice and transformative love.

Pastoral Synthesis and Implications

The research results can be summarized in the synthesis framework: **Personal Dignity → Social Solidarity → Systemic Change**. This framework is not merely theoretical but can serve as a pastoral evaluation matrix. Three key questions can assess Vincentian programs:

1. Is personal dignity respected?
2. Is solidarity achieved through a participatory approach?
3. Does the program address the structural roots of poverty?

The pastoral implications are twofold. First, the Vincentian mission gains philosophical legitimacy, helping it avoid the pitfalls of technocratic philanthropy. Second, the mission adopts a clear praxis orientation, focusing on building the participation of people experiencing poverty as historical subjects. Third, the mission remains rooted in the spirituality of Christ present in the poor, while standing on the firm philosophical foundation of personalism.

The study reveals that Vincentian spirituality finds its deepest root in the recognition of personal dignity as an ontological foundation. From this foundation springs solidarity—a virtue that transcends passive sympathy to demand concrete, active participation in the lives of others. The convergence of dignity and solidarity leads to systemic change, actualizing the Vincentian vision within social structures. The Indonesian context enriches this synthesis with a cultural fabric woven with *gotong royong*, kinship, and relational ethics that resonate with Vincentian values. Ultimately,

⁴¹ Lorentius Iswandir, "Efforts of Inculturation in the Vincentian Mission in Indonesia," *Studia Vincentiana* 2, no. 1 (2024): 54–61, <https://doi.org/10.35312/33b37q11>.

the progression from dignity to solidarity to systemic change forms a coherent pathway. This pathway embodies the core of Vincentian spirituality and serves as a practical pastoral matrix for evaluating and guiding Vincentian work in contemporary society.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that Karol Wojtyła's personalism provides a solid philosophical foundation for Vincentian mission theology. Through conceptual and hermeneutical analysis, the synthesis framework "**Personal Dignity → Social Solidarity → Systemic Change**" was developed. This framework asserts that personal dignity provides the ontological basis for recognizing people experiencing poverty as subjects; solidarity presents normative principles that demand participation; and systemic change manifests these principles through sustained structural transformation.

The Indonesian context enriches this synthesis with communal cultural values, such as *gotong royong* and local reflections on relational ethics. Thus, Vincentian mission theology is supported not only by the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul but also by the philosophical legitimacy of Wojtyła's personalism and the contextual power of Indonesian culture.

The practical implication of these findings is the need for pastoral evaluations based on indicators of dignity, solidarity, and structural change. Educational, health, and economic empowerment programs run by the Vincentian family can be evaluated by the extent to which they respect personal dignity, involve community participation, and lead to fundamental social transformation.

With this framework, the Vincentian mission in the contemporary era assumes a more integral direction: rooted in the spirituality of Christ among the poor, sustained by the philosophical foundations of personalism, and guided by a concrete commitment to solidarity and social justice.

References

- Baran, William. "The Two Readings of *Laborem Exercens*: Philosophical Wojtyła vs. Theological John Paul II." *Journal of Markets & Morality* 24, no. 1 (2021): 7–23.
- Claffey, James. "Systemic Change Is Vincentian Evangelization." *Studia Vincentiana* 2, no. 1 (2024): 71–73. <https://doi.org/10.35312/a321d839>.
- Friesen, Abraham. "The Subjective Dimension of Work in John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*." *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 18, no. 2 (2021): 233–50.
- Friesen, Abraham. *Work and Human Dignity in the Age of Capitalism*. Paulist Press, 2022.
- Iswandir, Lorentius. "Efforts of Inculturation in the Vincentian Mission in Indonesia." *Studia Vincentiana* 2, no. 1 (2024): 54–61. <https://doi.org/10.35312/33b37q11>.
- John Paul II, Pope. *Laborem Exercens*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981.
- John Paul II, Pope. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987.
- Maloney, Robert P. "The Heart of Jesus in the Spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac." *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 41–58.
- Markey, John. "Solidarity and Subsidiarity in Organizational Ethics: Reading Centesimus Annus Today." *Lumen et Vita* 12, no. 1 (2021): 45–67.
- Panasiak, Andrzej. *Participation and the Person: Wojtyła's Personalism in Contemporary Context*. Lublin Academic Press, 2024.
- Paul, Vincent de. *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*. Edited by Pierre Coste. XI. CCD. Vincentian Studies Institute, 1985.
- Pilario, Danny. "Vincentian Educational Ministry in Asia: Challenges beyond 400 Years." *Studia Vincentiana* 3, no. 1 (2025): 49–63.

- <https://doi.org/10.35312/qmf02w22>.
- Riyanto, Armada. *Relasionalitas: Filsafat Fondasi Interpretasi*. Kanisius, 2018.
- Sickinger, Raymond L. “Frédéric Ozanam: Systemic Thinking, and Systemic Change.” *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 1–22.
- Spinello, Richard A. “Karol Wojtyła on Community, Participation, and the Common Good.” *Studia Gilsoniana* 13, no. 2 (2024): 369–98. <https://doi.org/10.26385/SG.130216>.
- Udovic, Edward R. “Conversion and Discernment According to Vincent de Paul.” *Vincentian Heritage* 32, no. 1 (2014): 23–40.
- “Veritatis Splendor (6 August 1993).” Accessed September 24, 2025. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.
- Vincentian Family International Commission. *Manual for Systemic Change*. Famvin, 2017.
- Wojtyła, Karol. “Participation or Alienation?” In *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, edited by Theresa Sandok. Peter Lang, 1993.
- Wojtyła, Karol. *The Acting Person*. Translated by A. Potocki. D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979.