



## LENTEN PASTORAL MESSAGE 2024

### “Strengthening Solidarity and Subsidiarity to Realise Shared Prosperity”

(Presented in lieu of homily during the Eucharistic celebration  
on the weekend of February 10 & 11, 2024)

Dear Parents, religious persons, fellow priests, youth, and beloved children in Christ,

1. On Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024, we will enter the season of Lent. Lent is a special time, a time to be grateful for God's immense love for us; a time to reflect on ourselves before the Lord and return to our identity as disciples of Jesus. Lent will lead us to Holy Week, where we are invited to follow Jesus into the final days of His earthly life, enduring suffering, dying for His great love for the world, and ultimately rising from the dead. To truly feel God's love for us and the world, a key requirement is recognizing our true identity before the Lord.

2. Our true identity is revealed to us in the Scripture passages we hear today. We are disciples of Jesus, whose heart is always moved with compassion when witnessing the suffering of others (Mark 1:40-42). Saint Paul advises us, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). This means we are called to do everything, whatever it may be, "for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Thus, the news of God's love will spread more widely (Mark 1:43-45).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

3. The Word of the Lord can inspire us to deepen and actualize the spirit of **solidarity** and **subsidiarity**, which are our special concerns as the Catholic Archdiocese of Jakarta (KAJ) in the year 2024. These themes cannot be separated from the foundational themes of the KAJ in previous years, namely **respect for human dignity** (2022) and **common welfare** (2023). Solidarity and subsidiarity are ways of acting to create common welfare based on respect for the lofty dignity of every human being.

4. Solidarity is the bonds that unite all individuals and social groups with each other; a space given for human freedom for collective development, where everyone shares and participates. The principle of solidarity reveals the social nature of every human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights, and the shared journey of individuals and nations towards unity (*cf. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace*, 2009: 131-135). St. John Paul II stated that solidarity is a firm determination to devote oneself to the common good; meaning, for the good of all and each individual, as we are all responsible for everyone. Solidarity implies standing with our brothers and sisters who are poor and less fortunate, through individual actions or collective initiatives to create more just and fraternal social, political, and economic structures (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No.38).

5. Meanwhile, the fundamental meaning of “subsidiarity” is assistance. The principle of subsidiarity explains the duty of ‘higher levels’ to help ‘lower levels’ when needed. This principle states that

higher-level communities should not take over the tasks and authorities of lower-level communities (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 403). The subsidiarity principle acknowledges that everyone is responsible and entitled to determine their own destiny. The same applies to institutions or communities. As long as the responsibility can be adequately carried out by an individual or an institution, higher-level individuals or institutions should not interfere or take over their responsibilities. This principle protects individuals from the abuse of authority by higher-level individuals or institutions. Subsidiarity obliges higher-level individuals or institutions to assist those below them in fulfilling their basic rights as dignified human beings. Pope Benedict XVI stated that subsidiarity is, first and foremost, assistance given when individuals and social subjects cannot do it on their own (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 57).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

6. We are grateful that the Indonesians as a society have a high sense of generosity. According to an international research institution (Charities Aid Foundation), for six consecutive years, from 2018 to 2023, Indonesia has been the most generous country among many countries studied by the institution (*detikFinance*, November 22, 2023). Additionally, Indonesian society also possesses a spirit of solidarity and strong social bonds. Social bonds refer to a community's ability to unite, create a safe environment, and ensure the fulfillment of its members' needs. According to recent research (*Litbang Kompas*, June 7, 2021), the level of social bonds among citizens is good (73.4 percent), and tolerance among citizens is also good (81.9 percent). Social solidarity has been an identity long held by the Indonesian people.

7. We also want to appreciate the achievements of the government in creating common welfare, especially in the socio-economic sector, as indicated by the statistics provided by the Central Statistics Agency. However, economic growth has not been accompanied by fair distribution. The level of income inequality is still quite high. Based on expenditure distribution, the poor (bottom 40 percent) only receive 18.05 percent, while the rich (top 20 percent) get 46.71 percent. Economic growth also does not correlate with the improvement of the people's economic conditions. The cost of living is rising, and it is increasingly difficult for people to find jobs. In the last three years, the growth of the workforce has remained higher than the growth of job opportunities (*Kompas*, December 22, 2023).

8. Besides issues of injustice, poverty, and unemployment, we are also deeply concerned about the worsening problem of corruption in Indonesia. This is evident from the daily news and reports from institutions studying corruption.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

9. On the upcoming Ash Wednesday, Indonesia will hold General Elections to elect the President and Vice President, members of the People's Representative Council, and members of the Regional Representative Council. We earnestly hope that the leaders we choose are individuals genuinely working for the common welfare. The spirit of solidarity and subsidiarity should be the foundation for building Indonesia, uniting efforts for a just, prosperous, and peaceful society, while upholding the values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. I hope that the Catholic community can choose

new leaders who meet the criteria outlined by the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Indonesia, namely upholding Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, respecting diversity, possessing integrity, prioritizing national interests over personal or group interests, showing concern for the weak, poor, marginalized, and disabled, having a commendable track record, and upholding human dignity and environmental integrity (*KWI Session Message 2023: Walking Together Towards a Peaceful Indonesia, Jakarta, November 14, 2023*). Differences in choices should not divide the Catholic community and the Indonesian society in general.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

10. As mentioned, we are grateful that our society possesses noble virtues that have existed for a long time, such as generosity, social bonds, and a high spirit of solidarity. However, on the other hand, we still face problems of injustice, poverty, unemployment, and corruption. Nevertheless, as believers, we continue to have hope while striving for what can be done for the common welfare. We need to find creative and innovative ways to actively engage in strengthening solidarity and subsidiarity for the creation of common welfare.

11.1. For Catholic individuals involved in politics and social community service, I encourage you to actively participate and not be afraid to advocate for the values of justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity to create common welfare. The active involvement of Catholics in decision-making affecting the welfare of many people is appreciated as Indonesian citizens. As much as possible, this involvement can start from the lowest community structures (RT/RW or local communities) up to the regional and national levels.

11.2. Initiatives for concrete actions to reduce inequality and create job opportunities need to be continuously sought and developed. I support initiatives and efforts for the development of community-based economies, such as cooperatives, credit unions, SABUK (Small Business Guidance Centers), Ayo Kerja (Let's Work), and the Food Resilience Movement.

11.3. Other initiatives can also be carried out, such as mental health education, counselling, participation in stunting prevention in collaboration with Health Centers or the Health Department, charitable assistance to our brothers and sisters in need, and other initiatives that answer the question, "What should we do to strengthen the spirit of solidarity and subsidiarity for the creation of common welfare?"

12. Finally, I would like to express gratitude to the parents, religious persons, fellow priests, youth, and beloved children in the KAJ who have made various efforts to manifest the compassionate and solidarity face of God to others through various involvements and services. We hope that the initiatives we undertake, especially during the Lenten season, will continue to be our contribution to realising common welfare, a tangible expression of salvation. Greetings and blessings from the Lord to all of you, your families, and your communities. May Mary and Joseph pray for us.

+ Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo  
Archbishop of Jakarta