



Solidarity Is Always the Better Option



by Rajmund Dabrowski

Our son Michael was just three years old, and my wife and I were pushing him in a stroller to join thousands of others at the historic Castle Square in front of the Royal Castle—the former official residence of Polish monarchs—in Warsaw, Poland. We were joining a demonstration in support of solidarity.

Peaceful protests often turn into mayhem. That's what happened that day in Warsaw. Songs and chants for freedom were met by the force of the state with water cannons and gas pellets shot into the crowd. Soon we were on the run, covering our faces and wiping the unwelcome burning tears from Michael's face.

He remembers little, if anything at all, though he told me recently that he is thankful for the experience. He was being introduced to what it means to stand for freedom—sometimes at a cost.



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Even today, I ask myself if it was reckless. But being passive, letting others stand up against a restricted way of life—was that a better option? We could not then and would not today make that choice.

This experience is etched in my mind and connects with Christian values and the larger experience of scores of others who remind us to stand for what is right. A *pleiad* of God's people is an example of fidelity. A list of them in Hebrews (chapters 11 and 12) refers to a "cloud of witnesses." There is an element of solidarity that connects us with each other. We are connected through flesh and blood, work and language, suffering and humiliation. At times, though not as often, we are joined together through joy and happiness. But all too often we do not realize our togetherness, this human solidarity with a community of people.

When the Apostle Paul writes that we should carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), he seems to suggest that solidarity with the other cannot be forced from the outside. Solidarity prefers fidelity above violence. It prefers light above darkness.

Reflecting on fidelity, philosopher Józef Tischner, wrote: "When we speak about fidelity, we are seeing a statue of the great father of faith, a statue of Abraham. He was faithful. To be faithful means to be a chooser. A chosen one and the one who chooses, together. Abraham heard a call in the desert: 'Abraham! Abraham!' He answered: 'Here I am.' He was called and he chose to answer. We remember another moment when God used a similar call. He said to Adam: 'Adam, where are you?' But Adam answered God's call by hiding. He didn't wish to be seen. Abraham was—as it were—fixing Adam's error. He chose to answer God's choice by choosing."

Abraham is referred to as a father of religion. It all started with him making a choice, and when the choice yielded the fruit of faithfulness, a community, a nation, was born.

When we walked toward the Castle Square, we walked with a clear choice—to express solidarity with the people. It was our loyalty to the community. And we couldn't do it any other way.

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