

Pope Benedict XVI and Catholic Higher Education

*Commentaries in Advance of the Holy Father's
April 2008 Address to Catholic College Presidents*

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This special publication of The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education is issued in anticipation of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States. It is designed to provide some context for his historic April 17, 2008 meeting with Catholic college presidents and diocesan education officials.

About The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education

The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education is a division of The Cardinal Newman Society. Its mission is to study U.S. Catholic colleges and universities in accordance with the guidelines of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*.

The Center publishes a quarterly *Bulletin of Catholic Higher Education*. It also was responsible for the preparation of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College: What to Look For and Where to Find It*, published in November 2007. A second edition of *The Newman Guide* is scheduled will be published in 2009.

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The Visit of Pope Benedict XVI: Some Reflections of a College President

By Dr. Timothy O'Donnell

The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States will afford a tremendous opportunity for the Roman Catholic Church here in the United States to draw ever closer to the Heart of the Church. It is highly significant to observe that one of the desires expressed by the Pontiff for his short visit to our country will be to meet with the presidents of all U.S. Catholic colleges and universities .

Our current Holy Father, like his predecessor, longs to witness an authentic Catholic renewal in Catholic higher education, knowing it to be key for the future of culture and the future of our civilization. Pope Benedict recognizes the power wielded by the academy in shaping culture. Furthermore, as a man of refined intellect who is deeply sensitive to the trends of contemporary thought, he has clearly recognized the dangers that brutal secularism, with its accompanying moral relativism, poses a grave threat to Western Civilization that could strip human life of its true meaning and dignity.

About the Author

Dr. Timothy O'Donnell, KGCHS, is President of Christendom College.

Some deny that there is a crisis or that there is a trend toward secularization in the current state of Catholic higher education. They claim that Catholic colleges have simply become increasingly pluralistic and diverse, in keeping with the rest of the nation. But as Pope John Paul II taught in *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, the Catholic university has a specific contribution to make in the midst of this diversity since it, in a special way, is “consecrated to the Truth.”

In our Holy Father's recent encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, he makes a specific reference to the important role of Christ as the true Philosopher, who, in bringing the Gospel, brings Truth. It is Christ Himself who tells us what it means to be truly a man and what man must do in order to be fully human: “He Himself is both the Way and the Truth, and therefore He is also the Life that all of us are seeking.” Much of this encyclical can be directed to academia, particularly as the Pope targets a number of intellectual errors characteristic of the 19th century, with its naïve belief in human progress and the philosophical errors of the likes of Karl Marx. The Holy Father counters that, without God, there can be no hope and without hope, there can be no authentic human life.

Recognizing the vital role that education will play in exposing these modern errors, the Pope has already delivered a number of key addresses on the importance of Catholic higher education, indicating that he is likely to reemphasize the teaching communicated in John Paul's masterful encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. In so doing, Pope Benedict will point out the crucial role that must be played by Catholic institutions of higher learning to reengage the culture and communicate effectively to the world the great synthesis of the Catholic intellectual tradition that

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unites both faith and reason and recognizes in each of them a common source in Almighty God. This radical transformation can be achieved only if the university maintains a strong Catholic identity with a special commitment to the Gospel as it is communicated through the Magisterium.

The Pope, as a brilliant theologian himself, will certainly take this opportunity of meeting with the presidents of Catholic colleges to help these educators, who are seeking the truth with sincerity, to recognize that there is a special ecclesial dimension to their mission; Catholic education requires fidelity to the deposit of faith as it is communicated by the Church. Thus, since the Catholic university is consecrated, as we have said, in a special way to the search for and acquisition of Truth, it must therefore be open to everything related to God, man and the created order.

Recalling the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in its document *Dei Verbum*, Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium are like three pillars that are so interconnected “that one really cannot stand without the other.” These pillars should be embraced by Catholic colleges and universities and should provide the foundation of their efforts to help explicate the Faith in service to the Church and a world that hungers for the saving Truth of Christ.

Pope Benedict’s visit, not only as the Holy Father but also as a man of great intellect and scholarly ability, should assure scholars and educators everywhere that they have nothing to fear from the Church. A number of individuals in Catholic higher education fear that there would be a loss of freedom if they were to embrace fully the vision set forth in *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, but, as Pope Benedict beautifully stated in his homily at his Installation Mass in April 2005: “this yoke of Christ does not weigh down on us, oppressing us and taking away our freedom.” Pope Benedict, like all true academicians, is totally committed to the search for and acquisition of Truth.

We must remember that Truth is the object of the intellect; once the Truth has been discovered, there follows the obligation to submit to the Truth. The human heart was made for the Truth by the God who loves us. Thus, the human mind yearns for the union with God in the Truth, and the purpose of scholarly endeavor is the comprehension and communication of the Truth.

To that end, college and university presidents and scholars who share this love for the pursuit of the Truth should rejoice that a man of such intellect, learning and deep faith has been elevated to the papal throne and has come to our fair shores to speak to us about the great mission of Catholic higher education. His presence will be a grace for our broken and suffering Church and should be received as a source of joy and hope for all those who love the Church, who love the Faith and who are committed to communicating the whole truth about man, which is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.

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LIFE.”

Address of Pope
Benedict XVI
from the Vatican,
January 17, 2008,
to the Università
degli Studi
La Sapienza

Ratzinger, Bavaria and Higher Education

By Dr. Brennan Pursell

Joseph Ratzinger has been a prominent name in Bavarian higher education for about four decades. When the 42-year-old professor of theology came to Regensburg in 1969, he had behind him 17 years of teaching experience, a track record for excellence at the universities of Bonn, Münster, and Tübingen, and an international reputation due to his best-selling books and his service as an official theological expert at the Second Vatican Council. The university at Regensburg was new, first chartered in 1962, offering courses in three faculties from 1967. Leaving venerable Tübingen for that fledgling institution was a definite step down the ladder of academic prestige.

But Ratzinger did not care. He wanted to return to his native Bavaria after a 10-year sojourn in other parts of Germany, and his brother was well-established as the music director of the famous Regensburg boys choir. In a write-up for the local press, Professor Ratzinger publicly stated that his goal was to contribute to the new university's theological department through teamwork and dialogue, both for the sake of encouraging a genuine integration of the various disciplines of Catholic theology, and for the good of the students, so that they would improve their theological knowledge, and thereby come closer to truth.

After five years, his intellectual brilliance and complete sanity propelled him to the forefront of the university's leadership. In 1974, he was named Dean of his department, and two years later, the Bavarian Ministry of Culture appointed him *Prorektor* (Vice-President) of the University. As a result of his famous publications—dozens of his books and articles had been translated into at least a dozen languages—and his appointment to the Holy See's International Theological Commission, he soon gathered a cohort of graduate students from all over Europe, China, Korea, Chile, Benin, Canada, and the United States—by far the most international student academic group on campus. In contemporary lingo, we might say that he was leading the way toward globalization in academe, long before Regensburg had a program. Pope Paul VI, however, diverted Ratzinger's career path in 1977. Even after he became the Archbishop of Freising and Munich, Ratzinger remained an honorary member of the university faculty.

What does this mean for us in higher education in the United States? On the face of it, not much. Higher education in all Germany is a branch of the state and ruled by government bureaucrats in the states' ministries of culture. German universities, especially in Ratzinger's day, did no fundraising and had next to no interest in dorms, sports, student social and spiritual life, or really anything else apart from teaching and research. The state paid for tuition and subsidized the mess halls. Most students arranged for their own accommodations like

About the Author

Dr. Brennan Pursell is an Associate Professor of History at DeSales University and a Newman Fellow of The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education. His new book, *Benedict of Bavaria: An Intimate Portrait of the Pope and His Homeland* (Circle Press), was published in March 2008.

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normal adults. On the whole, it still is that way.

Pope Benedict XVI, however, has had much to say to the higher education establishment in Bavaria, Germany, and the rest of the world. In 2006, he exhorted the German bishops to support actively and financially the little university at Eichstätt in Bavaria, which is the only Catholic university in Germany. Eichstätt, he said, needs to become a larger, more prominent, elite university, where generations of future leaders learn to address the issues of the day from a firm grounding in Catholic learning, tradition and truth. Eichstätt is already one of the best rated universities in Germany, in terms of student approval of their professors and the institution's commitment to dedicated, attentive education of the whole person. But with 4,500 students it is quite small, relative to the weighty populations of the German state universities. All Catholic dioceses in Germany, the Pope added, should make firm contributions to the effort.

In the now famous Regensburg Address (September 12, 2006), Benedict XVI appealed to university scholars everywhere not to truncate their definition of reason by confining all knowledge to the material, the empirical, and the readily quantifiable. Human reason, which derives from God's, the *logos*, is capable of reaching toward greater heights. He did not say that all faculties should submit to the declarations of the theologians, but he stated unequivocally that theology and philosophy should not be excluded from the essential human dialogue about truth, or be dismissed as irrelevant or merely "meta". Everyone with an interest in truth should read the Regensburg Address, and especially political figures, such as Barack Obama, who declared in his best-selling political biography, *The Audacity of Hope*, "Almost by definition, faith and reason operate in different domains and involve different paths to discerning truth" (p. 219). The Pope differs.

The Regensburg Address is already producing fruit in the United States. At DeSales University, in an effort to bring the diverse faculties and disciplines together in dialogue, we have instituted a *Dies Academicus* each semester, as described by the Pope. The *Dies* is an open forum of, by, and for the faculty, where the rostrum is open for any and all to contribute to a discussion about a topic of general interest, such as the definition of globalization or the fundamental elements of a Catholic, liberal arts education. The response among the faculty and administration at DeSales has been extremely positive. I cannot recommend it enough for every college or university, Catholic and otherwise, where academic specialization tends to inhibit dialogue.

On April 17, when the Holy Father speaks at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., I expect him to reiterate some of the points he made in Regensburg, but I would not be surprised if he explicitly links American Catholic universities to his predecessor's "new evangelization," something which is almost impossible in the German socialist system. He will also probably cite *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, and might urge

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New Archbishop
Ratzinger on
choosing his
Episcopal motto
"Cooperators of
the Truth" in 1977

the American bishops to take a more active, assertive role as shepherds in the Catholic universities in their dioceses. But this is speculation.

Whatever Benedict XVI says to us this April, it will be clear, poignant, and eminently worth listening to. For those who do not know, the man is a bona fide genius. He speaks in flawless paragraphs, lectures in publishable chapters off the top of his head, and writes his books in a single draft. Is there any leader on the world stage today who is more educated and with greater raw intelligence than he? Those who are skeptical should read his books and decide for themselves.

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Some Teaching Milestones in the Life of Joseph Ratzinger

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1951 | Ordained as priest |
| 1953 | Awarded doctorate in theology; wrote dissertation on St. Augustine |
| 1957 | Awarded professorship designation; wrote dissertation on St. Bonaventure |
| 1958 | Professor, Freising College |
| 1959-1963 | Professor, University of Bonn |
| 1962-1965 | Theological advisor, Vatican Council II |
| 1963-1966 | Professor, University of Munster |
| 1966-1969 | Dogmatic Theology Chair, University of Tübingen |
| 1969-1977 | Professor, University of Regensburg |
| 1972 | Begins <i>Communio</i> , a theology journal |
| 1977 | Appointed Archbishop of Munich and Freising |
| 1977 | Named Cardinal |
| 1981-2005 | Prefect, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith |
| 2005 | Elected 265 th Pope |
| 2005 | Issued <i>Deus Caritas Est</i> encyclical |
| 2007 | Issued <i>Spe Salvi</i> encyclical |

Studying with the Future Pope: An Interview with Father Joseph Fessio, S.J.

By Joseph A. Esposito

Q. Father Ratzinger's doctoral dissertation dealt with St. Augustine. How much of the work of this Church Father influenced him as an academic?

A. Of course St. Augustine has had a strong influence on Pope Benedict XVI because he has had an influence on the entire theology of the West, including that of Thomas Aquinas. So whether or not he had done his dissertation on St. Augustine, he still would have had the influence of Augustine in his work because he is so indebted to the entire patristic contribution to faith, life and theology. He did post-doctoral work on Saint Bonaventure.

Q. Did you observe a Franciscan influence in his work [while studying under Professor Ratzinger in the 1970s]?

A. Again you can observe a Franciscan influence in the work of Joseph Ratzinger, but that is due to many factors. St. Bonaventure may be one of them. But his sense of the earth and of simplicity which he gets from being a native of rural Bavaria is certainly one, and his natural personality is one of both depth and simplicity.

Q. What was most noteworthy about him as a professor?

A. I think the most noteworthy thing about him as a professor was the way he led doctoral seminars. With several of us graduate students making presentations and discussing a theme among ourselves, he would for the most part sit and listen. From time to time he would ask someone who may not have been participating for an opinion. But at the end he would sum up what had been said. He would give emphasis to the most important points. He would synthesize the entire proceedings in an organic way that was always luminous and revealing .

Q. How do you think his career as a professor influenced his views on the role of higher education?

A. Because he was and still is a professor, he understands higher education from within. He was a highly regarded exemplar of what being a professor means and what a university education is for.

About Fr. Fessio

Father Joseph Fessio, S.J., is Theologian in Residence at Ave Maria University and founder of Ignatius Press. He completed his doctoral work under Father Joseph Ratzinger at the University of Regensburg in the 1970s.

About Mr. Esposito

Joseph A. Esposito is the Director of The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education at The Cardinal Newman Society and the Editor of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*.

Pope Benedict and St. Augustine

By Evangeline C. Jones

“When I read St. Augustine’s writings, I do not get the impression that he is a man who died more or less 1,600 years ago; I feel he is like a man today: a friend, a contemporary who speaks to me, who speaks to us with his everlasting timeliness of his faith; of the faith that comes from Christ, the Eternal Incarnate Word, Son of God and Son of Man.”

These words of Pope Benedict from a January 2008 weekly audience are among the latest of countless indications of his lifelong “friendship” with St. Augustine. They range from a 1953 dissertation on Augustine to his 21st-century papal encyclicals and audiences, as well as occasional autobiographical reflections. Indeed, the Holy Father closed his recent series of five audiences on “the greatest Church Father” with a personal note, “Augustine has had a profound effect on my own life and ministry.” Over the course of his talks, Pope Benedict gave catechesis based upon the life, works and inner experience (conversion) of Augustine. Far more than a mere tribute to Augustine, the Holy Father repeatedly emphasized the timeliness of Augustine’s message and example for us and our times.

About the Author

Evangeline C. Jones is the Deputy Director of The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education at The Cardinal Newman Society.

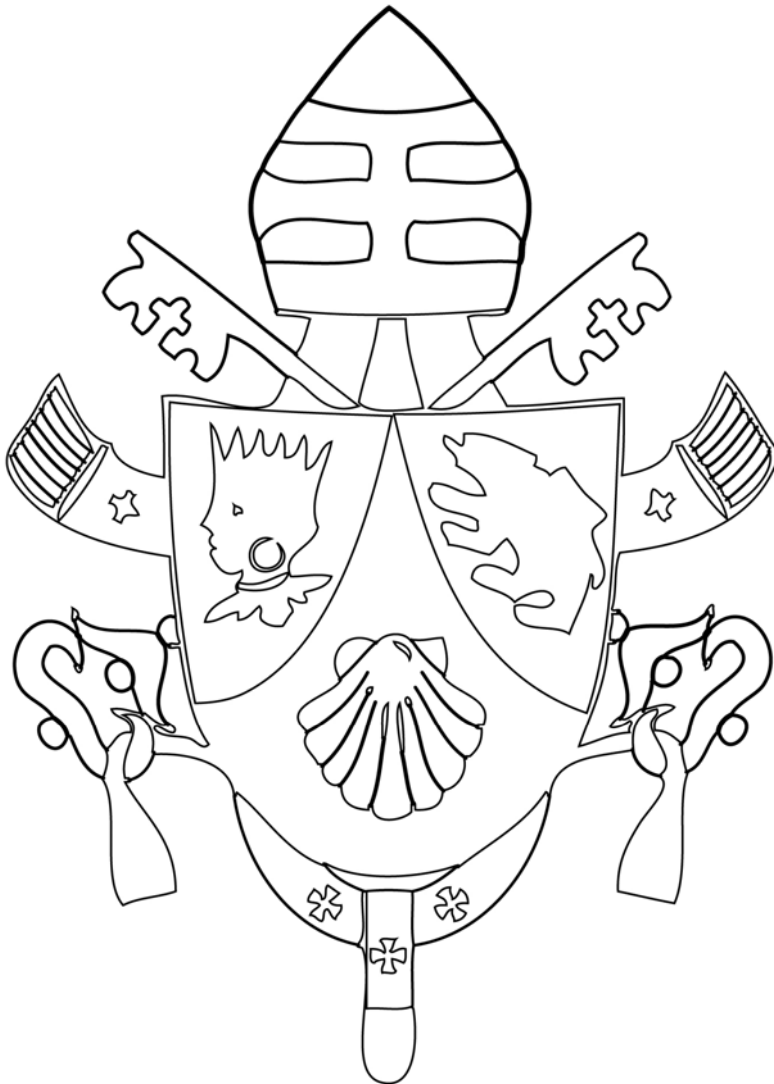
He recommends the *Confessions* for its “unique attention to the spiritual life” focused upon interiority and psychology, making it a “unique model...to modern times.” In his audience on the subject of faith and reason, “the crucial theme for Augustine’s biography,” Pope Benedict tells us, “Augustine’s entire intellectual and spiritual development is also a valid model today in the relationship between faith and reason, a subject not only for believers but for every person who seeks the truth, a central theme for the balance and destiny of every human being.” About Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, he says, “this book is also today a source for defining clearly between true secularism and the Church’s competence,” with its insights on the relationship between the political sphere and the sphere of faith.

Those involved in academic and intellectual work today will also find much to ponder in Pope Benedict’s description of Augustine’s final and deepest conversion: “The last stage was a conversion of such profound humility that he would daily ask God for pardon. He also demonstrated this humility in his intellectual endeavors, submitting all his works to a thorough critique.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, the coat of arms Pope Benedict selected incorporates two elements associated with St Augustine, and both convey a message about humility. The shell is said to represent an encounter St Augustine had with a young boy he found trying to pour sea water into a hole in the sand. Seeing the futility of the boy’s effort, Augustine also realized the futility of his own efforts to comprehend the Trinity, an unfathomable mystery.

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The other symbol, the bear with a pack on its back, is drawn from a story about Munich's own St. Korbinian. In memoirs published ten years ago, Pope Benedict also relates it to Augustine's meditation on Psalm 73: "Augustine takes the 'beast' in this verse to be a draft animal. He compares his work as a bishop to that of an ox pulling a wagon. Augustine had chosen a scholar's life—only to find that God harness him to his wagon, to pull it to the world.... As the farmer's ox is close to him and works for him, so Augustine realized that his humdrum duties brought him close to God.... Isn't Korbinian's bear, compelled against his will to carry the saint's pack, a picture of my own life?... 'I am not better than a beast in your sight'—but a beast close to God.... I am God's pack animal."



“AUGUSTINE’S ENTIRE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IS ALSO A VALID MODEL TODAY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON, A SUBJECT NOT ONLY FOR BELIEVERS BUT FOR EVERY PERSON WHO SEEKS THE TRUTH, A CENTRAL THEME FOR THE BALANCE AND DESTINY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING.”

Pope Benedict XVI
Weekly Audience
January 30, 2008

The Popes and Education in the 20th Century

Dr. Peter A. Kwasniewski

During her 2,000 years of history, the Catholic Church has been intimately involved in nearly every type of educational endeavor known to Western man, from the ancient schools of rhetoric to the great universities of the High Middle Ages, from humble rudiments taught at grammar schools to lofty flights of reason and imagination in the arts and sciences.

The Successor of St. Peter has a special reason to be attentive to the state of education in the flock he shepherds and to guide and encourage it in every way possible. In fact, we find among the popes, particularly those of the last millennium, an impressive connection with schools at various levels—naturally, first and foremost, schools of formation for the clergy, but also, as time goes on, schools for religious and for the laity. Pope John Paul II fittingly reminded the world in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990) that the university was born from the heart of the Church and that the Church is still her best ally in the delicate, decisive, and inescapable work of educating the whole person, above all with respect to man’s capacity to know and love God, on which his very dignity is based.

About the Author

Dr. Peter A. Kwasniewski is Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Wyoming Catholic College and a Newman Fellow for The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education.

If we consider the popes of our own time, from Leo XIII (1878–1903) onwards, we see several major themes consistently present in their speeches and writings. First and foremost, the Church belongs in higher education. As Leo XIII wrote to the Archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbons, in 1887: “It has always been the glory of the Pastors of the Church, but above all, of the Supreme Pontiffs, constantly to promote the acquisition of a knowledge worthy of its name, and carefully to watch over the teaching—especially theological and philosophical—imparted, so that it may be in keeping with the principles of faith. This union between the teaching of revelation and that of reason constitutes an indestructible bulwark of the faith.”

The Church has always inspired the best kind of education, the most well-rounded and the most profoundly searching, because, as the same Pope observed in 1897, “divine faith is not only in no way hostile to culture, but rather is the crown and climax of culture.” Indeed, a defining characteristic of Catholic education is its drive toward synthesis, a unified vision of God and the world, with the drama of redemption at its center.

“Directly or indirectly, all studies have some connection with religion,” wrote Venerable Pius XII (1939–1958) in 1950. “University does not mean simply an overlaying of curricula which are extraneous to one another, but indicates rather a synthesis of all the subjects of learning.... To actuate this synthesis from its center up to the main key that unlocks the whole edifice is the task of a Catholic university.”

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Accordingly, the curriculum of a genuinely Catholic institution “assign[s] in its zeal for truth the correct place in its programs to natural sciences and metaphysics, to mind and heart, to past and present, to reason and revelation,” as the same pontiff explained in 1939. On the negative side, as this Pope observed in 1952, “the university would fulfill its mission badly were it to abandon itself to pluralism or to a superficial eclecticism.”

Another important papal theme is service of the common good. Education, at its best, forms Catholics who love the common good of their nation and their Church, are equipped with the knowledge and zeal to work towards that goal, and are willing to make sacrifices for it. Of course, Catholic education cannot form such “apostles” unless it remains abidingly true to itself and to its own identity.

Pope Pius XII declared in 1949: “In accordance with absolute fidelity to Christian principles, which are the whole reason for existence of the Catholic University, it must, today more than ever, watch the aims for which it arose, and with persistent purpose of mind keep faith with the engagement solemnly undertaken to provide the nation’s social body with leaders and lovers of science and learning who will honor the faith and the Church.”

Almost 50 years ago, in September 1958, Pius XII observed: “The Christian school will justify its existence in so far as its teachers—clerics or laymen, religious or secular—succeed in forming staunch Christians”—words that give rise to sober reflection in view of the number of historically Catholic institutions that now justify their existence for reasons extrinsic or even contrary to the apostolic intentions of their founders and benefactors, whose great longing was that minds be illuminated with the light of Christ, souls nourished with the Bread of Life, hearts inflamed with the fire of God’s love.

To all the popes of modern times, therefore, the rapid secularization of schools at all levels, whether by government coercion or by traitorous choice, has been a cause of immense sorrow and a target of their impassioned protests. The popes, especially Pius XI (1922–1939) in his masterful encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), repeatedly and effectively refute the unnatural claims of “naturalism”—the view, now universally accepted in spite of its deplorable record of real-life failure, that children and young adults should be educated without any reference to God, their immortal souls, and the virtues necessary for salvation, and without the aid of the Church’s ministry.

Consider these forceful words of Pius XII from 1951: “Education which does not bother about being moral and religious fails in its greatest and better part, in that it neglects the noblest faculties of man, deprives itself of the most efficacious and vital energies, and ends up by ‘diseducating,’ mixing up uncertainties and errors with truth, vice with virtue, and evil with good.” The threat of secularism is a threat not only to the Church’s own institutions of learning but also to the com-

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mon good of modern nations as they slide more and more rapidly into the moral chaos of techno-barbarism.

In his well-known Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II, a university professor in his younger days, drew extensively upon an ancient and living tradition to offer the Church a compelling vision of what Catholic higher education must be in our times as well as a body of directives and provisions to which institutions must be held accountable to guarantee their fidelity. It seems, then, beautifully providential that at the start of this new millennium the Lord has given His Church another “pope of education” in the person of Joseph Ratzinger, a scholar, theologian and author of enormous stature.

There is seldom an audience, address, or letter in which the Pope does not mention or discuss the subject of education. The famous Regensburg lecture, the speeches given at the Lateran and Gregorian Universities, and the address intended for La Sapienza in Rome are all exemplary of Pope Benedict XVI’s intellectual penetration into the relationship of faith and reason, his sound judgment regarding the modern situation, his deep academic learning made humble by the love of God, and, in a period of doubt and confusion, the strong and steady leadership he exercises for the benefit of the People of God. Let us hope and pray that his example and teaching—a powerful summons to sanity and sanctity—will be heard and heeded by our universities and other institutes of learning.

PIUS XII OBSERVED: “THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL WILL JUSTIFY ITS EXISTENCE IN SO FAR AS ITS TEACHERS—CLERICS OR LAYMEN, RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR—SUCCEED IN FORMING STAUNCH CHRISTIANS....”

Popes of the Past Century

| Papal Name | Given Name | Reign |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| St. Pius X | Giuseppe Sarto | 1903-1914 |
| Benedict XV | Giacomo Della Chiesa | 1914-1922 |
| Pius XI | Ambrogio Ratti | 1922-1939 |
| Pius XII | Eugenio Pacelli | 1939-1958 |
| Blessed John XXIII | Angelo Roncalli | 1958-1963 |
| Paul VI | Giovanni Battista Montini | 1963-1978 |
| John Paul | Albino Luciani | 1978 |
| John Paul II | Karol Wojtyla | 1978- 2005 |
| Benedict XVI | Joseph Ratzinger | 2005- |

**Excerpts of Recent Statement from
Pope Benedict XVI on Education**

Address to the Convention of the Diocese of Rome, June 11, 2007

“...[T]here is talk of a great ‘educational emergency,’...an inevitable emergency: in a society, in a culture, which all too often make relativism its creed—relativism has become a sort of dogma—in such a society the light of truth is missing; indeed, it is considered dangerous and ‘authoritarian’ to speak of truth, and the end result is doubt about the goodness of life—is it good to be a person? is it good to be alive?—and in the validity of the relationships and commitments in which it consists.

“...For this reason, education tends to be broadly reduced to the transmission of specific abilities or capacities for doing, while people endeavor to satisfy the desire for happiness of the new generations by showering them with consumer goods and transitory gratification. Thus, both parents and teachers are easily tempted to abdicate their educational duties and even no longer to understand what their role, or rather, the mission entrusted to them, is.

“Yet, in this way we are not offering to young people...what it is our duty to pass on to them. Moreover, we owe them the true values which give life a foundation.

“...[T]his situation obviously fails to satisfy; it cannot satisfy because it ignores the essential aim of education which is the formation of a person to enable him or her to live to the full and to make his or her own contribution to the common good. However, on many sides the demand for authentic education and the rediscovery of the need for educators who are truly such is increasing.

“...[I]t is education and especially Christian education which shapes life based on God who is love...and has need of that closeness which is proper to love. Especially today, when isolation and loneliness are a widespread condition to which noise and group conformity is no real remedy, personal guidance becomes essential...”

**Excerpts of Recent Statement from
Pope Benedict XVI on Education**

Letter to the Faithful of Rome on the Urgent Task of Education, January 21, 2008

“Educating...has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult...Hence, there is talk of a great ‘educational emergency’...”

“...[A]n authentic education...needs first of all that closeness and trust which are born from love:...love which children... should have, from their parents. Yet every true teacher knows that if he is to educate he must give a part of himself, and that it is only in this way that he can help his pupils overcome selfishness and become in their turn capable of authentic love.

“...[P]erhaps the most delicate point in the task of education: finding the right balance between freedom and discipline. If no standard of behavior and rule of life is applied even in small daily matters, the character is not formed and the person will not be ready to face the trials that will come in the future. The educational relationship...is first of all the encounter of two kinds of freedom, and successful education means teaching the correct use of freedom...(W)e must never...pretend we do not see the errors or worse, that we share them as if they were the new boundaries of human progress.

“Education cannot, therefore, dispense with that authoritativeness which makes the exercise of authority possible. It is the fruit of experience and competence, but is acquired above all with the coherence of one’s own life and personal involvement, an expression of true love. The educator is thus a witness of truth and goodness. He too...is fragile and can be mistaken, but he will constantly endeavor to be in tune with his mission.

“...I would like to offer you a thought which I developed in ...*Spe Salvi* on Christian hope: the soul of education, as of the whole of life, can only be a dependable hope...I cannot finish...without a warm invitation to place our hope in God.”



A Division of The Cardinal Newman Society in Support of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*

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