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**EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM.  
REFLECTIONS BASED ON THE TEACHING OF BENEDICT XVI**

**LA EDUCACIÓN EN EL CONTEXTO DEL HUMANISMO CRISTIANO.  
REFLEXIONES BASADAS EN LAS ENSEÑANZAS DE BENEDICTO XVI**

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*Abstract:* Education should be placed in the context of Christian humanism. For Benedict XVI the relationship with God is the main element stimulating our personal growth. Faith encompassing the entire human existence creates a permanent life foundation, directs and gives a full meaning to life. Education should be directed towards the formation of original personality. In this process a young person plays a principal role, whereas the educator is an auxiliary factor. In the context of a crisis of education the Pope proposes the conditions of authentic education, such as the climate of love, sensitivity to truth and suffering, discovering the balance between discipline and freedom, the influence of role models, responsible treatment of education and hope coming from faith.

*Keywords:* Benedict XVI, Christianity, Education, Humanism, Growth, Young person.

*Resumen:* La educación debe situarse en el contexto del humanismo cristiano. Para Benedicto XVI, la relación con Dios es el principal elemento que estimula nuestro crecimiento personal. La fe que abarca toda la existencia humana crea una base de vida permanente, dirige y da un sentido completo a la vida. La educación debe estar dirigida hacia la formación de una personalidad original. En este proceso, una persona joven desempeña un papel principal, mientras que el educador es un factor auxiliar. En el contexto de la crisis de la educación, el Papa propone las condiciones de una auténtica educación, como el de un ambiente de amor, la sensibilidad a la verdad y el sufrimiento, el descubrimiento del equilibrio entre la disciplina y la libertad, la influencia de los modelos a seguir, el tratamiento responsable de la educación y la esperanza proveniente de la fe.

*Palabras clave:* Benedicto XVI, Cristianismo, Educación, Humanismo, Crecimiento, la Persona Joven.

## Introduction

Benedict XVI is indisputably a genius of contemporary theological thought and a perceptive observer of the changes in the modern world. In combining various perspectives the Pope creates an interesting humanistic synthesis, of which the theological reflection the centre. The analysis of his teaching proves to be a very enriching experience as the Pope concentrates on the social significance of Christianity and its inalienability in the European and world culture. Thus Benedict XVI is a zealous promoter of Christian humanism. In his analyses concerning various areas of social life he treats the supernatural dimension as an essential element of reality. Education is one of the most important aspects on which the Pope focuses and in this context he also emphasizes the significance of the supernatural dimension. It is worth examining his teaching in this respect as it will undoubtedly be the source of inspiration for parents, teachers and priest who teach children and young people fundamental life values.

The next stages of analyzing the papal teaching will be the presentation of a broader context of Christian humanism by Benedict XVI and the crisis of modern education. The question of a close relationship with God as a factor stimulating personal growth will also be an important element of this reflection. The conclusion is devoted to the presentation of detailed indications on education.

### 1. Christian Humanism

Christian humanism constitutes a broader background for Benedict XVI's reflection on education. The Pope states directly that the modern "social question," namely various problems of social life has become "a radically anthropological question."<sup>1</sup> Today the fundamental issue is the truth about man: his nature, dignity and supernatural vocation. In the context of education the Pope refers to the integral concept of the human being where personal relationship with God is an essential element stimulating human growth. Christian humanism is a broader perspective which the Pope assumes in his teaching on education.

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, art. 75. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html).

Benedict XVI teaches about “an authentic humanism, grounded in truth and guided by the light of the Gospel,”<sup>2</sup> “a truly integral humanism,” and “a Christian humanism.”<sup>3</sup> It concerns an integral concept of man which takes into consideration all aspects of his personality both the bodily and spiritual elements, his temporal and eternal vocation, personal richness in which man surpasses other creatures and the necessity to enter the surrounding world. It is essentially a theocentric humanism<sup>4</sup> which J. Maritain defines as the humanism of the Incarnation.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective God constitutes the centre of man endowed with freedom and supported by grace, the man who is both a sinner and a redeemed child of God.<sup>6</sup> Integral humanism is based on the premise that God is the centre of reality and He decides about the greatness of man. Based on this approach man is open to God and finds the essential source of his greatness and dignity in this relationship.

The opposition to integral humanism is the anthropocentric humanism which has been prevalent since the Enlightenment. It is characterized by a naturalistic concept of man and his freedom. Man is the centre of himself and everything that surrounds him. He justifies and explains himself and is the ultimate measure of all things. This Enlightenment concept which glorifies a human being demands the dethronement of God. It purports the complete immanence of man in his earthly existence and everything that can be experimentally explained. As J. Maritain observes the aim is “to create a man who would be god of history and his titanic dynamism without any timeless attribute.”<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI refers to these questions and states that “the greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God. ... On the other hand, ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today. *A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism.*

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<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Participants in the Twelfth Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20060427\\_social-sciences.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20060427_social-sciences.html).

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, art. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Humanizm integralny* (Londyn: Katolicki Ośrodek Wydawniczy Veritas, 1960), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Religia i kultura* (Warszawa: Fronda, 2008) 61.

<sup>6</sup> Maritain, *Humanizm...*, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Maritain, *Humanizm...*, 51.

Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and *ethos* — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment.”<sup>8</sup> Thus a modern man is convinced of his self-sufficiency. As a result of the original sin he is inclined to the selfish isolation. He believes he can “successfully eliminate the evil present in history”<sup>9</sup> and alone build the “kingdom of God” on earth. However, it will always be “the kingdom of man with all the limitations proper to our human nature.”<sup>10</sup> The consequence of sin is the imperfection of structures, institutions and solutions in our social life. Earthly life will always be somehow disappointing and imperfect.

Thus many contemporary problems of social life can be limited to the question about the concept of man which is the foundation of the social order. This problem may be summarized in the question whether man is “the product of his own labours or whether he depends on God.”<sup>11</sup> Modern man is presented with a dramatic choice between reason open to transcendence and reason closed within immanence. The Pope evidently refers to the perspective in which reason and faith support each other and bring freedom for man.<sup>12</sup> He stands for a theocentric humanism.

## 2. The Essence of Education

In the humanist social order a human being holds a central place. Similarly, in the process of education young people and their activity play an important role. Maritain observes that “the fundamental factor, namely the primary dynamic factor or the primary propulsive force in education is the internal vibrant source in the student. The teacher or educator is only a secondary dynamic factor, however, authentically causative fulfilling an auxiliary role.”<sup>13</sup> Thus education is based on the meeting of two people: the student and the educator, on the testimony of faith, authentic example

<sup>8</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, art. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas...*, art. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, art. 35. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html).

<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas...*, art. 74.

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas...*, art. 17, 74.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Dynamika wychowania”, trans. A. Ziernicki, *Znak* no. 9 (1991): 29.

of hope, love and values that originate from it. “It is an authentic meeting with another person who should first be listened to and understood.”<sup>14</sup> The Pope presents this question in a similar way emphasizing the subjective character of the human person who cannot be exploited as a means for the benefit of others and their interests. The human person is a good in himself.<sup>15</sup> Thus the active attitude of young people and their subjectivity in the entire process of formation is very important. Integral education should encompass all aspects of human personality, namely the development in the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, family and religious dimension.<sup>16</sup> According to J. Maritain, what is significant in this process is “the concentration on internal depths of personality and its subconscious spiritual dynamics, in other words, taking care of the inside and the interiorization of educational influence.”<sup>17</sup> Thus in the process of education the personality of a young individual should be formed in such a way that they will free themselves from only sensual desires as well as behavior and reactions which originate from instincts. What is essential here is the development of the spiritual dimension. Man should develop towards self-control and independence- characteristic of spirit thanks to which we exist. The essence of education is thus liberation, formation and education of an individual person and not only the liberation of the material ego. Man should develop to achieve individual personality which is not a copy but the original, and become a unique person. The focus on the individual, on the material ego frequently far from asceticism, renunciation and discipline leads to dispersion and disintegration of personality. The aim is to form the personality and shape what is spiritual.<sup>18</sup> It can be achieved by passing values, providing role models and supporting the motivation of young people.

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<sup>14</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops of Poland on their “Ad limina” Visit, Saturday, 26 November 2005*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/november/documents/hf\\_ben\\_xvi\\_spe\\_20051126\\_adlimina-polonia.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/november/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051126_adlimina-polonia.html).

<sup>15</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI during the celebration of First Vespers of the First Sunday of Advent, Saturday, 27 November 2010*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20101127-vespri-avvento.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20101127-vespri-avvento.html).

<sup>16</sup> Wiesław Łużyński, *Struktury pośrednie pomiędzy jednostką ludzką a państwem w nauczaniu Kościoła* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2008), 156.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Dynamika wychowania”, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Dynamika ...”, 30 – 32.

### 3. Modern Crisis of Education

In referring to the question of education Benedict XVI underlines its visible crisis. According to him, the source of this crisis is, among others, the failures experienced by parents and teachers. Frequently the blame is put on young people. Consequently, the lack of passing values results in the escalation of conflict between generations and even more serious educational difficulties as parents, teachers and educators yield to the temptation to giving up. Facing difficulties they frequently decide to abandon their important task and vocation. Another problem is the lack of understanding of their vocation by parents and educators who often lack courage to realize their responsible mission and instead adopt the attitude of a friend and peer or withdraw without undertaking the tasks of a teacher and educator. Frequently they even try to ingratiate themselves with their students thus losing authority and respect. In this situation it is very difficult to lead a young person towards mature humanity. Educational difficulties are further exacerbated by a modern cultural context marked with moral relativism. There are too many doubts concerning values, principles of behavior, life goals and decisions which should last all life. Both parents and teachers become more and more insecure how to lead young people and where to turn for guidance. Culture and mentality marked with the lack of faith in the value of the human person, the very meaning of truth and good, and ultimately in the goodness of life do not guarantee any support and blur points of reference. In the modern axiological chaos it is difficult to offer the young generation certain and lasting foundations on which to build life itself.<sup>19</sup> According to the Pope, all these problems testify to the serious crisis of education.

### 4. Personal relationship with God as an important element of human growth

An important element of the Christian concept of man is the call for a constant growth. Man is a creature who is “on the move”; he is a con-

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<sup>19</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of his Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20080121\\_educazione.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html); The speech on the presentation to the diocese of Rome of *The Letter on the Urgent Task of Education*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/february/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080223\\_dioecesi-roma.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080223_dioecesi-roma.html). Michał OLEKSOWICZ, *In search of the person. Towards a real revolution*, *Scientia et Fides* 1(2018), 230.



tinual pilgrim. The human nature is full of potentiality which requires actualization being full of tension and motion.<sup>20</sup> Man always strives for more. Before he achieves his ultimate form he has to experience many stages, transformations and renewals.<sup>21</sup> His mind is directed towards the search for truth and all partial truths are not able to quench this desire. Man strives for the absolute truth and his will is directed towards the realization of good. Achieving partial goods will not satisfy the human longing for ever-lasting and eternal good. Thus man will seek God who is the absolute good.<sup>22</sup> Limiting oneself to what is temporal, currently available and satisfies only current needs is not an authentically human ambition and goal. Man endeavors to reach what is never-ending, eternal and seeks the Absolute. This is how J. Maritain expresses this human longing: “although it is true that a human heart will always suffer the dearth of happiness it is not due to that fact that on earth man is destined to experience stagnation of a pitiful and narrow existence but due to the fact that life even the fullest and most abundant will always be too small in comparison to the capacity of his heart.”<sup>23</sup> Thus an essential element of integral education is a personal relationship with God. This relationship creates for people a virtually unlimited potential to grow.

Given socio-cultural transformations in the modern world and a clear crisis of education Benedict suggests the concept of growth and education in the spirit of Christian humanism where the personal relationship with God is central in human life. It is an essential element stimulating the growth of the human person. The relationship of man with the Father encompasses and directs the entire existence. In this relationship a great human potential can be unleashed and in this relationship people can experience what is truly beautiful, good and liberating.<sup>24</sup> Faith transforms human life and, above all, frees from the immanence and closing in what is temporal. Faith determines the goal and meaning of existence. Human beings live because they know they

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<sup>20</sup> Łużyński, *Struktury pośrednie...*, 36 – 39; Wiesław ŁUŻYŃSKI, *Chrześcijańskie braterstwo w świeckim społeczeństwie : refleksje na podstawie nauczania Josefa Ratzingera*, *Teologia i Człowiek* 45(2019), 75 – 77, 85.

<sup>21</sup> Maritain, *Humanizm ...*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Zofia J. Zdybicka, *Religia i religioznawstwo* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1988), 29 – 30.

<sup>23</sup> Maritain, *Humanizm ...*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Homily of His Holiness for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 13th January 2008*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20080113\\_battesimo.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080113_battesimo.html); Monika SZETELA, Grzegorz OSIŃSKI, *The concept of “dialogical soul” by Joseph Ratzinger against the latest concepts of neuroscience*, *Scientia et Fides* 2(2017), 207 – 209.

are loved by the Creator and this love enables them to love other people. They can have hope for the future because they know that God calls them to realize their vocation which they are invited by the Lord.<sup>25</sup> Faith involves our whole self: feelings, heart, intelligence, will, corporeity, emotions and human relationships. The reference to the Creator tears us away from what is here and now and directs us towards “our future destiny, reveals to us the truth of our vocation in history, the meaning of life, the pleasure of being pilgrims bound for the heavenly Homeland.”<sup>26</sup> The perspectives open to people faith reach the eternity. The faith in God who is love shows that only in love we can be fully human.<sup>27</sup> Modern people view themselves as fully mature, independent and autonomous. The Pope affirms that “this autonomy is a lie: it is an ontological falsehood because man does not exist on his own and for himself.”<sup>28</sup> According to Benedict XVI, the full realization of human personality takes place when people transcend their human horizons and enter the relationship with the divine “You.” In this encounter people are able to embrace selfless life, love, practicing solidarity and Christian brotherhood. Thus the fullness of humanity can be formed in families and communities where the love of God expressed as a gift can be experienced. Young people can be educated to live such life in relationships of love, sensitivity, empathy, compassion and disinterested service to others. Indeed, God reveals the fullness of humanity to people.<sup>29</sup> In this encounter man discovers God as the Father who receives him and gives him hope and trust.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI, *Veneration of the Holy Shroud. Meditation of His Holiness*, 2 May 2010. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20100502\\_meditazione-torino.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100502_meditazione-torino.html); Wiesław ŁUŻYŃSKI, *The “Baptised Nation”: the inalienability of Christianity in the culture of the Polish nation: reflections based on the teaching of cardinal Stefan Wyszyński*, Bogoslovska smotra, Vol. 88 no. 4, 1066 – 1067.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience, 17 October 2012*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121017.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121017.html).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *General Audience, 17 October 2012...*

<sup>28</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Homily of His Holiness. Eucharistic Celebration with Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission 15 April 2010*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100415\\_pcb.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100415_pcb.html).

<sup>29</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience, 17 October 2012*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121017.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121017.html); *General Audience Castel Gandolfo 27 June 2012*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20120627.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120627.html).

<sup>30</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience, 24 October 2012*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20121024.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121024.html).

## 5. The conditions of authentic education

Benedict XVI does not limit himself to formulating the general indications on education. An integral concept of the human person results in a concrete life practice which includes a certain model of education. The Pope teaches about the need for “an integral formation of the person which includes the moral and spiritual dimension”<sup>31</sup> and the integral growth.<sup>32</sup> Benedict XVI formulates several conditions of authentic education which may serve as guidance for everyone involved in the formation of the young generation.

The first condition is the experience of closeness and trust which are born from love. This is the first and fundamental experience of a child from its parents. Growing up in a healthy and loving environment children can understand that their birth is not an accident but the result of love and God’s plan.<sup>33</sup> Growing in love is a truly human development. Parents need to give a part of themselves and it is only in this way that they can help young people overcome selfishness and turn to other people. The love of parents helps children overcome various forms of egoism.<sup>34</sup>

In an authentic education the question about truth is essential. This great desire to know and understand the reality is expressed in constant questions and demands for explanation. Thus education should not be reduced to providing notions and information. In this process the respect for truth should be formed which will be a guide in life for a child.<sup>35</sup> Truth liberates from illusions of life, wrong decisions and mistakes. It allows us to choose the right direction of life, is a guidance in important life choices, makes it possible to

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<sup>31</sup> Benedict XVI, *Angelus, 1 January 2012*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_ang\\_20120101\\_world-day-peace.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20120101_world-day-peace.html).

<sup>32</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Homily of His Holiness during the First Vespers of the First Sunday of Advent, 27, November 2010*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20101127\\_vespri-avvento.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20101127_vespri-avvento.html).

<sup>33</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20080121\\_educazione.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html).

<sup>34</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

<sup>35</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

go through life with the feeling of self-confidence and safety.

In the process of education, according to the Pope, we must face a difficult problem of suffering as it is also part of the truth of our life. In case of children and young people it is necessary to treat the issue of suffering in an open and delicate manner and to introduce them to the meaning of suffering. Protecting the youngest from every difficulty and experience of suffering, we risk raising brittle and ungenerous people, as they will become helpless in the face of obstacles which will inevitably appear in their lives. They will not be capable of love, which corresponds to the capacity for suffering and for suffering together.<sup>36</sup> In the process of education the difficulty of confronting young people with suffering should be undertaken. This is the only way to teach the young generation compassion, the ability of accompanying people in need as well as the sensitivity towards other people. Abandoning this experience would lead to the formation of a cruel and inhuman society, insensitive to the weak and those who require care. By rejecting suffering, we reject the suffering person. Consequently, we are deprived of the possibility to practice love. Education without the experience of suffering will not lead to the fullness of humanity.<sup>37</sup>

Benedict XVI also emphasizes the most delicate task of education, namely finding the right balance between discipline and freedom. The character is not formed properly if no standard of behavior and rule of life are applied even in small daily matters. This is the only way to form attitudes, virtues and lifestyles which will help the young person to be ready to face the trials that will come in the future. Education is based on the encounter of the freedom of the young person with the freedom of the teacher. A successful educational relationship should lead to teaching the correct and responsible use of freedom. The teacher must accept that as the child gradually grows up and becomes an adolescent and then a young person who will need more and more freedom. There is a certain risk of freedom which the teacher must accept. At the same time, it is important to be constantly attentive in order to help young people. However, what teachers must never do is to support the young when they err, to pretend they do not see the errors, or worse, to participate in them.<sup>38</sup> Thus “the rod and whip” are surely the wrong methods

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<sup>36</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of his Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

<sup>37</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, art. 37-39.

<sup>38</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of his Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*. Accessed May 30, 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20080121\\_educazione.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html).

of education. On the other hand, it would be the bankruptcy of education to burden the children alone with responsibility for their personal development. The teacher should be the authority for students in guiding towards freedom.<sup>39</sup>

Authentic education requires authoritativeness, which is easy to achieve. It is acquired gradually thanks to experience and competence but, above all, with the coherence of one's own life and faithfulness to values. It is the fruit of life filled with love and personal involvement in the realization of this goodness. The educator should thus be a witness of values, especially truth and goodness. He too, of course, is fragile and can be mistaken, but he will constantly endeavor to be in tune with his mission. This is the way to build the true authoritativeness.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, education requires responsibility from all the participants of this process. It should be exhibited by educators in particular, who have to be diligently engaged in their tasks. Students gaining maturity should also take responsibility for themselves and others.<sup>41</sup> Benedict XVI views the problem of responsibility in a broader perspective indicating not only personal responsibility but also a responsibility which we share as citizens. A certain educational climate is created in society through adopting a particular lifestyle. However, society is not an abstraction; it is formed by concrete people. Citizens bring in values, rules and norms which are the essence of their everyday life and thus contribute to the creation of a certain educational climate which might be positive or negative. Benedict stresses the responsibility of all the participants of social life to create a more favorable context for education and introduce values which serve the authentic growth of younger generations.<sup>42</sup>

Among the conditions of authentic education the Pope also mentions the climate of hope resulting from faith. He emphasizes that hope is "the soul of education."<sup>43</sup> Nowadays, we experience a crisis of trust in life which appears to be the most serious root and reason for the modern crisis of education. Benedict XVI encourages to have hope in God. The Pope emphasizes that

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<sup>39</sup> Maritain, "Dynamika wychowania", 30.

<sup>40</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of his Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*.

<sup>41</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

<sup>42</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

<sup>43</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

“He alone is the hope that withstands every disappointment; his love alone cannot be destroyed by death; his justice and mercy alone can heal injustices and recompense the suffering experienced. Hope that is addressed to God is never hope for oneself alone, it is always also hope for others; it does not isolate us but renders us supportive in goodness and encourages us to educate one another in truth and in love.”<sup>44</sup> Hope that comes from faith allows us to go with trust through life and bravely face challenges that might appear.

### Conclusion

Christian humanism is a broader perspective in the light of which Benedict XVI analyzes the question of education. It is essentially a theocentric humanism. Its opposite is the anthropocentric humanism which locks the man within the horizon of earthly existence. Nowadays we may observe a clear crisis of education which is manifested by educational failures of parents and teachers, a wrong understanding of the mission of educators and finally by an axiological loss. In this situation the Pope suggests a Christian vision of growth and education. The relationship with God constitutes the main power stimulating the comprehensive growth of a human person. People are naturally directed towards development and their nature has a potential which demands actualization. However, only through opening to transcendence can this growth achieve its right perspective and direction. In encountering the personal “you” of God people leave their loneliness and turn to Him as He is the only one who can satisfy the longings of their hearts. Education requires specific conditions, namely a student-centered approach, providing the people with the climate of love and acceptance in the family, the awareness of truth, acceptance of suffering as an important element of human life, sensible balance between discipline and freedom. Further conditions of authentic growth are the creation of genuine role models, responsible treatment of education by young people, educators and the whole society and the creation of a the climate of hope originating from the Christian faith. In such conditions a child and young person inspired by parents and educators can aim at a richer humanity at *optimum potentiae* “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

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<sup>44</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Letter of His Holiness to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome...*

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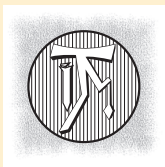
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