EDUCATION AS A PATH TO LOVE: A LEADERSHIP PERCEPTION
OF BENEDICT XVI'S CHALLENGE
TO CATHOLIC EDUCATION

STEFANO DEL BOVE, S.J.
MA, La Sapienza, Rome, 1994
STBach, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 2003
MPhil, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 2005

Mentor
Gerald Cattaro, EdD

Readers
John Elias, EdD
James Conroy, PhD

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

"It is not power, but love that redeems us!" Making this poignant proclamation at the heart of the homily of the mass for the beginning of his pontificate, Benedict XVI (2005g, ¶ 4) invited all Catholics, as well as all men and woman of good will to be open to a great religious challenge. Shortly thereafter, he specified, "This is God’s sign: he himself is love" and added, "Pray for me, that I may learn to love the Lord more and more" (2005g, ¶ 5). This sequence of sentences can be read as a reference to the salvific nature of the divine love, to its being the source of identity within the Church and the object of a pedagogical relationship between God and the human person.

These statements are profoundly emblematic because they distinguish a programmatic act of a newly elected Roman Pontiff, the supreme leader of the largest organized body of any world religion and the oldest living institution, the Roman Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ about two thousand years ago. The Church was established with the assurance that she would endure forever. Hence, the belief in substantial stability through the changes of the human history has upheld the Roman Catholic Church for more than twenty centuries. An echo of this awareness is at least present in another speech given by Benedict XVI at the beginning of his Petrine ministry:

Surprising all my expectations, through the votes of the Venerable Father Cardinals, divine Providence has called me to succeed this great Pope. I am thinking back at this moment to what happened in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi some 2,000 years ago. I seem to hear Peter’s words: “You
are the Christ... the Son of the living God” and the Lord’s solemn affirmation: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (cf. Mt 16: 15–19).
(Benedict XVI, 2005e, ¶ 2.1)

The last passage of this quotation from the Gospel of Matthew is considered the biblical foundation of the potestas clavium (power of the keys). This theological notion is a paradigm of an ecclesiastical form of power, practiced in the supremacy of love.

Catholic education follows the path of the lasting institution it belongs to. Various educational systems developed under the auspices of the Catholic Church, having accomplished their historical role, some disappeared not without having a lasting influence. Catholic education was able and ready to respond to the historical changes with a renewal of her language, her pedagogy and its commitment to knowledge and learning. While Catholic education learns from the recurrent crises of the Church, it never deviated from being an active part of the Church’s sacramental and pastoral activity within the world.

The most popular image of Catholic education is the form of primary schooling, which has grown, since the Renaissance, most especially in the nineteenth century.

The association of Catholic education with the historical processes of: (a) the development of the religious life around the Council of Trent and of the Orders with an explicit mention of education in their rule, (b) the missionary activity that spread education with the Gospel through the entire world, and (c) the exceptional diffusion of the parochial school system in United States that comprised the largest local network of schools of the Roman Catholic Church, resulted in a dramatic growth of
this form of education.

Indeed, Catholic educators provide literacy and basic cultural skills to thousands of local communities and, progressively, are able to give a future, especially to the sons and daughters of the marginalized, oppressed, uneducated immigrants or people who, because of violence and injustice, have been compelled to leave their native place. The life and strenuous service of men like Joseph Calasanz (1556–1648), who founded the religious order of the Piarists devoted to the free instruction of youth and characterized by a special vow of caring for the education of poor children, or women like Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774–1821), the first canonized American saint and founder of the Sisters of Charity, who dedicated herself to the apostolate of helping the poor and running parochial schools, exemplifies this ideal of Catholic education. Indeed, Catholic education still continues this kind of service to humanity according to the needs of the current times. Significant examples are networks of popular education such as Nativity San Miguel Schools and Cristo Rey High Schools.

However, Catholic education is much more than a global policy for literacy, it is a form of engagement between society, culture, and Church (D’Orsa, 2002; Buetow, 1988), and an authoritative voice on the crucial matter of conveying a cultural tradition to the younger generations and preparing them for a critical reading of the contemporary world so as to deal with its complexity. As the quality and the number of national and international alumni/ae associations show, Catholic education continues its influence in forging leaders and in shaping cultures according to the highest values and ideals.
The Catholic Church performed its mission of education since her beginning through the life and work of countless heroes and saints, who structured the Western civilizations and educated its leaders. In the first centuries of the Christian era, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 216) described education as God's will and a program for human salvation which focused the pedagogical relationship between Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, and men and women (Osborn, 2005). Reflecting about the truth within us, Augustine of Hippo (354–430) elaborated his doctrine of the interior teacher, Christ, who guides students to an authentic use of the language that lead them to discover the realities and to reduce them to charity (Paffenroth & Hughes, 2000).

During the Middle Ages, Christianity was enriched by the activity of compelling personalities and talented educators. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) gave traditional theology new resources using dialectical conversations that led his students to intellectual insight and to learning that elevated their minds to the ultimate reality of things; he believed that reason leads to results that are in full conformity with the doctrines of the Christian faith (Hogg, 2004). Following a similar path of inquiry, Peter Abelard (1079–1142) stated the consistency of faith and revelation as the beginning of belief and he related the dignity of human reason to its being made in God’s image; his school in Paris also welcomed lay people, great progress for a time where culture and education were reserved to ecclesiastics and monks (Luscombe, 1969). Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217–1274) devoted his entire life to the intellectual formation of others, aware of the ethical and religious roots of education; he posited the image of pilgrimage as way of knowledge and as a path to
God (Quinn, 1973). Almost all these great figures had a holistic approach to culture and education. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was the one who was able to employ all the pedagogical methods of his times and to offer a complete account of existing knowledge and wisdom, placing his educational thought in full theological perspective (Donohue, 1968).

The Renaissance was a time of renewal for Catholic education too. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), with his life and work gave an example of the potentialities of Catholic education, illustrating the proper relation of academic learning, especially ancient classics, to Christian piety, and reflecting on the method and aims of Catholic education and her original didactic (Woodward, 1971). Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) founded the Jesuits and dedicated the last part of his life to building and funding their network of schools didactically based on the Ratio Studiorum (formally edited only in 1599) and enabled them to connect in an innovative way the ideals of pietas and eruditio (devotion and knowledge) in order to found a new pedagogical tradition (Kolvenbach, 2004).

Catholic education was able to go beyond the crisis created by the French Revolution and during the Restoration: Catholic schools and institutions flourished again. In these times, Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855) applied the principles of his sophisticated philosophy to the reform of contemporary culture and of the Catholic Church; he focused the dynamics between the mystery of divine charity and the works inspired by her; he anticipated several modern philosophers and social scientists with his general theory of adapting education to the needs of the growing mind and in the importance he attached to instinct, feeling, and play (Franck, 1973).
Catholic education is inspired by the work tenaciously performed by protagonists of the modern missionary activity of the Church such as Daniele Comboni (1831–1881), with his *Plan for the Rebirth of Africa* (1864) (Gilli, 1979), Jules Monchanin (1895–1957) and Henri Le Saux (1910–1973), with their immersion in Indian philosophy and spirituality, Louis Massignon (1883–1962) with his wise openness to Islam and deep knowledge of that civilization (Craig, 2004).

The development of Catholic education is due also to many scholars whose academic work enriched those pedagogies inspired by the Catholic thought. Among the most authoritative in different linguistic areas are: Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), who explored the philosophical and the theological foundations of education in relationship to a new Christian Humanism inspired by the New Thomistic Tradition (McInerny, 1999); Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), who carefully related education to the process of the human understanding, self-awareness and action for change (Crowe, 1985); Gesualdo Nosengo (1906–1968), whose pedagogical thought and didactic were centered on the teaching as vocation and mission following Jesus the teacher; and Paulo Freire (1921–1997) who stressed the potential meaning of education for the marginalized and oppressed, promoted a liberating education (Freire, 1984) based on the struggle to remove the barriers that prevent persons from reaching critical consciousness and self-transcendence and from seeking for knowledge as openness to emerging truth (Elias, 1999).

However, Catholic education is not just a great living tradition of saints, heroes, scholars, men and women committed to its mission; it is also an international scheme that is inspired, encouraged and confirmed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy.
and especially by the Roman pontiffs. For centuries, popes have developed authoritative teachings about education and instituted and even funded prestigious universities. In the last three centuries, encyclicals, among the many kinds of papal documents, have progressively become the most common one. Ever since Benedict XIV, after his election in 1740, popes have issued a large number of these documents covering all the aspects of Catholic doctrine (Carlen, 1981).

Indeed, occasional references to education in the broad sense exist in several of these documents issued for other pastoral occasion as, *Sertum Laetitiae* (The crown of joy) written by Pius XII (1939) on the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the hierarchy in the United States, or the more famous *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and teacher) of John XXIII (1961) and *Ecclesiam Suam* (His Church) of Paul VI (1964).

A more systematic reflection and teaching about education began with documents issued to celebrate particular historical events or eminent figures of Catholic education, such as *Optime Noscitis* (You know well) where Pius IX (1854) developed the project of a Catholic university of Ireland or *Affari Vos* (Your good office), where Leo XIII (1897a) took position on the Manitoba school question; in the same year, Leo XIII (1897b) wrote a message for the celebration of St. Peter Canisius *Militantis Ecclesiae* (The militant church), where he reflected about culture and formation. Pius XII (1951) took part in many issues related to education; it is important here to mention at least his address to the First International Congress of Teaching Sisters and known as *Counsel to Teaching Sisters*.

Before Leo XIII's (1885) *Spectata Fide* (Proved fidelity), Pius XI's (1929) *Divini Illius Magistri* (That divine Master) and the Vatican II's declaration
In short, through the ages and within different civilizations, Catholic education remains the expression of "the duty and right of educating [which] belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life" (Code of canon law, 1983, can. 794.1).

Today, Roman Catholic Education, as a network of schools and universities, is questioned in a world characterized by three major challenges to the Church: (a) a new and aggressive secularization aided by globalization and hostile to traditional faith, (b) the religious competition between Islam and Catholicism, and (c) the revolutions in biotechnologies and genetic engineering and the moral dilemmas connected with them. (Gibson, 2006, p. 78)

Cardinal Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, connects secularization with a peculiar use of the reason that conditioned the more recent European history, as he stressed in a speech given in Subiaco (Italy), the day before John Paul II’s death:

And in the wake of this form of rationality, Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner unknown before now to humanity, excludes God from the public conscience, either by denying him altogether, or by judging that his existence is not demonstrable, uncertain and, therefore, belonging to the realm of subjective choices, something, in any case, irrelevant to public life. . . . If Christianity, on one hand, has found its most effective form in Europe, it is necessary, on the other hand, to say that in Europe a culture has developed that constitutes the absolutely most radical contradiction not only of Christianity, but of the religious and moral traditions of humanity. (Ratzinger, 2005b, ¶¶ 14–17)

This notion is specified by abundant literature; in a recent study about Catholic education, Gerald Grace (2002) affirms that, "While secularization changes
intellectual culture and power relations, it also operates to affect the world view of many individuals so that religious concepts, religious discourse and religious sensitivities are simply irrelevant to the everyday business of life” (p. 11).

An interesting correspondence and a public conversation between Joseph Ratzinger, at that time prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Marcello Pera, a well known philosopher and, at that time, president of the Italian Senate, took place in Rome in 2004. This reflection (Ratzinger & Pera, 2006) placed the spiritual roots of Europe, relativism, and the particular relationship between Catholicism and Islam in the context of the Western debate about freedom. Ratzinger said:

To highlight one issue that is fundamental to all cultures: respect for that which another group holds sacred, especially respect for the sacred in the highest sense, for God, which one can reasonably expect to find even among those who are not willing to believe in God. When this respect is violated in a society, something essential is lost. In our contemporary society, thank goodness, anyone who dishonors the faith of Israel, its image of God, or its great figure must pay a fine. The same holds true for anyone who dishonors the Koran and the conviction of Islam. But when it comes to Jesus Christ and that which is sacred to Christians, instead, freedom of speech becomes the supreme good. (p. 78)

On the same occasion, Ratzinger placed the Church position about life in the larger debate about human dignity:

Today almost no one would openly deny the primacy of human dignity and basic human rights over any political decision. . . . However, in the concrete sphere of the supposed progress of medicine, there are very real threats to these values. If one considers cloning, the storing of human fetuses for research purposes and for organ harvesting, and the whole field of genetic manipulation, no one can fail to have noticed the threat represented by the slow erosion of the human dignity. The situation is only made worse by the increased trafficking in human beings, new forms of slavery, and trafficking in human organs for the sake of transplants. To justify such unjustifiable means, “good ends” are cited repeatedly. (p.75–76)
Another matter must be added to these three topics of the discussion to complete the list of the issues about which Benedict XVI is particularly sensitive. This topic was paradigmatically stated by him when, as Cardinal Ratzinger (2005a), he presided over the Mass pro eligendo romano pontifice (for the election of the Roman pontiff):

Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be “tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine,” seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires. (¶ 11)

More challenges for the Roman Catholic Church come from the perception that media have of her internal situation and that can be summarized as, “Dogged by scandal and controversy in North America, debilitated by religious indifference in Europe, booming in Africa, buckling to protestant competition in Latin America, an overwhelmed minority in Asia” (Gibson, 2006, p. 2).

The Roman Catholic Church seems to be facing a significant choice. Narrowing the field to education, she can interiorize the crisis and simply acknowledge that her institutions are compelled, almost everywhere in the world, to make drastic compromises with this secular mentality. Moreover, this negotiation often can lead to a point where the attribute Catholic seems to indicate just a remote inspiration of a school or a university, pertaining more to their historical origins than to their real identity (Gallin, 2000).

Alternatively, the Roman Catholic Church can make the choice of considering the characteristics of the contemporary world as potential grounds for a development of her own educational institutions. Therefore, with patience and foresight, courage
and humility, she can continue to hear God’s voice and be alert in discernment because, “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (Gaudium et Spes, The joys and the hopes, 1965, ¶4). In other words, secularism, relativism, the confrontation among different civilizations, the new awareness of freedom and of human rights, the progress in science and technology can awaken to a journey towards the high goal of achieving the new evangelization. The Roman Catholic Church can renew its mission in the awareness that “The Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind” (Gravissimum Educationis, 1965, ¶8).

George Weigel (1999) recently made a comparison between the situation of Catholicism at the beginning of last century and after the long pontificate of John Paul II; he shows how the situation grew so much that, for the first time in history, it is possible to state:

Roman Catholicism is now a vastly complex religious community of one billion adherents, more than 17 per cent of the world’s population, living virtually in every country on the planet. . . . That community of faith, worship and charity is served by some 4,300 bishops, 404,505 priests, 848,500 women religious, and 428,000 mission catechists, who are organized into 2,842 dioceses. (p.20)

And with a special regard to education he highlights that:

The Church sponsors some 172,800 educational institutions around the world (running the gamut from simple village preschools to distinguished research universities) and operates some 105,100 social-welfare institutions—hospitals, dispensaries, and clinics, homes for the old ill, and handicapped, orphanages, nurseries, and marriage counseling centers. In Third World settings, those institutions are sometimes a region’s sole lifeline to modern education and medicine. (p.20)

At this point some features that motivate this study already have been
described: (a) the recent developments of the Catholic Church both as institution and as community of faithful; (b) the role that Catholic education, with her unique legacy, can play in the current world; (c) the increasing complexity of the world that challenges the approach of the Roman Catholic Church to accomplish her mission; (d) the policy of Benedict XVI, at the beginning of his pontificate, who seems to develop the previous three issues within a theology and pedagogy of the Divine Love.

Consequently, this research can be an opportunity to show what makes Catholic education today a significant presence within all cultures and a prophetic witness among nations.

The Pontificate of Benedict XVI

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was elected Roman Pontiff in the first conclave of the third millennium, after a life devoted to the service of the Church in many roles: as professor of theology, as bishop, as head of the Congregation of the Faith, and more recently as dean of the College of Cardinals. During all these years and from such positions he was able to develop a worldwide vision of the Church as a global institution.

Whether or not a new pope retains traits of his old self is an interesting question. Becoming pope meant that Cardinal Ratzinger also had to face the difficult duty of dealing with the enormous legacy of John Paul II. A new pope is a new creation; even if an individual being can maintain many of the traits of his national identity, cultural and academic background, he experiences the complete institutionalization of his personality.

A Pope can issue new documents and make pronouncements and decisions
that alter the leadership and governance of the organization. Hence, a prominent issue is how this change in such a high position is affecting and will affect in the future the policy of the Church and Catholic education. In this study this delicate transition will be the object of a careful analysis. Among the guidelines of Benedict XVI’s teaching as pastor of the universal Church, it is possible to stress at least two broad issues that have a special influence on education: (a) Benedict XVI’s vision of the Council particularly expressed on the occasion of the anniversary of *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965); (b) the publication of his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d).

In a recent allocution to the Roman Curia, Benedict XVI described the interpretation of Vatican II as the process within which the refounding of the Church could take place. He defined the proper way to read the Council documents in the light of a “hermeneutic of reform” as a synthesis of faithfulness to the tradition and the dynamic of quest; in this sense the effects of this reading will be to make the Council increasingly a great force for the perennial renewal of the Church (2005a, ¶43).

It is possible to identify in the deliberations of the Council all the conditions of a true Church refounding process as, “the ongoing process whereby Gospel values are applied to the most urgent, non ephemeral needs of today, under the inspiration of persons who see and can make it happen” (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 22).

The awareness of some post–Vatican II Catholic theologies makes Benedict XVI stay open to the dialectic between the notion, expressed by French term, *ressourcement* and the notion, expressed by the Italian term, *aggiornamento*. They are two complementary aspects of the renewal promoted at the Second Vatican Council,
first, a return to the original sources of tradition and second, a movement towards modernizing tradition. In the years following the Council, these terms began to be seen as distinct terms identifying different views of the Council itself (Imbelli, 2006). This seems to be an example of the “hermeneutic of the rupture” that Benedict XVI suggests avoiding if we want true and consistent change within the Church.

On Sunday, October 30, 2005, the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Paul VI and the Conciliar Fathers signing five documents of Vatican II, Pope Benedict XVI (2005c) stated in the message before the traditional prayer of the Angelus:

The Church has always been dedicated to the education of young people, recognized by the Council as something of ‘paramount importance’ for both the life of men and women and for social progress. Today too, in an era of global communication, the Ecclesial Community perceives the importance of an educational system that recognizes the primacy of man as a person, open to truth and to good. Parents are the primary and principal educators and are assisted by civil society in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The Church, to whom Christ entrusted the duty to proclaim the ‘way of salvation’, feels she has a special educational responsibility. In different ways, she seeks to fulfill this mission: in families, in the parish, through associations, movements and groups of formation and of evangelical commitment and, in a specific way, in schools, institutes of advanced studies and in universities. (fflf 5–7)

In this passage of his speech, the Pope called attention to some crucial points of the Catholic vision on education as they were developed in the declaration Gravissimum Educationis. They are: (a) the importance that education has for the Roman Catholic Church; (b) the definition of the educational responsibility as mission; (c) a mode of collaboration between family, Church and civil society in performing the educational function as a specific challenge for our era of global communication; (d) the original and specific idea of the primacy of the person. On the same occasion, Benedict XVI invited the believers in Christ to take up again in their
Education is a process that begins in the family and gradually involves the whole civil society, also, in the form of the right and duty of the state to provide equal educational opportunities.

Moreover, education is a form of true love as it is connected with the seeking of justice through charitable activity and the work of mercy. Therefore, in its most fundamental meaning, education is a participation in the missionary love of Jesus Christ in anticipation of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To understand and communicate the nature, the foundations and the purpose of Catholic education is an exercise of the right use of reason in its correct relationship with faith. The synthesis between truth and love is the very living core of Catholic culture and of the educational process that builds, cultivates, and transmits it. This inner dynamic inspires a concrete existential path, gradual and progressive, that can be defined as the apostolate of intellectual charity; this apostolate is a real contribution to the growth of the civilization of love.

The publication of the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d), was the first in the entire history of the Church to focus on the theme of love, allowed placing the Catholic approach to education in an innovative context. The document doesn’t directly discuss education and only a few passages are directly related to it. However, *Deus Caritas Est* gives an interesting perspective on love as part of the true nature of education and on how it might be viewed as a tangible form of this love. Moreover, this original theological emphasis on love offers researchers in
Catholic education the occasion to explore possible new configurations of Catholic educational philosophy and policy.

Therefore, this study intends to describe how, according to Benedict XVI’s teaching, Catholic education may be more clearly defined by its vocation to be a form of a specific kind of love, and how it can better contribute to a quality presence and a faith witness of the Roman Catholic Church among different people, nations, cultures, and civilizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of the theological notion of love-caritas-agape, as it is developed by Benedict XVI, and to present it as focal source of a renewed definition of Catholic education.

The study also intends to explain the potential changes that a renewed definition could bring in terms of policy and governance of the Catholic educational network within the contemporary cultural, political and religious arena.

This researcher’s study will be the fruit of a qualitative investigation that articulates and strengthens the foundations of Catholic education through methods of content analysis of selected works of Joseph Ratzinger, as well as of the principal, authentic, official and public documents issued by Benedict XVI, directly or through the departments of the Roman Curia. This analysis aims to show how a specific theological notion of love (a) is a compendium of many themes of Benedict XVI’s teaching, (b) expresses them in a coincise and highly communicative form, and (c) can powerfully affect the definition of Catholic education, its policy and its governance. Moreover, the findings of this analysis will be confirmed by interviews
Significance of the Study

Within a comparative perspective, this investigation takes place in the fields of Catholic Studies and International Education. The project's potential contribution to the theory in these fields is to make clear the specific character and the quasi-sacramental nature of Catholic education. A theological reflection on the pedagogical essence of love and a specific and careful attempt to relate the definition of the educational mission and identity of Catholic education to the teaching on love of Pope Benedict XVI may be a powerful means to reach this goal.

This study is not only designed to develop the complexity and depth of theoretical foundations of Catholic Education, but also intends to argue for the presence of Catholic schools, colleges, universities, and other educational agencies (a) as a gift to all nations, (b) as local agents of service and solidarity, (c) as a global catalyst of a culture of peace and justice. Therefore, the potential contribution of this study to the educational policy and governance of the Roman Catholic educational system is to increase the capacity of the Church to develop a distinctive worldwide leadership (Hunt, Oldenski, & Wallace, 2000) and to be an influential presence in the international community.

While Catholic education has a worldwide presence, it is variously related to the history, culture and sociopolitical situation of different civilizations. For centuries within Western civilization education was solely identified with Christian education. Today, the Catholic Church is refounding its educational presence through a positive approach to a changing world, becoming increasingly aware of her distinctive
presence among many others educational systems. Therefore, the outcomes of this study might interest three different kind of socio-political areas where there are Catholic educational institutions (a) countries where Catholicism is still a dominant presence (i.e., Western Europe and Latin America); (b) countries where Christianity plays an important role but Catholics are present among many other denominations (i.e., Eastern Europe, North America and Australia, parts of Africa); (c) and countries where Christians are a minority (i.e., Asia and North Africa).

Therefore, this study aims to strengthen the ground for a Catholic model of intercultural education and to improve the pedagogical practice within Catholic educational institutions. Catholic education means to build places and to live day-to-day where the fulfillment of the Church's divine mission—a legacy of values, and a style of tolerant, respectful presence—can support the life of Christian communities as well as give unique help for the development of the most enlightened social, political and cultural expressions of non-Christian civilizations. Catholic Education is a vehicle of dialogue and pluralism. In other words:

From a Christian viewpoint, intercultural education is essentially based on the relational model that is open to reciprocity. In the same way as happens with people, cultures also develop through the typical dynamisms of dialogue and communion. Dialogue between cultures emerges as an intrinsic demand of human nature itself, as well as of culture. It is dialogue which protects the distinctiveness of cultures as historical and creative expressions of the underlying unity of the human family, and which sustains understanding and communion between them. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002, ¶ 66)

General Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the theological notion of love-caritas-
agape, as it is developed in the teachings of Benedict XVI?

2. What is the contribution of this form of love to the definition of the educational mission of the Church and to a philosophy of Catholic education?

3. How can the emphasis on this form of love help Catholic educators to form leaders capable of a critical approach to a culture inured by secularization, relativism, and suspicion of authority and institutions?

4. What are the consequences of a renewed definition of education that stresses the role of love on the identity and the governance of Catholic educational institutions?

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is based on three theoretical underpinnings. The first is Bernard Lonergan’s search for an intellectual vision (Matthews, 2005), for a method for understanding the universal operations of the human mind, and for the connection between these operations and the educational action.

Second, the refounding theory (Arbuckle, 1993) will structure the analysis of the organizational change implied in the challenge of Benedict XVI to the Church and to her educational activity. A particular emphasis will be given to the theological connotation of the refounding process.

Third, the sustainable leadership theory (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) will structure the leadership perception especially through the interviews.

Limitations of the Study

This last section of chapter 1 illustrates the general limitations of the study.
The limitation of the critical literature review will be discussed in chapter 2; furthermore, some limitations of the methodology, especially about the role of the researcher in the organization under study, will find a more accurate definition in chapter 3.

The historical nature of part of the study determined its being open-ended; indeed, some other information or historical events could occur and enrich the articulation of the inquiry, which for that reason has a high degree of flexibility.

This study is largely based on a review of official documents and on interviews with international leaders in Catholic education. Therefore, dominant themes and general trends will be deeply discussed, but it is not possible to include in the inquiry either consequences or the implementation processes at the local level.

The literature about Catholic education has been limited to the time after the Second Vatican Council and to the documents that address the universal Church. The intent is not to explore every single aspect of the magisterial texts. Lastly, while this study presents a universal horizon and a multiplicity of perspectives, it is an expression of a particular vision of the world, typical of the Western higher education milieu.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to locate this doctoral dissertation within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 43). A discussion of critical literature will situate this research in the ongoing discourse about Catholic education and will develop the specific intellectual traditions to which this study is linked. By definition, the field of Catholic education is at the intersection of different domains of knowledge and is inclusive of the canons of such disciplines as the history of the Church, philosophy and theology, canon law, pedagogy and organization theory. Therefore, the complex nature of the problems in this branch of educational studies makes generativity in research more difficult than in other branches of social sciences and the contents of the study a challenging integration of knowledge. According to the articulation of Imbelli’s study about the contemporary Catholic Church (2006), the complexity of the content has to been seen within a specific context and through the processes of communication.

In this study, indeed, this complexity is aggravated by the elaborate dynamics of the international scenario and by the fact that the world of academic research and of the media seem to still follow the standards of Western civilization. In his study about Catholic education, John Donohue (1973) reports a significant statement from the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, when assessing his article on Christianity for the encyclopedia *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (1968-1970):

He remarked at the outset that the hazardous attempt to construct a brief synthesis of this kind can only have European and American civilization in
mind as audience. For our worldwide technology has not yet produced the common cultural outlook that would create a worldwide public for a text everywhere accessible. (p.4)

Even if today, thanks to the information revolution, this situation has changed and the audience could be international, still the scientific standards and the structure of the inquiry have not changed.

Another significant issue for this study is the linguistic choice about the critical literature. Latin still remains the official language of the Roman Catholic Church. Even if Benedict XVI seems to enjoy its use on some special occasion (e.g., for the message he delivered to the Cardinals in the Missa pro Ecclesia, Mass for the Church, celebrated on 20 April, 2005), the time of its systematic use has ended. Moreover, Latin is no longer a language used in academic institutions; therefore, a common literature about Catholic education is only a memory of the past.

Considering the United Nation system as an international paradigm, six official languages are officially used for formal documents and, as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted this regulation too, for international literature about education (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic). However, a consistent and influential literature about Catholic education exists only in the first of these three languages. Additionally, literature in German, Italian, and Portuguese is produced because of the role that Catholic education plays in the history of these countries.

In this study, the review will be narrowed mainly to the English critical literature (including some translations of foreign seminal studies) because it is still the most relevant and influential for theory and research in educational administration
and leadership. Among the many countries that developed this kind of research, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia still maintain a predominant role, even if a considerable written material about Catholic education exists in countries such as Ireland, India, South Africa and New Zealand. Therefore, literature of the Anglo-American tradition will be considered within the last four decades when:

The Catholic school is receiving more and more attention in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, with particular emphasis on the Church as she appears in the Constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. In the Council's Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* it is discussed in the wider sphere of Christian education. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 1)

An exhaustive review of everything previously written about Catholic education is almost impossible because this literature is large as well as highly and conceptually fragmented and framed. Thus, I will focus on a number of key conceptual pieces related to the definition of Catholic education within the Church, contemporary culture and current civil society.

This chapter will be articulated in sections according to the following traits of Catholic education: (a) belonging to a distinctive historical process, (b) rooted in a specific set of philosophical and theological issues, (c) consistent and loyal to the system of law of the Roman Catholic Church, (d) committed to institutional goals and manifesting a number of organizational traits. Therefore this chapter is articulated in four parts that will follow an introductory paragraph; they are: (a) the historical background (Gilson, 1948); (b) philosophical and theological foundations of Catholic education (Elias, 1986); (c) canon law background; (d) the organizational culture and structure of Catholic education.
Catholic Education

Education is related to the origins and development of civilizations and today has reached the most complex realities throughout the world. As Cardinal Zenon Grocholewsky (2002), the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, stated:

The field of education and the school is truly immense: there are more than a billion school-age children with their families, 58 million teachers, let alone non-teaching school personnel. (¶ 4)

As the growing interest in educational topics on the part of the international community shows, the importance of education has become part of a common heritage and of a shared awareness. Indeed, a worldwide view of education was developed through international conferences and global studies. Meetings such as Education for All, Jomtien in 1990; Education and Human Rights, Vienna in 1993; Special Education Needs, Salamanca in 1994; Higher Education, Paris in 1998; Science and Technology, Budapest in 1999; Technical Education, Seoul in 1999; and the World Education Forum, Dakar in 2000, formulated the guidelines for future educational action. Global studies like Faure’s report Learning to Be (1972), the Delors’s report Learning: The Treasure Within (1996) and Mayor’s report A New World (1999) are universally considered milestones of educational literature. However, “This is a global vision of education which, unfortunately, outside the context of official statements, is not concretely accepted” (Grocholewsky, 2002, ¶ 5).

Catholic education is not a world apart. It shares many of these general assumptions and provides a service of public and acknowledged utility. Catholicism brings to education the inspiring contribution of an intellectual tradition (Cernera, & Morgan, 2000; Roche, 2003) and of a cultural heritage which, for centuries, seeks the
integration between faith and learning (Woods, 2005; Hughes, 2005). To understand the real nature of the Catholic school one cannot divorce it from wider modern problems concerning schools in general:

To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic school it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the characteristic features of a school cannot be a Catholic school. (Congregation for Catholic education, 1977, ¶ 25)

Catholic education also benefits from the progress of pedagogical reflection and is open to the contribution of social and natural sciences. Nevertheless, the proprium (specificity) of Catholic education makes unique its contribution to world developments. Indeed, it encourages an integral humanism which finds in Christ its model and its inspiration; Catholic education seeks to develop the inner life of the students and to guide them to good life-choices. Apple, Kenway and Singh (2005) in their study about global education state:

The substantial challenges of creating education policies, pedagogies and politics that are responsive to the imperatives of these times or renovating existing ones are compounded by the changing political economy of education, changing in the production of knowledge, and changing student (and teacher) identities in response to and as an expression of the contemporary transitions in globalization. (p. 13)

The challenge of a pluralistic society, the impact of secularization (Fenn, 2001) brought to its fullest point from various forms of atheism (Pannenberg, 1989; Buckley, 2004), the increasing phenomena of religious fundamentalism (Berger, 1999), makes the matter of mission and identity a priority. In other words, pluralism, secularization, religious fundamentalism induce the Church to reaffirm her mission in education. Thus, she focuses the nature and the distinctive characteristics of her educational institutions and supports the development of a system of education at all
levels. This is the Church’s answer to the total educational needs of young people today.

Catholic education relies on specific doctrines and is enriched by the dialogue with theologians, philosophers and social scientists. Doctrinal authorities are: Scripture, Catholic Tradition (including the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church), and the many forms of Magisterium (Dyer, 1978; Sullivan, 1988, 1996; Maher, 2005). This study will particularly focus on the ordinary teaching of the Roman Pontiff, both direct and indirect (through the Roman congregations). The Congregation for Catholic Education (of Seminaries and Institutes of Study) reached its current form with John Paul II's *Pastor Bonus* (The good Pastor, 1988) and has authority over (a) almost all the institutions devoted to the formation of religious and clergy, (b) all institutions of higher education, either ecclesial or civil dependent on ecclesiastical persons, (c) all schools and educational institutes depending on ecclesiastical authorities.

Cardinal Grocholewsky, on the occasion of the presentation of the document *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* (2002), recapitulates the process of reflection and study that the Congregation has led since the times of the declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*:

In fidelity to this institutional task, in the 70s and 80s the Congregation promoted certain documents for the renewal of Catholic schools and the examination of relevant problems. The first was *The Catholic School*, published 25 years ago (1977). It can be said that the identity of a school that claims to be Catholic was pieced together in this document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982). In 1983, *Educational Guidance in Human Love* was published. The text responded to the need to offer clear guidelines on the topic of sex education, which must include the anthropological and moral as well as biological aspects, combined with pedagogical prudence and collaboration with families. In 1988 the document: *The Religious Dimension*
of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal (1988) [was published] . . . Recently, in 1997, with the approach of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, a circular letter was published entitled The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1998) which reflected on the identity and mission of Catholic schools in the contemporary educational context. (12-14)

Historical Background

This is not the place for an overview of the entire history of Catholic Education. The focus is on some of the crucial dilemmas that influenced its historical development and that make Catholic Education unique.

These dilemmas can be formulated through the following questions: should Catholic education be just a preparation for sacraments or religious instruction? Should Catholic education be reserved to the clergy? Should it promote a renewed form of the scholastic method or a different model of integrated knowledge? Should Catholic education take place only in institutions owned and directly operated by the Church?

Each of these questions was dominant in a certain historical period and found in that time a typical form of answer in the publication of a significant book, in the life of a policy-maker or in the realization of a new form of Catholic school. A typological method of analysis, which Reinhold Niebuhr applied to theology (1951), can sharpen and organize significant aspects of the historical data and be a powerful means of historical clarification.

To avoid the risk of giving a fragmented image of Catholic education, I consider these four dilemmas, the corresponding questions and typical expressions within Lonergan’s notions (a) of explanatory history and (b) of historical development in terms of diachronic structuralism (Doran, 1999).
Explanatory history is history in all its concreteness, yet history illuminated by a set of heuristic notions that would enable theologians equipped with these notions to relate to one another the various stages in evolution of the meanings constitutive of the Christian Church in genetic and dialectic fashion. In this explanatory history the key notion is not ‘what was going forward’. (p.658)

*Catechesis, Religious Formation or a New Form of Education*

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church and made Christians a distinctive group in Jewish society. However, until the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., they lived integrated in Judaism (Engen, 2004). This situation had consequences for education too: the teaching followed the Jewish method of instruction about the Scriptures. At home and in the weekly gatherings Christians enriched the message of the Judaism with authoritative accounts of the life of Jesus, the law of love, and the code of the Beatitudes in a climate of growing awareness of the *kerygma* (with at its center the mysteries of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ).

Moreover, the command Jesus gave to the Apostles: “Go therefore, teach all nations . . . and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Mt 27:19, 20) was gradually understood as a mandate to make the Church a teaching institution in all the countries where Christianity spread:

The early Christians proclaimed its good news (*kerygma*), attempted to build community (*koinonia*), witnessed (*marturion*) to their faith in Jesus, and served (*diakonia*) the need of the community. Many of these activities evolved in and from the worship (*liturgia*) of the Church. As time went on the community developed its own particular teaching of doctrine (*didache*). (Elias, 2002, 16)

The earliest form of Christian instruction was basically a preparation of the catechumens for Baptism. This model of education developed according to the new condition of the Christians within the Roman Empire:
In the fourth century, the Lenten Catechumenate was devised in answer to the influx of converts subsequent to Constantine's legalization of Christianity in 313 C.E. Prebaptismal preparation of catechumens decreased significantly from three years to eight weeks—a necessary adjustment in light of the large numbers joining the church. Luckily we have several witnesses to this new catechetical phenomenon—the lectures of Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Cyril of Jerusalem are the more complete testimonies. In aggregate their catechetical series suggest a degree of consistency in curricula and ritual practice: creedal and ethical instruction in addition to daily confession and exorcism, the process initiated through an enrollment ceremony. (Kalleres, 2005, p. 434-435)

The influence of classical culture induced Christians to be inclusive and to develop the classical notion of respect for the human person and to pursue a model holistic education. Moreover, instructing people in harmonizing all truths, in elevating all relationships, and in leading the individual soul back to the Creator soon became essential characteristics of the Christian educational influence.

The catechumenal school of Alexandria was probably the highest achievement of this process. As Werner Jaeger explains (1969), Christianity developed a new form of *paideia* (education) also described as a journey to Christ, the ultimate Wisdom. Authors such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen strenuously worked toward a creative synthesis between the best of classical culture and the Christian message.

Augustine of Hippo can be considered the first author to develop a Christian philosophy of education inclusive of fundamental philosophical and theological notions such as illumination, faith, understanding, free will, happiness and love. He reflected on the implications of a eudemonic ethic for educational practice and established the foundations for liberal education (Paffenroth & Hughes, 2000).

Regarding the relationship with classical heritage, as Stephen Benin (1983) clearly observed,
Augustine discourses on the silver and gold which the Israelites carried with them out of Egypt (Exod. 12:35). He likens the silver and gold to true philosophical teachings and notes that those teachings which are well accommodated to Christianity should not be dismissed out of hand nor feared but rather taken from their unjust predecessors and converted to Christian use (in usum nostrum) . . . The Egyptians lost clothing, which Augustine compares to those human institutions which are accommodated to human affairs... also should be seized and converted to Christian use. . . . If pagan learning could contribute to Christianity, then Jewish practice, when carefully researched and intelligently understood, might yield even more. (p. 9)

*Education for the Clergy or Education for the Christian Leadership*

The devastation related to the barbarian invasions, one of the many reasons for the decline of the Roman Empire, put the survival of many sources of Western culture in severe danger. The zeal of the Benedictine monks in preserving the works of classic and Christian authors throughout all the Middle Ages, is an example of the cultural commitment of the Church and of her effort at transmitting the Western intellectual and spiritual inheritance to following generations.

The spreading of monastic civilization and the diffusion of schools related to the monasteries led to the elaboration of a form of Christian education significant not so much in its content, but as testament to love of learning among peoples that had just emerged from barbarism. For centuries, the specific work of education was carried on in these schools and was intended primarily for the novice monks.

Since the ninth century a *schola exterior* (outer school) for lay students and for aspirants to the secular priesthood was often added to the monastery (Hildebrandt, 1992). A similar arrangement existed in the cathedral schools where education was provided for the clergy under the direct supervision of the bishop and gradually for the laity in parochial schools to which all had access. This change in the cathedral and monastic school systems was catalyzed by the Carolingian Renaissance and the
training of leaders in the Palatine school performed by Alcuin of York (735–804).

The first universities were institutions founded and supervised by the Church or through cooperation between ecclesiastical and secular power (Courtenay & Miethke, 2000). However the influence of the Church on them decreased in the measure that universities became the place where the local Christian lay leadership was forged.

Another step in the trend of not reserving education to a restricted number of privileged people was taken when Geert de Groote (1340–1384) founded the movement of the Modern Devotion and the Brethren of the Common Life (1376), likely the first religious order dedicated to popular education.

**Scholastic Method or a Different Model of Integrated Knowledge**

Thomas Aquinas, the intellectual leader of the Dominicans, made synthesis between the findings of reason and the truths of Revelation a typical goal of medieval thought, through a systematic use of the philosophy of Aristotle. He formalized the scholastic method which became dominant in universities as the paradigm of true inquiry in rational and systematic thought. He was also a contrast to the philosophers animated only by the desire to investigate some truth since he promoted a model of education based on contemplation and teaching the things contemplated.

Humanism, as a new season of classical studies and scientific discoveries, proposed an alternative to the scholastic use of reason and to consequent methods of inquiry. Erasmus of Rotterdam was an eminent witness of this new spirit and quest for change. His writing gave Catholicism the chance to renew its educational institutions. Erasmus himself became involved in 1517 with the project of the
Trilingual College in Leuven, based on the teaching of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and considered the school of the new learning in Europe.

*Catholic Education in Institutions Owned and Directly Operated by the Church or in other Setting*

In his reconstruction of the development of the idea of philosophy, Bernard Lonergan (2000) tried to relate the secularization of reason to the diffusion of state control of education. He individualizes three different stages: (a) philosophy in the context of the medieval symbiosis of theology, philosophy, the liberal arts and the sciences; (b) modern philosophy developed as a discipline completely autonomous from, but recognizing, the revealed truth and the authority of religion; (c) the Enlightenment emphasis on human reason as the ultimate basis and norm of human life. Lonergan saw in this historical development the roots of the secularist philosophy that “led spontaneously to a secularist education” (p. 12) and, with the contestation of Church authority, to state control of education.

Therefore, the relationship of Catholics with a public school system became an emergent issue and a very difficult one to solve. Preparing children to enter into society and giving to them a good Catholic formation became a very hard task for parents. Even if they can provide religious instruction at home or in the local parish, an institutional alternative was required.

A prophetical solution to this dilemma came from Cardinal Newman with his efforts to establish the Oratory school in 1859, which for its quality education was called a Catholic Eton (Schrimpton, 2005). The novelty of Newman’s approach reflected his intuition of the future role of the laity in the Church; indeed a
considerable part of its founding and governance relied on lay contributions and work.

Philosophical and Theological Foundations

History of Salvation: The First Covenant

Catholic education is founded on the gradual and progressive revelation and communication of God to humanity. God reveals the divine presence within creation. Thus, the reverence due to creation and the stewardship of creation are traits of the relationship between human kind and the Author of life. Since the early Church, an educational challenge was to form people to be able to find in nature the vestigia Trinitatis (traces of the Trinity) as evidence of the mysterious and harmonious coherence in God’s creation.

Furthermore, God reveals the divine presence within history. His wish, to fulfill the nature of humans as creatures and to rescue them from original sin, opens human history to become the history of salvation articulated in the First and New Covenant.

Many passages of this path make manifest the pedagogical attitude of God towards humanity. God’s revelation to the protagonists of the history of Israel is a good example of múšar (instruction) in its value both of positive teaching and of correction. In particular, it is possible to describe the exchange between God and Abraham regarding the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18: 22–33) as an example of Socratic dialogue in which Abraham receives from God a fundamental lesson in charity and mercy (Eisen, 2000).

However, the educational presence of God is manifested more in the great
biblical narratives than in single episodes. Indeed, the *Canticle of Moses* describes the history of Israel as a saga and God as the great educator of the people of Israel:

He found them in a wilderness, a wasteland of howling desert. He shielded them and cared for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle incites its nestlings forth by hovering over its brood, so he spread his wings to receive them and bore them up on his pinions. (Dt. 32: 11–12)

The exodus from Egypt is the paradigm of God’s education that makes the individual and the people of Israel a free community of faithful, as Psalm 78, a meditation on Israel past, clearly proclaims:

I will open my mouth in story, drawing lessons from of old. We have heard them, we know them; our ancestors have recited them to us. We do not keep them from our children; we recite them to the next generation, the praiseworthy and mighty deeds of the Lord, the wonders that he performed (Ps. 78: 2–4)

Under Hellenistic domination, a strong debate ensued about significant changes that occurred in educational practice and which provoked strong opposition within that society: the participation of young Judeans in the gymnasia of Hellenistic cities, (Collins & Sterling, 2001) especially in the one established by Jason, “the outrageous wickedness of the ungodly pseudo-high-priest” (2 Macc 4: 13), in Jerusalem.

Walter Brueggemann (1982) explains how Judaism provides an educational path that holds together the three parts of the biblical canon, *Torah* (Law), Prophets, and Writings. According to this articulation, the students can learn from God as the source of freedom for the community, God as source of prophecy, and God as source of Wisdom.
In the Christian perspective, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the revelation of God. Thus, he brought to perfection the pedagogical relationship established between God and the people of Israel. The title teacher is given to him more frequently than any other title in the Gospels. His pedagogical action was (a) person-centered, (b) aimed to move people from passive reception to active participation in life, (c) able to lead people to a conversion of heart, (d) able to make people servants of the community and announcers of the coming of Kingdom of God (Kealy, 2000).

If historically Jesus cannot be shown to be a successful and effective teacher, he was nonetheless a demonstrably good one (Dillon, 1995). Therefore, it is possible to explore many dimensions of this activity of Jesus. His pedagogy was an introduction to the value and importance of conversion. He prepared his disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit: “I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth” (John 6: 14–15). The conduct of his teaching proves the principle that education must adapt itself in method and practice to the needs of those who are to be taught. The miracles performed were also a way of teaching by doing; Jesus always gave examples of what he was teaching, as the parables contained in the Gospel show. His practical wisdom used objects and circumstances with which his hearers were familiar.

Yieh’s (2004) thesis is that Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the unique teacher of truth served to help the Church’s mission to make disciples of all nations. In
accomplishing this mission, the Church is also assisted by the Holy Spirit. Education is part of the Church as sacramental reality and presence in the world. Indeed, Catholic education takes part in the three dimensions of the Church (Imoda, 2006) related to: didache (the message revealed by God and proclaimed by the Church), koinonia (the fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit) and diaconia (the service to the Christian community and to humanity as well). A special kind of service is instructing the ignorant, following the precept of mercy given by Jesus to his disciples (Mt. 25).

A last trait of the divine pedagogy is the action of grace and its consequences on educational work:

Freedom and grace come to fruition in the spiritual order which defies any merely temporal assessment. When grace infuses human liberty, it makes freedom fully free and raises it to its highest perfection in the freedom of the Spirit. It is when the Catholic school adds its weight, consciously and overtly, to the liberating power of grace, that it becomes the Christian leaven in the world. (Congregation for Catholic education, 1977, ¶ 84)

Canon Law Background

The new Code of Canon Law (1983) deals with the regulations about education in Book III, dedicated to the teaching munus (office) of the Church. Within Book III, Title III is concerned with Catholic education and contains twenty-nine canons. They are distributed in three chapters: Catholic Schools (cc. 796-806); Catholic Universities and Other Institutes of Higher Education (cc. 807-814), and Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (cc. 815 – 821). Many of these canons are exhortatory or declaratory more than directly regulatory or prohibitory.

Most of this material has no counterpart in the previous Code (1917) and most of the legislation is derived directly from the documents of the Second Vatican
Council. Even if Catholic education legislation is more developed and has a different articulation from the Code of 1917 (Abbass, 1997), the critical literature about it seems to be still incomplete. The new themes are three and show the new challenges of the teaching office, central to the purpose and mission of the Church. First of all, the role of the laity is clearly stated and encouraged; then, parental rights and the responsibility for the education of their children are particularly emphasized; last and foremost, considerable attention is paid to the organization of Catholic schools, colleges and universities (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000).

Three introductory canons state the basic principles of the legislation contained in Book III. Canon 793 affirms the rights and obligations of parents, within the broad framework of Catholic education, to provide a Catholic education for their children. Thus, it can be considered as a foundational canonical provision in support of home schooling. The Church and her ministers have rights and duties as well. Indeed, canon 794 grounds the Church’s educational role in her divine mission to assist all men and women in their efforts to achieve the fullness of the Christian life. Therefore, bishops and pastors have the obligation to ensure the access of youth to the Church’s educational apostolate. Canon 795 states the goals of education and defines human development as a holistic process. The notion of vera educatio (true education) integrates the formation of the whole person and the acknowledgement of the common good.

About Catholic schools, canon 796 states their primacy among the other means of education. Indeed, they assist parents in the duty of educating their children and are a privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. Canon
797 bases the parental prerogative of choosing their children’s school in the notion of true freedom. Two political considerations follow this statement: (a) an admonition to the Christian faithful to ensure that civil governments recognize and safeguard this freedom and the right to choose with genuine freedom according to their conscience, and (b) the affirmation of the principle of distributive justice which should guide the state’s allocation of public subsidies. The nature of the Catholic school is defined by canon 798 as a means and not as an end. Therefore if something prevents parents from sending their children to a Catholic school or to a school that provides Catholic education, they should assure an appropriate Catholic education outside the school.

Canon 799 regulates religious-moral education.

Canon 800 encourages the establishment and promotion of Catholic schools and begins a series of rules that concern issues of identity and mission. As affirmed in canon 801 about the schools operated by religious institutes, the permission of the local bishop is necessary to allow their establishment. Thus, the question of identity is related to the intervention, direct or indirect, of competent ecclesiastical authority (cc. 802 and 303). Canon 804 specifies that the episcopal conferences are to issue general regulations for Catholic religious formation and that it is the responsibility of the local bishop to supervise efforts at their implementation. This duty includes the right of vigilance over and visitation of the Catholic schools located in the territory of his diocese (cc. 805-806).

The chapter about Catholic universities deals with the complex question of the applicability of these canons to institutions like the majority of the Catholic colleges and universities in United States, considered as more affiliated with the Catholic
Church than as canonically erected as Catholic institutions. A second significant issue is the effort that the Church exerts in order to insure the integrity of Catholic teaching (cc.810 – 812) and the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority that is required for a university that bears the title or the name Catholic.

The regulation of the Church school for advanced studies of sacred sciences is much more linear and less ambiguous than the one about Catholic universities. They are institutions founded and approved by the Holy See (c. 816), ruled according to the norms of the apostolic constitution Sapientia Christiana (Christian Wisdom–John Paul II, 1979b) and supervised by the Congregation for Catholic education.

Organizational Scheme

The culture of an organization embraces the core values shared by its members including their beliefs about the institutional mission and how it should be achieved; the structure of an organization is the set of rules and roles that shape the relationships between its parts (Alvesson, 2002).

Historically, the genius of Catholicism has been to integrate the power structure of a hierarchical organization with the spirit of communion of a religious community. However, Philip Jenkins (2003) states that Catholicism doesn’t do enough to distinguish the two dimensions. Therefore, it is generally identified with the institution and not with a community of faithful and, for that reason, is an object of the classic prejudices against a hierarchical power. In the same way, the expression Catholic education is more often related, in the common opinion, with institutional issues than with the day-to-day problems of a community of people.

This study will pursue a description of the organizational culture and structure
of Catholic education following (a) the scheme given in Gravissimus Educationis (1965) and of the Code of Canon Law (1983), and (b) the configuration of “good of order” in Lonergan’s Topics in Education (2000).

**Gravissimus Educationis**

In contemporary times, almost every country has Catholic schools or universities that are fostering the dialogue between the Church and mankind. The Second Vatican Council devoted a short document to education, Gravissimum Educationis (1965), which consists of a list of general principles. Indeed, a special post-conciliar commission, the Congregation for Catholic Education, received the duty of developing them and episcopal conferences have the responsibility to apply them to local situations. The role given to this Roman congregation was a consistent solution to the lamentable lack (Lee, 1967) of central supervision of the Church with regard to education. In this review of literature, special attention will be paid to the documents issued by the congregation.

**Catholic Primary and Secondary Education**

Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance. It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, ¶ 5)

Schools are important in terms of the future of the Church (Egan, 1988; Brigham, Convey, & Cummins, 1991; O’Keefe, 1996; Sullivan, 2000) and, as a famous study on “the declining Church” showed (Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976), seem more important in a time of traumatic transitions than in a time of peaceful stability. Catholic imagination (Greeley, 2000; Herron, 2001) and Catholic
schools' ability to build identity and give measurable shape to dreams for a good and just society (McLaren, 1986) is important in assuring that function. Moreover, strong empirical evidence exists (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993), that Catholic schools are more appropriately characterized by shared beliefs about a school’s purpose, student capabilities and norms of behavior than public schools and, "when Catholic school personnel proclaim ‘We are a community,’ they are describing an organizational reality that does differentiate their school from a public high school” (p. 283). As a study on the underlying policies shows (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982), academic outcomes and disciplinary standards are high and, “when family background factors that predict achievement are controlled, students in both Catholic and other private schools, appear to achieve at a higher level than students in public schools” (p. 180). Marcellin Flynn, in his broad reflections on Australian Catholic Schools (1993), gives a good list of key dimensions of a Catholic school, even if the notion of unique configuration seems to better describe the specificity of these educational institutions: (a) commitment to tradition and history (Lesko, 1988), (b) positive anthropology (Byrnes, 2002), (c) sense of sacramentality, (d) commitment to a rationality based on the integration of the faith-reason tension. The specificity of the identity of Catholic school is also described through its essential attributes (Gnanarajah, 2006) organized in a grammar (Jacobs, 1997) and in an original notion of holistic formation (Smith, 1997) and promotion of values (Fusco, 2005).

Catholic Higher Education

The Church is concerned also with schools of a higher level, especially colleges and universities. In those schools dependent on her she intends that by their very constitution individual subjects be pursued according to their own principles, method, and liberty of scientific inquiry, in such a way that an
ever deeper understanding in these fields may be obtained and that, as questions that are new and current are raised and investigations carefully made according to the example of the doctors of the Church and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas, there may be a deeper realization of the harmony of faith and science. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, ¶10)

The idea of a Catholic university (Pelikan, 1992; O’Brien, 2002), its definition as institution, its mandate and its relationship with the Catholic Church is the subject of a vast literature (Altbach, 2003; Gleason, 1995; Morey, & Piderit, 2006; O’Keefe, 1997; Shea & Van Slyke, 1999). This literature flourished especially in United States, where Catholics were slow to enter seriously into higher education, but built the largest array of colleges and universities (Burton, 1998, p. 557). A true dilemma of this kind of organization is to find a strategy that enables it to be at the same time an academic institution of the first order and to nurture in creative ways the faith commitment that called this institution into existence (Hughes & Adrian, 1997).

Monika Hellwig (1997) suggests some traits of distinctiveness: (a) the emphasis on the continuity between faith and reason, (b) the respect for the cumulative wisdom of past generations in the tradition, (c) an effort to be inclusive in membership and values, (d) the acknowledgement of communitarian aspects of redemption, and (e) the pervasive appreciation of the sacramental principle (pp. 13–23). A Catholic university should maintain the sacred dimension that the Church represents and the *communio* with the Christian community (O’Ri, 1974; 1987).

**Pontifical Institutions**

The Church expects much from the zealous endeavors of the faculties of the sacred sciences. For to them she entrusts the very serious responsibility of preparing her own students not only for the priestly ministry, but especially for teaching in the seats of higher ecclesiastical studies or for promoting learning on their own or for undertaking the work of a more rigorous intellectual apostolate. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, ¶11)
Even if the reference to the Second Vatican Council is important, a study on the character of Catholic education (Youniss & Convey, 2000) suggests:

Discussions on Catholicism are too often blinded by debates over Vatican II that tend to dwell on whether the Church has drifted too far from some unspecified pre-1960 norm or whether it has lived up to the options the council glimpsed for the future. This form of debate distracts us from a fundamental point: history does not move backward in time and any viable religion must be practiced and understood in the context of the real lives and living cultures. (p. 8)

_Catholic Education as a Good of Order_

Defining the notion of human good as the foundation of a Catholic philosophy of education, Bernard Lonergan (2000) affirms the existence of three different kinds of good (particular, of order, value). He states:

An educational system is a good of order. An educational system is not the education of this child, or of this young lady. It is a flow of educations. It determines what flows and the direction in which it will flow. (p. 34)

He specifies, “So the good of order involves four aspects: a regular recurrence of particular goods, coordinated human operations—habits, institutions, and material equipment—and finally, the personal status which results from the relation constituted by the cooperation” (p.36). Later, he reflects on the development of human good through differentials and integration factors. Discussing sin and redemption, he stresses the role of the theological virtues: faith reestablishes truth as a meaningful category and answer to the problem of sin as aberration; hope is the condition to succeed over the cumulative effects of sin as a component in social processes; love is the only effective response to self-perpetuating sin (p.58–70).

In this section of the reviews of literature, Catholic education is described as a good of order and its distinctive traits articulated on being witness of the theological
virtues. Within Catholic tradition, the paradigm "to be witness" has great value because conduct is always much more important than speech.

Witness of the Catholic Faith

"Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself". (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2000, no. 1814)

An educational institution’s witness of faith: (a) is centered on the Revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ; (b) belongs to a living tradition; (c) accomplishes an apostolic and ecclesiastical mission; (d) is founded on specific philosophical and theological issues; (e) is animated by a spirituality, liturgy and life of prayer; (f) is characterized by a pervasive religious dimension.

Centered on the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Education promotes a concept of life centered on Jesus Christ:

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life. The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision makes the school “Catholic”; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 34)

The person of each individual human being is at the heart of Christ’s teaching and life. Therefore, the notion of human dignity promoted in Catholic educational institutions is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation.

With its educational project inspired by the Gospel, the Catholic school is called to take up this challenge and respond to it in the conviction that “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, ¶ 10)
Belonging to a living tradition.

In recent years, the reduction of education to its purely technical and practical aspects has become a common practice. This dangerous and false neutrality signifies, in practice, forgetting that an educational institution expresses a tradition and often religious beliefs. Focusing on Catholic experience, Timothy Walch (2000) observed, “What is rarely acknowledged, however, is that the success of Catholic schools today is built upon three traditions that extend back more than two centuries” (p. 176):
(a) tenacity or determination to overcome any kind of historical obstacle;
(b) adaptability or flexibility and openness to the different places and political situations, (c) of community (Durka, 1988; Convey, 1992).

Accomplishes an apostolic and ecclesiastical mission.

The challenge of complexity in the modern world makes it urgent to increase awareness of the mission and ecclesial identity of Catholic educational institutions. They participate in the apostolic mission of the Church:

The Catholic school “fully enters into the salvific mission of the Church, especially in the need for education in the faith,” and involves a sincere adherence to the Magisterium of the Church, a presentation of Christ as the supreme model of the human person, and a special care for the quality of the religious education in the school. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 38)

Education is not only a great opportunity for the salvific mission of the Church but also a quality means of evangelization:

To carry out her saving mission, the Church uses, above all, the means which Jesus Christ has given her. She also uses other means which at different times and in different cultures have proved effective in achieving and promoting the development of the human person. The Church adapts these means to the changing conditions and emerging needs of mankind. In her encounter with differing cultures and with man’s progressive achievements, the Church proclaims the faith and reveals “to all ages the transcendent goal which alone
“gives life its full meaning.” She establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 8)

The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school is written at the very heart of its identity and can be described also in these terms:

The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 49)

*Founded on specific philosophical and theological issues.*

The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church. Additionally it developed an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony.

A Catholic school is not simply a place where lessons are taught; it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs of today’s youth and illumined by the Gospel message. A thorough and exact knowledge of the real situation will suggest the best educational methods. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 22)

*Animated by a spirituality, liturgy and life of prayer.*

Educational work is the basic instrument for personal sanctification and, therefore, is characterized by a liturgical and sacramental rhythm and time of life. The eventual connection with a specific religious order or a particular spirituality enriches the institutional life.

The necessity for a cultural mediation of the faith is an invitation for consecrated persons to consider the meaning of their presence in schools. The altered circumstances in which they operate, in environments that are often laicized and in reduced numbers in educational communities, make it necessary to clearly express their specific contribution in cooperation with the other vocations present in schools. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002, ¶ 5)
Characterized by a pervasive religious dimension.

An important responsibility of Catholic educational institutions is presenting the Christian faith systematically and in a way suited to the young people of today.

What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension, and that this is to be found in (a) the educational climate, (b) the personal development of each student, (c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, (d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.

(Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 1)

The same document later states:

There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message. The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity. The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality. Moreover, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 68)

The notion of religious education in Catholic institution is broad, deep (Astley, 1994) and founded on a set of hermeneutical keys (Lombaerts, 2004, p.14).

Witness of Hope

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2000, no. 1817)

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man. An educational institution’s witness of faith is:

(a) prophetically discerning the signs of the time; (b) promoting the lay educational vocation (Leckey, 2006); (c) devoted to the care of youth; (d) gift to all nations; (e) building a culture of peace and justice.
Prophetically discerning the signs of the time.

This Sacred Congregation sees a genuine “sign of the times” for schools in the various facts and causes described above; it is an invitation to give special attention to the role of lay Catholics, as witnesses to the faith in what can only be described as a privileged environment for human formation. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 4)

Promoting the lay educational vocation.

The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the Church regards as positive and enriching, is theological. This awareness clarifies the idea of the specific character of the laity’s vocation in the Catholic School as educators.

To summarize: the Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 24)

The notion of vocation is also the correct frame to understand the care for an educator’s competence:

The work of a lay educator has an undeniably professional aspect; but it cannot be reduced to professionalism alone. Professionalism is marked by, and raised to, a supernatural Christian vocation. The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 37)

Devoted to the care of youth.

The future of the world and of the Church belongs to younger generations that, unfortunately, find themselves in a condition of radical instability, or live in an environment devoid of truly human relationships, often in a climate of total religious
indifference. Catholic education responds to this social reality with a statement about its form, “The educational process is not simply a human activity; it is a genuine Christian journey toward perfection.” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 46) and with a strong commitment, “The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and the mysteries of the human spirit.” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 61)

*Gift to all nations.*

Spread throughout the world, Catholic education makes a significant contribution to the evangelizing mission of the Church, including those areas in which no other form of pastoral work is possible:

In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterize different civilizations. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 85)

Schools exist in countries where the practice of Christianity has almost totally disappeared:

Therefore, “the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth”. In order to achieve this presence of the whole Church, and of the Savior whom she proclaims, lay people must be ready to proclaim the message through their words, and witness to it in what they do. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 9)

Finally, Catholic schools exist in countries where the Church is persecuted and where one who is known to be a Christian is forbidden to function as an educator.

Although forced to live his or her Catholicism anonymously, the lay educator can still be (because of regrettable human and religious motives) the only way that many of the young people in these countries can come to some genuine
knowledge of the Gospel and of the Church, which are distorted and attacked in
the school. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 54)

Building a culture of peace and justice.

Christian education sees all of humanity as one large family, divided perhaps
by historical and political events, but always one in God who is Father of all.
Therefore a Catholic school should be sensitive to and help to promulgate
Church appeals for peace, justice, freedom, progress for all peoples and
assistance for countries in need. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988,
¶ 45)

Witness of Love

“Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for
his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (Catechism of the
Catholic Church, 2000, no. 1822). An educational institution’s witness of faith is: (a)
a sacramental reality, (b) integrating faith-culture-life, (c) seeking for a holistic
formation of the person, (d) socially based in the family, the community, the local
Church, (e) promoting a collaborative culture, (f) sharing with the poor in solidarity,
sobriety in life and educational style.

Sacramental reality.

Christian love is neither sentimentality nor humanitarianism; it is a new
reality, born of faith. Teachers must remember that the love of God governs
the divine plan of universal salvation. The Lord Jesus came to live among us
in order to show us the Father’s love. His ultimate sacrifice testifies to his love
for his friends. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 85)

Integrating faith-culture-life.

A typical goal of Catholic teaching is to lead the students to an integration of
faith and culture and to personal integration of faith and life. Knowledge, values,
attitudes and behavior should be fully integrated with faith beliefs. This goal should
be grounded in an authentic communication of culture:
For the accomplishment of this vast undertaking, many different educational elements must converge; in each of them, the lay Catholic must appear as a witness to faith. An organic, critical, and value-oriented communication of culture clearly includes the communication of truth and knowledge; while doing this, a Catholic teacher should always be alert for opportunities to initiate the appropriate dialogue between culture and faith—two things which are intimately related—in order to bring the interior synthesis of the student to this deeper level. It is, of course, a synthesis which should already exist in the teacher. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 29)

Seeking for a holistic formation of the person.

In Catholic educational institutions, the pursuit of wisdom and competence and the quest for psychological maturity and spiritual depth are part of an educational program which is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

The integral formation of the human person, which is the purpose of education, includes the development of all the human faculties of the students, together with preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, becoming aware of the transcendental and religious education. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 17)

However, holistic formation attains to a higher goal, “the harmonious development of the human person progressively reveals in each of us the image of a child of God. True education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal”. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983, ¶ 1)

Sexuality is an integral part of the development of the personality and of its educative process. In the light of the Mystery of Christ, it appears to us as a vocation to realize that love which the Holy Spirit instills in the hearts of the redeemed.

Socially based family, community, and Church.

Catholic education considers highly the social nature of education in terms of involvement of the family, of the community and of the local Church in its institutions.

In harmony with the Second Vatican Council, that this community dimension in the Catholic school is not a merely sociological category; it has a
theological foundation as well. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, ¶ 18)

Indeed,

The Catholic school will work closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and Christian community, youth associations, etc.). But one must not overlook many other spheres of activity in society which are sources of information and in their various ways have an educational influence. Alongside this so-called “parallel school” the school proper is an active force through the systematic formation of the pupils' critical faculties to bring them to a measure of self control and the ability to choose freely and conscientiously in the face of what is offered by the organs of social communication. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, ¶ 48)

The Catholic school is the centre of the educative Christian community as an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society. “The Catholic educator, in other words, must be committed to the task of forming men and women who will make the ‘civilization of love’ a reality” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, ¶ 19).

In the Council texts, the community dimension is primarily a theological concept rather than a sociological category; this is the sense in which it is used in the second chapter of Lumen Gentium (Light of nations, 1964), where the Church is described as the People of God.

On the one hand, a Catholic school is a “civic institution;” its aim, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a “Christian community,” whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and his Gospel. It is not always easy to bring these two aspects into harmony. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, ¶ 66)

Promoting a collaborative culture.

Collaboration is the way things are accomplished in a Catholic educational institution and involves bishops, priests, religious, parents, teachers, school
administrators, faculty, professionals or auxiliary staff, donors, stakeholders, etc.

Collaboration makes educational policy demanding on all participants in the institutional life who must be committed to it freely.

*Sharing with the poor in solidarity, sobriety in life and educational style.*

Catholic education should be for all and give special attention to those who are weakest. That goal makes it a form of education for true freedom:

Education to freedom is a humanizing action, because it aims at the full development of personality. In fact, education itself must be seen as the acquisition, growth and possession of freedom. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002, ¶ 52)
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this chapter is to describe the specific knowledge-building process followed in this study as well as to give an account of the ethical values that will regulate this investigation. The researcher’s intention is to show how this humanistic and qualitative inquiry will lead to richness of findings as well as to quality conclusions about how Catholic Education is challenged by Benedict XVI’s doctrine about love. Within this compound issue, a particular emphasis will be given to the effects of his style of leadership and of his answer to the role expectations of the first pontificate of the new millennium.

The methodology of this study will bridge a specific epistemology, with a choice of theories and methods to provide a guide throughout the research experience (Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, 2006, p.21). Bernard Lonergan’s epistemology will be the philosophical substructure of the research and it consists in a life-long effort to understand the universal operations of the human mind as they are related to reality and as they lead to an effective action within different historical and cultural settings. In other words, Lonergan answered questions such as, “What is intellectual desire, how does it relate us to the world, how is it satisfied, and what sort of world does it make known?” (Matthews, 2005, p. 4). Intellectual desire is a principle of cognition that structures consciousness in terms of levels or sets of progressive operations which Lonergan labeled as empirical, intelligent, rational, and responsible. In other words, Lonergan’s method consists in: (a) be attentive to data, (b) exploring with
intelligence, (c) discerning with rationality, and (d) being responsible.

Lonergan expressed his epistemological inquiry especially in his major work, originally published in 1957, *Insight* (1992) which he further developed in two seminars he gave in the following years. They are the Halifax classes (1958) that later became *Understanding and Being* (1990), and the Cincinnati lectures (1959) that later were transcribed and collected in *Topics in Education* (2000). However, many other Lonergan works exist that applied the method of *Insight* to disciplines such as mathematics, empirical, and human sciences. The inclusion of these domains of knowledge shows the holistic nature of Lonergan’s method and its potentiality. Therefore, in this study I will follow the intellectual vision and method of Lonergan, adopting a dialectical, synthetic, and critical approach to the inquiry and focusing the isomorphism that Lonergan individualizes between the structure of the knowing and the structure of the known, “Lonergan’s world view is at its heart an objectification of the relation between the knowing subject and the known universe” (Matthews, 2005, p. 372).

**Overall Strategy**

Qualitative research can be defined as: a set of interpretative activities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), inherently multiple methods in focus and holistic as search for understanding of the whole. This study will focus on the notion of culture of education (Bruner, 2003) as a social pattern which belongs also to the Roman Catholic Church.

“Qualitative research crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matters” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). This feature is particularly true approaching the
Roman Catholic Church as an institution with an ecumenical perspective, whose mission is to reach all cultures and groups, as well as individuals in their specific situations; as Avery Dulles (2002) states:

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church goes to assert that all human beings, even those to whom the Gospel has not as yet been preached, are related to the church of Christ (Lumen Gentium, 16). . . . The grace of Christ thus operates in a secret way in all persons of good will, ordering them toward salvation, and disposing them to accept the Gospel if and when they hear it credibly proclaimed (Lumen Gentium, 16–17). (p. 45)

Catholic education participates in this wise and universal vision and mission of the Church and, therefore, is open to the challenges of the current world. Indeed, in the Statement on Globalization and Education (2005), recently issued by the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of Social Sciences, educational change is defined as an answer to emerging cultural traits, “Today, in the face of globalization, global migrations, the explosion of knowledge-intensive economy, and above all compelling obligation to fight poverty by all means throughout the world, education may require serious re-thinking” (p. 6). In our contemporary times, also, Catholic education is challenged by the extent of educational function which has broadened and has become more complex. Educational institutions need balanced action of courageous renewal and prudent innovation. To accomplish this goal a systematic study is required. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman (2006) state that the overall strategy of a qualitative research is “a plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest; the research methods are the specific tools for conducting that exploration” (p. 56). Here, the phenomenon of interest is Catholic education as expression of the mission, of the identity and of the life of the Roman Catholic Church, articulated on its marks (a technical term for attributes) (Madges &
Daley, 2006) and backed in its doctrines (dogma or revealed truths), in the historical development of theology, and philosophical speculation about the corollaries of dogma. This study will be conducted through a combination of methods in relation to a critical examination of written documents and records of the oral history.

Rationale

This qualitative researcher will confront three challenges (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.11). The first challenge is developing a conceptual framework in Catholic Studies. It requires being inclusive of various disciplines and at the same time being focused and not diverging from the purpose of the study. This is the reason why the articulation of the theoretical frameworks of this study is limited to four authors, covering the major disciplines that distinguished the identity of phenomena related with the Roman Catholic Church. They are ecclesiastical history, philosophy and theology, canon law, pedagogy and organizational theory. The canons of these sciences need to be kept in mind during each step of the research process.

The second challenge is planning a design which is systematic, manageable and flexible. It entails that the classical structure of the doctoral dissertation will be developed in a number of chapters which will integrate the different sources of data and the major categories that will be used for the data analysis.

The third challenge is producing a coherent document that explains that a study about the effects of the papal teaching about love on the philosophy of Catholic Education should be done, can be done, and will be done. All through the inquiry, this researcher will demonstrate the consistency of this project with the real needs of the Church.
Situating the Researcher Perspective

The research trajectory is based on the researcher’s awareness of his personal competence and of his positionality toward the chosen topic.

This researcher belongs to the institution that is object of the study, the Roman Catholic Church; he has a specific interest in her educational apostolate and a certain degree of familiarity with the frameworks he will use, with the documents he will analyze, and with the people he will interview. Additionally, this research can be also considered an exercise of agency, because both the researcher and the participants are engaged, even if at different levels and with different roles, in the development and governance of the field.

There are some efforts that will make these traits strengths of the study more than biases. They are to be sensitive and critical about how the researcher’s biography shapes the study; to view social phenomena holistically and not in a sectarian or apologetic perspective; to use a complex reasoning related with an interdisciplinary approach; to set a systematic reflection on his path of growing during the inquiry (Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

Theoretical Paradigm

The study will be a conceptually integrated enterprise thanks to a well articulated theoretical paradigm which is the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises (Guba, 1990). The theoretical framework for the dissertation runs along multiple axes and intends to show the potential significance of the research questions of this study for the field of International Catholic Education.
The articulation of this framework provides the definition of terms and some of the rules followed during the inquiry. This framework will also be the background for the document analysis and the interviews because it includes chosen historical, philosophical and theological theories required to understand the context. It answers questions such as, “What is the model of Catholic Church implied in the study?”, “What does it mean by the term philosophy of education?”, and “What kind of love is the matter of the Roman pontiff’s teaching?”

Avery Dulles spent decades of theological research on ecclesiology focusing the different perspectives on the Roman Catholic Church which are described in his most successful book *Models of Church* (2002). Dulles reflected on the awareness of the identity the Church fashioned through the changes in political, social, philosophical, and theological thinking, and manifested in different models. They actually coexist, even if in different ages there has been a dominant one. From the Council of Trent (1545–1563) until to 1940 when, at the vigil Pius XII’s (1943) encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (Mystical Body), the Church was defined mainly as a secular political society, analogously to national states. This definition focused only on the visible and structural characteristics of the Church which was considered the “perfect society.” However, the Church is much more than a social structure!

The model of the “Body of Christ” was elaborated by theologians such as Sebastian Tromp (1889–1975) and found expression in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943). This paradigm concerns the relationship between the mystical and the visible, between the supernatural community of grace and the visible and historical organization. Both aspects are essential, but it is not clear how they are
combined. A third model emerged, especially through the work of Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), from the Fathers of the Church, and it became a major theme of the Vatican II. It is the Church as sacrament of Christ, both sign and instrument of His ministry. This paradigm tried to solve the dilemma of the relationship between the visible and the invisible, because the community was intended as the visible form of the invisible communion in Christ. Even this model inspired the ecclesiological reflection of the Council, the dominant model of Vatican II was that of “the People of God” or more exactly, the Church on pilgrimage through history like the rest of humanity, but strengthened by faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The expression “the People of God” can be traced back to the exodus of the Israelites; it is a basic biblical category that can influence the definition of Church structures and traditions. Dulles claims that, radically interpreted, this model let the Christians seem to be living according to the Ancient Covenant more as than the new one.

Last and foremost, the model of the Church as Servant inspired the Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). The mystery of Christ’s Incarnation makes the Church intimately associated with all that is human, and she is called to make a positive contribution to all persons and cultures, after the example of Christ, who came “not to be served, but to serve” (Mt. 2:28). Emphasis is placed on the need first of all to scrutinize the “signs of the times.” Thus, this model introduces a rather new attitude of listening to and learning from the world.

Franco Imoda (2006) included these models in a scheme structured on their correspondence with: (a) the four elements that characterize the life of the Church
according to J. Courtney-Murray: *koinonia* (communion), *diakonia* (service), people of God and visible society, (b) the four primary functions of a social system according to T. Parson: integration, pattern maintenance, goal attainment and adaptation, and (c) the five dilemmas that, according to T. O’ Dea, are structurally inherent to religious institutionalization: symbolic (considered by Imoda as a meta-dilemma), of mixed motivation, of administrative order, of delimitation, of power.

Imoda’s attempt to point to these correspondences is analogous to Lonergan’s description of the isomorphism between the three types of human good, of cognitional activity, of society, of existential subjectivity, which belongs to his inquiry about a definition of a philosophy of Catholic Education (Lonergan, 2000, p.41–43). Both authors tried to show the integrated nature of reality as well as of human knowledge.

In the first of his Cincinnati lessons, Lonergan (2000) elaborated a model of philosophy of education which should be understood as the contemporary moment in a perennial philosophy that is:

Essentially an open philosophy, that it can take cognizance of individual and historical developments, that it can be concrete, existential in the general sense of that term (not in the sense of particular existentialist schools), and that it can be historical, Catholic, and ‘a philosophy of’ . . . . It need not be confined simply to timeless truths and conclusions from universal to particulars.” (p. 22)

Lonergan was looking for a notion of philosophy far from previous models, based on the affirmation of human reason and freedom as the ultimate basis of human life that was elaborated by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and which proclaimed philosophy as the successor of religion. According to Lonergan, this philosophy promotes individualism, state education controlled by a new class of functionaries:
Lonergan refutes also the Cartesian separation between human rationality and authority of the revelation and symbiosis between philosophy and theology, which was the dominant paradigm of the medieval culture. He seeks for a philosophy that is aware of the fundamental factors that shaped contemporary education: (a) the masses as pedagogical problem; (b) the revolutionary new learning in mathematics and natural sciences, in languages, literature and history, and in human sciences too; (c) the increasing multiplication of specialized fields that contrasts the holistic formation of men and women as Christians which means well-mannered people, scholars, adults open to learning and to being witnesses of faith and of tradition, and able to ethically manage a social, economic, political practice.

Lonergan considers as foundation of a philosophy of education the invariant structure of the human good. He explores it both as object and developing subject. Indeed, there are three forms of human good—(a) particular good, (b) good of order, (c) value—that develop through differentials and levels of integration to more complex levels of culture. The course of the human good as subject culminates with the analysis of moral development and opens the path to a reflection on the higher levels of consciousness, where Lonergan describes the core experience of love. Among the many forms of love, benevolence and appreciation both rely on transcendental love and on self transcendence which can take the form of a moral conversion in an original form of integration of eros and agape. The end of transcendental love is mystery (Dunne, 1985).

This study will be enriched from some parts of the inquiry of Martin D’Arcy.
(1888–1976) about love as part of the mystery of human nature. He was able to bring
the Augustinian tradition about love into the contemporary world with man in a
situation characterized by creativity and chaotic freedom. He believes in a deep
interplay between the self-realizing love called *eros* and the self-giving love called
*agape*. He perceives and elaborates the mystery that must be traced down into the
existence of two loves within man. D’Arcy develops the doctrine of the two loves by
identifying *eros* as belonging to essential self or *animus* and *agape* to the existential
self or *anima* (D’Arcy, 1947). This research will not follow the possible radical
interpretation of the tension between reason and agape, in which d’Arcy believed.
Indeed, according to Daniel Williams (1987), a search for the essential structure of
reason in the midst of its distortion will be pursued and the affirmation of its
limitation in trying to grasp the full truth of love will be placed in the correct scenario
(p. 283).

**Research Design**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that, “A research design describes a flexible
set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and
second to methods for collecting empirical material” (p.22).

The universal-international-global characteristics of the Roman Catholic
Church, the peculiarity of her leadership group, the complexity of Catholic Studies as
a convergence of disciplines, and the living nature of the Catholic tradition and of
Benedict XVI’s pontificate as historical phenomena make flexibility a crucial issue of
this study design. Thus, a high degree of flexibility is required in terms of possible
adjustments of technical aspects of the strategy of the inquiry and of the right to
modify the original design as the research evolves.

Strategy of the Inquiry

"The strategy of the inquiry comprises the skills, assumptions, enactments, and material practices that the researcher-as-methodological-bricoleur uses in moving from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of the empirical materials" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 371). This study will include a description of the triangulation, of the methods, of data collection and of data analysis, interpretation and representation.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a "strategy for increasing the validity of evaluation and research findings" (Mathison, 1988, p.13). Triangulation involves using (a) data sources provided through the same method or (b) different methods to corroborate, elaborate and answer the same research questions. This study will be based on the last type of triangulation, which means that it will look for a convergence of multiple data sources (Denzin, 1978).

Triangulation, "yields a more accurate and valid estimate of a result when each method of measurement actually converges on the same answer. However, complete convergence may not always occur in qualitative data" (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006).

This study will rely on a triangulation between (a) the analysis of published works of Joseph Ratzinger as theologian, bishop, head of the Congregation for Catholic Education and lastly dean of the College of the Cardinals; (b) the official documents of the teaching of Joseph Ratzinger as Benedict XVI; and (c) a number of
interviews with major formal leaders of Catholic Education.

Methods of Data Collection

Document Analysis

Review of documents, in the form of content analysis, is an unobtrusive method of research. The data collected have a high degree of authenticity because they are not influenced through researcher interaction (Reinharz, 1992, p.147–148).

In their recent reflection about methodology in qualitative research, Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Laevy (2006), stress the importance of this method as:

Quantitative content analysis has been integral to create our repository of social scientific knowledge, including that aimed at social justice. The strength of this method is that it enables researchers to examine patterns and themes within the objects produced in a given culture. Researchers can analyze preexisting data in order to expose and unravel macro processes. (p. 287)

Dealing with texts reduces the span of the inferential reasoning that is an important component of other qualitative methods. However, great attention should be paid both to the questions that funnel the analysis and to the categories that guide the coding.

The Joseph Ratzinger legacy

Joseph Ratzinger is one of the most prolific authors of contemporary Catholicism. As Vittorio Messori (1985), in one of the rare extensive interviews Ratzinger gave during his entire life, summarizes:

Author of a dissertation on St. Augustine and later a lecturer in dogmatics in the most famous German universities (Münster, Tübingen, Regensburg), Ratzinger has also published scholarly works as well as essays that have enjoyed a wide circulation and become bestsellers in many countries. Critics vouch that his work not only attests to competence in special areas but also calls special attention to comprehensive questions, to what German call das Wesen, essence, and precisely also to the essence of faith and to the possibility
for it to come to terms with the modern world.” (p.17)

In the catalogue of Ratzinger’s edited works there are many integral classics of theology, at various time reprinted as *Introduction to Christianity* (2000), extensive interviews and personal account of life as *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927–1977* (1998); reports of conversation with famous scholars as the recent one with Jürgen Habermas transcribed in *The Dialectic of Secularism* (2007). There are also the documents of his academic activity before Second Vatican Council and in the year when he was attending the sessions of that event as an expert chosen by the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joseph Frings; the articles written for the periodicals *Concilium* and *Communio*; the addresses, homilies, public responses, presentations and introductions of formal Church Documents he gave as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, etc.

Therefore, the inquiry will employ something akin to purposive sampling of these documents. The statements will be selected in reference to: (a) the nature and the attributes of the notion of Christian love, (b) the nature of the Church educational mission, (c) a specific notion of Catholic Philosophy of education and Pedagogy, (d) the matter, aims and means of Catholic education, (e) the contemporary announcing of the Gospel, often labeled as the new evangelization, (f) a possible critical approach to a cultured inured by secularization, relativism, (g) issues of identity and governance of Catholic educational institutions, (h) the guidance for a Christian educational practice, (i) the moral, political and social dimensions of education.
Documents of the Benedict XVI pontificate

The nature of the documents of papal teaching is the object of a specialized literature and the influence of his Magisterium on Christianity and on the entire world is often a matter of academic discussion and mass media debate.

The official edition of the papal documents is in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (Acts of the Apostolic See), even if many formal translations are published in other periodicals, in the United States *Origins*, or other formal collections.

The Roman pontiff as universal pastor is the heir of a doctrinal *munus* (office). In carrying out this task, institutional authority generally prevails in the expressions of his personal style, personality and cultural background. The pope exercises his mission as Peter’s Successor basically in three ways: (a) by word, as he addresses all Christians and the whole world; (b) by writing, both with all the documents issued directly or by the departments of the Roman Curia which operate under his mandate; the encyclicals, which formally have the value of universal teaching, played a special pattern in the recent pontificates; (c) by actions, mainly initiatives and institutions of a scholarly and pastoral nature; a mention of the papal fostering activities of study throughout the Church and promoting institutes for teaching the faith (seminaries, faculties of theology and religious studies, theological associations, academies, etc.) is due on regard of the field of this inquiry.

Papal writings will be carefully analyzed in this study and, among them, a special regard will be given to *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d).

*In Depth Interviews*

The use of interviewing to acquire information is today very common and
assumes a plurality of forms. Interviews are purposeful conversations that come in a series of formats, “We can think of the interview method running along a *continuum from informal to formal*” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 111).

Patton (2002) divides interviews in three categories: (a) the informal or conversational interviews that have the goal to build a relationship and to explore ideas and the personality of a participant; (b) the general interview guide approach where the interviewer has a certain degree of control over the agenda of the conversation; (c) the standardized, open-ended interviews. “Qualitative, in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories” (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p. 101).

Even if in-depth interviews are conversational, there is here a certain degree of systematization in questioning and a special care will be given to personal interaction to let these interviews yield quickly a large quantity of quality data. “In-depth interview uses individuals as the point of departure for the research process and assumes that individuals have unique and important knowledge about the social world that is ascertainable through verbal communication” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119).

In-depth interviews are issue-oriented and generally concentrated in a unique session. The goal of such intensive interviews is to gain rich qualitative data from the perspective of international leaders of Catholic Education. In this study great attention will be given to balance in questioning about experiences and the perceptions of the participants.
Elite interviews.

Elite individuals are prominent and influential in an organization and can provide an overall view of it (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.105) and they have access to a great amount of information but often are not motivated or allowed to divulge them (Bennis & Nanus, 2003).

Each choice will be briefly explained and a general criterion has been used to build a purposeful sample of those who are interviewed. Informants are people in an institutional position, according to the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church, who are considered influential and well-informed on the reality of Catholic Education and have the possibility to develop a worldwide perspective.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Representation

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe this part of the research process as moving from the field to the text to the reader and follows, “The practice of this art allows the field-worker-as-bricoleur... to translate what he has been learned into a body of textual work that communicates these understanding to the reader” (p. 313).

In this study, the data exploration and reduction will be performed on the basis of the Neuendorf (2001) flow chart. This researcher will follow Neuendorf’s inductive nonlinear qualitative model; thus, the following steps will be executed: (a) focusing the topical area; (b) analyzing subsets of data; (c) generating codes or abstracting them from the text; (d) reiterating the analysis; (e) integrating additional sources such as memo notes; (f) refining the codes and generating meta-codes to reach a holistic interpretation and representation.

The elite interviews will require a longer treatment. The first step will be a
transcription inclusive of all verbal and nonverbal information. Then this researcher will follow David Karp's scheme for successful analysis of in-depth interview material, formalized in 2004, as it appears in Hesse-Biber and Leavy's manual of qualitative research (2006).

A strong attention will be paid to creating coding categories and an interview guide; to writing memos and to providing explanations for changes in analytical directions of the interviews; caring about the personality of every respondent especially to extreme cases because they are often the most informative.

Ethics in this research project

A consideration of ethics is a critical part of the substructure of the inquiry from its beginning since its public defense. Even if the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will oversee the goal and the correctness of the research procedures, it could be useful here, at the end of the presentation of the methodology of this study, to briefly reflect on (a) the moral and epistemological integrity, (b) the emotional engagement related to qualitative research, and finally (c) the general ethical standpoint of all the academic enterprise.

**Integrity**

"Epistemological integrity could be defined as a logical and compelling connection between the genre, the overall strategy, the research questions, the design, and the methods and is often quite convincing." (Marshall, & Rossman, 2006, p. 55).

However, in his study on higher education, Bruce Macfarlane (2004) gives an engaging and well-rounded definition of the word integrity, inclusive of its moral aspect, indeed, integrity "refers to a concern to focus on the character of the actor
rather than principle-based theories, such as utilitarianism and Kantianism . . . . What is required is an identification of virtues compatible with reflective professionalism” (p.127–128).

Emotional Engagement

The monitoring of emotional engagement, required by the nature of qualitative studies, will be done keeping a journal during the document analysis as well as taking accurate field-notes during the interviews.

Additionally, the Michael Patton’s (2002) ethics checklist will provide a practical internal guideline on how proceed in the inquiry.

The General Ethical Perspective

The ethical standpoint of this research is inspired by Bernard Lonergan’s developmental notion of effective freedom; William Matthews (2005) gives a powerful description of this notion:

Parents, educators, doctors, workers, managers, counselors, priests, policemen, and politicians are all confronted with the task of achieving effective freedom in their own interpersonal worlds. It might involve the undoing of biases, of bigotry, racist attitudes, hatreds, the prisons of our minds and hearts that lock up our essential freedom to grasp the truth and pursue values. It might involve letting go outdated ways of understanding and teaching or might demand forgiveness, a change of heart. The illustrations, though limited, point to extensiveness of the limitations on our effective freedom. (p. 428)
CHAPTER IV

BENEDICT XVI’S CHALLENGE TO CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The First Papal Encyclical on Love

The publication of the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d) was in many ways a first. It was the first document of this kind written by Benedict XVI, the first in the entire history of the Church to focus on the theme of love, the first to have the Pope himself directly involved in its publication. Prior to this encyclical letter, the papal Magisterium had never dealt in such a direct, explicit, and analytical way with the subject of love.

Love also distinguishes the way Benedict XVI presented this document to readers of *Famiglia Cristiana* (The Christian Family - in the issue of February 5th) the most widely bought weekly magazine in Italy (De Cicco, 2006). On this occasion, he wrote an open letter, a first of its kind written by a pope, presenting the encyclical with authentic pastoral care and giving suggestions to the faithful to facilitate its reading.

This encyclical catalyzes the paradigmatic role transition that happened to Ratzinger with the papal election. Unlike the past, when he appeared as the severe custodian of the orthodoxy of the faith, he presents himself as the humble servant of the Church with a renewed attitude to teach, to listen to the needs of the world and to mentor people in search of the truth. The papal teaching seems to begin a path of pastoral action conceived as pedagogy for the spiritual growth of the people of God.

This path finds its model in the richness of Divine Love as it is described in
the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* that could be considered a landmark of the first year of Benedict XVI’s pontificate. Notably, at least three major issues of his previous theological reflection inspire, enrich and strengthen this reflection about love: (a) the theme of ecclesial communion, extensively researched by James Massa (1997), that is achieved by a procedure that Ratzinger defined at the beginning of his theological career, “the idea of *ablatio* or the stripping away of conceptual and institutional incrustations which had obscured the true image of the Church as bride of Christ and as *communio* of believers living in and from his body” (p. 389); (b) the complex issue of the relationship between faith and rationality. Benedict XVI conceived the document as a result of the correct exercise of true rationality. In this sense, a most interesting background is the theme of the state of mind under which we believe (expressions typical also of Cardinal Newman’s reflection) and the relationship between true knowledge and love. Andrea Bellandi (1996) and almost all the most significant commentaries on Ratzinger’s works developed these issues: André Fermet (1973), Jan Luis Segundo (1985), Jacques Rollet (1987), Aidan Nichols (1988), Hermann Häring (2001), Paolo Martuccelli (2001); (c) the relationship between Christian beliefs and the ethics of witnesses which is a priority issue for Ratzinger as demonstrated by the many life-interviews he delivered (Vittorio Messori, 1985; Peter Seewald, 1997; Giuseppe De Carli, 2005), by the autobiography, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977* (Ratzinger, 1998) in which he reconstructed his life from his childhood to his appointment as bishop of Munich, as well as by the most significant works of biographers—like John Allen Jr. (2000).

Moreover, as Avery Dulles (2007) underlines, the encyclical seems to include
both the major issues of Ratzinger’s thought and many of its limits:

The sources it cites as authorities are for the most part biblical and patristic. When it cites philosophers, it does not treat them as authorities. It speaks of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, but in each case the purpose is to point out how they failed to attain the full truth of biblical revelation. Patristic theologians such as Augustine, Gregory I, and Pseudo-Dionysius, by contrast, are always cited with the intention of reaffirming their views. Interestingly, the encyclical makes no reference to scholastic authors, not even to Thomas Aquinas. The pope does not disagree with St Thomas, so far as I can see, but he concentrates on the biblical and patristic roots, perhaps to make his theology more accessible. It is also noteworthy that the encyclical does not mention modern scholars who have traced what they have called the “problem of love” in its medieval and modern history. (p. 21)

The limits of this encyclical are even more evident in critical analysis like that of Tyssa Balasuriya’s:

While acknowledging a variety of viewpoints, the Encyclical remains firmly grounded in a traditional Western context. Adherents among the many strains of contemporary Christian theology may thus find much to take issue with here. Feminist theologians will object to its occasionally sexist language, along with its arguments with respect to reproductive rights. Liberation theology in the Latin American grain receives no acknowledgment of its unique contribution to the development of Christian teaching over the past several decades (e.g. love as it relates to compassionate activism and efforts at constructive social change). Proponents of liberation theology in its Asian and African incarnations will have much to say about their experience of the "Christian love" imposed on them through Western colonialism. Those seeking inter-religious dialogue may wish to remind the Pope that the traditional Christian interpretation of “God is love” seems not to have applied to them throughout much of Catholicism's history. And those concerned with inter-racial justice, global ethics, and ecology may also find fault with Christian theology and spirituality as they experienced it. (2006, p. 230)

Nonetheless, Deus Caritas Est is a document well articulated, well reasoned,
reflective, a true example of Western erudition and its tone of language is moderate.

The encyclical doesn’t directly address specific fields such as education and only a few passages are directly related to this topic. Thus, education is mentioned—in the second part of the document—as a work of charity that contributes to the building of a just society. Indeed, the pope mentions the achievements of religious orders founded in the nineteenth century to combat poverty and disease and to answer to the need for better education (DCE, no. 27). Education is included in a horizon where love manifests the original nature of the Church’s service and where service is viewed as a tangible form of this love.

Furthermore, Benedict XVI designs two alternative patterns of the presence of education in this encyclical. The first comes from a comparison with ecumenism. Indeed, commenting on the apparent lack in the encyclical of any reference about ecumenism, Benedict XVI made an interesting distinction between the letter of the text and the contexts and background (January 18, 2006):

My first Encyclical will finally be published that same day, 25 January; its title is already known: “Deus Caritas Est,” “God is love.” The theme is not directly ecumenical, but the context and background are ecumenical because God and our love are the condition for Christian unity. They are the condition for peace in the world. (Benedict XVI, 2006f, ¶ 16)

Therefore, it is possible to infer that education and its relationship with the different forms of love could be found in the context and background of the encyclical. The second kind of presence comes from the proximity between the notion of education and of the exercise of intellectual charity. As Leuzzi (2007, p. 11) noted, Benedict XVI, in a speech delivered to the audience for the Fifth Day of the European Student, said that he would write another chapter of the encyclical devoted
to intellectual charity (March 10, 2007). That means that the encyclical contains the premises for such development and offers the theoretical foundations for the convergence of knowledge and love in an educational setting.

To conclude, the encyclical is a doctrinal reflection about love. However, Benedict XVI keeps writing from a perspective essentially theological in contrast to a more empirical reading which would have characterized a trained historian. This is an important distinction. Nowhere does Ratzinger show any contextual or historical sense. Like his latter-friend Balthasar, he is essentially a theologian. Historians tend to be much more aware of relativity, of change and context. Thus historians understand that for the believer, faith is always lived out within the context of history. Thus our theological understandings are determined and limited by the constraints of culture and human experience. (Collins, 2005, p. 147)

Structure of Deus Caritas Est

Deus Caritas Est (God is love–Benedict XVI, 2005d, in the text quotations this document is abbreviated as DCE followed by the number of the paragraph) has forty-two paragraphs presented in a one-single-paragraph introduction, two sections, and a short conclusion. The author explains the main articulation of the documents in the following terms:

The first part is more speculative, since I wanted here—at the beginning of my Pontificate—to clarify some essential facts concerning the love which God mysteriously and gratuitously offers to man, together with the intrinsic link between that Love and the reality of human love. The second part is more concrete, since it treats the ecclesial exercise of the commandment of love of neighbor. (DCE, no.1)

This articulation is clear as Benedict XVI is at the same time sensitive to the legacy of John Paul II and also able to develop a new style of papal teaching:
Benedict’s first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, is also distinctly moderate . . . . Benedict brilliantly incorporates the criticism of the church and then corrects it theologically. The second half of the document, apparently begun by John Paul II and left unfinished at his death, warns that Catholic charities must see themselves as part of the church’s expression of love, not merely as one more benevolent organization trying to do good in the world. Catholic charitable activity, it insists, is not “a means of changing the world ideologically . . . but a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs.” Such charity is not separate from the Spirit’s outpouring of love in the church or the church’s mission to bear the love of God into the world. (Byassee, 2006, p. 22)

Benedict XVI conceives these parts as *profoundly interconnected*, as he explained to the participants in a meeting (23 January 2006) organized by the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* (One Heart) on the theme *But the Greatest of These Is Love* (1 Cor13:13):

A first, theoretical part that talks about the essence of love, and a second part that addresses ecclesial charity, with charitable organizations. However, what interested me was precisely the unity of the two topics, which can only be properly understood if they are seen as only one thing. (2006e, ¶ 12)

Indeed, the encyclical is an exercise of wisdom, theoretical and practical, about the nature and the consequences of love. Therefore, this wisdom can help the presence and action of the Church in the world and can catalyze the transition, within the pastoral activity of the Church, from problematic situations to an improved one: “That transition involves two components, namely, reflection and action. Either component alone he considers an aberration. Action without reflection is blind, routine, and unprogressive. Reflection without action . . . is meaningless” (Lonergan, 2000, p. 4).
In other words, the encyclical could be considered a significant means that helps love to transform the world, as it is a document that intends to inspire and to guide the life of the Church:

Theory cannot be separated from practice. Theory is indispensable to the transformation of the world... without theory we lose ourselves in the middle of the road. But, on the other hand, without practice, we lose ourselves in the air. It is only through the... dialectical relationship of practice and theory that we can find ourselves and, if sometime we lose ourselves, we will find ourselves again in the end.” (Freire, 1993, 102, 132)

This dialectical relationship between theory and practice seems to be originally developed by Benedict XVI. In a recent speech on higher education, he describes how in medieval theology there was a detailed disputation on the relationship between theory and practice (on the proper relationship between knowledge and action) and how the model of the medieval university with its four faculties expresses this correlation (Benedict XVI, 2008b, ¶ 10).

Returning to the text of Deus Caritas Est (see also DCE, no. 28), the theoretical reflection about love can lead to a commitment to its practice in terms of awareness to develop the long range view needed to “give solid ground on which to build the social and economic structures which are needed to support love” (Dunne, 1985, p.105) and to make possible concrete action achieving love and justice.

The ultimate challenge is not to reduce love to just the topic of spiritual and theological speeches, but rather to both theorize about education and love, and also to live them concretely. This is possible only through a dialectical relationship between theory and practice, which means connecting the text of the encyclical with the life of the Christian communities and institutions.
The Characteristics of Charity in *Deus Caritas Est*

*Philosophical Elements for a Definition of Love and its Characteristics*

In accordance with the Christian vision, a first and general definition of love could be, "Love is an expression of spirit. It is spirit seeking the enjoyment of freedom in communion with other" (Williams, 1968, p.3). This statement is true both at the levels of divine and human existence. However, human love is a penultimate reality and is founded on the divine love. In the many Christian theological traditions, love is associated with life and especially with light (Inge, 1935), a trait that Benedict XVI seems to highlight in the encyclical too:

Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. (DCE, no. 39)

Moreover, at the beginning of *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d), Benedict XVI states that love manifests God’s identity and is the way God relates with humanity. Divine and human loves are analyzed as part of a single discourse as they point to a profound underlying unity.

Love, the main topic of the encyclical, is amply described and its characteristics are deduced from essential facts. These traits describe it as visible reality. Moreover, love can be recognized through these marks which also play the role of criteria to find love in all situations. Indeed, a mark belongs to love both as a quality of its existence but also as an operative category of its action.

There are intrinsic properties that love has by virtue of itself, depending on no other reality. They could be determined by inspection of the object itself. There are
other characteristics that come from the encounter of love with other notions. Benedict XVI finds these properties mainly through a biblical and historical inquiry. These traits let readers achieve some knowledge about the original, ethical, pedagogical and theological nature of love.

Benedict XVI doesn’t offer a systematic and exhaustive list of all the possible attributes of love rather he articulates an extensive description of love which includes many of them. In other words, this narrative approach is different from a comprehensive reflection on the Christian notion of love that should include (a) the premises in classic literature and philosophy, (b) the major Christian classics, (c) as well as other authors who developed a doctrine of love in dialectic with the Christian perspective on it.

In the first part of this chapter, the researcher will attempt a close reading of the text of Deus Caritas Est pursuing the goal of mapping the characteristics of love as they are presented in this document.

Love as the Center of Faith

Benedict XVI is not the first pope to affirm the centrality of love in the Christian experience. To limit the references to the contemporary pontificates, Pius XII (1956) in Haurietis Acquas (You shall draw waters), whose anniversary almost coincided with the release of Deus Caritas Est (2005), mentioned love within the mystery of the heart of Christ and the devotion related to it. Moreover, John XXIII (1999) in Journal of a Soul and Paul VI in his speeches about intellectual charity often returned to this notion; finally, John Paul II made the importance of love a constitutive element of his teaching and in his first encyclical Redemptor Hominis
(The redeemer of man- John Paul II, 1979a) he stated that:

Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. (no. 10)

However, Benedict XVI is the first pope to fully develop this centrality of love. At the beginning of the encyclical, he approaches the definition of love touching the absolute foundations of things. Love is described in its essence, as center and source, as the heart of the Christian faith, as essential for the definition of the Christian image of God and of the resulting image of mankind and of its destiny. The Pope expresses this centrality through the words of St. John, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1Jn 4:16) (DCE, no. 1).

From the first paragraphs of the encyclical, love is described as primordial word. Love is the primordial creative power that moves the universe; man is part of a project of love that began with the Creation, as affirmed later in the text, “His creation is dear to him, for it was willed by him and “made” by him. The second important element now emerges: this God loves man” (DCE, no. 9). This love is within the human drama and it is a constant presence throughout the history of salvation. Moreover, love is related with the mystery of God and the subjects “God” “Christ” and “Love” are connected and become the central guide of the Christian faith. To conclude, a sympathetic reader of the encyclical summarized this trait of originality and importance of love:

Benedict XVI intends, therefore, to bring us back to the living center, to the essence of the Christian message, in order to find in it again the freshness and the simplicity of an event. This event astonishes, opens a new horizon, and
gives life a new and decisive direction: a direction that is determined by the
discovery of the Love of the Father that comes to us in Jesus.” (Melina, 2006,
p. 17)

Love as Personal Encounter

According to Benedict XVI, love is the primordial event of the intimate
encounter with a loving and personal God (DCE, no. 18). A concrete experience of
the personal encounter with God’s love distinguishes Christian life and makes it
different from an ethical choice or an intellectual creed:

Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come
to know and to believe in the love God has for us . . . Being Christian is not
the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event,
a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. (DCE, no.
1)

Good theoretical foundations and a rigorous morality are relevant parts of the
Christian experience, but they belong to a further level while love as event and the
event of love seem to be the fundamental nature of it.

According to Benedict XVI, love is an encounter that means an event that
requires a structural openness to the other: “Saint John's words should rather be
interpreted to mean that love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with
God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God” (DCE, no. 16).

Benedict XVI defines specifically this encounter as concrete and personal.
Indeed, God knows each by name (Jn 10:1–3), because love is intimate and personal
knowledge of the beloved person.

Moreover, the nature of love is to enact a dialectical process: love as
encounter is further articulated in terms of gift that leads to a response. Love grows
from an indeterminate condition of research to a real discovery of the other and to a
gradual responsibility in terms of concern and care for the other (DCE, no. 6). Love could be defined as a journey toward authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.

The encyclical contains a number of further considerations on the nature of love as encounter that, in its gradual unfolding, clearly reveals that love: (a) is not merely a sentiment (DCE, no. 17); (b) cannot be produced by the will but is able to involve it; (c) cannot be commanded; indeed, since God has first loved us (cfr. 1 Jn 4:10), is now no longer a mere “command” but the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us; (d) asks for reciprocity:

He has loved us first and he continues to do so; we too, then, can respond with love. God does not demand of us a feeling which we ourselves are incapable of producing. He loves us, he makes us see and experience his love, and since he has “loved us first”, love can also blossom as a response within us. (DCE, no. 17)

Love is personal awareness of and memory of our origins from the mystery of the Love of God, indeed, “The root from which love comes is more profound than its conscious life; it is more intimate and secret than the very desire in which it is manifested. It precedes the conscious motivations of our acts” (Melina, 2006, p. 19). Therefore, an ontological priority of love over desire, passion, and emotion exists so that love is the ultimate root of human being and action.

Love is an encounter that seeks to become definitive both in the sense of personal exclusivity and in the sense of being forever (DCE, no. 6).

Love as a personal encounter requires a mutual understanding. Thus, it strengthens the foundations of rich and satisfying primary relationships in the Church as community as Avery Dulles stresses (2002, p. 49).
Since Apostolic times, mutual love has been an element of the very consistency of the Christian message and of the Church’s witness in front of the world:

The external mission of the Church can never be separated from its inner life. In the early centuries, the Church expanded not so much because of concerted missionary efforts as through its power of attraction as a contrast to society. Seeing the mutual love and support of Christians, and the high moral standards they observed, the pagans sought entrance into the Church (Dulles, 2002, p. 213)

Love is Multiform

In his reflection about love, Benedict XVI stresses the fact that love is an abused word that has countless and even contrasting meanings. He presents a simple list of some of them as the starting point of his reflection:

Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word “love”: we speak of love of country, love of one’s profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbor and love of God. (DCE, no. 2)

This is neither a complete list nor a systematic one. Indeed, Benedict XVI doesn’t mention many kinds of love: of the environment, of art and of beauty, of animals, of learning, of knowledge, of searching for truth, etc. However, this seems to be just the first step of his analysis that begins from the most elementary forms of love—that Lewis (1991) in his classifications of the different kinds of love gathers under the category of affection—to the highest level of the love of God. These loves are not wholly separated and blend into one another.

After this introduction, Benedict XVI examines eros and agape as two dimensions of love: indeed, “Fundamentally, ‘love’ is a single reality, but with
different dimensions; at different times, one or other dimension may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love" (DCE, no. 8).

Benedict XVI’s hermeneutics prefers a tradition that stresses the profound unity among different forms of love rather than an approach that emphasizes the dichotomy between eros and agape.

This latter tradition was formalized by Anders Nygren (1890–1978) and Karl Barth (1886–1968) about a century ago and has influenced part of contemporary Western culture’s approach to this issue. However, Benedict XVI refers to a more ancient and well-established tradition; indeed, a deep contraposition between eros and agape was considered false by many of the patristic authorities:

A thesis such as this one has the support of an exceptional witness like Origen—who most certainly could not be accused of having inadequate linguistic preparation—who calmly observes how the two words want to express the same thing except for the fact that, so he says, on the one hand, the term eros has a sensual connotation, while, on the other, it is more vague. (Salmeri, 2006, pp. 80-81)

Therefore, it is possible to achieve this potential complementarity of eros and agape on the condition that the sensualism of eros is educated, leading back to its positive potentialities. The integration of eros and agape will influence anthropology in many senses: from the issue of the relationship between body and soul to the love between man and woman where “body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness” (DCE, no. 2).

According to Benedict XVI’s vision, a goal of human formation to love is to let, “The element of agape thus enters into this love [eros], for otherwise eros is
impoverished and even loses its own nature” (DCE, no. 7). A biblical image can also express the inner dialectic of love and its human and divine poles, “In the account of Jacob's ladder, the Fathers of the Church saw this inseparable connection between ascending and descending love, between eros which seeks God and agape which passes on the gift received symbolized in various ways” (DCE, no. 7).

Love has a Healing Nature

Love has a healing power at least in two senses. The contemporary human condition of man is marked by fragmentation and lost with their psychological consequences: love can alleviate this human sufferance with the support of benevolence, admiration and care.

However, according to the Christian vision of history, humanity is wounded to a deeper level because of original sin which is one of the reasons that made the human drama the place for the history of salvation. God relates to the world “with a view to healing the whole human race” (DCE, no. 9) and “God’s passionate love for his people—for humanity—is at the same time a forgiving love” (DCE, no. 10).

Thus, love manifests its healing power as it is deeply related to forgiveness, “Every fault committed against God is a betrayal of love because it is committed against the one who loves unconditionally (gratuitously) and never ceases to do so. The forgiveness offered is the glory of God” (Laffitte, 2006, p. 177). This love had its highest manifestation in the salvific mission of Jesus as John Paul II formulated in Dives in Misericordia (God, who is rich in mercy), “Making the Father present as love and mercy is, in Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of His mission as the Messiah” (1980, ¶ 3:4).
Love Engages the Whole Person

One of the points of Benedict XVI’s concern is avoiding some results of a partial and alienating perspective on love:

We are actually dealing with a debasement of the human body: no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere. The apparent exaltation of the body can quickly turn into a hatred of bodiliness. (DCE, no. 5)

On the contrary, the human search for love should seek complementarity between body and soul because “man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united” (DCE, no. 5). Love should be considered as a path to human dignity, the attempt to preserve the integrity of the human being as, “Christian faith… has always considered man a unity in duality, a reality in which spirit and matter compenetrate, and in which each is brought to new nobility” (DCE, no. 5). Benedict XVI is very clear about this issue, “It is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature” (DCE, no. 5) and he highlights that:

It is characteristic of mature love that it calls into play all man’s potentialities; it engages the whole man, so to speak. Contact with the visible manifestations of God’s love can awaken within us a feeling of joy born of the experience of being loved. But this encounter also engages our will and our intellect. (DCE, no. 17)

Love is Open to Growing towards Higher Levels

Love is not a static reality but has its own inner dynamic that makes it open to growing. The growth is also from a love that is still insecure, indeterminate and searching to a love that is concerned and cares for the other, that seeks for the good of the beloved, that is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.
To achieve this goal, human love as *eros* “needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns” (DCE, no. 4). Benedict XVI further describes this need for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing of love because, “an intoxicated and undisciplined eros, then, is not an ascent in ‘ecstasy’ towards the Divine, but a fall, a degradation of man” (DCE, no. 4).

To return to a good form of sensual love is the first phase of a long process that leads to higher goals as, “Love embraces the whole of existence in each of its dimensions, including the dimension of time. It could hardly be otherwise, since its promise looks towards its definitive goal: love looks to the eternal” (DCE, no. 6) and:

It is part of love's growth towards higher levels and inward purification that it now seeks to become definitive and it does so in a twofold sense: both in the sense of exclusivity (this particular person alone) and in the sense of being “for ever”. (DCE, no. 6)

A good image that represents this progress is the passage from ecstasy - because true eros tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine and to lead people beyond themselves - to exodus. Benedict XVI defines the nature of this passage as:

Love is indeed “ecstasy”, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God. (DCE, no. 6)

*Love Makes “Visible” the Divine*

According to Benedict XVI, affirming the association between love and God is a prophetic choice, “In a world where the name of God is sometimes associated
with vengeance or even a duty of hatred and violence, this message is both timely and significant.” (DCE, no. 1)

Love makes God visible as the communion of persons in the first revelation of the divine love in the Trinity, the example of perfect life that it is the life-love of person for person, where there is a complete union without loss of personality. Trinity is the perfect model of love because of the coincidentia (coincidence) of eros and agape as, “God loves, and his love may certainly be called eros, yet it is also totally agape” (DCE, no. 9) and further, “We have seen that God’s eros for man is also totally agape. This is not only because it is bestowed in a completely gratuitous manner, without any previous merit, but also because it is love which forgives” (DCE, no. 10). Because God is a communion of persons, God loves the human person with a personal love. The nature of man is determined by this love as:

The being-for proper to person is, in an analogous way to the Trinity, being part of a communion . . . This unity to which the Christian belongs is the Church, a communion of love that can be perceived in the birth both of a new mentality and of a new way of being with the other, of being at the service of the other, a culture of love . . . We carry the wounds and the joys of the other within ourselves and bring them in Christ through the Spirit to the father. (Lopez, 2006, p. 197)

Love makes visible the nature of God’s benevolence toward humanity through election and the gift of freedom as shown in the first covenant, “His love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her” (DCE, no. 9). The history of the love-relationship between God and Israel includes: a) the gift of the Torah (Law); b) opening Israel’s eyes to the true human nature; c) showing to Israel the path leading to true humanism.
The revelation of love in the Songs of Songs is a synthesis of the God’s love for humanity, as Benedict XVI highlights in the encyclical (DCE, no. 6; 10). Indeed:

The Song presents us with the reality of human love as it is now experienced—a created joy with multiple pleasures but fraught also with tensions, dangers, and disappointments. The wonder of love in the Song is that it is precisely through our bodily realities and problems that are encountered because of our fallen nature that love reaches its fulfillment. This is truly a redemptive understanding of love. (Atkinson, 2006, p. 135)

Moreover, love makes visible the radical nature of God’s action in favor of humanity as prophets in the ancient covenant, especially the prophet Hosea, show us that:

This agape dimension of God's love for man goes far beyond the aspect of gratuity . . . God's passionate love for his people—for humanity— is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice. (DCE, no. 10)

Benedict XVI considers the legacy of Israel important in furthering Christian development: “In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel’s faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth” (DCE, no. 1).

On the level of Scripture, the novelty of Christianity is related to a new meaning of love: “The tendency to avoid the word eros, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word agape, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love” (DCE, no. 3). Indeed, the New Testament mainly uses the term agape - which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage - to express love, while the term philia, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.
Love makes God visible in the highest expression of divine salvific intentionality as the further revelation of divine love is Jesus Christ, Son of God and son of Man, who made through his Cross and Resurrection a unity of love where men and women, remaining as such, can also be sons and daughters of God. The mystery of Incarnation involves faith, worship and ethos being interwoven as a single reality that takes shape in our encounter with God's love:

Only by keeping in mind this Christological and sacramental basis can we correctly understand Jesus' teaching on love. The transition that he makes from the Law and the Prophets to the twofold commandment of love of God and of neighbor, and his grounding the whole life of faith on this central precept, is not simply a matter of morality—something that could exist apart from and alongside faith in Christ and its sacramental re-actualization. (DCE, no. 14)

Jesus with his teaching and actions manifested to all mankind the love of God. This universality of love is described in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lc 10:30–37) and in the amplification of the notion of neighbor and of the concrete love for man in the parable of the Last Judgment:

Lastly, we should especially mention the great parable of the Last Judgment (cf. Mt 25:31–46), in which love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life's worth or lack thereof. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God. (DCE, no. 15)

The relationship with Christ renews the way people can see each other and the world, beyond the superficial level of appearances:
Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern. This I can offer them not only through the organizations intended for such purposes, accepting it perhaps as a political necessity. Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love that they crave. (DCE, no.18)

Love makes visible the universality of the Holy Spirit that animates the Church in her pastoral action, “The Church is God's family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life. Yet at the same time *caritas–agape* extends beyond the frontiers of the Church” (DCE, no. 25) and her awareness:

God’s gifts are not confined to people who employ biblical or Christian symbolism. The Church understands God as the loving Father of all men; it celebrates and preaches God’s redemptive love extended to all. The Church, therefore, takes it for granted that others besides Christians are recipients of God’s grace in Christ. (Dulles, 2002, p. 63)

The Effects of the Characteristics of Charity on Education

*The Relational Structure of Catholic Education*

Catholic Education is a form of engagement between society, culture and Church (Buetow, 1988; D’Orsa, 2002) and therefore as each educator has three different publics—academic, ecclesial, civic (Elias, 1986, pp.17–28)—each actor has to deal with at least two others (individuals or groups, directly involved or represented through a symbolic artifact).

Thus, different schemes of relationships could result from the various possible combinations and each of them requires maturity, the respect of some ethical rules and values, a connection with Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium. The most
common of these schemes are the relationships of teacher-pupil and professor-student/researcher. In primary and secondary Catholic education, this relationship between teacher and pupil includes a family, a civic local community, a curriculum, a certain kind of educational institution, a style of cultural transmission, a church community, etc. In Catholic higher education, the learning-teaching process includes present and future customers or clients (according to the different professions), the scientific community (with different profiles according to the field of research), the ecclesial institution related to the university, etc.

Using a religious terminology each relationship includes another kind of diversity: elements of creation, of mankind, of the Absolute. All these kinds of presence can be gathered under the category of “the other” as question, challenge and promise:

The other, standing as mystery before a self, an ‘I’, which is also mystery, is thus a constant request, a question, a world to discover and to know, so that the other can also became a response. . . . The other is thus a threat, a challenge, a danger, a source of anxiety, but also a promise of perfecting, of promoting of the value realized in the giving of the self. (Imoda, 1998, p. 191)

The Relevance of the Education of the Heart

The centrality of love in the Christian experience brings emphasis on education of the heart that can be interpreted as the formation of mature affectivity and a life inspired by moral feelings, virtues, good habits and predispositions:

Keeping in mind the relational aspect of affectivity, we are able to distinguish four steps in the development of affectivity: (1) the capacity to engage in positive relationship with all; (2) the capacity to initiate friendly relations; (3) friendship; (4) the capacity of love of one spouse or for all, according to one’s state in life (conjugal or virginal). (Di Pietro, 2006, p. 359)
However, in Christian tradition, the heart is the symbol of the deepest dynamic of the human being, the place where life is unified and has its origins. Therefore, it could represent the formation of integrity. Moreover, the education of the heart should lead people: (a) to overcome selfishness and to live according to altruism, brotherly love, hospitality; (b) to reach the maturity of Christian life, “so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming” (Eph 4:14) and be receptive of the challenge, “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Rm 12:2) because, “When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things” (I Cor 13:11).

There exists in the human person (and precisely in the region of the heart) that which Plato called ‘thumos’, an affective area which is quite different from the pure vital force, the need (epithumia) . . . . It is human desire as it is expressed in the area of passions; more specifically in three passions involving possession (avoir), power (pouvoir), and worth (valoir). (Imoda, 1998, p. 57)

Training Students with Joy and Creativity

Love is openness to encounter others. It puts emphasis on a model of education that has at its center the human being (child, pupil, student, researcher, young professional, etc.) and it is conceived as an act of care and creativity. This form of education should bring joy to people involved in it and should encourage the expression of all the good potentialities of the person.
Such a model of education based on the role of love was adopted for the gradual reformation of pedagogy achieved by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) and further developed by Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), and it inspired part of the philosophy of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), especially the way to attain individual maturation in terms of inner freedom, perfection, benevolence, justice, and equity or recompense.

Pestalozzi promoted the value of intuition, of experience and of perception based on senses: he believed that without some sense, any form of instruction easily became a form of violence and oppression. He criticized a didactics based only on the use of written texts that he considered symbols of external and dogmatic precepts. He preferred to use books as sources and nourishment of the children’s imagination as a tool to free the mind and not to produce constraint (Hayward, 1979).

Many of the principles—such as gradualism of learning, progressive assimilation, self activity—that Pestalozzi supported have been applied to the very beginning of the life of the child by Froebel. A popular example of this approach to education could be considered the use of the Froebel’s gifts as introductory material to the study of the formal disciplines, an approach based on the importance of free play for children. The logic of the gift is considered as the true foundation of educational practice: the mind should be fed by love and then occupied with exercises. In general, education should follow the rhythm and the style of care typical of the primary relationships.

This model of schooling based only on human nature and its natural development had the important function to free education from formalism. However,
it has a critical limitation that should be carefully considered. Indeed, the Jewish philosopher and educationalist Martin Buber (1878–1965) criticized this model through a vision of education that on this point is very similar to the Catholic one:

One of the central principles of Buber’s educational doctrines comes into play—that encounter, which is the focus of the process of education. Buber contends that the child is an active partner in the process by which his creativity is transformed, and that the agency of that transformation is the child’s ‘originative instinct’. This instinct is primary and spontaneous, although it can direct the child either to create things or destroy them, it tends rather toward the making of things than aimless action. The encounter leading to ‘communion’ between pupil and educator is meant to guide, direct and support the child’s potentialities, of which the instinct of creation is one of the most important. By virtue of this encounter, the reality with which the pupil grapples is made vital and actual, and those of its aspects that were abstract prior to the encounter become concrete and immediate. (Cohen, 1983, p. 37)

Therefore, it is the total environment that, interacting with human nature and freedom, authentically educates the child. In other words, affirming the value of freedom is a good under the condition of tempering it through wise guidance.

Analogously, encouraging mutual love leads to humanizing education but this should be done within an ethical framework. Indeed, in certain relationship (as doctor-patient or teacher-pupil) to become wholly mutual would deprive these bonds of their distinctive value.

Coscientization and Social Agency as a Goal of Education

Love is multiform, inclusive of differences, and it is inclined to enlarge horizons. Love could inspire a model of education able to combat any form of reductionism. It engages the whole person and inspires the holistic educational approach to the individual being. These are the reasons that make love inspire a
pedagogy and an educational practice capable of deconstructing the foundations of authoritarianism.

The ideological formation for the reproduction of inequality entails a lack of knowledge of the structural conditions of social injustice and economic inequality as well as an oppressive practice of education that doesn’t support the critical development of students as full integral beings. Thus, a compelling educational goal is to foster coscientization and social agency to allow students to learn about the world while changing it for the better.

The struggle against any form of educational reductionism that leads to ideology and destroys the humanistic utopia marked the entire life of the pedagogist Paulo Freire (1921–1997) and of the scholars that followed his theories (see also Darder, 2002). His paradigm of reflection-action began with the articulation of the notion of human freedom (Freire, 1970) and, in a certain sense, culminated in a revolutionary utopia of hope (Freire, 1996).

According to his thought, education should be inspired by pedagogy as art and life and should go beyond the domain of techniques. Students need a loving pedagogy capable of promoting the continuous growth of their human and intellectual horizons. To educate with love is an act of courage and means to offset the debilitating nature of fears. Each individual person should be helped to realize the predispositions contained in his/her own individual being. Educators, through love, should be able to see the potentialities of education as an emancipatory force and to commit their life to the liberation of others, especially those who are marginalized.

Particular attention should be given to the role of “sensualism” - a
characteristic of love-eros that can be educated - and its revolutionary potential for
the empowerment of the teaching process (Darder, 2002, p. 96). This is a concrete
way to root in love the development of critical conscience and a commitment to social
justice.

The Healing Role of Pedagogy of Love

Love has a healing power that could make educational practice more human in
the sense that it gives a proper place to the person. It is based on a didactic that
respects the gradualism of human learning and that promotes the maturity of human
love in terms of empathy, control of desire, discernment and silence. This educational
process is able to heal the wounds of the human soul, being similar to the work of
analytical therapy. However, the healing power of love can achieve much more and
promote a new humanism that includes the pedagogy of love. The most important
aspiration of this pedagogy is healing the split between mind and heart. Since the
beginning of his theological career, Benedict XVI promoted this convergence through
a model of authentic rationality that contrasts with the narrow model of the reasoning
of scientific positivism.

The pedagogy of love could be compared to the ‘genetic’ pedagogy proposed
by Franco Imoda (2000). “Genetic” pedagogy transcends common sense as well as
theoretical or interior pedagogy that, in Imoda’s theory (a) responds to the immediate
need and can hardly adapt to novelty and change; (b) is exposed to reductionism from
below (psychological) or from above (spiritual); (c) could result in subjectivism:

Genetic pedagogy not only takes the questions, the struggles and motivations
seriously at each level of maturity, but also tends to bring them into
relationship with the questions, struggles, and more fundamental
anthropological motivation: those which confront the subject with the absolute Other. (Imoda, 2000, p. 154)

The Challenge of Holistic Formation

A love that engages the whole person makes an effort to include emotions, passions, dreams and spirit in the formation process. However, a reflection on love could challenge Catholic education much more by proposing a model of holistic formation that is a real solution to the fragmented identity and multiple self that contemporary man is experiencing.

Martin D’Arcy (1888–1976) reflected on the double aspect of love—eros (love in its selfish, passionate forms) and love-agape (the selfless Christian love for one's neighbor, which the New Testament and especially St. Paul called “charity”).

Eros and agape are marked by two different approaches to the self; one more sensual, existential and the other more essential, rational.

Their conflict is unnecessary and the two loves (better the two dimensions of love) so far from being opposites, appear to require the presence of each other. D’Arcy looked for a synthesis between classical and biblical elements, concluding that Christian love must be paradoxically both selfish and selfless (D’Arcy, 1947). A deeper level of integration between the essential and existential self could be a solid anthropological foundation for a model of Catholic education that is aware of the complexity of self that has emerged in modern psychology.

Education as an Effort to Get to the Highest Forms of Good

Love as a desire for unity with the beloved and for enjoyment of that which is good plays a significant role in a model of education where people are educated for some good (Lonergan, 2000, p. 26). More specifically, education can help the person
to grow in the awareness of the invariant structure of good and to enjoy its highest levels. Lonergan defines three orders of good: particular good, good of order, value.

There are different kinds of values—vital, social and cultural—that are preludes to the most comprehensive religious values and that are governed by relations of mutual presupposition and complementarity. This multiplicity of values should be a characteristic of the non-negotiable platform of a Catholic educational institution and should contribute to making clear its specificity.

At least two corollaries of Lonergan’s theory of human good should influence the structure and the life of a Catholic educational institution. They are (a) the isomorphism that exists between the three kinds of good, the human condition, the progressive levels of human knowledge, the different kind of societies and cultures; (b) the openness to the new context of education marked by three critical factors: masses, new learning, and specialization.

Restoring the True Image of God and of Mankind

Love is essential for Christian faith and makes the Divine “visible”. From this consideration it is possible to develop an original definition of the purpose of Catholic education as an effort - not just through religious instruction but through the whole curriculum and the entire life of the organization—to make people embark with courage on the path to becoming an image of God, as Ratzinger states commenting on Psalm 22:10 in Meditation on the Priesthood of 1987:

The one praying here blesses Yahweh, who has “counseled” him, and thanks him because at night he has “instructed him”. The Septuagint and the Vulgate are with this formulation evidently thinking of the physical laws that “educate” a person. “Education” is understood as being correctly adjusted to the true dimension of the human being, which is not to be realized without
suffering. The word *education* would be, in this case, a comprehensive expression for the direction of a person along the way of salvation; through that process of transformation by which from being clay we become an image of God, and so we are able to receive God for eternity. (Thornton, 2007 p. 277)

The Characteristics of the Church’s Service of Charity

In the second part of the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI offers to the reader an exercise of practical wisdom about the role of the Church’s service of charity within civic society. The starting point is that the personal dialectic of love between God and creatures cannot remain as something merely at an individual level, but has to become an essential act of the Church as community. Moreover, an institutional form is also needed to better express the communal action of the Church.

Benedict XVI firmly states that ecclesial organizations of charity are not a form of social assistance that is superimposed by accident on the reality of the Church; on the contrary, it is part of the nature of the Church. An analogy can make clearer this ecclesial bond: just as to the divine "Logos" (Word) corresponds the human announcement (the word of faith), so too, the "Love-Agape" must correspond the loving service of the Church (its charitable activity).

The Church’s charity has many goals: (a) helping the neighbor in particular needs; (b) communicating to others the love of God already received; (c) in a certain sense, making the living God visible.

Benedict XVI articulates his doctrine in three major points about the ecclesial service of love and enlists seven characteristics that should distinguish it.

*Service of Charity as Opus Proprium of the Church*

Benedict XVI describes the service of charity as the *opus proprium* (own
work) of the Church or as her distinctive way to make love concrete. He develops his reflection in terms of historical and political analysis.

First of all, communion has a material aspect too, and the Church, since her beginnings, is well aware of it. Indeed, the *Acts of the Apostles* documents the radical way Christian communities had of sharing spiritual goods as well as temporalities. However:

As the Church grew, this radical form of material communion could not in fact be preserved. But its essential core remained: within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life. (DCE, no. 20)

Thus, forms of mutual support, of caring and of benevolence should make living with dignity and enjoying the use of essential goods possible for all, at least within the community. This hard challenge is at the origin of the diaconal ministry, as Benedict XVI remembers in one of the historical digressions of the encyclical:

The Apostles, who had been entrusted primarily with “prayer” (the Eucharist and the liturgy) and the “ministry of the word”, felt over-burdened by “serving tables”, so they decided to reserve to themselves the principal duty and to designate for the other task, also necessary in the Church, a group of seven persons. (DCE, no. 21)

The ministry of charity exercised in this communitarian way by the group of deacons, became part of the fundamental structure of the Church (DCE, no. 21) to the present time. The account of the origin of this ecclesiastical office makes evident the connection between spiritual and material services in the action of the Church in the sense that an act of service is always an act of charity, an expression of God’s love, and thus cannot be just a mechanical provision of some goods:
Nor was this group to carry out a purely mechanical work of distribution: they were to be men “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (cf. Acts 6:1-6). In other words, the social service that they were meant to provide was absolutely concrete, yet at the same time it was also a spiritual service; theirs was a truly spiritual office that carried out an essential responsibility of the Church, namely a well-ordered love of neighbor. (DCE, no. 21)

The direct and explicit mention of education as a work of charity is a significant corollary of this historical analysis. Indeed, “Concrete needs were met by a growing number of groups, associations, leagues, federations and, in particular, by the new religious orders founded in the nineteenth century to combat poverty, disease and the need for better education”. (DCE, no. 27)

Three issues belong to a more political consideration of the ministry of charity and are supported by historical evidence. First, Benedict XVI affirmed the right of the Church to receive State support for her work of public utility:

Here it might be helpful to allude to the earliest legal structures associated with the service of charity in the Church. Towards the middle of the fourth century we see the development in Egypt of the “diaconia” . . . . By the sixth century this institution had evolved into a corporation with full juridical standing, which the civil authorities themselves entrusted with part of the grain for public distribution. (DCE, no. 23)

Second, the Church system of charity could be considered as a source of inspiration for the secular administration and its value is not restricted to the boundaries of the Catholic communities:

A mention of the emperor Julian the Apostate († 363) can also show how essential the early Church considered the organized practice of charity. . . . He thus considered it essential for his new pagan religion that, alongside the system of the Church's charity, an equivalent activity of its own be established. According to him, this was the reason for the popularity of the
"Galileans". They needed now to be imitated and outdone. In this way, then, the Emperor confirmed that charity was a decisive feature of the Christian community, the Church. (DCE, no. 24)

Third, the ministry of charity has a universal value that the new means of communication are reinforcing:

The Second Vatican Council had made this point very clearly: "Now that, through better means of communication, distances between peoples have been almost eliminated, charitable activity can and should embrace all people and all needs."(DCE, no. 30)

Moreover, Benedict XVI affirms the rights of the Church to an independent action within the framework of her separation from the State. Therefore:

Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as “social charity”. The Church's charitable organizations, on the other hand, constitute an opus proprium, a task agreeable to her, in which she does not cooperate collaterally, but acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature. (DCE, no. 29)

Because charitable activities of the Church are founded on love, they are necessary even in the most just society:

The Church can never be exempted from practicing charity as an organized activity of believers, and on the other hand, there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary, because in addition to justice man needs, and will always need, love. (DCE, no. 29)

Service of Charity as Dimension of the Church's Activity

Christian discipleship can be articulated in different ecclesial activities: koinonia (community), leitourgia (prayer and worship), didache (instruction),
kerygma (proclamation), and diakonia (service). In other words, Benedict XVI remembers that, “Saint Luke provides a kind of definition of the Church, whose constitutive elements include fidelity to the “teaching of the Apostles”, “communion” (koinonia), “the breaking of the bread” and “prayer” (cf. Acts 2:42)” (DCE, no. 20) and further he states:

The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity that could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being. (DCE, no. 25)

The works of charity are among the fundamentals of the Church as institution (societas) and they are an essential part of its life as community (communitas).

Therefore, Catholic education as a work of love is related to the other dimensions of ecclesial activity and (a) should have a special care for rituals (different forms of religious cult and worship) and strengthen the educational community through a life of prayer; (b) should be receptive to the ecclesial proclamation of the Gospel, to the critical reading and study of the Word of God according to the Tradition and the teaching of the Church in their transposition to the contemporary world with its joys and with its suffering.

Catholic education that includes the poor, cultivates a high sense of institutional freedom, seeks healing and nourishes people well expresses the intentionality of the Church in her service of love:

Love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to her as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of
the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word. (DCE, no. 22)

*Service of Charity and Human Justice*

Benedict XVI enriches the definition of the Church’s service of charity by comparing it to the work of social justice and answering the objection raised and developed by Marxism about the preferential need of justice in order to eliminate poverty because “the poor, it is claimed, do not need charity but justice” (DCE, no. 26). According to Benedict XVI, this statement summarizes the Marxist position that he criticizes because it doesn’t respect two different dynamics: the just social order pursued by the State and the Church’s work of love that elevates to the highest level the sharing of material and spiritual goods. Therefore:

It is true that the pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community's goods. This has always been emphasized by Christian teaching on the State and by the Church's social doctrine. (DCE, no. 26)

In this field the role of the Church is indirect as:

Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task that every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically. (DCE, no. 28)

And:

We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of
the Church, but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run. (DCE, no. 29)

The distinction of roles, duties and responsibilities between the Church and the State is the occasion for a definition of the place of Catholic social doctrine:

This is where Catholic social doctrine has its place: it has no intention of giving the Church power over the State. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just. (DCE, no. 28)

To address the State on its political obligation to build a just society, let us consider one of the most significant statements of the encyclical:

Love-caritas will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. (DCE, no. 28)

Seven Characteristics of the Church's Charitable Activity

Benedict XVI points to the increasing number of diversified organizations that today are in charge of responding to various human needs. In his vision, this shows that the command of love of neighbor belongs to natural law. However, the Church's charitable activity maintains, among the others, its specific identity that makes it
different from just another form of social assistance (DCE, no. 31).

Thus, Benedict XVI looks for the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity and states that her charitable activities are a simple response to specific situations but done as an expression of the Church’s proximity to human sufferings and needs, including material needs. Moreover, seven characteristics distinguish this ecclesial work that is: (a) performed with professional competence and heartfelt concern; (b) a reciprocal experience of the richness of humanity; (c) a social occupation independent of parties and ideologies; (d) inspired by the program of the Good Samaritan; (e) not to be used as a means of proselytism; (f) lead by the awareness of a pure and generous love.

David Schindler (2006), commenting on the encyclical, defines what Christian faith and love add to secular social activities. He recapitulates this contribution in three points: (a) ante omnia cordis formation (first of all the formation of the heart); (b) independence from parties and ideologies; (c) charity as a mean of evangelization and not of proselytism (2006, p. 40).

In the vision of Benedict XVI, evangelization is deeply related to education. He defined it as a form of a new Christian paideia (the classic Greek word to define human formation). Indeed he significantly clarified this relationship in a speech delivered at the conference New Path of Evangelization for the Third Millennium on November 9, 2003, and published two days later in the Italian newspaper Avvenire. Culture is defined as the connection between the human process of communication and evangelization. Culture is made by language, community, institutions, law and custom, morality, art and rituals. The Gospel is announced within a living culture and
becomes an active presence in reshaping this culture. In the ancient world, the notion of culture was expressed by the term *paideia* or education in its highest sense, which is the path that brings mankind to the fulfillment of his original nature. In this sense, the Gospel is by definition *paideia*-culture related to all strengths that support the configuration of the human being as part of a community. Ratzinger discusses how the Logos has to purify and to lead a culture to its fulfillment and how, in its pedagogical action, the Logos needs skillful and virtuous cooperators.

**Education as a Work of Charity**

From a number of Ratzinger’s speeches and from his papal teaching, especially manifested in the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, it is possible to better articulate Catholic education according to theological and ecclesial notions as: Church ministry, part of the nature and mission of the Church, a form of evangelization. Moreover, Catholic education as a service of love and work of charity has a legitimate presence in each society, culture or civilization.

The Church cannot cease its ministry of love, its work of mercy in favor of the many categories of people in spiritual and material need since the Church cannot avoid educating humankind.

To accomplish this mission, Catholic education needs institutions where love (a) promotes change in terms of emphasis on foundations, curriculum, style of teaching, methodology and evaluation; (b) empowers research as an exercise of intellectual charity; (c) keeps alive the awareness of the socio-political value of scientific activity and makes it contribute to the progress of human freedom and democratic life.
Catholic education needs institutions that through love are able to integrate the transmission of cultural heritage and achievements for a better future.

Catholic schools and universities should form competent and compassionate professionals as expert researchers of the truth through scientific knowledge, as part of the leadership of a society that builds justice and makes it perfect through love.

Love should shape Catholic educational leadership and the leaders that come from its schools and universities as imitators of Christian saints and martyrs. As Benedict XVI states it, “Finally, let us consider the saints, who exercised charity in an exemplary way… the saints are the true bearers of light within history, for they are men and women of faith, hope and love.” (DCE, no. 40)
CHAPTER V
BENEDICT XVI CHALLENGES CATHOLIC EDUCATION

During the three years of his pontificate, the interest of Benedict XVI in education and the number of his public interventions that challenge Catholic Education increased constantly not only in terms of quantity, but also of quality. In this sense, the reference to love, that characterizes the papal magisterium after Deus Caritas Est (2005d), actually distinguishes papal speeches on education, too.

Almost certainly, the encyclical catalyzed a significant change of Benedict XVI’s attitude toward education. He did not develop a strong vision on education before his papal election or at the beginning of his pontificate. He currently seems more and more aware of the importance of education for the mission and for the life of the Church and he is progressively articulating it as a major issue in his teaching and in the Church’s policy. For example, he recently deepened the notion of authentic education (vera educatio) relating it to authentic love:

Several common requirements of an authentic education. It needs first of all that closeness and trust which are born from love: I am thinking of the first and fundamental experience of love which children have, or at least 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. (Benedict XVI, 2008a, ¶ 6)

Evidences of this process come from a chronological review of the acts of his pontificate. Indeed, considering the entire collection of Benedict XVI’s speeches to February 2008, more than one hundred major references exist about Catholic
Education.

At the beginning the situation was different. The mention of love was still not related to any educational issues even if, since the homily at the Mass for the assumption of the Petrine ministry (24 April 2005), he gave love a central place. Indeed, among the new forms of the desert, he mentioned the desert of broken love (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p.23). Moreover, he defined pastoral care was defined as providing the true good which is the true form of love. Delivering the message to the universal Church for the beginning of his Pontificate (20 April 2005), Benedict XVI articulated a program of six points: (a) fidelity to Vatican II and efforts for its implementation; (b) collegiality; (c) ecumenism; (d) dialogue with other civilizations; (e) service of peace; (f) care and attention to youth as the future of the Church. There was no reference to education, which seems not to be an object of particular interest for this pope, and even its mention in the speech related to the Angelus prayer on October 30, 2005 on the occasion of the anniversary of Gravissimum Educationis (1965) did not change this situation.

Nevertheless, after the release of Deus Caritas Est it is possible to observe a shift in Benedict XVI from education as an occasional theme to an emerging priority of his teaching. First, education has become a field in which to achieve a deep understanding of Deus Caritas Est and to implement its message. Second, the pope seems to be authentically sensitive to this message, and he offers to the Church an example of a renewed commitment to education inspired by the theology and pedagogy of love. In a certain sense Benedict XVI presents himself as an agent of change in Catholic education: keeping the educational mission alive, listening to the
needs of the people of God, inviting to a deep reflection and to a renewed action, bringing the attention of media on this field of missionary activity of the Church.

Third, Benedict XVI challenges Catholic education in various ways that this chapter will examine beginning with an analysis of the Church’s response to the educational emergency in terms of both pastoral action as well as leadership.

The Church’s Response to the Current Educational Emergency

At the beginning of the year 2008, Benedict XVI wrote a letter to the faithful of the diocese and city of Rome on the urgent task of educating young people:

Educating, however, has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult. Parents, teachers, priests and everyone who has direct educational responsibilities are well aware of this. Hence, there is talk of a great "educational emergency", confirmed by the failures we encounter all too often in our efforts to form sound people who can cooperate with others and give their own lives meaning. Thus, it is natural to think of laying the blame on the new generations, as though children born today were different from those born in the past. (Benedict XVI, 2008a, ¶ 2)

He connected this part of the Church mission with a current socio-cultural issue, the “educational emergency”. He found the causes of this emergency in the attitude that attribute to relativism the same authority of a Church dogma. Benedict XVI’s answer to this issue comes from his reflection on education as the right path to counter the relativistic mentality.

The Support of Love to Education as a Church Priority

Addressing the Society of Jesus (April 22, 2006), a religious order that has a special relation with the pope regarding Church mission, Benedict XVI focused on the precedence of culture and education over any other form of apostolate (Benedict XVI, 2007b, p.483) and visiting the Pontifical Gregorian University (November 3,
2006), he clarified the theological nature of this priority, “Because study and teaching are related to the kingdom of God, they had to be supported by faith, hope and love” (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 502-504). However, education is a pastoral priority too and it involves the Church leadership that is responsible for the organized and institutional forms of charity. This is a critical issue in the life of the Church and in the way the Catholic hierarchy defines its identity. Thus, Benedict XVI devoted part of his first encyclical to it.

Love Makes Education a Pastoral Priority for Church Leaders

The last part of *Deus Caritas Est* lays stress on practical reflection regarding critical church leadership issues. As Benedict XVI observes, there is a gradual awareness in the Church documents of the relationship between the role of the bishop and the works of charity:

The *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* explored more specifically the duty of charity as a responsibility incumbent upon the whole Church and upon each Bishop in his Diocese, and it emphasized that the exercise of charity is an action of the Church as such, and that, like the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it too has been an essential part of her mission from the very beginning. (DCE, no. 32)

Bishops as all Church’s leaders should maintain in their conduct of life high standards of morality: “The essential has already been said: they must not be inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world, but should rather be guided by the faith which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6)” (DCE, no. 33). Moreover, “The criterion inspiring their activity should be Saint Paul’s statement in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: “the love of Christ urges us on” (5:14)” (DCE, no. 33). Benedict XVI proposes the biblical code of Catholic charity as a source of inspiration for personal
Saint Paul, in his hymn to charity (cf. 1 Cor 13), teaches us that it is always more than activity alone: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (v. 3). This hymn must be the Magna Charta of all ecclesial service; it sums up all the reflections on love that I have offered throughout this Encyclical Letter. (DCE, no. 34)

This is also a milestone of Christian identity for the personnel who carry out the Church’s charitable activity on the practical level. Collaboration with secular institutions is encouraged but on the condition of maintaining this specificity:

Interior openness to the Catholic dimension of the Church cannot fail to dispose charity workers to work in harmony with other organizations in serving various forms of need, but in a way that respects what is distinctive about the service that Christ requested of his disciples. (DCE, no. 34)

The Relevance of Education in the Bishops’ Ministerial Service

*The Example of Benedict XVI as Bishop of Rome*

Benedict XVI as bishop of Rome devotes a lot of time to his diocese and education is a field that clearly illustrates this care. Since the beginning of his papal ministry, he attended yearly the local diocesan conventions. In his speech of June 6, 2005, he stated that a true educational organization doesn’t need only a good theory and a doctrine to transmit, but people committed to Christian witness (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p.205). Authentic education (*vera educatio*) is education to the truth and therefore a path to overcome relativism (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p.207).

The next year, addressing again the audience of the ecclesial congress of the diocese of Rome - which that year was almost completely focused on education as the title shows, *The Joy that Derives from Faith and its Relationship with the Education*
of the New Generations: Educating Young People in Faith, a Fundamental Task

(June, 5, 2006)–Benedict XVI defined education in the faith of the new generations, "a fundamental task that involves the entire Christian community” and invited priests and educators to promote a true and proper, "pastoral care of the mind and more widely, of the person" (Benedict XVI, 2007b, p. 773-779).

On the analogous occasion, a year later (June 11, 2007), Benedict XVI made more explicit the issue of education as a fundamental task of the Church:

Educating in the faith, in the sequela, and in witnessing means helping our brothers and sisters, or rather, helping one another to enter into a living relationship with Christ and with the Father. This has been from the start the fundamental task of the Church as the community of believers, disciples and friends of Jesus. The Church, the Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit, is that dependable company within which we have been brought forth and educated to become, in Christ, sons and heirs of God. (2007a, ¶ 12)

The Pope pointed to a sign of current crisis and gave more elements to define the educational emergency as:

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. (Benedict XVI, 2007a, ¶ 16)

Education, according to the papal teaching, should enable people to make the definitive decisions of adult life and should give consistency to freedom through a mature love:

As I said at the Ecclesial Convention in Verona [2006]: “A true education
must awaken the courage to make definitive decisions, which today are considered a mortifying bind to our freedom. In reality, they are indispensable for growth and in order to achieve something great in life, in particular, to cause love to mature in all its beauty: therefore, to give consistency and meaning to freedom itself.” (Benedict XVI, 2007a, ¶ 41)

He made relevant remarks about the deep connection between mission and formation that exists in the Catholic Church and which is part of the teaching of Vatican II:

Therefore, the awareness of being called to become witnesses of Christ is not a corollary, a consequence somehow external to Christian formation, such as, unfortunately, has often been thought and today too people continue to think. On the contrary, it is an intrinsic and essential dimension of education in the faith and discipleship, just as the Church is missionary by her very nature (cf. Ad Gentes, n.2). (Benedict XVI, 2007a, ¶ 61)

Further in the same speech, the Pope expressed, briefly and effectively, the two kinds of unity that Catholic Education enjoys: (a) the synergy between the Church and civic society and (b) the integration of faith, culture and life:

In convinced synergy with families and with the Ecclesial Community, Catholic schools should therefore seek to foster that unity between faith, culture and life that is the fundamental goal of Christian education. State schools too can be sustained in their educational task in various ways by the presence of teachers who are believers -- in the first place, but not exclusively, teachers of Catholic religion -- and of students with a Christian formation, as well as by the collaboration of many families and of the Christian community itself. (Benedict XVI, 2007a, ¶ 66)

Benedict XVI Addresses other Catholic Bishops

In speeches released to groups of bishops during their visit ad limina Apostolorum (thresholds of the Apostles) - that means the obligation of visiting the
pope to give an account of the state of their dioceses - the areas of (a) education of the clergy, (b) religious education, but also (c) the commitment of the Church to education are often matters focused on by Benedict XVI.

These three areas are closely related as it is possible to infer from a passage of Benedict XVI’s address to the bishops of Zimbabwe - received on July 2, 2005—“your concern for sound catechesis and an integral religious education must also be extended to the system of Catholic Schools” (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p. 315). In the address to the bishops of Sri Lanka (May 7, 2005), this connection is detailed because education and in particular religious education in schools must therefore be a high priority as a task of the salvific mission of the Church (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p. 57).

The relevant nexus, between education and charity, was developed in a speech (6 February 2006) to the second group of bishops of Congo (Benedict XVI, 2007b, p. 164) while in the remarks to the bishops of Burundi (28 May 2005) the focus was on service in the world of education and solid formation as a way to stop the cultural regression to paganism (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p. 164).

Benedict XVI considers recognizing the value of Catholic education a reason for joy. Commenting on the national quality network of Catholic schools of Ireland (28 October 2006), he said to the Irish bishops “You are blessed in Ireland with solid resources in your network of Catholic Schools” (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 524–525). There are also many more particular occasions to rejoice such as the establishment of the new Catholic University mentioned in the address to the bishop of Malawi (29 September 2006–Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 449).

Many other occasional references to education enrich the papal
communications to groups of bishops. However, I want to underline those delivered: (a) to the Polish bishops on Catholic education as a fundamental task of the salvific mission of the Church; (b) to the bishops of Cameroon about education and enculturation; (c) to the bishops of Ontario (Canada) on the relationship between education and the evangelization of culture; and I will conclude with the interesting remark (d) to the German bishops about intellectual honesty.

In the audience of November 26, 2005, Benedict XVI asked the Polish bishops not only to foster the Catholic education of youth but also to organize effective adult catechesis. The topic of his speech was clearly stated:

During our conversations we touched on many topics. For today, I have chosen from among them the question of Christian education. Indeed, it is one of the most fundamental tasks that comprise a permanent part of the saving mission of the Church and of our episcopal service. (Benedict XVI, 2005b, ¶4)

Education is defined by the centrality of the person and the ethics of witnesses:

We know that here it is not only a matter of didactics, of perfecting methods of transmitting knowledge, but also has to do with an education based on the direct, personal encounter with the person, on witness—that is, on the authentic transmission of faith, hope and charity and the values that directly derive from these—from one person to another. Thus, it is an authentic meeting with another person who should first be listened to and understood. (Benedict XVI, 2005b, ¶¶ 6-7)

The Pope discussed the formation of the young generation that entails a close collaboration between the Church and schools, universities and other lay institutions.

This collaboration requires people able to achieve it and, therefore, Benedict
XVI urged this group of bishops to redouble their efforts to organize adult catechesis. At the conclusion of this address there is one of his few quotations from the conciliar decree on education:

At the end of this reflection and as a conclusion, I would like to recall the words of the Second Vatican Council which taught in the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*: “All Christians—that is, all those who, having been reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, have become a new creature, are called and in fact are children of God—have a right to a Christian education. Such an education not only develops the maturity of the human person... but is especially directed towards ensuring that those who have been baptized, as they are gradually introduced to a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith... Accordingly, the Sacred Synod directs the attention of pastors of souls to their very grave obligation to do all in their power to ensure that this Christian education is enjoyed by all the faithful and especially by the young, who are the hope of the Church” (¶ 2). (Benedict XVI, 2005b, ¶¶ 46)

There are at least two reasons to consider the visit *ad limina* that the bishops of Cameroon made on March 18, 2006. It was the 10th anniversary of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, which Pope John Paul II signed in Yaoundé in September 1995 and the new Pope delivered a long reflection on the need to purify culture:

You must make the Gospel penetrate the depths of your peoples' cultures and traditions, characterized by their wealth of human, spiritual and moral values, without ceasing to purify these cultures through a necessary conversion of everything in them opposed to the fullness of truth and life as revealed in Jesus Christ. (Benedict XVI, 2006a, ¶¶ 4)

The mission of the Church is defined in pedagogical terms as a school of communion and as a continuing search for unity:
The Church is called to become more and more a home and school of communion. From this perspective the work done together in a spirit of charity, in your Episcopal Conference composed of French-speaking and English-speaking Bishops, is already in itself an eloquent sign of that unity which you experience, and serves to carry forward the evangelization of your people, marked by ethnic differences. (Benedict XVI, 2006a, ¶ 11)

A third point developed was about the need of formation to help people to respond to the attack on the traditional family institution:

For this reason it is right to encourage a family ministry that offers young people a demanding emotional and moral education, and prepares them to commit themselves to living conjugal love responsibly, a condition that is so important for the stability of families and for the whole of society. (Benedict XVI, 2006a, ¶ 24)

The speech to bishops of Ontario (Canada), received on September 8, 2006, is a reflection on the dynamism of evangelization. The reader can hear the echo of Deus Caritas Est as:

The fundamental task of the evangelization of culture is the challenge to make God visible in the human face of Jesus. In helping individuals to recognize and experience the love of Christ, you will awaken in them the desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, embracing the life of the Church. This is our mission. It expresses our ecclesial nature and ensures that every initiative of evangelization concurrently strengthens Christian identity. (Benedict XVI, 2006b, ¶¶ 3)

Education is defined as a taxing apostolate at the heart of the life of the local Church and, as a manifestation of the Church’s mission; it helps people recognize God’s charity as mentioned above:

Within the context of the evangelization of culture, I wish to mention the fine network of Catholic schools at the heart of ecclesial life in your Province.
Catechesis and religious education is a taxing apostolate. I thank and encourage those many lay men and women, together with Religious, who strive to ensure that your young people become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith which they have received. (Benedict XVI, 2006b, ¶ 4a)

Education is defined as the field of the crucial cultural struggle against relativism. The Pope described the effect of the relativistic horizon on the formation of youth:

A particularly insidious obstacle to education today, which your own reports attest, is the marked presence in society of that relativism which, recognizing nothing as definitive, leaves as the ultimate criterion only the self with its desires. Within such a relativistic horizon an eclipse of the sublime goals of life occurs with a lowering of the standards of excellence, a timidity before the category of the good, and a relentless but senseless pursuit of novelty parading as the realization of freedom. Such detrimental trends point to the particular urgency of the apostolate of 'intellectual charity' which upholds the essential unity of knowledge, guides the young towards the sublime satisfaction of exercising their freedom in relation to truth, and articulates the relationship between faith and all aspects of family and civic life. (Benedict XVI, 2006b, ¶ 4b)

Addressing the first group of German bishops (November 10, 2006), Benedict XVI challenged Christians not to fear spiritual confrontation with the ostentatious intellectual superiority that society pretends toward ultimate existential questions. The pope recalled the attention on the unique nature and on the source of Christian answers that is “the Gospel of the Logos made man”. Therefore, in Catholic Education, the central content of the faith is not to be glossed over to give precedence to current issues of other problems that in this perspective are definitely marginal.

A Special Emphasis on the Role of Universities

Rome, the pope’s diocese, has a large number of universities and colleges
within its territory. They are public, private, international, Protestant, Catholic and pontifical institutions. For political and historical reasons, the city has the highest concentration of pontifical higher education institutions. Therefore, Benedict XVI has had many occasions to take position on higher education.

On November 25, 2005, he addressed the community of Sacred Heart University on the occasion of the inauguration of the academic year (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p. 844-848). This speech could be interpreted as the search for a wide perspective on higher education as an alternative to the legalistic narrow approach based on the measurement of Catholic identity according to certain specific behaviors. Benedict XVI questioned Catholic Higher Education in broader terms:

Thousands and thousands of young people pass through the halls of the “Catholic University”. How do they leave it? What culture did they encounter, assimilate or work out? (¶ 8)

The question of identity is a matter of culture and of an institutional liaison with Rome:

This is the great challenge . . . to give life to a true Catholic university, one that excels for the quality of its research and teaching and, at the same time, for its faithfulness to the Gospel and to the Church’s Magisterium. It is providential that the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart is structurally linked to the Holy See through the Toniolo Institute for Advanced Studies, whose task it was and is to guarantee the attainment of the institutional goals of this Athenaeum for Italian Catholics. This original definition always confirmed by my Predecessors, collegially guarantees that the University is firmly anchored to the Chair of Peter and to the patrimony of values bequeathed as a legacy by the Founders. (¶¶ 9-10)

The Pope formulated the challenge of a Catholic University as promoting the dialogue between faith and true rationality, which is possible because it is ultimately
rooted in the mystery of Incarnation:

This then is the great challenge to Catholic Universities: to impart knowledge in the perspective of true rationality, different from that of today which largely prevails, in accordance with a reason open to the question of the truth and to the great values inscribed in being itself, hence, open to the transcendent, to God. We now know that this is possible precisely in the light of the revelation of Christ, who united in himself God and man, eternity and time, spirit and matter. “In the beginning was the Word”, the Logos, creative reason . . . and “the Word became flesh” (Jn 1: 1, 14). (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 17-18)

Still in the field of Catholic higher education, Benedict XVI presides at the opening of the new academic years i.e. at the Lateranense, the University of the Dioceses of Rome, on October 21, 2006 (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 489 ss) and addresses speeches at the beginning of the academic year as the one delivered to the students of the Pontifical Roman universities on October 23, 2006.

He also speaks to faculty, students and administrators of the universities and colleges of Rome on the occasions like the preparation for Christmas, as he has done in December 12, 2005 and on December 14, 2006 (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 849–851). Additionally, a new way of communication with university students was experienced on March 10, 2007 with the recitation of the holy rosary and the address to groups of students connected with the Vatican through satellite. The Pope reminded them how:

It is evocative to think of intellectual charity as a force of the human spirit capable of bringing together the formation processes of the new generations. More globally, intellectual charity can unite the existential journey of young people who, while living very far away from one another, succeed in feeling bound to one another on the level of interior inquiry and witness. (Benedict XVI, 2007g, ¶ 5-6)
This issue is developed in the collection of essays on *intellectual charity* (Leuzzi, 2007) published on the occasion of the pope’s 80th birthday. The book could be considered an interesting response of scholars of the Roman universities to the doctrinal and pastoral commitment Benedict XVI showed in the first three years of his pontificate.

Benedict XVI’s teaching about higher education had a further significant development with the speech intended to be delivered at the public university “La Sapienza” on January 2008. The visit couldn’t take place because of a lack of serene political climate, but the text of the speech was made available. The pope relates the nature of the university to the authority of the truth:

> Today, however, it is a secular university with that autonomy which, in keeping with the vision inspiring their foundation, has always been part of the nature of universities, which must be tied exclusively to the authority of the truth. It is in their freedom from political and ecclesiastical authorities that the particular function of universities lies – a function that serves modern society as well, which needs institutions of this kind. (Benedict XVI, 2008b, ¶ 2)

Indeed this is one of the most significant points of his vision of higher education which is at the same time the place where relativism was developed but also the place where an effective way to overcome relativism and to build a new humanism can be found. The Pope made clear, since his first speech, that the struggle against the dictatorship of relativism is one of the central challenges of the present time. He has included the definition of relativism—together with the definition of agnosticism—in an interesting description of the current secular society:

> It is possible to identify two basic lines of our current secularized society that are clearly interdependent. They impel people to move away from the
Christian proclamation and cannot but have an effect on those whose inclinations and choices of life are developing. One of these is agnosticism, which derives from the reduction of human intelligence to a mere practical mechanism that tends to stifle the religious sense engraved in the depths of our nature. The other is the process of relativization and uprooting, which corrodes the most sacred bonds and most worthy affections of the human being, with the result that people are debilitated and our reciprocal relations rendered precarious and unstable. (Benedict XVI, 2006c, ¶ 12)

Moreover, Benedict XVI’s definition of relativism is part of the larger assessment of European civilization that produced it. Actually, relativism is affecting a culture that is characterized by an enduring presence of the Church. Relativism is a product of a narrow version of rationality and the university understood in its deep and true mission contains all elements to fight it. Indeed, the fundamental traits of a university’s mission are the love of wisdom and the quest for truth, based on the conviction that there is an essential unity between truth and good. The Church is sympathetic with this kind of mission that the pope articulated on April 10, 2006, addressing the participants to the seminar *The Cultural Heritage and Academic Values of the European University and the Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area*:

The Church intends to make her own contribution to this reflection [to building the Europe of the third millennium] as she has done over the centuries. She has taken a constant interest in the study centers and universities of Europe which, together with “the service of thought,” have passed on to the young generations the values of a special cultural patrimony, enriched by two millenniums of humanist and Christian experience (cf. “Ecclesia in Europa,” No. 59). (Benedict XVI, 2006d, ¶ 5)

The university should renew its mission and remain faithful to humanism that
historically catalyzed the dialogue between faith and culture, as Benedict XVI said on 
June 23, 2007), addressing the participants in the *European Meeting of University 
Lecturers: A New Humanism for Europe. The Role of the Universities*:

Far from being the fruit of a superficial desire for novelty, the quest for a new 
humanism must take serious account of the fact that Europe today is 
experiencing a massive cultural shift, one in which men and women are 
increasingly conscious of their call to be actively engaged in shaping their 
own history. Historically, it was in Europe that humanism developed, thanks 
to the fruitful interplay between the various cultures of her peoples and the 
Christian faith. Europe today needs to preserve and reappropriate her 
authentic tradition if she is to remain faithful to her vocation as the cradle of 
humanism. (Benedict XVI, 20071, ¶ 2)

The relationship between faith and reason as part of the mission of the 
university was the topic of the Regensburg lecture as he clearly stated at the General 
Audience September 20, 2006 and a recurrent issue in many other speeches of his 
apostolic journey to Cologne. Promotion of a new humanism is part of the Christian 
proclamation and a matter of spiritual growth for Christian educated people as the 
Pope explained in the message for Lent 2006 (September 29, 2005–Benedict XVI, 
2006g, p. 608).

Benedict XVI is particularly involved in these challenges because he 
considers himself as part of this scenario as he explained to representatives of the 
world of culture at the University of Pavia on April 22, 2007:

I am therefore glad to find myself among you for this encounter, to which I 
attribute special importance since I also come from the academic world. Every 
university has an inherent community vocation: indeed, it is, precisely, a 
universitas, a community of teachers and students committed to seeking the 
truth and to acquiring superior cultural and professional skills. The centrality 
of the person and the community dimension are two co-essential poles for an
effective structuring of the universitas studiorum. (2007f, ¶ 2-3)

Centrality of the person but also of theology: this could be a good synthesis of Benedict XVI’s thought about higher education. Indeed, he shows a very traditional view of the university considering theology at the heart of the organization.

In his address to a delegation of the theological faculty of the university of Tübingen in Germany (March 21, 2007), he remembered strong debates that often took place on the occasion of the appointment of a professor of theology:

Thus, it was evident that all the professors of the University felt in some way competent in theology; they had the feeling that they could and should participate in the decision. Theology was obviously very dear to them. Consequently, on the one hand it could be perceived that their colleagues in the other faculties in a certain way considered that theology was the heart of the University and on the other, that theology was precisely something that concerned everyone, in which all felt involved and somehow also knew that they were competent. (Benedict XVI, 2007e, ¶ 7-8)

Benedict XVI gave here a very specific version of what the term university refers to and of the places where it could be better experienced:

In other words, come to think of it, this means that precisely in the debate concerning the chairs of theology, the University could be experienced as a university. I am pleased to learn that these cooptations exist today, more than in the past, although Tübingen has always striven for this. (Benedict XVI, 2007e, ¶ 10)

This is also his way of articulating the important notion of unity in an educational organization, “Theology was evidently something in which the universitas was present and in which it was demonstrated that the whole forms a unit, and that precisely at its root are a common questioning, a common task, a common
The Holy See's Response to Global Educational Priorities

The Relevance of Education for the Holy See's Foreign Policy

If a secular or a religious leader acts in the belief that their communities are inferior to themselves, this intellectual and moral pride destroys whatever good they are able to accomplish and a just love can inhibit such a destructive process. Political power conceived as an absolute, political action mastered just as strategic and technical knowledge are the roots of the perversion of "the truth of the authority" that never has to be separated from "the authority of the truth". The Catholic Church can combat regression to this kind of authoritarianism through prophetic statements to political leaders, and especially through promoting education to freedom and to political action with high ethical standards. These goals converge in a field specific to Catholicism, which is the social doctrine of the Church. The Church has many ways to let her voice be heard. A significant one is the office of the pope as head of the central government of the Catholic Church - the Holy See. Because of his position among heads of nations, the Pope receives ambassadors whom he addresses them in formal speeches, especially on the occasion of the presentation of their letters of accreditation. The Pope also makes his voice heard through his representative to international organizations.

From an analysis of these documents what emerges is that Benedict XVI uses his political role highlights the value of Catholic education around the world in at least four ways: a) contributing to the sustainable development of countries; b)
helping to resolve conflicts and supporting the building process of democracy and
peace; c) responding to formative needs within humanitarian emergencies; d) and
aiding intercultural dialogue, which is the condition for interreligious dialogue. These
areas are crucial to the grow of the civilization of love that is one of the main goals of
the Christian presence in the world. These papal political pronouncements have
particular value especially in countries where Catholic schools and universities are
the only Church presence allowed and they often operate in contexts where religious
liberty is not guaranteed, or Christians are persecuted.

Catholic institutions are a leading presence: a) in building a culture of
dialogue and cooperation between young Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, in
educating for peace and learning to live together acknowledging cultural differences
(Holy Land and Bosnia); b) in operating a network of schools focused on holistic
formation of the person in Morocco with a school population entirely of Muslin
students; c) in offering high quality education in a country with only one Catholic
school (Nepal); d) in taking care of the education of minorities and of the people that
there are suffering in poverty (United States); e) in transforming a model of school –
the French Lyceum – that recalls colonialism in a place where it is possible to
enhance a cultural dialogue based on friendship among nations (Sénégal, the school
of Sainte Marie de Hann in Dakar); f) in making education for all possible through
the care of the poorest and weakest as in the international network of Fe y Alegria in
most countries of Latin America; g) in supporting the rediscovery through the
formative process of the value of the individual and of freedom in the former
communist countries of East Europe (Zani, 2007).
These examples show the magnitude and worldwide influence of the Catholic educational system. Thus, Benedict XVI can say an authoritative word about education all over in the world based on both the universal jurisdiction he enjoys as head of the Holy See and on his unique pastoral service to the Catholic Church as Roman Pontiff.

The Pope’s basic position is that education and the equitable provision of basic goods are goals of the Church’s universal action, that means including Christians and all men and women of goodwill (address to seven new ambassadors on June 16, 2005 - Benedict XVI, 2006g, p. 230).

At the heart of Benedict XVI’s concern for education there are such critical issues as:

1. the importance of creating educational opportunities (to the new ambassador of Macedonia - May 19, 2005 and to the new ambassador of Santa Lucia – December 1, 2005);  
2. the role of the schools in the moral rebuilding of society and in the consolidation of the democratic order (to the new ambassador of Zimbabwe – June 16, 2005);  
3. the relevance of schools as a place for dialogue between cultures (to the new ambassador of Switzerland - June 16, 2005);  
4. the value of schools as part of the freedom that the Church needs to give as its contribution to the development of democracy (to the new ambassador of Venezuela - August 25, 2005);  
5. the importance of an organized and institutional presence for Catholic
Education (to eleven new ambassadors to the Holy See - December 1, 2005);
6. the value of education as a source of stability and reconciliation (to the new ambassador of South Africa – December 1, 2005);
7. the value of teaching religion in public schools (to the new ambassador of Spain – May 20, 2006);
8. the nexus between the transcendent and education, love and education (to the new ambassador of Uruguay – June 30, 2006);
9. the education of youth to a correct sense of national and local identity (to the new ambassador of Slovenia – September 16, 2006);
10. education as a matter of collaboration between State and Church in order to guarantee that education will be everyone's patrimony and that its quality will be improved at all levels (to the new ambassador of Peru - March 16, 2007).

Moreover, Benedict XVI has summarized many of these elements in the address to the new ambassador of Ukraine (March 30, 2007) in a political context characterized by the collaboration within the Pan-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations to work out together a program for the teaching of Christian ethics in public schools and with the State for the fundamental support for the Catholic University of Ukraine with the decision by the Ukrainian Authorities to recognize the status of theology as a university discipline. On that occasion, Benedict XVI spoke of the importance of education for the Catholic Church:

One of the vocations of the Catholic Church is expressed in the importance she has always given to the education of the young, especially through the
apostolate of numerous religious institutions dedicated to this task in the course of history. (Benedict XVI, 2007i, ¶ 10)

Education is a path to realize the authentic nature of man and to answer to the inner call to communion:

For the Church, it is a matter of enabling young people to receive a solid and integral formation founded on Christian ethical principles, and thus on the fundamental dignity of the human being created in God's image. They will thus be able to find a way to personal, moral and spiritual fulfillment. (Benedict XVI, 2007i, ¶ 11)

Education is the most responsible way to build the future:

They will also be better equipped to take on their role in society in the future, with the ongoing concern to further respect for human dignity in its different expressions, in the areas of politics, economics and bioethics. (Benedict XVI, 2007i, ¶ 12)

**Papal Addresses to the International Community**

Among the many addresses sent on the occasions of conferences organized by international organizations - especially those that belong to the United Nations system where the Holy See has permanent observer’s missions – the letter sent to Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran for the UNESCO Colloquium *Culture, Reason and Freedom* (May 24, 2005) has a particular relevance for this research. Benedict XVI articulates the theme of the universal right to education in neutral terms:

In a world at the same time many-faceted and enlightened but also subjected to the pressing demands of the globalization of economic relations and especially of information, it is of the utmost importance to mobilize the energies of intelligence so that the human person's right to education and culture may be recognized everywhere, particularly in the poorest countries. (2005f, ¶ 6)
However, he develops this issue according to one of the most original categories of Christian theology, the relationship between humans and their Creator:

In this world where men and women must learn increasingly to recognize and respect their brothers and sisters, the Church wants to make her own contribution to serving the human community by shedding more and more light on the relationship that unites each person to the Creator of all life and is the basis of the inalienable dignity of every human being, from conception to natural death. (Benedict XVI, 2005f, ¶ 7)

This relationship based on love is the foundation of human nobility. According to the Catholic vision, this love is also the source of human rights; moreover, education could be considered as a path to this love as well.

To conclude this section detailing how Benedict XVI uses the concept of love to make his addresses to representatives of nations more authoritative and original, I will make a brief incursion into the Pope’s biography, which hopefully will make clearer the political significance of this use of love. Indeed, this pope’s care to challenge political leaders to establish favorable conditions for a just development of society, to support with their action the establishment of true democratic forms of government, to consolidate peace and social justice echoes a dramatic experience that lead him to consider education as a concrete form to contrast political authoritarianism and its devastating consequences. The political persecution of Catholic schools under the Nazis and in Bavaria (the native region of Benedict XVI) and the social resistance to the rule to give up the sign of Catholic identity (as the removal of symbols such as the crucifix from schools and public buildings) left deep memories in him. Education and humanistic formation through the classics are in
Benedict XVI’s vision the true inner resources against such attempts to limit human freedom, as it was during the Nazi regime. Education should be so powerful that those who receive it never compromise with ideology. Probably early in Cardinal Ratzinger’s experience was the idea that the Roman Catholic Church was the only institution able to oppose totalitarianism, and schools were part of an active resistance to evil. A reference to Hannah Arendt’s (1906–1975) political theory could be useful. A crucial point of her philosophical inquiry about totalitarian regimes is the relationship between their claim of absolute power and the transformation of an ideological system of belief into a deductive principle of action. This process deeply contradicts the nature of education as an active choice for loving the world enough to assume responsibility for it. Hannah Arendt devoted only a short essay to education, *The Crisis in Education* (2006), which describes the formation of youth as the only way to confront the ruin of the world that otherwise would be inevitable.

While the struggle against any form of authoritarianism and dictatorship is a permanent challenge for education, there are some current global priorities that Benedict XVI mentioned which make more manifest the social nature of education as a work of mercy and charity. Catholic education should give preferential attention to immigrants and especially to political refugees (see the papal messages for the annual Day of Immigration and in particular the one delivered on October 18, 2006 – Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 460) and to encourage the building of a culture of peace, especially through programs for training agents of humanitarian action and social reconciliation (see the papal messages for the annual World Day of Peace and in particular the one published on December 8, 2006 - Benedict XVI, 2007c, p.775-
Benedict XVI has not forgotten the fight against AIDS. On August 5, 2006, he was interviewed in Castelgandolfo before the apostolic journey to Cologne on the occasion of the *World Youth Day* (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p.88-102). The underlying theme of the interview - published with the title *The Joy of Service* - was the Catholic Church and her relationship with the world. Two significant ideas make this interview relevant for this study. First, Christianity has love as a positive proposal to the world and this love comes before any norm, law or prohibition (p.95). Second, education comes ‘before’ morality and that has to be stressed in the message of the Church (p.94). Thus, a long section is devoted to the formation of the human person and became the occasion to confirm Benedict XVI’s belief in the danger of technical instruction to reduce the meaning of education:

I believe that the real problem of our historical moment lies in the imbalance between the incredibly fast growth of our technical power, and our moral capacity that has not grown in proportion. That’s why the formation of the human person is the true recipe, the key to it all, I would say, and this is what the Church proposes. Briefly speaking, this formation has a dual dimension: of course we have to learn, acquire knowledge, ability, know-how, as they say. In this sense Europe, and in the last decades America, have done a lot, and that’s important. (2006h)

The challenge is the formation of the heart that is the most solid foundation and the best resource for epochal enterprises like the struggle against AIDS and the prevention of this epidemic disease with all its social consequences:

But if we only teach know-how, if we only teach how to build and to use machines, and how to use contraceptives, then we shouldn’t be surprised when we find ourselves facing wars and AIDS epidemics. Because we need two dimensions: simultaneously we need the formation of the heart, if I can
express myself in this way, with which the human person acquires points of reference and learns how to use the techniques correctly. And that’s what we try to do. Throughout Africa and in many countries in Asia, we have a vast network of every level of school where people can learn, form a true conscience and acquire professional ability which gives them autonomy and freedom. (2006h)

From the speeches addressed to members of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) on November 24, 2005 (Benedict XVI, 2006g, p.843) and on October 16, 2006 (Benedict XVI, 2007c, p. 449), it is possible to infer that Benedict XVI considers education as a way to nourish people while providing them the basic goods. There is no authentic struggle against misery without giving people a good formation. The Eucharist, in the Christian belief, is the paradigm of the nourishment and healing power that can animate the educational mission of the Church. People committed to Catholic education are more sustained and nourished by the Eucharist than be mere religious, intellectual, and social engagement.
CHAPTER VI

ELITE INTERVIEWS

The Increasing Relevance of Interviews

Interviews are becoming a very popular tool of inquiry and source of social knowledge because of the increasing trend of powerful people expressing their thoughts through this technique of communication. In a time that stresses the role of the individual and verbal communication, interviews are an effective and direct method to gain information or to focus a topic. In particular, elite interviews give access to a selected group of professionals who because of their position have a deep knowledge of their field and a wide perspective on it.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will enrich the results of the documentary analysis with some of the findings from eight interviews with international leaders of Catholic education.

A Worldwide Perspective on Catholic Education

While the interviews in this study have been conducted on three different continents, America (United States of America), Europe (Italy), and Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), almost all the participants have developed a global vision of Catholic education. All the participants are in their full maturity and have held their positions for years.

Only 2 respondents are women as evidence that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church seems to be still dominated by men. This consideration is reinforced by the fact that these positions are not exclusively filled by ordained members of the
hierarchy, which in the Catholic Church are men. 4 participants out of 8 belong to a religious order.

There is no ethnic inclusiveness in this group of Church leaders, almost all are white and all belong or are deeply influenced by the European and North American cultures. 5 of the 8 interviewed have strong international backgrounds. However, not all those interviewed showed a multicultural approach to education; also they don’t have a common language (almost all speak English and a number of them, mostly priests and religious, speak a little Italian as a result of their theological or canon law studies in Rome).

Some Limits of These Elite Interviews

The high position of the participants required some methodological adjustments in the way of conducting the interviews. They could choose the language: Italian (4 of 8 participants), English (3 of 8 participants), and Spanish (1 of 8 participants). The North American participants were familiar with research-interviews and had no difficulty in letting them be recorded. The other leaders chose not to have the interview recorded and even note taking was quite difficult.

Therefore, this chapter is based on eight interviews that produced two different kinds of records: transcriptions of the three taped interviews and a detailed report (written shortly after the conversation) for each of the five interviews that were not taped.

It was very difficult to make these participants answer the questions and keep them focused on the theme of the interview. Indeed, they easily moved on to what is important to them and especially on what is important in their history. This
phenomenon was in one case so explicit that the participant at the end of the interview apologized for focusing too much on personal biography. Therefore, only the material that was relevant to the research (and that was related to the major questions) was transcribed.

Although participants received in advance the consent form (containing a description of the study) and a list of the questions, they did not seem to have made any preparation for the interview. There was one significant exception: one of the interviewees admitted to using the time before the interview to read some literature and gave some remarks preliminary to the interview to the effect that it was important to be very specific in the use: (a) of the word “challenge” contained in the title of the dissertation, which could be related both to an explicit and direct statement of Benedict XVI or to an interpretation of his teaching (as challenging for education); (b) of the expression “current definition” contained in the description of the project, which was considered unclear because the definition of Catholic education relies on a centuries-old tradition. This participant also expressed concern about the broad scenario of this research.

The Key Findings

There are at least three major findings from the interviews that contribute to this research and enrich and develop findings of the document analysis. Moreover, many other findings are relevant for the context of this research and will be gathered in another paragraph.
Loyalty More than Sense of Identity

Even if it was not requested, almost all the participants manifested a strong sense of loyalty to the Catholic Church, an attitude which they consider a fundamental trait of their leadership. Their sense and awareness of mission and identity of Catholic education was not as well expressed. With two exceptions, participants did not manifest a critical reading of the Catholic Church and of her educational system.

A Sociological Definition of Love

The participants described love in very generic terms and often through images. They used a sociological language to define such notions as love, act of charity, ministry of love. They neither quoted the encyclical Deus Caritas Est nor made a reference to any theologian or philosopher. Two of them mentioned the contemporary misunderstanding of the term love, but didn’t analyze this phenomenon. However, one participant did mention a possible connection between the ministry of charity and the grace of Baptism.

Little Knowledge of Benedict XVI

The participants revealed little knowledge of papal teaching and less of Cardinal Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s thought. The only two books that are mentioned are the doctoral thesis on Augustine and Introduction to Christianity (2000). This lack of knowledge did not prevent them from discussing papal teaching and Catholic education. They mostly use information that is easily available from the media.
Other Findings

The following selection of findings is based on the main eight questions of the interview.

The Background of a Catholic Educational Leader

The participants described their background and positions in simple and traditional terms. They stressed the faith of their family and their Catholic formation as responsible for their current commitment with Catholic education. They also claimed that high positions of leadership in the Church require humility; on this matter, a respondent stated, “these are not jobs for ambitious people”!

The participants were appointed to their position after what they defined as “the crisis” following student activism and violent protests in 1968, which was also a critical time for the development of their leadership style. A connection between that time of contestation and the current crisis was mentioned by two participants and one of them described how adult debates about the faith negatively affected the religious instruction of children; in the schools, an attitude favoring discussion without any basic competence replaced catechesis. However, for another participant the political season of ’68 awakened a path of searching for institutional and structural answers to those violent student protests. Indeed, the social and political fracture of that time gave the occasion for a deeper professional educational commitment to strengthen a culture-community-curriculum. In those years, the new generation strongly criticized traditional institutions. One of the interviewees was sympathetic the request on renewal of the society implied in the students’ critique; moreover, the participant was scandalized by the evil within the institution but was able to accept the challenge of
making this scandal productive.

Four participants mentioned their studies in education, but they do not consider themselves (with one exception) to be scholars in education or experts in pedagogy. Only one of those interviewed was challenged: to work on the interrelation between education and culture and to establish through education the right foundations of a political vision of reality, to free people and not to indoctrinate them. The participants that worked in primary and secondary education felt that higher education and the hierarchy of the Church have little knowledge of schools and of their problems.

The Style of a Catholic Educational Leader

The participants described their responsibilities and style of leadership using conventional descriptions. Their primary concern was to guarantee the bond between their institution and the universal Church (in many of their answers it is not clear if they make the correct distinctions between Roman Catholic Church, Holy See, Vatican etc.).

Only one participant made an explicit and direct definition of his role: leader but not an executive one. Thus, this person judged the main duty of an educational leader to look, to observe, to encourage, and to help educational organizations by giving authoritative orientations. The role of supervision was interpreted in two different ways: as an exercise of power and control (two participants) and as mentoring, guiding, inspiring, advising etc. Unanimously, they defined service as the context in which to understand leadership and one participant stated that, “In the heart of a good leader there is always a good teacher”.

A participant said that, “a leader is not just a custodian of the institution, but exposes himself personally to the prophetic voices around him” and developed this statement as the Christian way to be open to the future.

_The Educational Mission of the Catholic Church_

Defining their perspective on the Church’s educational mission and on the action of the Holy See and of the Roman Pontiff regarding education, the participants expressed respect for the Church as institution and they didn’t mention difficulties and crises within the educational institution. According to another participant, Christian love, in its connection with the mystery of Incarnation, should help a leader to be rooted in the local culture and to help, also through education, the progress of his/her country.

A participant defined the Catholic education mission as transmission of Catholic culture and the work of salvation based on listening to people and questioning them about the sense of life in a loving way. Catholic education rescues people from two kinds of ignorance: the first related to poverty and the second related to the loss of Christian identity.

The value of the Magisterium (generally identified by the higher education leaders with the document _Ex corde ecclesiae_ (Born from the heart of the Church, 1990). and with the _Catechism of the Catholic Church_ (2000) by leaders of primary and secondary education) is to be more than just a help: it is compared by a participant to “an anchor” that assures stability and unites us to the universal Church.

A participant said that education could be considered as one of the many ministries of the Church and should reflect the work of evangelization; moreover it is
important to remember that an educational element exists in each ministry of the Church.

**Educational Leaders Serving Two Popes**

The participants have been resistant to any comparison between the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Only in an interview was it possible to discuss this issue. In the opinion of this interviewee, the pontificate of Benedict XVI is still too short for this kind of inference.

**Education as Act of Charity**

Education is an act of charity because its role is: (a) to find through education a path of inclusion for the many people at the margins of society; (b) to orient people to the truth and to service; (c) to enable people to grow in the truth. A participant defined the teaching of the Church as an act of charity.

**Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s Thought and Catholic Education**

The last part of the interview concerned, in really broad terms, Benedict XVI’s cultural background and the possible consequences that his theological and philosophical vision of the world might have on any dimension of Catholic Education. Thus, the last questions focused on three topics: Ratzinger’s study of Augustine and Bonaventure, the absence of St. Thomas in his works, and relativism.

Almost all the participants never systematically studied Ratzinger’s writings, but one affirmed it explicitly. The participants generally apologized for their very poor knowledge of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. Only one participant introduced the Augustinian theme of the contraposition between the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, but without any reference to either of their origins in different forms of love.
or in the way Ratzinger developed this patristic doctrine.

Discussing relativism, all the participants expressed a generic condemnation of it. However, only in two interviews was a further analysis possible. These two leaders converged on the need for a more temperate condemnation of relativism. They believed that: (a) a light relativism is not a tragedy, the problem is relativism that absolutises itself and is against humanism; (b) it is wise making a distinction between flexibility due to cultural difference and relativism; relativism is unacceptable as well as a monolithic idea of the truth.

In conclusion, the elite interviews integrated the knowledge achieved in this research with their three major findings as well as with a number of insights about educational leadership at the highest level of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, elite interviews provided the elements of the leadership's perception of the challenge that Benedict XVI could bring to Catholic education.
CONCLUSIONS

*Education as path to love* (2006) is the title of the conference sponsored by Fordham University at the headquarters of UNESCO (Paris). The idea that inspired this dissertation belongs to that event, which signaled the beginning of this passionate path of research.

First and foremost, this study tried to show the way Catholic Education forms men and women as loving presence in the world and how Benedict XVI supports this challenge with his authoritative teaching.

Therefore, this study intended to prove that love, as it is defined by the Christian Revelation, Tradition and the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, but is not only the goal of the educational enterprise, but also the inner force and the most reliable foundation of education. Indeed, the connection between love and education belongs to the center of the Christian experience, and it gives to us some understanding of the relationship between God and humankind.

Moreover, this study accomplished ten specific aims and resulted in five major findings. They allow this researcher to formulate at least seven recommendations for further research.

**Major Aims Accomplished in This Study**

This study allowed this researcher: to explore many aspects of the world of Catholic Education; to investigate the foundations of Catholic Education on the basis of extensive readings in history of the Church, history of education, pedagogy, Canon Law, philosophy and theology; to present the most significant documents of the
teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about schools and universities; to achieve an accurate analysis of the first encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005d) and to present it as source of authentic inspiration for people committed to the charitable activity of the Church and, more specifically, for leaders who serve the people of God through education; and to gain a deeper understanding of this doctrinal reflection about love through notions that belong to previous theological works of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

More specifically, through this investigation, this researcher was able to articulate the characteristics of the Christian notion of love as they are presented in this pope's teaching. These traits of love were developed within a model of education enriched by the contribution of such contemporary scholars such as Bernard Lonergan, Martin D'Arcy, Paulo Freire, Avery Dulles and Franco Imoda.

This form of Catholic education, manifestly based on love, was further developed through the analysis of the characteristics of the Catholic service of charity and the Catholic role in the political life of civic societies.

This study also examined the connection between Benedict XVI's reflection on love and the way he is progressively challenging bishops and international leaders to improve education and to support Catholic educational institutions.

This study was enriched by the findings of eight elite interviews international leaders in Catholic Education.
Major Findings

This study achieved at least these major five findings:

1. The theological notion of love articulated in the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), which draws together significant themes of Ratzinger’s thought (communio, faith-reason, ethics of witnesses, etc.), is developed in the further teaching of Benedict XVI and inspires a renewed form of Catholic Education.

2. According to Benedict XVI, love can be an essential animating force of Catholic education in the nature and mission of the Church; is a form of evangelization, an authentic answer to the current educational emergency.

3. This new form of Catholic education is a Church work of charity and mercy.

4. According to Benedict XVI, this emphasis on love and its educational consequences should make the development Catholic education a priority for the pastoral programs of bishops and for the agenda of international leaders.

5. International leaders of Catholic education are open to discuss these issues (because of their loyalty to the Church as institution), even if they show a general perception of how Benedict XVI’s emphasis on love could challenge Catholic education.

Benedict XVI, in his second encyclical *Spes Salvi* (In hope we were saved, 2007h), returned to the redemptive power of love, as in his reflection which I quoted
at the beginning of this dissertation (cf. p.1):

It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of “redemption” which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man “redeemed”, whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say: Jesus Christ has “redeemed” us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote “first cause” of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). (Benedict XVI, 2007h, ¶ 26)

Love is related to hope that is the “soul of education” and makes us trust in life:

I would like to offer you a thought which I developed in my recent Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* on Christian hope: the soul of education, as of the whole of life, can only be a dependable hope. Today, our hope is threatened on many sides and we even risk becoming, like the ancient pagans, people “having no hope and without God in the world”, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Ephesus (Eph 2:12). What may be the deepest difficulty for a true educational endeavor consists precisely in this: the fact that at the root of the crisis of education lies a crisis of trust in life. (Benedict XVI, 2008a, ¶ 13)
Recommendations for Further Research

This research took place in the field of Catholic Educational Studies which needs a more accurate epistemological definition as it is still too weak compared with Public Education. Indeed, the literature about mission and identity could be conveniently enriched by a future study that better articulates the foundation of Catholic education as convergence between a work of mercy and a work of evangelization. Another notion that seems to require a further investigation is the nature and the use of the idea of “pedagogical mission” of the Church. This kind of study could support the activity of the Congregation for Catholic Education and bishop’s conferences to increase—in quantity and quality—the release of documents able to reduce the discrepancy that exists between the teaching of the Church and the vast and complex educational enterprise of Catholic schools and universities throughout the world. Other possible research could transform the list of the characteristics of love offered in the first part of Deus Caritas Est (2005) into a phenomenology of the Christian notion of love and the characteristics of the service of charity, offering guidelines for the life of educational organizations.

Such studies would help Catholic leader improve their perception of the potentialities of education and inspire their style and action not only in terms of institutional loyalty, but also in terms of awareness of apostolic identity.

This study allowed this researcher to accomplish [what he considers] a great deal even if the topic and structure of this dissertation probably required much more. At this point in the path, it is wise to remember what Ratzinger used to say to his doctoral students: have the courage to leave some gap!
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
Education as a Path to Love: A Leadership Perception of Benedict XVI’s Challenge to Catholic Education

Conducted by: Fr. Stefano Del Bove, SJ. Doctoral Candidate at Fordham University. (212) 6063440
Fordham faculty sponsor: Dr. Gerald Cattaro. (212) 6366430.

In his teaching as the universal pastor of the Roman Catholic Church, Benedict XVI is focusing on the doctrinal and pastoral importance of love. Therefore, the theological notion of love - caritas-agape - is deeply developed in his encyclical letter, God is Love (2005). This could therefore be a focal source of a renewed definition of Catholic education. This research study intends to explain the potential changes that a renewed definition of Catholic education could bring in terms of policy and governance of the Catholic educational network within the contemporary cultural, political, and religious arena.

Therefore, this research study is not only designed to develop the complexity and depth of theoretical foundations of Catholic Education, but also intends to support the presence of Catholic educational institutions as gift to all nations, as local agents of service and solidarity, as well as a global catalysts of a culture of peace and justice.

The potential contribution of this study to the educational policy and governance of the Roman Catholic educational system is to increase the capacity of the Church to develop a distinctive worldwide leadership and to be an influential presence in the international community.

If you have any question about your rights as a participant in this study, contact Dr. Lee Badger, Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at Fordham University. irb@fordham.edu (212) 6367946.

I would like to interview you for approximately ninety minutes. The participation to this research study is completely voluntary. There is no consequence to your participation or non-participation in the study. The interview will take place in your office or in a designated place of your choice by the end of December 2007.

You will receive the main questions of the interview in advance and your identity will remain confidential. The data will be kept secure at Fordham University and it will be used only for the purpose of the study. Only the Fordham faculty sponsor, the professional transcriber (and eventually a professional translator if you want to give the interview in Italian, French, or Spanish) and the doctoral student will have access to the data. You may withdraw from the study at anytime, even after the interview has taken place.

Please retain a copy of this form as you may need to contact someone if questions arise.

I give permission for my interview to be reordered on audiotape and I agree that the information I gave maybe used as part of the study.

I give permission to be interviewed for the study. However, I choose not to have the interview recorded.

Signature Date
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you define your position within your organization? Since when are you serving the Church in this way and what is your previous background?

2. How do you briefly describe your responsibilities and style as a leader of a Catholic educational institution?

3. What kind of perspective your position gives you on the Church educational and pedagogical mission, about the action of the Holy See and of the Roman Pontiff regarding education?

4. Change and continuity in your job before and after the election of Benedict XVI

5. What is the relationship of the work in the institution you are leading and education as an act of Charity?

6. How Benedict XVI’s theological background (Augustine and Bonaventura) is influencing the value, role and presence of Catholic educational institution?

7. Joseph Ratzinger in his long carrier as theologians focused many issues but not so much Thomism: do you see any relevant consequences on any dimension of Catholic Education?

8. How the ministry of intellectual Charity can strength the educational institutions in facing the “dictatorship of relativism”? 
ABSTRACT
This qualitative study presents a renewed definition of Catholic education based on the theological notion of love-caritas-agape which Benedict XVI describes in the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005). The traits of love illustrated in the first part of the encyclical have been developed within a model of education enriched by the contributions of contemporary scholars as Bernard Lonergan (philosophy of education), Martin D’Arcy (anthropology), Paulo Freire (political education), Avery Dulles (theology) and Franco Imoda (psychology).

Benedict XVI’s notion of love-caritas-agape draws together significant themes of Ratzinger’s thought (communio, faith-reason, ethics of witnesses, etc.) and is developed in his further papal teaching.

According to Benedict XVI, love can be an essential animating force of Catholic education within the nature and mission of the Church; it is a form of evangelization, an authentic answer to the current educational emergency.
Moreover, Catholic education is a Church work of charity and mercy. According to Benedict XVI, this emphasis on love and its educational consequences should make the development Catholic education a priority for the pastoral programs of bishops and for the agenda of international leaders.

The findings of ‘elite interviews’ to international leaders of Catholic education completed this investigation revealing a generic perception of the potentiality of Benedict XVI’s teaching about love as well as of the way he is challenging Catholic institutions to answer the current educational emergency.

International leaders of Catholic education are open to discuss these issues (because of their loyalty to the Church as institution), even if they show a general perception of how Benedict XVI’s emphasis on love could challenge Catholic education.
VITA
**VITA**

**STEFANO DEL BOVE, S.J.**

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