

INTRODUCTION:
“JOSEPH RATZINGER: IN HONOR OF
HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY”



In celebration of the 90th birthday of Joseph Ratzinger, *Communio*'s Summer 2017 issue commemorates this moment in the life of the pope emeritus by revisiting principal themes of his theological legacy. In Ratzinger's preface to the 2000 edition of his seminal *Introduction to Christianity*, he sums up the teaching of this work in the following way: "The God who is *Logos* guarantees the intelligibility of the world, the intelligibility of our existence, the aptitude of reason to know God and the reasonableness of God, even though his understanding infinitely surpasses ours and to us may so often appear to be darkness. The world comes from reason, and this reason is a Person, is Love—this is what our biblical faith tells us about God" (26). The essays gathered here carry on Benedict XVI's constant recollection that it is in communion with the God who makes himself known in Jesus Christ that human life is fulfilled and illuminated as a whole.

James V. Schall, in "A Happening That Really Took Place: Ratzinger on Reason, Revelation, and the 'Adventure of Thinking,'" offers an interpretation of Benedict XVI's celebrated "Regensburg Lecture." As Schall comments, at the center of this address lies Ratzinger's hallmark concern to uphold finite reason in its capacity for God's self-communication. "The Word, the *Logos*, in whom all things were created, is precisely the measure of *all that is*. Revelation is not first an incomprehensible act of will but a matter of dialogue, as mind addressed to mind." The

human intellect is naturally available for receiving a call and conceiving a hope that comes to it with God's free self-gift in Christ. Schall explains that modernity's restricted sense of reason has resulted in a society with the utopic desire to secure "resurrection" on a wholly immanent, pragmatic basis.

In "Ratzinger on the Timelessness of Truth," **Tracey Rowland** considers the relationship between God's invariable truth and the development of history in which this truth is revealed and received. Rowland defends Ratzinger's position that the Church's tradition, as the ever-new unfolding of God's definitive act of revelation, never departs from its origin. As such, doctrinal principles bear the memory of the person, Christ, from whom the Church continues to live today. "Ratzinger-Benedict stands for the affirmation of both history and metaphysics, not metaphysics without history (the pre-conciliar problem) or history without metaphysics (the postmodern temptation). He eschews any kind of dualistic choice between the being-Christology of Chalcedon and the event-Christology of the New Testament."

James M. Carr discusses the significance of Ireland's recent legalization of so-called same-sex marriage in "The 2015 Marriage Referendum in Ireland: A Ratzingerian Analysis." Carr follows Ratzinger by identifying one source of the West's cultural crisis in a positivism that precludes the givenness of natural order from rational discourse. This viewpoint fuels the modern project to have man progressively decide, or manufacture, his own identity by technical means. The political impetus to redefine marriage's very form, Carr argues, betrays modernity's "revolutionary" denial that man's self-determination is rooted in the truth of his being as creature. "One of the central constraints on freedom in the political sphere is the acknowledgment and respect of human dignity which derives not from human reason but the creative reason of the *Logos*, Christ. Moreover, freedom must always be understood as a positive, ontological concept: the freedom to be the person created by God to seek and know him and enter into relationship with him."

In "Ratzinger on the Augustinian Understanding of Religious Freedom," **Daniel E. Burns** elucidates how Ratzinger's distinctive interpretation of religious freedom takes inspiration from Augustine's *City of God*. According to Augustine, the com-

munity of the Church both transcends the bounds of the state and liberates the state for its own ancillary task. “In this way, Ratzinger says, the Church has given the world a gift of freedom, the gift of a politics free of the false claim that politics can fully determine man’s proper relationship to the divine, a ‘demythologised’ politics.” Though the two orders are rightly distinct, the state remains inseparably related to, and dependent on, the Church’s authority. Indeed, Ratzinger maintains that the Church’s appeal to conscience, understood as the *anamnesis* of God, recollects man to the ultimate truth in relation to which the political order receives its proper integrity.

Two essays reflect Ratzinger’s call for the retrieval of an integral vision of reality in an age increasingly oblivious to being and the universal presence of God. In the first, “Augusto Del Noce on the ‘New Totalitarianism,’” **Carlo Lancelloti** attends to Del Noce’s trenchant critiques of liberal society. According to Del Noce, this “technological society” shares with the totalitarian regimes it rejects a systematic undermining of reason’s capacity for the whole, doing so through an ideology that holds that experimental science alone provides the valid measure of truth. By evacuating metaphysical claims of rational significance, our civilization suppresses a sense for transcendence, above all the desire for God, and absolutizes political power and action as the domain of human meaning. As Lancelloti notes, “the most potent refutation of totalitarianism is the rediscovery that human freedom is founded on the recognition of the transcendent.”

D. C. Schindler, in “Love and Beauty, the ‘Forgotten Transcendental,’ in Thomas Aquinas,” addresses the hidden centrality of beauty in the Angelic Doctor’s metaphysics of love. Unlike the more directly Platonic masters of the Patristic era, for whom beauty has a manifest primacy, Aquinas speaks of love mainly in relation to goodness. Unfolding Thomas’s own principles, however, Schindler illustrates how the disposition to the good depends on the prior reception of another being’s self-showing. In this regard, the soul’s joyful rest in the experience of beauty presents the foundation both for his rational apprehension of truth and for his voluntary desire to embrace the good. “If love is a response to beauty,” Schindler concludes, “this means that at the core of everything we do, even if we are unconscious of it, lies some experience of beauty, a glimpse of the gratuity

and wonderfulness of reality that displays itself before us and invites us in.”

In his *Behold the Pierced One*, Ratzinger describes the Incarnation as follows: “the Logos so humbles himself that he adopts a man’s will as his own and addresses the Father with the I of this human being; he transfers his own I to this man and thus transforms human speech into the eternal Word, into his blessed ‘Yes, Father.’” In harmony with this claim, **Roch Kereszty**, in “The Ontological and Psychological Notion of ‘Person’ in Trinitarian Theology and Christology,” confronts the accusation that the Church’s doctrinal Christology, particularly the Chalcedonian confession that Jesus is a divine person in two natures, does not sufficiently esteem the complete humanity assumed by the Word. Kereszty responds that the Son’s human nature is wholly personalized by the hypostatic union, and that this is precisely why Jesus can perfectly reveal God in the flesh. He accordingly speaks of Christ’s human consciousness in term of his personal development as man, the growth through which Jesus appropriates and reveals his divine I through dialogue with the Father. “Jesus is the one man who carries out the absolute, perfect gift of self to the Father, but he can do so only because he is the incarnate Son who, as man, surrenders himself to the Father.”

In *Retrieving the Tradition*, we publish an essay and an address given by **Joseph Ratzinger** prior to his election to the papacy. First, in “*Sources Chrétiennes* and the One Unique Source,” Fr. Ratzinger, still a professor at the University of Regensburg, looks back on an important series of Patristic writings published by Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou in the mid-twentieth century. Ratzinger remarks that, in the post-conciliar context, it was pivotal for theologians to see new doctrinal developments as abiding in the Church’s theological roots, and indeed to recognize the whole of her tradition as having its single origin in Jesus Christ. “‘Sources,’ in this sense, are those writings that make known the original Christian event, and so serve Christian unity, while confirming and deepening Christian life. Where this conception of ‘source’ prevails, there is no archaeologism, but a living and fruitful relationship to history.” In “The New Evangelization,” Ratzinger, now a cardinal and Prefect of the CDF, ponders the present form in which the Church is called to carry out her perennial mission of bringing mankind to the fullness

of life given with membership in Christ. He urges us to see that the fundamental need of our own time, characterized as it is by “a loss of what is essentially human,” is the recovery of God. Evangelization can only lead others to a fully human existence in God by imitating Christ’s own way of making the Father visible, a work Christ performs above all through the fruitfulness of his death. “To follow Christ is to share in his Cross, to unite ourselves to his love, so that our life might be transformed in giving birth to the new man, created according to God (Eph 4:24). Whoever omits the Cross, omits the heart of Christianity (1 Cor 2:2).”

Finally, we print **David L. Schindler’s** “*In Memoriam: Kenneth L. Schmitz.*” Professor Schmitz, who served *Communio* from the beginning as a member of the original board, passed away on August 25. *Requiescat in Pace.* □

—The Editors