

Janusz Szulist

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
ORCID 0000-0002-0410-0565

Civic Profile of the State Community in the Teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

Abstract: The object of analysis in the article is the civic profile of the state community, positively assessed in the teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. Civil society, with its many advantages, has its dangers which, with the reductionist style of modern reflection, serve to individualise references, which was strongly emphasised in modernity. It is impossible to ignore the issue of the natural order recognised by human reason (dating back to antiquity), which is crucial for every humanisation process. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict is aware of the risk of over-interpreting the status of a person as an individual in society. A proper sense of citizenship in the state is shaped by the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, inherent in personalism. Awareness of one's own rights while being responsible for one's neighbour is shaped in the family. Democratic systems, on the other hand, serve to promote freedom and equality in the world, essentially expressing the ethos of the citizen. The source material of the study is the teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

Keywords: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, civil society, democracy, family, principles of social life, state

Today, one can observe a noticeable increase in individual awareness of inalienable rights and, above all, freedom. Social development is focused on the human being, which does not necessarily mean humanization in the sense of promoting an integral vision of the person (in terms of both earthly/material and spiritual/supernatural references) in the world. Benedict XVI appreciates the fact that the sense of self-sufficiency in the world is deepened¹

¹ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wiara – prawda – tolerancja*, 188.

while pointing to the unique status of the person in the universe.² Moreover, papal teaching calls for a democratic state ruled by law that, founded on an objective moral order, would cultivate the bonds of solidarity that are indispensable for the common good and that define the meaning of modern forms of government.³ This article analyses the civic profile of the state community and illustrates the role played by the individual factor in political communities, reflecting the personal identity grounded in the nature of the individual, bearing in mind the influence of materialist ideologies as well as the tendency to absolutize negative freedom as the highest form of individual self-fulfilment. The source material is the teachings of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

1. The Concept of Civil Society

Promotion of the free market economy as well as democratisation of ever wider spheres of life (not only political) draws the attention of political scientists, sociologists, and even philosophers and theologians to the concept of civil society as a necessary profile of modern political and economic systems. The spread of this type of community is also fostered by a deepening awareness of pluralism, which is essential for the preservation of what is specifically human⁴. It is also impossible to ignore the fact that human beings function within structures where production, exchange, and cooperation determine the bonds inspired by individuals. Edward Shils defined civil society as follows: “Civil society is a pluralistic society in which the autonomy of constitutive individuals, communities, and social classes is limited by the recognition by individual citizens and groups of citizens of their obligations to society as a whole and to the competent central bodies and laws.”⁵ The essence of civil society expresses the interrelationship of rights and duties, as signalled by John XXIII

² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1703.

³ Cf. Borutka, *Spoleczne nauczanie Kościoła*, 181–182.

⁴ Cf. Shils, “Co to jest społeczeństwo obywatelskie?” 19.

⁵ Cf. Shils, “Co to jest społeczeństwo obywatelskie?” 17.

in his encyclical *Pacem in terris*.⁶ Every human being is entitled to necessary goods defined by legal formulas (e.g., the ones that guarantee preservation of one's life) but, at the same time, must be aware of the obligations derived from the above right towards other people (or, to use biblical categories, neighbours).⁷

In general, the existence of civic demands is embedded in institutions or legal systems with a rich philosophical tradition dating back to ancient times. In Aristotle's view, the civic community is derived from law, corresponding to the natural order as discovered by human reason. Among the values defining the essence of such a community are justice, reasonableness, and the common good. The ancient concept of civil society guaranteed, on the one hand, the strengthening of the postulates of natural law linked to the individual, and on the other hand, axiologically (and to some extent morally) oriented power contributed to the multiplication of the public good, raising the quality of coexistence in the state altogether.⁸ The development of a state with a clearly defined civic profile was natural. At the same time, inviolable social principles were maintained. A peaceful disposition of citizens able to work together for the benefit of the community was assumed.⁹

A different view of civil society emerged in modern times among such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and René Descartes. The human being is the centre of social reference. The nature of the individual is dominated by desires that preclude any coexistence or even threaten one's existence. In such a situation, the only guarantee of the existence of the community in general becomes a social contract. An individual is able to survive only by giving up some of his or her natural rights. It follows that civil society is derived solely from the contract that conditions the existence of the elements necessary for the state or any other group (Thomas Hobbes).¹⁰ Modernity, apart from seeking to curb man's natural

⁶ Cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, no. 28

⁷ Por. Ratzinger, *Chrześcijańskie braterstwo*, 35.

⁸ Cf. Chluska, "Społeczeństwo obywatelskie," 20.

⁹ Cf. Aristoteles, *Eth. nic.* 1265b–1266a; Aristoteles, *Pol.* 1094a–1094b.

¹⁰ Cf. Hobbes, *Vom Menschen*, 165–174; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 82–86; Chluska, "Społeczeństwo obywatelskie," 21.

desires, gives rise to rationalism as proposed by Descartes. Cognitive and rational capacities determine what is optimal for the individual while also becoming the source of legislation; all other social entities become redundant. Such a state of affairs is a blatant undermining of the objective moral order and a move towards relativism, where citizenship is an expression of subjectivity. The will to cooperate, if it were to take place, is the result of the individual's (often essentially selfish) interest.¹¹

At the present moment, two additional approaches to citizenship as a determinant of social structures can be identified. Jürgen Habermas distinguished, building on the philosophy of John Locke and Aristotle, between two types of so-called 'active citizenship.' In Locke's view, citizenship occurs within the community. Man belongs to a certain group within which he carries out his specific tasks, which makes his individual identity ever more distinct. John Locke's concept assumes not only the existence of both entities, the individual and the group, but also claims that both are mutually enriching.¹² On the other hand, according to the philosophy of the Stagirite, one should speak of citizenship as a tool that serves to transpose the individual's characteristics and demands into social relations. The juxtaposition of ancient and modern views allows Jürgen Habermas to emphasise the need to balance purely private claims with certain public expectations, where agreement would mean development accompanied by principles such as the common good or solidarity.¹³

The model of civil society, reflected in the structures of the state, coexists today with the idea of association. In the 1970s, French politicians and theorists drew attention to the 'association phenomenon.' Valéry Giscard d'Estaing went as far as formulating an 'association doctrine.' The existence of intermediate bodies between the central government (even at the regional level) and the individual promotes

¹¹ Cf. Descartes, *Discours de la methode*, 40–49; Descartes, *Meditationes de prima Philosophia*, 98–117; Chluska, "Społeczeństwo obywatelskie," 21.

¹² Cf. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 141–142; Chluska, "Społeczeństwo obywatelskie," 21–22.

¹³ Cf. Habermas, *Strukturalne przeobrażenia*, 141–143; Chluska, "Społeczeństwo obywatelskie," 21–22.

innovative social solutions.¹⁴ The authority, in turn, gains the opportunity to delegate some of its powers, which is particularly important when care structures are overgrown. In France, but also in other European countries, it is in the interest of both the liberal and the left-wing options to develop the idea of association.¹⁵ In each of these options, the citizen, through various types of formations, gains the opportunity to present his or her individual interests that are components of his or her citizenship more effectively.

By definition, civil society protects natural human conditions. A personal being that subscribes to Christian thought, or generally to universal human virtues, is inherently open to the existence of the Absolute.¹⁶ The way in which man relates to the deity is expressed by religiosity, which is not only a set of practises (cultivating community-approved behaviour) but also encompasses values and principles correlated with the natural talents of the individual (citizen). Religion in relation to society possesses an axiology and morality,¹⁷ which in the teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI include, naturally, the Christian tradition and take into account other derivative philosophical views.¹⁸ Religious structures foster the attainment of ever-higher goods by each citizen up to the Supreme Good, i.e., God, using natural capacities and skills. Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1885), defined this behaviour of the secular community according to the hierarchy of goods as follows: “[...], civil society, established for the common welfare, should not only safeguard the well-being of the community but also have at heart the interests of its individual members, in such mode as not in any way to hinder, but in every manner to render as easy as may be, the possession of that highest and unchangeable good for which all should seek.”¹⁹ The natural activity of man inscribed in the hierarchy of goods promotes integral development, in which man acquires new qualities of life with fraternal references to his fellow human beings.

¹⁴ Cf. Załęski, *Neoliberalizm*, 100.

¹⁵ Cf. Załęski, *Neoliberalizm*.

¹⁶ Cf. Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*.

¹⁷ Cf. Kloc, “Społeczeństwo obywatelskie a religia,” 220.

¹⁸ Cf. Brunori, *Benedykt XVI*, 229–230.

¹⁹ Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*.

2. Moral Evaluation of the Promotion of Civil Society

The model of civil society has become a permanent element of the Church's social teaching. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* devotes a chapter entitled *Political Community at the Service of Civil Society* to this issue. Political communities are formed by citizens who, as persons, are characterised by reason and free will. In every community, the way in which authority is exercised must be conducive to the development of these natural talents in terms of the natural as well as the supernatural, i.e., with reference to God. The idea of a state society deeply embedded in state structures is expressed in planned, real-world interactions that ensure the regulation of citizens' needs while maintaining the necessary bonds of solidarity.²⁰

Benedict XVI reflects on the contemporary models of statehood and presents the dangers of social progress (as a consequence of reductionist interpretative schemes),²¹ as well as referring to the opportunities for humanization arising from contemporary civilizational development (especially within Western civilization)²² while raising the noble slogans of individualism. In this context, it must be said that the origins of economic and political injustice are linked to the absolutization of the demand for self-sufficiency. In this line of thinking, determinants of social progress are the welfare rate or the maximisation of the effectiveness of the social impact of institutions that promote specific ideologies or merely individual interests. Values and principles that are invoked by contemporary reformers have, in fact, nothing to do with the objective moral order.²³

²⁰ Cf. *CSDC* 417; Benedict XVI, Address, 21 May 2010.

²¹ Cf. Szulist, *Teologia państwa*, 393.

²² Cf. Benedict XVI, *List o przyczynach kryzysu*, 12–13.

²³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 30 April 2010. This is how Benedict XVI describes consequences of the lack of reference of the sense of self-sufficiency to an objective moral order in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*: “The conviction that man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own action alone has led him to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action. Then, the conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from “influences” of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive

The real development of the concept of civil society takes place when the economic and political spheres are inextricably linked to each other.²⁴ Trends in the economy affect the way the state functions. Individuals oriented towards profit maximisation²⁵ show no interest in the common good, the determinant of which is, to some extent, selflessness and generosity understood as a derivative of pietism towards personal dignity in the entire order of creation.²⁶ Egoistic attitudes of individuals or widespread forms of group chauvinism generate indifference, contempt, and, in extreme cases, extermination of opponents (or simply individuals or groups of a different identity or *modus operandi*). Moreover, in such conditions, reference to the moral order and the assumption of the existence of a supernatural realm are rejected.²⁷ The above behaviour can be attributed to social entities. In such cases, the moral assessment is quite clear. In this context, Benedict XVI points to a growing expression of fatalistic attitudes, which, although linked to globalisation, affect the existence of specific individuals. “Sometimes globalisation is viewed in fatalistic terms, as if the dynamics involved were the product of anonymous, impersonal forces or structures independent of the human will.”²⁸ The belief in the existence of anonymous forces against which man is powerless and completely at their mercy is essentially a form of interpretation of reality, explaining the impasse, the lack of help in a situation of crisis or underdevelopment, etc.²⁹ Fatalism essentially excludes interpersonal relationships, which is a blatant falsification of the perception of a society. Moreover, one should not overlook

way. In the long term, these convictions have led to economic, social and political systems that trample upon personal and social freedom, and are therefore unable to deliver the justice that they promise” (*CV* 34).

²⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 41; Benedict XVI, Address, 30 April 2010.

²⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 40; Benedict XVI, Address, 19 March 2009.

²⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 41; Benedict XVI, Address, 29 May 2008.

²⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *List o przyczynach kryzysu*, 16.

²⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 42.

²⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 39.

deliberate actions, where an element of force majeure is introduced to evade responsibility or the need to respond to any form of injustice or growing conflicts.³⁰

Apart from some risks associated with the idea of civil society as an essential profile of political communities, Benedict XVI takes an unequivocal stand on the promotion of subjectivity in the world based on the natural talents of the person, thus contributing to the formation of the common good in society,³¹ which is the purpose of the state.³² It contributes to the formation of reciprocal relationships where the subjectivity of each partner in the social relationship is always guaranteed.³³ Civil society and the state intertwine at the level of the fundamental principles of human communities. In his *Address to the authorities of the Lazio Region, City and Province of Rome (14.1.2010)*, Benedict XVI defined the essence of civil society, starting from the premise of personalism. The principle that defines the functioning of political communities is therefore that a person is entitled to civil liberties in terms of both material and spiritual goods. “The human person is at the centre of political activity, and his moral and spiritual growth must be the primary concern of those entrusted with the governance of the civic community. It is fundamental that those in whom citizens have placed their trust by entrusting them with the responsible function of governing institutions should consider as a matter of priority the constant pursuit of the common good, which is not a good sought for its own sake but for the sake of those who belong to the social community and who can only truly and more effectively achieve their good within it.”³⁴ In order to meet the demands of citizens, a necessary solution today is social policy, whose institutions in modern political systems are permanently

³⁰ Cf. Szulist, *Teologia państwa*, 316–317.

³¹ Cf. Kowalczyk, “Solidaryzujmy się,” 56; Benedict XVI, *Address*, 20 March 2009.

³² Cf. *CSDC* 393.

³³ Cf. Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 159.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Address*, 14 January 2010.

expanding and shaping models of the welfare state, the social welfare state, etc.³⁵

A specific comment on this matter is made by Francis. The pope warns his readers against the dangers of populism in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. At the present moment, there are many politicians appealing to the lowest instincts of citizens or instrumentalizing the nation (in areas as sensitive as culture). Their only purpose is to stay in power or take over governance in the name of selfish interests in the form of ideology, imposed, for example, through the modern media.³⁶

The formation of a model of civil society within the state is fostered by the implementation of social principles set out in Catholic social teaching.³⁷ Truth refers to the presentation of a citizen's status as a person in society.³⁸ In turn, love determines the source of other principles of the social order and is also the major initiator of the humanization of community relations (invariably preserving the demands of subjectivity).³⁹ In addition to the above-mentioned principles of social life, commonly found in dealing with any contemporary social issue, two other principles mentioned by Benedict XVI are crucial in the aspect of civil society: solidarity (fraternity) and subsidiarity. Solidarity as a principle of social life is based on the natural conditions of personal being, expressing the civic character of references in society. It is about the ability to empathise with another person's

³⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 10 February 2007; Kłusak, "Zasadność statusu państwa opiekuńczego," 77–79.

³⁶ This is how Pope Francis describes the situation of so-called unhealthy populism: "But this can degenerate into an unhealthy 'populism' [i.e., 'popular' leaders] when individuals are able to exploit politically a people's culture, under whatever ideological banner, for their own personal advantage or continuing grip on power. Or when, at other times, they seek popularity by appealing to the basest and most selfish inclinations of certain sectors of the population. This becomes all the more serious when, whether in cruder or more subtle forms, it leads to the usurpation of institutions and laws." Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 159.

³⁷ Cf. Kupny, "Podstawowe zasady," 77–78.

³⁸ Cf. *CSDC* 420.

³⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 28 May 2006.

situation, to provide rational assistance, to interpret the neighbour's situation in all its concreteness, and so on.⁴⁰

The indicated characteristics of solidarity were expressed by John Paul II in his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.⁴¹ Benedict XVI, in turn, continuing the teaching of his predecessor, sees the importance of solidarity, mainly in development. Such a view is a return to the thought of Paul VI expressed in *Populorum progressio*.⁴² However, in the opinion of the German Pope, looking at the dynamics of social change, there is no other solution to crises (e.g., the crisis of 2006–2008)⁴³ than solidarity, which restores the right of each citizen to decide for himself instead of unreflective absorption of actions coming from social control, determined by the crisis situation⁴⁴ or by any ideology (reductive for the status of man in the world).⁴⁵ “[...] not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty, and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth.”⁴⁶ Due to the fact that economic and political spheres intertwine, solidarity in one sphere affects the other.

Promoting the human face of social structures is a task that the successor of Benedict XVI expressed in fraternity as a meaningful development of solidarity, taking into account the element of the specific bond of the Church's teaching, that is, grace and salvific goods. A fraternal attitude is intensified by the experience of the unity of the human race, in which there will be room for everyone. Pope Francis even speaks of a “worldwide desire for fraternity,”

⁴⁰ Cf. Benedict XVII, Address, 31 May 2008; Kupny, “Podstawowe zasady,” 86–87.

⁴¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 38.

⁴² Cf. Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, no. 14.

⁴³ Cf. Szulist, *Perspektywy ludzkiego rozwoju*, 12–14.

⁴⁴ Cf. Cichosz, “Zakończenie,” 122.

⁴⁵ Cf. Cichosz, *Prawda chrześcijańska*, 8–9.

⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 36.

where people always retain their individual identity.⁴⁷ Solidarity and fraternity are the only ways to normalise social relations, especially in periods after crises such as COVID-19 or in the future after the Ukrainian-Russian war.

Subsidiarity is the second principle that shapes the civic character of political communities. In his encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II pointed out the importance of subsidiarity in protecting the freedom of each individual as well as the readiness to provide assistance when any dysfunction occurs: “[...] the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”⁴⁸ A state that treats its citizens with due respect (expressed in the recognition of personal dignity and human rights) will always ensure that everyone fulfils their proper vocation in both the secular and religious spheres. The opposite of such an attitude of the state are all kinds of centralised regimes in which, in the name of socialist (or related) ideology, individuals are deprived of their subjectivity.⁴⁹

The application of the principle of subsidiarity should go hand in hand with the application of solidarity. Benedict XVI sees it as an opportunity for real development at every level of social reference, from the neighbourhood to global society. The criterion for doing this properly is to address vulnerable people who have been hitherto

⁴⁷ Pope Francis expresses the ‘worldwide desire for fraternity’ as follows: “Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation [...] We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all!” (Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 8).

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, no. 48.

⁴⁹ Cf. Leśniak, “Pomocniczość,” 379.

marginalised in the community.⁵⁰ Therefore, civil society must not be the privilege of a chosen few. A society as a whole is to be provided with conditions for the free realisation of its own ethos.⁵¹

A model of civil society applies not only to the individual but also to the family, which is the community most strongly correlated with each person in terms of its natural properties and is the first space for the realisation of the principles of social life. Benedict XVI underlines the importance of family in shaping contemporary political systems that guarantee a civic profile. He refers to socialisation,⁵² which, in its primary dimension, is the internalisation of values and principles necessary for children and young people to live responsibly in the community.⁵³ A turning point in socialisation and, to some extent, in upbringing is the initiation of ‘self-education’, as John Paul II points out in his *Letter to Families*. The privilege of self-determination in shaping one’s own personality, however, is not a negation of the relationship with the family or a denial of the commandment: “You shall honour thy father and thy mother.”⁵⁴ Gratitude towards parents fosters further social interaction, assuming mutual respect for one’s own subjectivity, which is, after all, an essential feature of the civic community.⁵⁵ Apart from the reference to the socialisation process, Benedict XVI emphasises the role of the state’s concern for young married couples and families with many children.⁵⁶ Young people facing the challenge of a new-born baby or providing decent living conditions for a larger family face tasks that often cannot be met alone. Various types of benefits, the presence of others, and often just the awareness of support institutions effectively address various types of crises that can permanently deform family relationships. In

⁵⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 12 March 2011; Benedict XVI, Homily, 1 January 2011; Benedict XVI, Address, 10 February 2007.

⁵¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 12 March 2011.

⁵² Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 14 January 2010.

⁵³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 4 June 2011.

⁵⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, no. 16.

⁵⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 5 June 2011.

⁵⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 14 January 2010.

this context, one can point to depression, addictions, and other factors that distort⁵⁷ postulates of individualism.

The civil society model is implemented above all in a democratic system. Equality and freedom, as well as cooperation for the common good, correspond to the most essential characteristics of personal existence ascribed to citizens. Civil liberty exercised in a democratic state is, by definition, linked to respect for other citizens in terms of their subjectivity as well as on the basis of an immutable canon of values and principles. In this sense, the passage in the encyclical *Centesimus annus* concerning democracy but also referring to the subjectivity of citizens becomes understandable: “Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person. It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals and of the ‘subjectivity’ of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility.”⁵⁸ Understanding democracy as a system that pays homage to selfish freedom leads to a distortion of the idea of citizenship. In this context, the authors of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* are very clear about the danger of relativism, which contributes to injustice.⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that the failure to link freedom to the common good leads to anarchy (making the exercise of power impossible).⁶⁰ Moreover, freedom itself begins to appear to be a “curse,” as signalled by Jean-Paul Sartre.⁶¹

By contrast, the development of civil society in a democratic system begins with the human being as a person, followed by principles derived from love in truth.⁶² A culmination of this process is the economic-social system, where selflessness is embedded in the political interest and in the generation of profit. This selflessness

⁵⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, Message, 6 January 2011; Trawkowska, “Modele pracy socjalnej,” 124–126.

⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, no. 46.

⁵⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Message, 6 January 2011; *CSDC* 407.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wiarą – prawdą – tolerancją*, 194.

⁶¹ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wiarą – prawdą – tolerancją*.

⁶² Por. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 2.

always expresses what is most human and conducive to recovery from crises (at various social levels). “The exclusively binary model of market-plus-State is corrosive of society, while economic forms based on solidarity, which find their natural home in civil society without being restricted to it, build up society. The market for gratuitousness does not exist, and attitudes towards gratuitousness cannot be established by law. Yet both the market and politics need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift.”⁶³ The state is raising funds. The distribution of accumulated wealth according to the principle of the common good cements democracy,⁶⁴ thus giving a sense of support to each citizen to develop his or her own personality and to make the world more and more human with economic support.⁶⁵

A state citizen, in addition to functioning in the system of power (be it active or passive), faces various types of religious groups, including the Catholic Church. The principles of Christian life do not interfere with civic engagement. Faith is a unifying element, indicating the mutual complementarity of the sacred and profane spheres and preserving its proper autonomy as postulated in the documents of the Second Vatican Council:⁶⁶ “[...] the indispensable and tireless defence of the deposit of faith and of the sacramental and hierarchical community is not in itself opposed to dialogue with representatives of the authorities regarding those aspects of ecclesiastical life that concern the sphere of civil life. Moreover, there is no particular difficulty in accepting the recognition of civil authorities, provided that it does not involve a denial of the inalienable principles of faith and of ecclesial communion.”⁶⁷

In the Pope’s view, it is legitimate to show civil disobedience when passed regulations are incompatible with a Christian’s conscience.⁶⁸ The aim of the involvement of the lay faithful is to limit the formation of “structures of sin,” as John Paul II has already reminded his readers

⁶³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 39.

⁶⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 42.

⁶⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, 1 January 2011.

⁶⁶ Cf. Vaticanum II, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36.

⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, Letter, 27 May 2007.

⁶⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, Letter, 27 May 2007.

in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*⁶⁹ or *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.⁷⁰ Apart from the teaching dimension – pointing to an objective moral order – the Church’s mission is cooperation. In this perspective, one points to a commitment to the education of the young through the Catholic school system,⁷¹ social institutions⁷² or the promotion of broadly understood Christian culture.⁷³ According to Benedict XVI, a good example to illustrate the extent of this interaction is multidirectional assistance to the family, without which it is inconceivable to build a model of state with a civic profile.⁷⁴ In the Pope’s view, the Church in general is the initiator of fraternal cooperation, which can already be experienced in the liturgical assembly. Each member of the community carries out his or her own function while always maintaining his or her own subjectivity, from the individual to the family to the state.⁷⁵

Summary

The model of civil society should be an essential feature of a state oriented towards the realisation of the demands of the common good. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI takes a positive view of the empowerment processes of individuals and natural communities. However, one must be aware of the danger of absolutising freedom and also of reinforcing the individual’s sense of powerlessness in the face of ideology, or fatalistic attitudes in general. Formation of the idea of civil society has a long tradition, dating back to antiquity. Aristotle refers, on the one hand, to natural law discerned by man. On the other hand, power should always be axiologically oriented – this is the only way to enhance social welfare in terms of material and spiritual needs. Modernity, on the other hand, points to the necessity

⁶⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 16.

⁷⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 39.

⁷¹ Cf. Cichosz, *Ku pełni człowieczeństwa*, 201–221.

⁷² Cf. Trawkowska, “Modele pracy socjalnej,” 118.

⁷³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 5 June 2011.

⁷⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 14 January 2010.

⁷⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 12 March 2011; Benedict XVI, Address, 19 March 2009.

of the social contract in the implementation of civic demands, as well as to the rational nature of the individual's pro-social commitment. Man has the opportunity to develop his individual talents in a group. However, anthropocentrism is related to the risk of relativism. Today, it is important to point to a model of active citizenship, reinforced by associations of various kinds.

Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI emphasises the personalistic character of civil society, which protects the person in terms of personal dignity and human rights. Strengthening a civic-minded state is achieved by the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity (based on truth and love). Man becomes increasingly aware of his individuality in the family, which is also a place of socialisation. Family upbringing – especially in its primary sphere – shapes responsible democratic attitudes and fosters a sense of equality and fraternity. The Church, as a religious community, cooperates in living one's own humanity more fully while respecting the subjectivity of fellow human beings in the state. The concept of civil society, in Benedict XVI's view, aims to show the beauty of creation, where each person has his or her proper tasks in a salvific order.

Obywatelski profil społeczności państwowej w nauczaniu Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI

Abstrakt: Przedmiotem analiz w artykule jest obywatelski profil społeczności państwowej zaprezentowany w nauczaniu Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie przy wielu swoich zaletach, nie jest wolne od niebezpieczeństw, które przy zastosowaniu redukcjonistycznego stylu współczesnej refleksji służą indywidualizacji odniesień, co było m.in. silnie eksponowane w czasach nowożytnych. Nie sposób pominąć kwestii porządku naturalnego poznawanego ludzkim rozumem (sięgającego początkami starożytności), co posiada kluczowe znaczenie w wszelkich procesie humanizacji. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedykt jest świadom ryzyka nadinterpretacji statusu jednostki jako indywiduum w społeczeństwie. Właściwe poczucie obywatelskości w państwie jest kształtowane na gruncie zasad pomocniczości i solidarności, nieodłącznie związanych z personalizmem. Świadomość własnych praw przy odpowiedzialności za bliźniego jest kształtowana w rodzinie. Z kolei systemy demokratyczne służą promowaniu w świecie wolności i równości, wyrażających w istocie etos obywatela. Materiałem źródłowym opracowania jest nauczanie Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI.

Słowa kluczowe: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, demokracja, państwo, rodzina, społeczeństwo obywatelskie, zasady życia społecznego

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