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On Benedict XVI's Call to Courage in Education

Paola Dal Toso Speaks of Compiling the Pope's Teaching

ROME, NOV. 8, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI says there is an emergency in education, and yet, he is a firm believer in people's desire to seek the truth. Hence, though he is aware of the difficulties, he invites educators to courage and responsibility.

These are some of the reflections offered by Paola Dal Toso, who has compiled the Pope's various reflections and teachings on the topic of education.

"Papa Benedetto XVI ed il compito urgente dell'educazione" (Pope Benedict XVI and the Urgent Task of Education) was published by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana and presented Friday.

Q: How did this book come about?

Dal Toso: The book was born from my interest in the topic of education, which Benedict XVI always has very present. I began to reflect after being involved in an inter-associative table, created by the Italian bishops' National Office for Education, the School and the University, immediately after the conference of Verona of 2006, when the then director, Monsignor Bruno Stenco, intuited that the topic of education was really important.

Q: Did Benedict XVI give some indication on this topic?

Dal Toso: In January of 2008 the Pope wrote a letter to the Diocese of Rome on the duty of education; hence, my interest was awakened in that circumstance. Then I wrote an article, published in the Salesian magazine Pedagogical Guidelines, which is a very valuable tool at the university level. I began to realize the importance and frequency of the Pope's appeals on education. Therefore, I began to compile by subject everything he was saying.

Q: So the Pope's interventions on education have been numerous?

Dal Toso: Yes. Taking into account that he isn't a pedagogue, that there are no interventions directed to or specific to education, but that he addresses the topic in the ambit of other questions. It's true

that there are letters and several interventions in the Diocese of Rome, as well as to the Italian bishops, in reference to pastoral planning for a 10-year period, but he has also made other appeals.

Q: The book, then, is a compilation on the topic of education from the various addresses of the present Pontiff?

Dal Toso: I have tried to systematize all these appeals, expressions and reflections. I have organized them according to a very simple outline, an analysis of the educational emergency and, therefore, of the problems that characterize society. I have reflected also on the figure of the educator, the question of the educational relationship, the pupil, the other educators as well as the parents, the teachers, the institutions. From the pedagogical point of view, we call them the "educational agencies": I refer to the family, the school, sports associations, the oratory [parish activity for children in Italy], but also volunteer work.

Then I have discussed other topics, in particular the use of the means of communication that can also be of value from the educational point of view and in all realms. This goes beyond the school context as it has been understood traditionally. Surely education is not just instruction.

Q: It isn't understood just as education of the youngest?

Dal Toso: No. In the Pope's writings the exhortation is clear to education directed not only to children, as we understand it traditionally, but also to adolescents, young people and adults. It's very clear: the Pope poses the problem of the education of adults, an education that must continue throughout the whole of life.

Q: Is there a desire for evangelization?

Dal Toso: Yes, especially when the Pope highlights education as an instrument to accompany the discovery of what can be an answer to the question of truth. Benedict XVI sees in people this desire for truth.

Q: Is there something concrete in Benedict XVI's thought on education that you would like to highlight?

Dal Toso: I think the Pope is conscious of the difficulties of educating at present, but he invites us also to be courageous, and to assume the responsibility of education, to address and accept this challenge of the educational emergency and this need.

[Translation by ZENIT]

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