

2011

## Local Communities and Globalization in Caritas in Veritate

Jeffery Nicholas  
jnichol2@providence.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity>  
ISSN: 1839-0366

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
Copyright Regulations 1969  
WARNING

This material has been copied and communicated to you by or on behalf of the University of Notre Dame Australia pursuant to part VB of the Copyright Act 1969 (the Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

### Recommended Citation

Nicholas, Jeffery (2011) "Local Communities and Globalization in Caritas in Veritate," *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity/vol1/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact [researchonline@nd.edu.au](mailto:researchonline@nd.edu.au).

---

## Local Communities and Globalization in Caritas in Veritate

### **Abstract**

Caritas in Veritate leaves us with a question, Does Benedict XVI see politics as a practice or as an institution? How one answers this question has tremendous implications for how one should address the inequalities of contemporary society and the increasing globalization of the world. Alasdair MacIntyre, for instance, would consider politics to be primarily a practice with a good internal to its activities. This good consists in rational deliberation with others about the common good. If one considers politics an institution, however, as seems to be the case with Jacques Maritain, then one pays less attention to the common good and more attention to the mechanics of the political institution. The difference in understanding goes a long way toward how one conceives of, determines, and achieves the common good, a central task for Catholic social teaching. It also prefigures whether and how one can justify self-sacrifice for the common good, demanded of police officers and soldiers, for instance, as well as whether and how one prioritizes the practices of a given political community. Caritas in Veritate (CIV) brings to the forefront issues of self-sacrifice and prioritization of practices at the global level. This paper shall address the position Benedict XVI lays out on globalization with reference to a global politics through the lens of the common good and the distinction between practice and institution.

## Local Communities and Globalization in *Caritas in Veritate*

Jeffery Nicholas

---

### Introduction

*Caritas in Veritate* leaves us with a question, Does Benedict XVI see politics as a practice or as an institution? How one answers this question has tremendous implications for how one should address the inequalities of contemporary society and the increasing globalization of the world. Alasdair MacIntyre, for instance, would consider politics to be primarily a practice with a good internal to its activities. This good consists in rational deliberation with others about the common good. If one considers politics an institution, however, as seems to be the case with Jacques Maritain, then one pays less attention to the common good and more attention to the mechanics of the political institution. The difference in understanding goes a long way toward how one conceives of, determines, and achieves the common good, a central task for Catholic social teaching. It also prefigures whether and how one can justify self-sacrifice for the common good, demanded of police officers and soldiers, for instance, as well as whether and how one prioritizes the practices of a given political community. *Caritas in Veritate (CIV)* brings to the forefront issues of self-sacrifice and prioritization of practices at the global level. This paper shall address the position Benedict XVI lays out on globalization with reference to a global politics through the lens of the common good and the distinction between practice and institution.

In short, Benedict XVI shares with Maritain a reliance on an important citation from St. Thomas. Maritain uses the claim that the individual is not committed to political society according to everything she is. Rather, Maritain claims, not only that the individual is anterior to society, but also that the *summum bonum* – the highest good – is an individual, not a communal, good. His reliance on this claim opens the door for MacIntyre to criticize Maritain's political society for failing to justify self-sacrifice or prioritize goods. I shall argue that, even though Benedict XVI cites the same passage that undergirds Maritain's individualism, he does not in fact fall to MacIntyre's initial criticism of Maritain. Benedict XVI conceives of the human person as a member of a family, not in terms of part to whole, but in terms of a whole belonging to a larger whole and seeking the common good.

Centralizing the importance of the human family, in *CIV* Benedict XVI is able to call for a global political government with teeth. We are challenged to become protagonists of globalization rather than its victims. Once more, however, one should carefully consider the common good. Even if Benedict XVI's understanding of the human being is not individualist, he needs a more elegant understanding of politics as practice by which to accomplish his goals. Recognizing the human being's relational character, MacIntyre would encourage us to engage in local communities rather than relying on global government to satisfy human ends or bring us closer to the ultimate end of human life. In fact, when families are engaged in healthy relationships with local communities they have a better chance of supporting and empowering individuals to become rational deliberators and, thus, protagonists of globalization. Thus, while Benedict XVI rightly challenges us to become protagonists of globalization, his account requires a correction from MacIntyre to set up the real possibilities of that happening in the face of the present barbarism.

## 1: Benedict XVI and the Human Family

In chapter five of *CIV*, “The Cooperation of the Human Family,” Benedict XVI lays out his notion of the relational nature of the human being. He situates his understanding of the human being within a discussion of the poverty that attends isolation. “One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation”.<sup>1</sup> Other forms of poverty, according to Benedict, arise out of isolation – “from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love.” Sin entered the world from a rejection of God’s love, which comes from “man’s basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient.”

Today, however, human beings are much more integrated than in the past. “The explosion of worldwide interdependence,” or globalization, constitutes the new feature of the progress of humanity. Cultures interact more easily than at any other time.<sup>2</sup> Further, “humanity itself is becoming increasingly interconnected; it is made up of individuals and peoples to whom this process should offer benefits and development ... the breaking down of borders is not simply a material fact; it is also a cultural event both in its causes and its effects”.<sup>3</sup>

While social integration and globalization, especially on the economic level define our reality, Benedict XVI says we must transform this apparent integration “into true communion.” “The risk of our time is that the de facto interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interactions of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development”.<sup>4</sup> International trade limits the sovereignty of nations.<sup>5</sup> Integral human development – the theme of *CIV* – requires “recognition that the human race is a single family”.<sup>6</sup> Individuals must realize that human solidarity imposes duties on them.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, the economy, as a sector of human activity, “needs ethics in order to function correctly”.<sup>8</sup> The common good, then, must include the whole human family.<sup>9</sup>

Under Benedict XVI’s vision of the human family lies a conception of the human person as relational. Human beings are defined through interpersonal relations. One matures authentically through living out these relations. The human person establishes her worth, not through isolated activity, but through relating to others. Benedict is quick to point out that Christian revelation prevents any too easy accommodation with totalitarian forms of society. The Christian community does not absorb the individual but values the individuals as someone in relation to community – that is, “a relation between one totality and another.”

Those familiar with Thomistic thought in the twentieth-century will hear echoes of the philosophy of Jacques Maritain. Where Benedict writes of a relationship between one totality and another, Maritain writes of a relationship between wholes. Moreover, in *CIV* Benedict XVI cites a passage that undergirds Maritain’s Thomistic liberalism, and one which proved subject of much debate. Using Thomas Osborne’s analysis in “MacIntyre, Thomism, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, n.55

<sup>2</sup> *CIV*, n.26

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, n.42

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, n.9

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, n.24

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, n.53

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, n.43

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, n.45

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, n.7

Contemporary Common Good,”<sup>10</sup> I shall examine this debate briefly to show what results if one were to interpret Benedict XVI along the same lines as Maritain and then suggest that this is an incorrect interpretation of Benedict. Rather, Benedict XVI calls us to recognize our human family and develop global government to address human needs. I shall argue that MacIntyre’s recommendation of local communities provides a more fruitful path to becoming protagonists of globalization.

## 2: Maritain, The Human Person, and the Common Good

Maritain distinguishes two aspects of the human being: the individual and the personal. The human being is individual according to his/her material self.<sup>11</sup> This claim follows from an Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics. According to an Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, human beings are the kind of beings they are – i.e. human – because we share in the same form, human. However, each human being is a separate, individual human being because we are distinguished by matter. I consist, not simply of spirit, but of spirit-informing-this-matter, and it’s my material reality that, at first, distinguishes me from you.<sup>12</sup>

According to Maritain, though, the human being is also “person” due to his/her spiritual reality. Unlike material individuality that excludes us from others, person, or spirit, expresses itself to others. Maritain defines the person as a term of “independence, as a reality which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe unto itself, a relatively independent whole”.<sup>13</sup> The person, then is “a whole, an open and generous whole”.<sup>14</sup> One might say, the human being is a totality.

Maritain, however, favors no state totalitarianism. Using Thomistic metaphysics, he wants to strike a balance between anarchical individualism and state totalitarianism. Though the person wants to be part of society, the person by no means is “in society in the way in which a part is in a whole and treated in society as a part in the whole”.<sup>15</sup> Rather, Maritain distinguishes between a human being belonging to society according to his entire being and being fully committed to the whole of society. “[A]lthough man in his entirety is engaged as a part of political society (since he may have to give his life for it), he is not a part of political society by reason of his entire self and all that is in him. On the contrary, by reason of certain things in him, man in his entirety is elevated above political society”.<sup>16</sup> Maritain cites a clause from the *Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 21, a. 4, ad. 3, the same clause that Benedict XVI makes use of 63 years later in *CIV*. “Man is not ordained to the body politic, according to all that he is and has.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> T. Osborne, ‘MacIntyre, Thomism, and the Common Good’, in Kelvin Knight and Paul Blackledge (eds.), *Revolutionary Aristotelianism* (Stuttgart: Lucius and Lucius, 2008), pp. 75-90

<sup>11</sup> J. Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good* trans. John J. Fitzgerald, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p.36

<sup>12</sup> This metaphysical analysis leads St. Thomas into some interesting speculations about separate identity between the period of our death and the resurrection. Confer, for instance, W. Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001)

<sup>13</sup> Maritain, *op. cit.*, p.40

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71

<sup>17</sup> Benedict XVI cites the Latin: “*Homo non ordinates ad communicate politicam secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua.*”

According to Thomas Osborne, “Maritain attempts to support a liberal democracy with an alternative account of the common good ... by arguing that for Thomas Aquinas the individual has priority over the state”.<sup>18</sup> Because human beings are person, Maritain concludes, according to Osborne, that “each human being has an individual good which is superior to that of any whole”.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, one can interpret Maritain plausibly to hold that the individual person has priority over the common good.

Osborne is right. Maritain declares, for instance, that a society of free persons must be personalist

because it considers society to be a whole composed of persons whose dignity is anterior to society and who, however indigent they may be, contain within their very being a root of independence and aspire to ever greater degrees of independence until they achieve that perfect spiritual liberty which no human society has within its gift.<sup>20</sup>

Maritain argues, then, that, as a person, the human being stands above the political good even if, as a material political being, the human being is subservient to the common good. The human person is engaged in his entirety in political society because said society may require him to sacrifice his life for it. Yet, by her whole being, the person is elevated above political society. For Osborne, the position that Maritain lays out falls to the same critique that Alasdair MacIntyre makes of the modern liberal society. That criticism consists of two parts.

First, the contemporary nation-state relies on the self-sacrifice of individuals in the roles of police officers, fire fighters, and soldiers. Yet, the nation-state “presents itself as a kind of utility company,” providing material goods for its members. Such a conception does not, according to MacIntyre, give the individual something to die for.<sup>21</sup> Second, the contemporary nation-state must place value on “different kinds of practices and indeed on human life”.<sup>22</sup> Osborne provides the example of safety regulations. Such safety regulations include costs (value) that bureaucrats establish. In setting such costs, however, the bureaucrats favor some practices over others.

Maritain, as already noted, holds that the state can require the individual to sacrifice his life for the common good. He goes further. Because the individual human being depends on society to make up for his material deficiencies – for example, by teaching the mathematician mathematics – the state can require that the mathematician teach mathematics.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the state cannot force the mathematician to teach or embrace mathematics that he does not hold as true. Further, providing someone with education in mathematics, or other utility services, will not justify the state in requiring individuals to sacrifice their lives for the state.<sup>24</sup> At this level, MacIntyre might grant that the individual under Maritain’s political philosophy would in fact teach mathematics.

---

<sup>18</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.72

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson. (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), p.20

<sup>21</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.78

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, pp.73-4

<sup>24</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.84

The problem goes deeper, however. A political community operating under Maritain's political philosophy would not be able to prioritize practices.<sup>25</sup> That is, it cannot justify requiring the mathematician to teach philosophy. To do so would require it to affirm that the good of the individual is subordinate to the common good. Consider, for instance, the case of someone who studies mathematics, not to teach, but to develop a closer relationship to God. This mathematician may consider teaching to be antithetical to growing closer to God because that activity would require her to spend less time getting closer to God. Because Maritain conditions that the human person is not wholly part of the political state, he is open to this sort of criticism. His prioritization of the individual over the state undermines the development of the virtues and undermines the pursuit of the human good. The development of virtues and the pursuit of the human good require, on MacIntyre's Aristotelian-Thomistic account, a society that can both justify itself to the point of death to the citizen and must prioritize or order practices according to the common good.<sup>26</sup>

### 3: Benedict XVI, Maritain, and the Human Family

When we consider the problems with Maritain's political philosophy, we might question whether they are inherent to any Thomistic political philosophy or whether they result from a mis-interpretation of St. Thomas. This question becomes all the more important for trying to grasp Benedict XVI's political philosophy as laid out in *CIV* given his reliance on the same key passage from ST. I-II q. 21, a. 4, ad. 3. Osborne draws on Charles De Koninck's interpretation of this passage, in "In Defense of St. Thomas,"<sup>27</sup> to argue that Thomas is not supporting individualism here. "According to De Koninck, Thomas is saying that humans are only partially ordered to the political common good because the political common good is not the ultimate end of human beings".<sup>28</sup>

Let's consider the context of the citation from the Summa. Question 21 concerns the merits and demerits of human action. In article four, Thomas asks whether a human action is meritorious or demeritorious before God as regards good or evil. Article four follows article three that asks whether an action is meritorious or not with respect to good and evil. Thomas answers that an action receives merit or demerit with respect to justice. Justice, however, concerns one's relationship to others. So actions are approved of or disapproved of on the basis of whether they help or hurt others.

Article four follows from article three because one wants to know whether such actions in community also receive approbation or condemnation from God with respect to their good and evil. Question 21, a. 4, ad 3, then, addresses, not simply the relationship of the individual to political community, i.e. justice, but the merits of an action in a political community with respect to God. Thomas writes

I answer that, a human action, as stated above [Article 3], acquires merit or demerit, through being ordained to someone else, either by reason of himself,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78; cf: A MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy, and the Common Good', & MacIntyre, 'Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity', in Edward McLean (ed.), *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*, (Wilmington, DC: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2000) pp. 91-115

<sup>27</sup> C. De Koninck, 'In Defense of St. Thomas; A Reply to Father Eschmann's Attack on *The Primacy of the Common Good*', in Ralph McInerny (ed.), *The Writings of Charles De Koninck* vol. II, pp. 205-365

<sup>28</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.77

or by reason of the community: and in each way, our actions, good and evil, acquire merit or demerit, in the sight of God. On the part of God Himself, inasmuch as He is man's last end; and it is our duty to refer all our actions to the last end, as stated above.<sup>29</sup>

This answer rests on the claim in sentence two: “not all human actions are ordained to God.” No human actions are ordained to something other than God – the body politics or other individuals or something else.

The particular phrase that both Maritain and Benedict XVI cite come from article four, ad 3, where Thomas replies to an objection he entertains in setting up the question. The objection – that is, the actions do not have to be referred to God in order to be deemed meritorious or not – reads “Further, a human action acquires merit or demerit through being ordained to someone else. But not all human actions are ordained to God. Therefore not every good or evil action acquires merit or demerit in God's sight.” Thomas thus replies:

Man is not ordained to the body politic, according to all that he is and has; and so it does not follow that every action of his acquires merit or demerit in relation to the body politic. Yet, all that man is, and can, and has, must be referred to God: and therefore every action of man, whether good or bad, acquires merit or demerit in the sight of God, as far as the action itself is concerned.

For Thomas, the human being belongs in all that she “is and can and has” to God. All human actions are judged according to that relationship and are, thus, meritorious or not according to that relationship. Maritain interprets this passage to mean, as discussed above, that the human individual relates to God as final end as an individual final end. De Koninck, however, holds that this means only that God is the common good of humanity – of all human beings. Thomas does not support a conception of the individual over the common good. Rather, he supports a view that humanity’s highest end – God – is a common good of humanity. All actions, even those in the political state and in light of the common good, are judged, primarily, with respect to God as final end.<sup>30</sup>

Does Benedict XVI, in citing the same section of the *Summa*, understand the individual’s relationship to the state the same way Maritain does? Arguably not.

Benedict XVI cites with the passage from the *Summa* a passage from Thomas’ Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. That passage properly translated reads, “the order of the part is opposed to the order of the whole.”<sup>31</sup> This section of the Commentary concerns the relationship between the soul and human nature. Thomas asserts that “the spirit is part of human nature.” Thus, spirit is not a part opposed to the whole human being – something separate and distinct. Rather, the spirit belongs to the whole of human nature. Thus, for Thomas, “it is not possible to speak of the soul separate from the body” or the body separate from the soul. We might say, using Benedict XVI’s words, that the soul is not isolated from the body or from the person.

---

<sup>29</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, I-II, Q.19 Art.10

<sup>30</sup> I want to thank Christopher Lutz for guidance in understanding this debate and the relevant passage from St. Thomas.

<sup>31</sup> Thanks to Gerald Twaddell for research assistance in locating the Latin edition of this text and to Linda Showman for help in translating this passage.



Benedict, then, wants to motivate a metaphysics of the relations between human persons. The “human community does not absorb the individual, annihilating his autonomy, as happens in various forms of totalitarianism, but rather values him all the more because of the relation between the individual and community is a relation between one totality and another”.<sup>32</sup>

In short, Benedict XVI implies that human beings are related to each other as wholes in a family seeking God as the common good. Throughout *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI speaks of the human family.<sup>33</sup> He writes more, in fact, about the human family than he does about families *per se*. The cooperation of the human family in the face of globalization proves to be of utmost importance for Benedict XVI. He rightly fears that this understanding of family can be misinterpreted to support a totalitarian form of community or government. He is one with Maritain there. Yet, Benedict XVI wants, not to prioritize the individual over the community, but to establish the relational nature of human beings in the face both of totalitarianism and rampant individualism. Our common good is the good of the one human family.<sup>34</sup>

This understanding of the human person as relational and of human beings constituting one global human family underlies Benedict XVI’s call for us to become protagonists of globalization. “To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically, and culturally, making it the polis, or ‘city.’” This stand defines “the institutional path – we might also call it the political path” which will contribute “to the building of the universal *City of God*, which is the goal of the history of the human family”.<sup>35</sup> Echoing John XXIII, Benedict XVI envisions this institutional path as giving rise to a global government.

In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise the economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making ... there is an urgent need of a true world political authority.<sup>36</sup>

This authority must, of course, be regulated by law and seek the common good under the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Moreover, it needs to be universally recognized as having authority and given effective power to achieve its goals and “ensure compliance with its decisions.”

One can recognize the ideal which Benedict XVI lays down. Obviously no nation-state or religious body has the moral or political authority to lay down the law. Nor does any, despite the delusions of the United States, have the real power to achieve its goals or ensure compliance. While the ideal is pretty, if one follows MacIntyre’s criticism of modern nation-

---

<sup>32</sup> *CIV*, n.53

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, n.7, 13, 33, 42, 53, 54, 57

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, n.53

<sup>35</sup> *CIV*, n.7

<sup>36</sup> *CIV*, n.67

states, Benedict XVI's one world government comes up short. We should, instead of turning to a global government, turn to local communities to support integral human development.

#### **4: MacIntyre's Local Communities: An Attempt at Synthesis**

I do not want to be too quick here in asserting MacIntyre's solution. Osborne, whose critique of Maritain I followed, holds that a similar critique applies to MacIntyre. For Osborne, when MacIntyre writes about local communities, he writes about "workplaces, schools, parishes, trade union branches, adult education classes, and the like".<sup>37</sup> For Osborne, because MacIntyre identifies local communities as workplaces, schools, parishes, etc., MacIntyre succumbs to the two criticisms he makes of nation-states. "[N]one of these local communities is concerned with the good life as a whole ... the local community's weakness in ordering practices is similar to that of the contemporary nation-state".<sup>38</sup>

Further, according to Osborne, MacIntyre's local communities cannot require the loyalty of a soldier or a police officer to the extent that it can justify the self-sacrifice of the soldier or police officer. Thus, Osborne writes, "MacIntyre discusses several kinds of local communities, but none of them obviously should have coercive force".<sup>39</sup> Osborne continues

MacIntyre does recognize that members of local communities will have to participate in conflicts between nation-states, but he does not indicate how this participation should occur. Should an individual fishing crew decide to sign up in a war against totalitarian aggression? Should such deliberation be assigned to a sports club or the members of a factory?<sup>40</sup>

Given the examples Osborne uses, parishes and schools, on the one hand, and fishing crews and sports clubs, on the other, his argument against MacIntyre appears convincing. If MacIntyre in fact identifies the local communities that he prizes as sports clubs and parishes, or work places and fishing crews, then he could not and should not expect such "local communities" either to be able to prioritize practices or to require the self-sacrifice of members for the good of the community.

MacIntyre, however, does not identify local communities as fishing crews and parishes. Rather, he identifies local communities as defined by shared deliberation that includes various institutions and associations. If we examine the passage from which Osborne derives his list of MacIntyrean local communities, we see that MacIntyre has been misread.

If then the nation-state cannot provide a form of association directed towards the relevant type of common good, what of the family? Families at their best are forms of association in which children are first nurtured, and then educated for and initiated into the activities of the adult world in which their parent's participatory activities provide them both with resources and models. It follows that the quality of life of a family is in key part a function of the quality of relationships of the individual members of the family to and in a variety of other institutions and associations: workplaces, schools, parishes,

---

<sup>37</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.78 & 84

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86-7

sports clubs, trade union branches, adult education classes, and the like. And it is insofar as children learn to recognize and to pursue as their own, and parents and other adult members of the family continue to recognize and pursue, the goods internal to the practices of which such associations and institutions are the milieu that the goods of the family are realized. The family flourishes only if its social environment also flourishes.<sup>41</sup>

In this passage, MacIntyre identifies the family as one association. He further recognizes that the health of the family depends, in part, on the health of the relationship of the members of the family to other institutions and associations. When he writes about the “goods internal to the practices of such associations and institutions,” the associations and institutions refer to the parishes and trade unions. Nowhere does he refer to schools and parishes as local communities. Rather, the local community is identified as the social environment of the family – that is, all of those associations and institutions together with the family. Thus, MacIntyre is able to write “[I]t must instead be some form of local community within which the activities of families, workplaces, schools, clinics, clubs dedicated to debate and clubs dedicated to games and sports, and religious congregations may all find a place”.<sup>42</sup> The local community, rather than being defined as, rather encompasses families, workplaces, trade unions, parishes, etc.

If my interpretation of MacIntyre’s local communities proves correct, then Osborne’s criticism of MacIntyre rests on a mistake. The question consists, not in whether parishes and schools can require self-sacrifice and prioritize goods, but whether local communities that include parishes and schools can require self-sacrifice and prioritize goods.

If we follow MacIntyre, we should establish, support, and engage in local communities. Societies that allow individual to flourish possess three characteristics.<sup>43</sup> First, the members of the society recognize that obedience to the precepts of natural law is necessary if they are to discover their individual and common good. Second, they will be small scale and self-sufficient, “to protect themselves from the destructive incursions of the state and the wider market economy”.<sup>44</sup> They will be societies of small producers rather than large scale, mis-named, free markets. MacIntyre is quick to point out that such small scale communities will not be compartmentalized and will not recognize their activities as compartmentalized from the political unit. Such compartmentalization, or fragmentation, rather, characterizes the politics of late modernity. Further, especially in the political realm, individuals will present themselves honestly in their whole aspect rather than as fictional characters running for office.

This conclusion entails that Catholic social teaching should turn away from discussions of global justice and a call for a global government with teeth and turn to discussions of how parishes, monasteries, and other religious communities can participate in, support, and belong to local communities of the kind MacIntyre prefers. Here I think we can tie together some of Benedict XVI’s words with MacIntyre’s own thought.

In §66, Benedict XVI calls on consumers to become more educated about their daily role in purchasing. Such education can be accomplished, not only through schools, but also

---

<sup>41</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, The Paul Carus Lectures, 20 (Chicago: Open Court, 2009), p.134

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135

<sup>43</sup> MacIntyre, ‘Politics, Philosophy, and the Common Good’, pp.247-9

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.248

through the parish as a dialogue partner in the common good of the local community. Further, consumers should search for new ways for exploring their economic roles. Benedict XVI mentions consumer cooperatives. Despite the fact that he makes these claims in a section focused on the global market, education and developing new modes of economic living are always local activities. They bring into question how the local community can supply its basic needs and provide a milieu for social flourishing.

Genuinely free markets are always local and small-scale in whose exchanges producers can choose to participate or not. And societies with genuinely free markets will be societies of small producers ... in which no one is denied the possibility of the kind of productive work without which they cannot take their place in those relationships through which the common good is realized.<sup>45</sup>

One way of supporting local communities and their economies consists in developing local forms of control over utilities. A community that builds solar panels or wind turbines to provide electricity for itself moves one step closer to being self-sufficient. A church that aids in this self-sufficiency increases the local autonomy, not only of the community, but of itself and, further, protects the environment, an important concern of Benedict XVI's.

Also of import in relation to MacIntyre is Benedict XVI's call, following the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching from the publication of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 on, to support trade unions.<sup>46</sup> However, he calls for such unions to turn away from their nationalistic interests to global interests. At this point, some ground must be bridged between Benedict XVI and MacIntyre. Labor unions will always be concerned with local institutions. Yet, they will gain more power to achieve their defense of the worker by aligning with workers in other communities and, thus, across the globe. When the focus becomes one of power or of money, however, it will always be the local community that will call the trade union back to its basic good. Here, we should see local parishes and religious communities, not only supporting, but requiring their non-ordained employees to join unions.

Talk of local communities is all well and good, someone might say, but what of globalization? Benedict XVI calls for us to become protagonists of globalization rather than its victims.<sup>47</sup> I think MacIntyre can make the most significant correction to *Caritas in Veritate* on this point.

Lying at the center of MacIntyre's embrace of local communities and his rejection of nation-states and globalization is rational debate and deliberation. Rational debate and deliberation remain absent from nation-states, despite the fact of voting, and nothing suggests anything will be different on the global level. The "vast majority have no say as to the alternatives between which they are permitted to choose. And there is no way in which the elites that determine those alternatives can be effectively challenged or called to account".<sup>48</sup> Moreover, contemporary "education systematically prepares children to inhabit and to accept a society of gross inequalities and fails to prepare them for rational deliberation." Both a system that allows rational deliberation and the individuals ability to call political leaders to

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.249-50

<sup>46</sup> *CIV*, n.64

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, n.42

<sup>48</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, (2008) "What More Needs To Be Said: A Beginning, Although Only a Beginning, At Saying It," in Kelvin Knight and Paul Blackledge (eds.), *Revolutionary Aristotelianism* (Stuttgart: Lucius and Lucius, 2008), p.263).

question and a system that educates people for rational deliberation prove necessary for human flourishing at the level of the political common good. Lack of these aspects in modern nation states obscures “from most people in advanced societies the salient fact ... that the costs of globalizing change, like the costs of natural disorders and the costs of war, are inflicted on and paid by those least able to afford them.”

If we are to become protagonists of globalization, we will have to be able to engage in shared rational deliberation and call to account those who presume to be our leaders. MacIntyre and Benedict XVI are on the same line here, but MacIntyre recognizes the features of late advanced capitalism that prevent the hopes of Benedict XVI to come to fruition. Which fact leads to one more way in which Catholic Social Teaching must proceed: as members of local communities, churches must be at the forefront of educating children and adults. Bishops who look too easily to filling the pulpit at the cost of educating their ministers fail, not only the global Church and human society, but the local communities, and in so failing their local communities exacerbate their failure of humanity. Education within the Church, in its seminaries and universities, must embrace the challenge of education that MacIntyre makes in his recent *God, Philosophy, and Universities*.<sup>49</sup>

### Conclusion

I have examined Benedict XVI’s metaphysics of the human person as relational in *Caritas in Veritate* in light of Alasdair MacIntyre’s political philosophy. Benedict XVI cites a section of the *Summa* which proved controversial under Maritain’s interpretation. Following Osborne’s discussion, I argued that Maritain misinterpreted the passage in question and, further, that, combined with a passage from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Benedict XVI avoids Maritain’s interpretational mistake. Rather prioritizing the individual over the common good, Benedict XVI emphasizes that all human beings belong to the human family. We must, as a family, become protagonists of globalization by instituting a global government with real teeth. I suggested, further, that this call undermines itself insofar as it presents politics as an institution rather than a practice. Politics as practice is local and undergirds rational deliberation which is necessary for achieving the human end.

From this conclusion, I’ve argued that we need to look more closely at MacIntyre’s alternative to the modern nation-state: local communities. This move entailed examining what MacIntyre means by local communities. Rejecting Osborne’s interpretation that local communities can be identified with parishes, schools, and trade unions, I noted that MacIntyre says such communities have three characteristics. They are (1) observant of natural law, (2) small scale, and (3) societies of small producers. The first condition aligns MacIntyre’s local communities with the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching by recognizing the importance of natural law as a foundation for a just society in which its members flourish. Thus, one avenue of further discussion would concern the development of a truly Thomistic natural law. MacIntyre has provided some possible way signs on this account, but a greater development (such as the one I offered in 2009 at the Third Annual Conference of the International Society of MacIntyrean Enquiry)<sup>50</sup> needs to continue.

<sup>49</sup> MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy and Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition*, (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2009)

<sup>50</sup> Jeffery Nicholas, ‘Critical Theory, Natural Law, and the Common Good: MacIntyre or Young; City or Polis’, delivered at the the International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry Third Annual Conference, University College Dublin, March 2009

Further, the local church, in part headed by her bishop or abbot, must become an active participant in local communities helping them establish local economies, local power sources, and trade unions that have global reach. Most importantly, however, the local church must support with the community, including under the auspices of its national education system, a reformed education that sets the child up, not for living within a globalized oligarchy in which leaders are selected by some elite, but for true rational deliberation. The tasks of philosophy, then, become both theoretical, in developing accounts of natural law, deliberative democracy, and rational deliberation, and practical, in actively supporting concrete practices, institutions, and associations in the pursuit of the common good at the local political level. Only by incorporating that pursuit of the political common good in our lives can human beings, as individuals and in communion, achieve the ultimate good that stands at the end of all time and reality.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Thanks to Christopher Lutz for detailed comments and discussion on an earlier draft of this paper.