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ON “UNEASE” AND “IDEALISM”: REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI’s EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE IN JUSTICE AND PEACE AND ITS MESSAGE FOR LAW TEACHERS

LUCIA A. SILECCHIA*

In the past several months, much has been said and written about the legacy of Pope Benedict XVI after he announced his decision to “renounce the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. Peter,”1 and enter into a life of prayer “hidden from the world.”2 Some of this attention has been directed toward an appreciation of Pope Benedict XVI’s contributions to thought on Catholic education.3 However, little attention has been paid to a short but passionate message that has much to inspire all involved in education—and, in a particular way, much to teach those whose life’s work lies in legal education.

Last year, Pope Benedict XVI identified “unease” and “idealism” as the twin concerns of today’s young—their unease with our imperfect world, coupled with an idealism that they may help build, for the future, “a society with a more human and fraternal face.”4

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This insight into the mind of the young was beautifully captured in Pope Benedict XVI’s 2012 Message for the World Day of Peace, entitled *Educating Young People in Justice and Peace* (“Educating Young People”). Each New Year’s Day, it is traditional for the papal World Day of Peace Message to identify a threat to peace and to offer reflections as to how all people of good will might respond to that threat so as to build a more peaceful, hope-filled world. Some of the annual Messages have garnered much attention because they address, with particularity, a timely high profile issue or controversy and may make specific recommendations as to how that challenge might be addressed.

Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE (Sept. 15, 2012), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120915_giovani_en.html (“I am aware of the difficulties which you face daily on account of instability and lack of security, your difficulties in finding employment and your sense of being alone and on the margins. In a constantly changing world you are faced with many serious challenges.”).


6. The tradition of the annual World Day of Peace Message is a longstanding one. “By initiative of Pope Paul VI, beginning in 1968, the Church celebrates the first day of the year as the *World Day of Peace*. The same Pontiff started the tradition of writing annual Messages that deal with the theme chosen for each *World Day of Peace*.” Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* ¶ 99 (2d ed. 2005) [hereinafter *Compendium*]; see also id. ¶ 99 (“These Messages expand and enrich the corpus of the Church’s social doctrine.”); id. ¶ 520 (“The *World Days of Peace* are particularly intense moments of prayer for peace and for the commitment to build a world of peace. . . . The Papal Messages on these annual occasions represent a rich source for the renewal and development of the Church’s social doctrine and show the Church’s constant pastoral activity aimed at the promotion of peace.”) (emphasis in original).

Since it was proclaimed, however, the 2012 Message has—quite unfortunately—failed to attract as much press or popular attention as some of its predecessors. This may well be because it did not focus specifically on any of the obviously high-profile threats to world peace, sadly abundant as they may be. Instead, the 2012 theme was “Educating Young People in Justice and Peace.”

This theme was a refreshing and timely one. It focused not so much on a problem or threat but, instead, turned its gaze to the most promising response to such threats: the education of today’s young men and women in the pursuit of genuine justice and lasting peace.

The theme is one that should be of interest to all; but, in a particular way, it speaks to those who have been blessed with a vocation to teach. In introducing the broad obligations of all educators, Pope Benedict XVI said:

8. See Educating Young People, supra note 4.

9. See Canon Liam Slattery, Creating Peace and Justice, THE CITIZEN GLOUCESTERSHIRE (Jan. 14, 2012), http://citizen.gloucestershire.vlex.co.uk/vid/canon-slattery-parish-priest-peter-385938668 (“Pope Benedict chose the theme in the conviction that young people, with their enthusiasm and idealism, can offer new hope to the world today.”); and Cindy Wooden, Teaching Young About Human Dignity Promotes Peace, Justice Pope Says, CATHOLIC NEWS SERV. (Dec. 16, 2011), http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1104930.htm (“Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said the pope’s message highlights the fact that he sees young people not only as hope for the future, but as an active part, the most vital part of the human family in a world that needs energy and new ideas now.”).

[W]ith a great sense of responsibility may they ensure that the dignity of each person is always respected and appreciated. Let them be concerned that every young person be able to discover his or her own vocation and helped to develop his or her God-given gifts. . . .

Every educational setting can be a place of openness to the transcendent and to others; a place of dialogue, cohesiveness, and attentive listening, where young people feel appreciated for their personal abilities and inner riches, and can learn to esteem their brothers and sisters. May young people be taught to savour the joy which comes from the daily exercise of charity and compassion towards others and from taking an active part in the building of a more humane and fraternal society.  

More specifically, though, *Educating Young People* has much to inspire those whose particular vocation lies in legal education. This may be most obvious for those who teach at religiously-affiliated law schools, where the themes addressed by Pope

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Benedict XVI are or might be addressed more explicitly. However, just as *Educating Young People* itself was intended for all people of good will, so, too, does it have something to say to all teachers of law.

*Educating Young People* begins by announcing that education in justice and peace is “a primary duty for society as a whole,” and spells out the indispensable, intertwined roles for the family, political leaders, the media, and young people themselves to name but a few. It then goes on to focus on the unique and weighty responsibilities of educators. Pope Benedict XVI described education as “the most interesting and difficult adventure in life.” Those who teach law would likely agree wholeheartedly that, for both teachers and students, education is


15. Id. ¶ 2 (“Where does true education in justice and peace take place? First of all, in the family, since parents are the first educators. The family is the primary cell of society. . . . The family is the first school in which we are trained in justice and peace.”).

16. Id. (“I ask political leaders to offer concrete assistance to families and educational institutions in the exercise of their right and duty to educate.”).

17. Id. (“In today’s society, the mass media have a particular role: they not only inform but also form the minds of their audiences, and so they can make a significant contribution to the education of young people. . . . [T]he connection between education and communication is extremely close . . . .”).

18. Id. (“Young people . . . need to have the courage to live by the same high standards that they set for others. Theirs is a great responsibility: may they find the strength to make good and wise use of their freedom. They too are responsible for their education, including their education in justice and peace!”).

19. Id. This notion of education as a challenge mirrors an earlier comment of Pope Benedict XVI when he reflected “[e]ducating . . . has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult.” *Pope Benedict XVI, Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE (Jan. 21, 2008), [http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione_en.html) [hereinafter *Letter to Rome*]. See also 2012 New Ambassador Address, supra note 10 (“While examining
interesting, difficult, and, certainly and always, an adventure. They likely also see in today’s students both the wonderful idealism of which Pope Benedict XVI spoke and, simultaneously, genuine youthful concerns about the future—both their own individual futures20 and also, generously, the future of the fragile world they will help to shape.21 It is certainly with idealism that many students enter law school, and often, with unease that they leave to embark on their professional lives.

the numerous challenges of our age, we can note that education occupies a primary place.

20. Much has been written recently by secular commentators about law students’ unease and dissatisfaction. See Lauren Carasik, Renaissance or Retrenchment: Legal Education at a Crossroads, 44 IND. L. REV. 735, 747 (2011) (“The literature is rife with articles deploiring the prevalence and severity of law student’s distress, which manifests in a variety of maladaptive responses. Studies document elevated rates of depression, anxiety, alcoholism, suicide, and professional dissatisfaction among law school students.”); Michael Serota, A Personal Constitution, 105 NW. U. L. REV. 149, 151 (2010) (“The personal challenges of lawyering are well-documented. Approximately 20% of the legal profession suffers from clinically significant levels of substance abuse, depression, anxiety, or some other form of psychopathology. America’s lawyers suffer from the highest rate of depression of all professionals. In fact, lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to suffer from a major depressive disorder than the rest of the employed population, and they are also at greater risk of developing heart disease, alcoholism, and drug use than the general population.”) (citations omitted); Jennifer Jolly-Ryan, Promoting Mental Health in Law School: What Law Schools Can Do for Law Students to Help Them Become Happy, Mentally Healthy Lawyers, 48 U. LOUISVILLE L. REV. 95 (2009) (exploring the roots of mental health challenges in law students and lawyers). See generally Lucia Ann Silecchia, Reflections on the Link Between Faith and Intellect 8 (Catholic Univ. of Am. Legal Studies Series, Paper No. 2011-2, 2011), available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=1746911 (In this unpublished address presented at The Catholic University of America, I reflected on some of the personal challenges faced by law students: “Much has been written about the ways in which the law school years can be a difficult time in students’ lives personally and professionally. At times, the competitive nature of the law school enterprise and worries about debt and employment can be overwhelming. Important and difficult decisions have to be made about what professional path to pursue. Some have accused the steady emphasis on methodically examining all sides of an issue of stealing from law students the convictions they had about what was right or true or just. Added to this is the reality that the years during which most students go to law school can also be years of increasing familial and personal obligations.”).

21. Indeed, encouraging this outward concern is a primary responsibility of legal educators. See Araujo, supra note 12 (“One of the major obligations of educators . . . concerns the need to help the young see beyond themselves. If we are truly living in an ‘it’s-all-about-me’ culture, there is an antidote to the problems with which a taste engenders. It is responsibility.”); Educating Young People, supra note 4 (To the extent that lawyers become active participants in political life, Pope Benedict XVI encourages such a path toward helping others, as he optimistically calls politics “a genuine service to the good of all.”).
Indeed, as Pope Benedict XVI reflected more recently, "[m]any young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way. More generally, however, young people look at the difficulties of our world and ask themselves: is there anything I can do?"22  Certainly, many young people asking themselves this question find themselves in law school, hoping that the education they receive there—and the teachers whom they meet there—can help answer this profound question.

In many ways, the task facing today’s professors is no different or more daunting than that which faced their predecessors who were also charged with guiding a new generation into an often-troubled world. A few months before presenting Educating Young People, Pope Benedict XVI reflected:

I am reminded of my own first steps as a professor at The University of Bonn. At the time, the wounds of war were still deeply felt and we had many material needs; these were compensated by our passion for an exciting activity, our interaction with colleagues of different disciplines and our desire to respond to the deepest and most basic concerns of our students. This experience of a “Universitas” of professors and students who together seek the truth in all fields of knowledge . . . helps us to see more clearly, the importance, and even the definition, of the University.23

Yet, while the challenge may still be the same, Pope Benedict XVI urgently renewed it for the professoriate of the twenty-first century. Educating Young People includes much that is worthy of reflection by all who teach. However, for those whose privilege it

23. 2011 Address to Young University Professors, supra note 10; see also Pope Benedict XVI, Address by the Holy Father Meeting with Members of the Academic Community at Vladislav Hall in the Prague Castle, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE (Sept. 27, 2009), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/september/Documents/hf_ben-xvi SPEC_20090927_mondo-accademico_en.html) [hereinafter Prague Academic Address] ("Together with your research there is a further essential aspect of the mission of the university in which you are engaged, namely the responsibility for enlightening the minds and hearts of the young men and women of today. This grave duty is of course not new. From the time of Plato, education has been not merely the accumulation of knowledge or skills, but paideia, human formation in the treasures of an intellectual tradition directed to a virtuous life. . . . [L]ikewise today: once young people’s understanding of the fullness and unity of truth has been awakened, they relish the discovery that the question of what they can know opens up the vast adventure of how they ought to be and what they ought to do.").
is to teach law students, perhaps three themes are the most challenging and thought-provoking.

First, *Educating Young People* is a direct challenge to teach primarily by example. This challenge is bluntly proposed by the exhortation that “today more than ever we need authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts; we need witnesses capable of seeing farther than others because their life is so much broader. A witness is someone who first lives the life he proposes to others.”

Previously, Pope Benedict XVI offered a similar challenge when he insisted, “[y]oung people need authentic teachers: persons open to the fullness of truth in the various branches of knowledge, persons who listen to and experience in [their] own hearts that interdisciplinary dialogue; persons who, above all, are convinced of our human capacity to advance along the path of truth.”

Certainly, rules and facts are a critically important part of education—particularly in legal education where the application of detailed rules to specific facts lies at the heart of the enterprise. As the practice of law grows increasingly complex and the scope of legal rules and regulations grows quickly and steadily, the rules and facts that students must master can seem overwhelming—particularly when coupled with the reality that students must also be well-trained in the analytical and professional skills necessary to use their hard won legal knowledge in a productive and effective way to serve the clients and communities on whose behalf they will work.

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24. *Educating Young People*, supra note 4, ¶ 2; see also *Catholic University Address*, supra note 15 (“Account for the hope that characterizes your lives... by living the truth which you propose to your students.”); *Pope Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the United States of America (Regions X–XIII) on Their “Ad Limina” Visit, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE* (May 5, 2012), available at http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/benedict-xvi/speeches/2012/.../bf_ben-xvi_spe_2120505 ys-bishops_en.html (“[T]he essential task of authentic education at every level is not simply that of passing on knowledge, essential as this is, but also of shaping hearts.”); *Prague Academic Address*, supra note 23 (“I wish to encourage you in all that you do to meet the idealism and generosity of young people today not only with programmes of study which assist them to excel, but also by an experience of shared ideals and mutual support in the great enterprise of learning.”); *Letter to Rome*, supra note 19 (“[A]n education would be most impoverished if it were limited to providing notions and information and neglected the important question about the truth, especially that truth which can be a guide in life.”).

25. *2011 Address to Young University Professors*, supra note 10; see also *Letter to Rome*, supra note 19 (“The educator is thus a witness of truth and goodness. He too, of course, is fragile and can be mistaken, but he will constantly endeavor to be in tune with his mission.”).
Yet, the challenge posed by Pope Benedict XVI is to see the obligation of a teacher as extending beyond mere imparting of knowledge and toward living a life that offers effective witness to all that which they hope their students will become.26 He warned in an earlier speech against a critique that should sound familiar to those who study the state of modern legal education:

At times one has the idea that the mission of a university professor nowadays is exclusively that of forming competent and efficient professionals capable of satisfying the demand for labor at any given time. One also hears it said that the only thing that matters at the present moment is pure technical ability. This sort of utilitarian approach to education is in fact becoming more widespread, even at the university level, promoted especially by sectors outside the University. . . . We know that when mere utility and pure pragmatism become the principal criteria, much is lost and the results can be tragic. . . .27

26. See Carasik, supra note 20, at 758 (“Legal educators seem to shrink from discussions about their role in shaping professional ideals. Professors seem comfortable issuing definitive answers about doctrine but less so in advancing their beliefs about justice and professionalism . . . . In hiding behind tenets of neutrality to cover the reluctance to weigh in on these matters, legal educators may tacitly and inadvertently send the message that matters of professionalism are wholly relegated to the realm of personal choice.”); Lebanon Address, supra note 10 (“The goal of education is to guide and support the development of the freedom to make right decisions, which may run counter to widespread opinions, the fashions of the moment, or forms of political and religious ideology. This is the price of building a culture of peace!”); see also Lucia Ann Silecchia, Integrating Spiritual Perspectives with the Law School Experience: An Essay and an Invitation, 37 SAN DIEGO L. REV. 167, 192, 195 (2000) (“In law schools, much is done—and rightly so—to train would-be lawyers to be knowledgeable, competent, and ethical. Yet, there is more to sound practice than this trio of virtues. . . . Some opine, quite correctly, that one [problem] in the legal academy is the desire to approach legal analysis from a purely objective, analytical perspective. Such a perspective—while intellectually rigorous and quite satisfying as a logical pursuit—creates a vacuum when it comes to matters of real meaning and value.”).

27. 2011 Address to Young University Professors, supra note 10. For a similar critique, see 2012 New Ambassador Address, supra note 10 (“Schools and universities seem to have become incapable of creative projects which contain a transcendental teleology that can captivate young people in their deepest recesses, even if they are tempted—ever anxious about their future—by the least effort, a sufficient minimum and easy success, at times inappropriately using the possibilities offered by modern technology. Many would like to succeed and rapidly to obtain an important social and professional status, while disdaining the formation, skills and experience they need. The modern world and responsible adults have been unable to give them the necessary bearings. Could not the dysfunction of certain institutions and some public and private departments be explained by a poor education . . . ?”).
To avoid this “tragedy,” then, Educating Young People is a call to respect students as individuals, to listen with care, to live as though justice and peace are possible, and to respect the dignity of all students while trying to ensure that they see the value in doing the same. This is a call to legal educators to reflect carefully and thoughtfully on their vocation as teachers “who must be ready to give of themselves,” and what that may mean for the way in which they care for the people, principles, institutions, and ideals entrusted to their care. It is a compliment to think that Pope Benedict XVI—himself a former professor—proposed that such a type of education (and educator) not only should be but can be. Teaching rules and facts is certainly easier. Yet, Educating Young People generates a certain unease with the easy. For that, teachers of the law can be reluctantly grateful.

Second, Educating Young People urges those who would educate the young for justice and peace to reflect on the link between human dignity and human freedom. Nowhere is the

28. Id. (“[T]eaching is not just about communicating content but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them . . . .”); Catholic University Address, supra note 13 (“[T]he profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love. Indeed, the dignity of education lies in fostering the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated.”).

29. See Educating Young People, supra note 4, ¶ 2 (exhorting those at educational institutions to “ensure that the dignity of each person is always respected and appreciated. Let them be concerned that every young person be able to discover his or her own vocation and helped to develop his or her God-given gifts.”).

30. Id.

31. See Araujo, supra note 12 (“[T]hose who have a responsibility for the education and formation of young people (I would think this includes law professors) must acknowledge the impact they can and do have on what inspires the enthusiasm and objectives of the young.”); 2011 Address to Young University Professors, supra note 10 (reminding young university professors of the importance of their role, saying: “[y]ou provide a splendid service in the spread of truth, in circumstances which are not always easy.”).

32. The theme of human dignity is at the heart of Catholic teaching, and has been explored extensively in the major social encyclicals of the past century. See generally Compendium, supra note 6, ¶¶ 105–06 (explaining that the roots of human dignity lie in the creation of the human person in the image and likeness of God: “The Church sees in men and women, in every person, the living image of God himself. . . . It is to these men and women, who have received an incomparable and inalienable dignity from God himself, that the Church speaks, rendering to them the highest and most singular service, constantly reminding them of their lofty vocation so that they may always be mindful of it and worthy of it . . . . All of social life is an expression of its unmistakable protagonist: the human person.”).

33. As with human dignity, the centrality of human freedom has been spoken of often in prior papal documents. See, e.g., Compendium, supra note 6,
true understanding of this link more important than in the shaping of those who will, as lawyers, be guardians of both dignity and freedom in the decades to come. Human dignity, called a “supreme dignity,” has its roots in the creation of the human person in the image and likeness of God. Freedom, called a “precious value,” is deeply cherished by the young and essential for justice. Educating Young People suggests that a correct understanding of these two values both individually and in relation to each other forms the basis of any genuinely just society. Thus, it must be at the heart of any legal education if today’s young men and women will be able to shape a truly just and peaceful world in the years to come.

¶ 135 (“Man can turn to good only in freedom, which God has given him as one of the highest signs of his image.”).

34. Educating Young People, supra note 4, ¶ 3.

35. Id. (“Man . . . was created in the image and likeness of God. The grateful recognition that life is an inestimable gift, then, leads to the discovery of one’s own profound dignity and the inviolability of every single person. Hence the first step in education is learning to recognize the Creator’s image in man, and consequently learning to have a profound respect for every human being . . . .”); see also COMPENDIUM, supra note 6, ¶ 108 (“The fundamental message of Sacred Scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of God . . . and sees in his being in the image of God the element that characterizes and distinguishes him . . . .”); Pope Benedict XVI, Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the Occasion of the Eighteenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE (Apr. 27, 2012), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120427_social-sciences_en.html (“At the heart of the Church’s social doctrine is the anthropology which recognizes in the human creature the image of the Creator, endowed with intelligence and freedom, capable of knowing and loving. Peace and justice are fruits of the right order that is inscribed within creation itself, written on human hearts (cf. Rom 2:15) and therefore accessible to all people of good will . . . .”).

36. Educating Young People, supra note 4, ¶ 3; see also COMPENDIUM, supra note 6, ¶¶ 132–33 (“A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person . . . . In no case, therefore, is the human person to be manipulated for ends that are foreign to his own development . . . . The person cannot be a means for carrying out economic, social, or political projects imposed by some authority, even in the name of an alleged progress of the civil community as a whole or of other persons . . . . It is therefore necessary that public authorities keep careful watch so that restrictions placed on freedom or any onus placed on personal activity will never become harmful to personal dignity, thus guaranteeing the effective practicability of human rights.”).

37. See COMPENDIUM, supra note 6, ¶ 135 (“Man rightly appreciates freedom and strives for it passionately. . . . [F]reedom not only allows man suitably to modify the state of things outside of himself, but it also determines the growth of his being as a person through choices consistent with the true good.”).
Respect for human dignity mandates, among other things, that utility, self-interest, and materiality cannot drive the way in which humans relate to each other.\(^{38}\) As *Educating Young People* cautions, “the person cannot be sacrificed for the sake of attaining a particular good, whether this be economic or social, individual or collective.”\(^{39}\) Rather, dignity encompasses respect for the rights to which all are entitled simply by virtue of their humanity\(^{40}\)—and the correlative responsibilities owed by all to all to safeguard those rights.\(^{41}\) Unfortunately, in today’s world, threats to human dignity are widespread and they cry out for an effective, impassioned response from tomorrow’s lawyers. This is particularly true with respect to those who are uniquely vulnerable: the preborn, the frail elderly, those with serious physical and mental illnesses, those who lack life’s basic necessities, and those who find life burdensome in a myriad of ways.\(^{42}\) It is preservation of the profound dignity of all that is the sacred responsibility of all, but a particular duty of those whose work is in law. Without a

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38. In contrast, when human dignity is not respected, “[a]t the root of personal and social divisions, which in differing degrees offend the values and dignity of the human person, there is a wound which is present in man’s inmost self.” *Compendium*, supra note 6, ¶ 116.

39. *Educating Young People*, supra note 4, ¶ 3; see also 2012 New Ambassador Address, supra note 10 (“We must teach [the young] that the human person’s every action must be responsible and consistent with his yearning for the infinite . . . freed from individualistic and materialistic temptations.”); 2013 Diplomatic Corps Address, supra note 10 (“The building of peace always comes about by the protection of human beings and their fundamental rights. This task . . . challenges all countries and must constantly be inspired by the transcendent dignity of the human person and the principles inscribed in human nature. Foremost among these is respect for human life at every stage.”); *Id.* (“To be authentic, the defence of rights must instead consider human beings integrally, in their personal and communitarian dimensions.”).

40. *Compendium*, supra note 6, ¶¶ 144–45 (“Since something of the glory of God shines on the face of every person, the dignity of every person before God is the basis of the dignity of man before other men.”).

41. *See Araujo*, supra note 12 (“Without responsibility, the freedom that rights claims stimulate will be nothing more than the misguided pursuit of license to do whatever I want to do simply because I want to do it. But with responsibility guiding the way, the independence of rights will eventually enable the one exercising rights to recognize that this exercise necessitates interdependence.”); see also *Compendium*, supra note 6, ¶ 153 (“In fact, the roots of human rights are to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being.”).

42. *See blessed are the Peacemakers*, supra note 7 (“True peacemakers . . . are those who love, defend, and promote human life in all its dimensions . . . . Life in its fullness is the height of peace. Anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life.”).
proper understanding of human dignity, all social goods—beginning with peace itself—remain unattainable.\footnote{This was a theme taken up by Pope Benedict XVI later in 2012. He explained: “Our human dignity is inseparable from the sacredness of life as the gift of the Creator. In God’s plan, each person is unique and irreplaceable.”\textit{Lebanon Address}, supra note 10; \textit{see also id.} (“The unconditional acknowledgement of the dignity of every human being, of each one of us, and of the sacredness of human life, is linked to the responsibility which we all have before God. We must combine our efforts, then, to develop a sound version of man, respectful of the unity and integrity of the human person. Without this, it is impossible to build true peace.”).}

Respect for freedom is both a critical safeguard for human dignity and, if “misunderstood and misused,”\footnote{\textit{Educating Young People}, supra note 4, ¶ 3.} a grave threat to it as well. Discussion of freedom and rights is a critically important part of modern legal education, particularly in the United States, where the fundamental rights accorded to Americans are framed in the lofty language of freedom. Soberly, however, \textit{Educating Young People} proposes that a false freedom, unmoored in a moral foundation, is a recipe for evil.\footnote{\textit{See Compendium}, supra note 6, ¶¶ 138, 140 (“In the exercise of their freedom, men and women perform morally good acts that are constructive for the person and for society when they are obedient to truth, that is, when they do not presume to be the creators and absolute masters of truth or of ethical norms. . . . The exercise of freedom implies a reference to a natural moral law, of a universal character, that precedes and unites all rights and duties.”); \textit{see also Lebanon Address}, supra note 10 (“Evil, the devil, works in and through human freedom, through the use of our freedom.”).} It can also be a sure path to loneliness and isolation if the understanding of what is good, just, and true is merely a function of individual opinion.\footnote{\textit{Educating Young People}, supra note 4, ¶ 3 (“Freedom . . . is not the absence of constraint or the supremacy of free will, it is not the absolutism of the self. When man believes himself to be absolute, to depend on nothing and no one, to be able to do anything he wants, he ends up contradicting the truth of his own being and forfeiting his freedom.”); \textit{see also Catholic University Address}, supra note 13 (“We observe, with distress, the notion of freedom being disturbed. Freedom is not an opting out. It is an opting in—a participation in Being itself. Hence authentic freedom can never be obtained by turning away from God.”).} The challenge that \textit{Educating Young People} poses to educators is no less than the charge that “[i]t is the task of education to form people in authentic freedom.”\footnote{\textit{Educating Young People}, supra note 4, ¶ 3; \textit{see also 2011 Address to Young University Professors}, supra note 10 (“[T]he University has always been, and is always called to be, the ‘house’ where one seeks the truth proper to the human person.”).}

How, then, is education in both human dignity and human freedom to be accomplished? \textit{Educating Young People} suggests a curriculum of sorts for this undertaking, noting that true train-
ing in justice and peace requires: “mutual trust, the capacity to hold constructive dialogue, the possibility of forgiveness, which one constantly wishes to receive but finds hard to bestow, mutual charity, compassion towards the weakest, as well as readiness to make sacrifices.” To the extent that legal education fails to give students the opportunity to reflect on these essential questions—or to the extent that it presents dignity and freedom in a false conflict or in an inaccurate way—it fails in one of its most critical tasks. Thus, Educating Young People urges that time be taken to consider these central questions of human life with courage, with honesty, and with openness to the challenges inherent in them.

The third challenge proposed in Educating Young People is, perhaps, the most daunting. Education is often measured by definable accomplishments, tasks completed, goals reached, and credentials secured. Anyone who has successfully defended a thesis, passed a bar examination, won a grade school spelling bee, or secured a professional license understands that. Indeed, assessment of accomplishments and outcomes is becoming ever more important in legal education—and to a large extent, rightly so. However, Educating Young People demands much more.

In what may be the two most challenging phrases of Educating Young People, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “[p]eace is not a blessing already attained, but rather a goal to which each and all of us must aspire,” and “[p]eace . . . is not merely a gift to be received: it is also a task to be undertaken.”

48. Id. ¶ 3. Pope Benedict XVI went on to say, “in order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity, in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the realization of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution.


50. Educating Young People, supra note 4, ¶ 6.

51. Id. ¶ 5.
“gift” are certainly words of great comfort. They invite one to contemplate, perhaps with grateful complacency, what has been achieved or accomplished. They may tempt teachers and students to believe that the short time that students spend in school—law school or otherwise—can bring the “blessing” and “gift” of a true understanding of justice or peace.52

Educating Young People does not propose the comfort of achievement or accomplishment. It offers instead, the unsettling invitation to undertake a “goal” and a “task”—not as an easily completed assignment but, instead, as the noble and fragile work of a lifetime.53 A legal education, no matter how sound, can be but the beginning of an understanding of justice and peace, and what it takes to pursue and maintain either in today’s complex world. For the young, who “with their enthusiasm and idealism, can offer new hope to the world,”54 and for those privileged to be part of their education, this may be the lasting heart of Educating Young People and its enduring challenge as well.

52. 2011 Address to Young University Professors, supra note 10. This was not the first time that Pope Benedict XVI explored the unsettling incompleteness of educational achievement. He previously reflected saying “the path to the fullness of truth calls for complete commitment: it is a path of understanding and love, of reason and faith. We cannot come to know something unless we are moved by love . . . . [W]e need to recognize that truth itself will always lie beyond our grasp. We can seek it and draw near to it, but we cannot completely possess it; . . . truth possesses us and inspires us. In intellectual and educational activity the virtue of humility is also indispensable, since it protects us from the pride which bars the way to truth.” Id.; see also Pope Benedict XVI, Celebration of Vespers with University Students and Teachers of Rome in Preparation for Christmas: Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, VATICAN: THE HOLY SEE (Dec. 16, 2010), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf_benxvi_hom_20101216_vespri-universitari_en.html (“Building your own lives and building society are not tasks that can be accomplished by distracted or superficial minds and hearts. They require profound educational action and continuous discernment that must involve the whole of the academic community, encouraging that synthesis between intellectual formation, moral discipline and religious commitment. . . .”); 2012 New Ambassador Address, supra note 10 (“[T]oday more than ever the young also need to be educated in the meaning of effort and perseverance in leadership.”).

53. See 2013 Diplomatic Corps Address, supra note 10 (“[P]eace is both God’s gift and a human task, one which demands our free and conscious response.”); Id. (“[F]rom the Christian point of view, the glorification of God and human peace on earth are closely linked, with the result that peace is not simply the fruit of human effort, but a participation in the very love of God.”).

54. Educating Young People, supra note 4, ¶1.