

Abstract of the doctoral thesis

The state, politics and the Catholic Church in the social doctrine of Pope Benedict XVI

Key words: Benedict XVI, social doctrine of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church, relations between the State and the Church, politics, religion,

The subject of the research conducted for this thesis is the social doctrine of the Catholic Church developed by Pope Benedict XVI during his pontificate in the years 2005-2013. The purpose of the work is to reconstruct the internal structure of the said doctrine and its most important references. The research area for this dissertation is within social sciences in the discipline of political and administration sciences. The research carried out as part of the work is connected with political science, referring to such sub-disciplines as the political science of religion and the history of political thought. The dissertation consists of four chapters, each of them addressing a different aspect of the social doctrine of Benedict XVI in connection with the broadly understood issue of the relationship between religion, church and politics. In chapter one consisting of seven subchapters a reconstruction of the genesis of Benedict XVI's social doctrine is made. It shows the most significant stages of J. Ratzinger's life, with special emphasis being placed on those that had a decisive influence on the intellectual stances of the future pope. Chapter two consisting of six subchapters concerns Benedict XVI's approach to the state and political power. The issue is of immense importance for this dissertation, because the attitude to these phenomena is an element which conditions the papal perception of the relationship between religion and politics. The subject of the third chapter is Benedict XVI's approach to the broadly understood problem of secularization. The issue was addressed, because without discussing the phenomenon of secularization it is impossible to understand the modern shape of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. Chapter four consisting of seven subchapters is dedicated to reflections on the presence of religion as such and the Catholic Church in the public sphere.

To achieve the research goals of the dissertation, the author used an approach that should be described as interdisciplinary. The approach assumes the use of the achievements of many social sciences and humanities. It should be underlined that the basis for this research are the methods of political science research and the research perspective of the political science of religion. In order to reconstruct the researched reality as fully as possible, the author referred to both the positivist tradition of political sciences which assumes the possibility of objective knowledge of the surrounding reality, as well as a constructivist reflection which assumes that the knowing subject gives meaning to individual phenomena, and these meanings cannot be read without taking into account the context in which they are found. On the level of methods and techniques, the author refers to the following ways of researching social reality: (1) the genetic explanation method; (2) the comparative method; (3) the institutional and legal method; (4) the historical-critical method and narrative analysis.

While working on this dissertation, the author used inference methods based on both induction and deduction. The first approach proved useful in the study of documents of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and the writings of Benedict XVI understood as part of a tradition shaped in the historical process; the second approach turned out to be most useful at the stage of literature analysis and publications concerning the subject of the research.

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