

## ABSTRACT

The dissertation *Fundamental Ecclesiology in the Theological Thought and the Magisterium Ecclesiae of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI* presents an attempt to reconstruct and systematize the fundamental ecclesiology found in the writings and teaching of the German theologian. Despite numerous studies devoted to his ecclesiology, a comprehensive treatment of this subject from a fundamental-theological perspective has so far been lacking. The aim of the work is therefore to fill this gap by identifying, describing, and interpreting the elements of J. Ratzinger's/Benedict XVI's thought that together form a coherent model of fundamental ecclesiology with clear apologetic value.

The thesis of the dissertation states that Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI proposes an original and theologically integrated approach to fundamental ecclesiology, rooted in Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church, while remaining open to dialogue with the contemporary world. His reflection is marked by a close interconnection between ecclesiology and Christology.

The first chapter, devoted to the origins of the Church, discusses contemporary interpretations of the beginnings of Christianity and then reconstructs Ratzinger's view that the Church is born through a dynamic process encompassing the entire life of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The dissertation also examines documents of the International Theological Commission and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which, under the guidance of the German theologian, articulated arguments concerning the historicity of the Church.

The second chapter presents the four marks of the Church: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. The study outlines their biblical and theological foundations, contemporary challenges related to their realization, as well as their character as both gift and task for the community of believers.

The third chapter analyzes the structure of the Church, focusing successively on the development of ecclesial offices, the principle of apostolic succession, the question of primacy, and issues related to the democratization of ecclesial structures. Each topic is presented with consideration of Ratzinger's position, which emphasizes the

sacramental character of ecclesial offices and their theological identity in the context of contemporary challenges.

The final chapter presents a proposal for new paths of justifying the Church's credibility, derived from the theological legacy of the German theologian. The study discusses the categories of beauty, love, hope, and rationality, highlighting their theological foundations and significance for contemporary Christian apologetics.

The analysis demonstrates that the fundamental ecclesiology of J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI constitutes a coherent theological project, capable of engaging in dialogue with modern challenges while remaining deeply rooted in the Church's Tradition.

**Keywords:**

Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, fundamental theology, fundamental ecclesiology, origins of the Church, beginnings of Christianity, marks of the Church, structure, hierarchy, ecclesial offices, apostolic succession, primacy, democratization, ways of justifying the Church's credibility.