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## The Papacy of Benedict XVI and the End of Modernity

In August 2005, Pope Benedict XVI baffled the modern press, when they reported he took an odd, Kerry-esque “cruise” down the Rhine to arrive at the World Youth Day celebrations in Cologne. In fact, and much more likely, he may have been recalling the ancient voyage of St. Boniface, who sailed down the Rhine in order to reconvert the Germanic tribes—and was rewarded with the crown of martyrdom. Symbols that look slightly ridiculous to the modern world—a world that has forgotten history—have great meaning to Pope Benedict and will shape the world during his reign.

This paper will begin by exploring the symbolism deliberately chosen by this pontiff—Pope Benedict XVI—in recalling the ancient founder of monasticism St. Benedict of Nursia and Benedict XV, the “peace pope” who opposed the modern fratricide of Europe during World War I, as well as the subsequent foundation of the secular League of Nations that replaced the Holy Roman Empire. In connection with this, it will probe recurrent themes in his writings as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger that call for a return to primitive Christian ways of living.

Second, the paper will examine Pope Benedict’s beginning homily as well as his documents to date. Third, in connection with this, it will examine his methodology of governing the Church to date. This paper will argue that Deus est Caritas’s rejection of revolution and recent shakeups in the Curia signal the demise of modern statecraft in the Vatican. This will then be examined according to the French Revolution’s impact in politicizing the Church, and will show a deliberate rejection of Napoleon’s Enlightenment ideology to use the Church for political gain.

Bio: Ellen Rice is the editor of *The John Paul II Lifeguide: Words to Life By*; and a co-author of the Catholic Schools Textbook Project’s *All Ye Lands: Teacher’s Edition*, and *Light to the Nations, Vol., 2* [forthcoming]. She offers publishing services to scholarly and educational institutions and presses. Her works have appeared in *Our Sunday Visitor*, *The Irish Family*, *Crisis*, *Today’s Catholic*, *The Wanderer*, and *Catholic Dossier and The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, the last two of which she assisted in editing for several years.