

Crossing the Threshold of Hope

Pope John Paul II , Vittorio Messori (Editor)

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Fifteen years into his Papacy, and on the eve of the third millennium, Pope John Paul II goes to the heart of his personal beliefs and speaks with passion about the existence of God; about pain, suffering, and evil; about "salvation"; and about the relationship of Catholicism to other branches of the Christian faith. With the humility and generosity of spirit for which he is well known, John Paul speaks forthrightly to all people. (Religion--Roman Catholic)

Crossing the Threshold of Hope Details

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From Reader Review Crossing the Threshold of Hope for online ebook

J. Alfred says

I'm not a Roman Catholic, but as a guy who tries to be ecumenical and history-conscious, I like their style. And the title "His Holiness" is hard to beat. So when I came across a copy of a little book I'd heard praised, by one of my students, by a guy whose title is both His Holiness and The Blessed (I think-- he's a Pope/saint, anyway), I thought I'd give it a read.

It was good. The story of how it came to be is nice, and it offers an interesting perspective on a lot of the historical and spiritual things going on in the world. I like the idea of sort of concentric circles of truth and finding places of shared truth with different people groups-- I'd heard that before from a very smart Catholic guy and it's presented in here in an unsystematic manner.

Here's a quote which is pretty representative of the philosophically-rooted but practically-minded style I like in the Catholics I've gotten to know:

The person is a being for whom the only suitable dimension is love. We are just to a person if we love him. This is as true for God as it is for man.

Cool.

J.T. Therrien says

Be not afraid! (to read this book).

I loved this Q & A between an Italian journalist and St. John Paul II, but it did present some challenges. This book is unique in that the style is informal, yet the content ranges from deep philosophical theories (JP II's patented phenomenological background) to theology (in his replies he refers to many of the Church's Encyclicals and the Magisterium's documents issued after the Second Vatican Council).

The range of topics covered (the renewed Marian devotions, human rights, abortion and the culture of death, ecumenism, attitudes regarding Muslims and Buddhists, the Church's relevance in the modern world, the problem of good and evil, etc.) offers a goldmine of information on John Paul II's own personal views and those views are complimented with the Church's official position. The answers provided are succinct, yet complete.

Although it is clear that this interview takes place at the close of the twentieth century, most of the topics covered have been debated and explored by the faithful since Jesus' time.

Be warned, however, that one will walk away from reading Crossing the Threshold of Hope with a fairly extensive reading list.

This small volume of insights is essential reading for Catholics who take their faith seriously and for readers interested in further exploring Catholic theology and social doctrine.

Brian says

This is one of the most significant theological works of the 20th century, if not one of the most important ever produced in the Christian tradition. I put it right next to my St. James Bible and Reinhold Neibuhr's "Moral Man and Immoral Society" on the bookshelf. It's more or less the transcript of an interview that Pope John Paul II had with a British journalist. The journalist forces His Holiness to confront the most controversial questions facing the Roman Catholic Church, including Christianity's relationship with Islam and Judaism, questions of human suffering, pain, and evil, and the essence of faith in God and living a life of hope, dignity, clarity, and vision. In an era of the Catholic Church in which the current Pope has openly criticized the Islamic faith as inherently violent while radical Islamic jihadists declare a military crusade against America and the West, and in which the Vatican releases lists on the religious implications of being a nice driver, Pope John Paul II's restores dignity to the Catholic tradition by answering each question gracefully. It's a remarkable and timely response to the widespread secular criticism of the Catholic Church following the disgraceful sexual abuse scandal of the 90s as well. One of my all-time favorites, and I recommend anyone who wants to truly understand Catholicism and the purpose of living a Christian life to read it cover to cover. It's short and great.

Cate says

I really enjoyed this book. It is fairly short and so a quick read. It is interesting in that it is formulated from questions posed by a journalist and the written answers that Pope John Paul II sent back to him when there interview wasn't able to happen.

I was recently having conversations about the Catholic Church's opinion of other religions and how much I liked how very open they were. This book quotes from the *Nostra Aetate*: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. The Church has a high regard for their conduct and way of life, for those precepts and doctrines which, although differing on many points from that which the Church believes and propounds, often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men." And later: "Instead of marveling at the fact that Providence allows such a great variety of religions, we should be amazed at the number of common elements found within them."

Of course, the book is not limited to this topic, but addresses (among others): The Papacy, whether God exists, why God tolerates suffering, and then addresses separately Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam; as well as eternal life and the theme of John Paul II's papacy, "Be Not Afraid!"

djt says

The book is written by a reporter/writer who gave Pope John Paul II a few major questions he wanted the Pope to comment on, and afterward he interviewed the Pope and was given the very in-depth responses to each of the questions. All of the questions addressed and responded to, therefore, had been given very thoughtful analysis and it shows when you read these just how thoughtful they really were. Reading this gives great insight to a great man, and reveals his thoughts, not only on the Catholic Church, but on a total world view. I really enjoyed this book.

Colin says

Very good book if you want to understand the position of the Catholic Church as it stands today on modern social issues, and why these things are not opinion-based, but reflect a consistency with the faith from centuries before. Sin does not change but remains the same. Temptation is what changes, and our culture is full of new temptations that lead us to sin. Yet the eternal truths about sin have not changed at all.

JPII puts the transition of old to new into perspective and explains the foundation of why the Church preaches, teaches, and believes that modernity has a great potential but also a great battle ahead. Marxist revolutions were only the beginning of a much larger trend of man to reject God entirely in every aspect of life, but this is symptomatic of a larger fear of what might happen if mankind truly accepted God and accepted his forgiveness of our wretched sinfulness. JPII wisely suggests it is fear that will be the biggest enemy in the future when he offers his advice: "be not afraid!"

Finally, the new evangelization is a concept laid out in this book which brings hope, that there is a way to bring mankind back to a wholeness of self, to human rights, to respect and dignity of the human life, to sacrifices for the sake of others, because in truth, the new evangelization is not much different from the old evangelization, to be in the world but not of the world, to profess our faith in word and deed, and again, to "be not afraid!"

Joan says

Disappointed, this was more legalistic and less inspirational than I expected.

Nate says

St. Augustine said, "Audi partem alteram (hear the other side)."

As a Protestant Evangelical, I had grown up hearing only the Protestant side of why Catholics are at best Christians with a lot of traditionalist baggage and at worst not really Christians. Have you ever heard someone ask, "Are you Catholic or Christian?" with all sincerity?

In an effort to get my information from the proverbial horse's mouth, I went to the top -- The Pope.

This book is a good introduction to Pope John Paul II's post-Vatican II Catholicism. It is set up in question-answer format with him and an Italian journalist. He covers lots of issues that Protestants and many others will find very relevant with a surprising ring of familiarity.

Is this guy a Christian??!!!

Joaquin Mejia says

This is the first time I read a book written by St. John Paul II himself. And I loved it! In reading this book, you will get to learn about the wisdom of this great saint. The book was based on an interview made up of different questions so that means St. John Paul II discusses different topics in this book. Every answer St. John Paul II gave was full of wisdom and compassion. Knowing that John Paul II is very famous as a learned theologian and philosopher, I can assure you that the book is very easy to read.

So many different topics were discussed in this book and I don't think it will be easy for me to talk about all of them in this review. How can I write a review about a book that talks about so many different things? All I can do is say that it was insightful and inspiring. I'm just so glad to read this book by a good and faithful servant of Christ. But since I can't talk about all the things discussed in "Crossing the Threshold of Hope", I will just talk about my favorite part of the book.

My favorite part of the book is the chapter where St. John Paul II talks about the youth. When the interviewer asks him about his hope for young people, St. John Paul II's answer was so inspiring. It really moved me because I am a young person myself. Reading the words he said, I can truly see how much he loved the youth. He has so much more hope for the youth than the young people I know and talk to everyday. He understands the youth and he knows how to inspire them. I hope that there will be more people who love the youth that much because it is those kinds of people that the youth need.

That is just a little bit of the insight and inspiration I got from the book. Even if the book is quite short, there is actually so much more you can find if you read it.

Doreen Petersen says

Outstanding book and a definite must read for all Catholics!

Liz says

JP2, WE LOVE YOU!!!!

Gerald says

I inter-library loaned this book since Fr. Barron of *Word on Fire* ministries said that his "we have a reasonable hope that all people are saved" quote followed the teaching of St. John Paul II (JP2) as outlined in a part of his Crossing the Threshold of Hope. It seemed as though Fr. Barron was promoting universalism. The "Does 'Eternal Life' Exist?" chapter got to the heart of the matter.

Overall, this book was a written dialog between a secular reporter and the Pope. The reporter asked all the overarching questions that most non-Christians (and even Christians) ask. The best chapter was the one that

explains the phrase, "the fear of God". Many Christians, including myself, have difficulty understanding this concept, but JP2 explained it in a satisfying way.

Returning to the eternal life/salvation question, JP2 mentioned that the possibility of eternal damnation in Hell doesn't seem like a destination that the True God who is Love would actually send people. However, to me, there was certainly nothing explicit, nor between-the-lines that would indicate that Hell was not a possible outcome for people's eternity for the True God who is Justice, especially since Jesus Himself in the Gospels talked of Hell so often.

The key phrases for understanding JP2's take on Hell were (186), "[The problem of hell] is a mystery, truly inscrutable, which embraces the holiness of God and the conscience of man. The silence of the Church [regarding people that are sent to Hell] is, therefore, the only appropriate position for Christian faith." So, in the final analysis, it seems that the appropriate position of Fr. Barron is to be silent on who may or may not be in Hell, while still proclaiming the teachings of Jesus about Hell that are revealed in the Gospels.

K.D. Absolutely says

My first Lenten read this year. I chose this because Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) will be canonized next month (April 27, 2014). When he died in 2005, the Catholic Church waived the 5-year waiting period for the road to canonization to start. He was proclaimed Venerable in 2009 and Beatified in 2011. So far, he is my favorite pope. He came to the Philippines twice: in 1981 when I was 17 years old and a college student in Baguio City:

and in 1995 during the World Youth Day. I did not have the chance to see him in person but intently watched him on television and followed his schedules during those visits. In 1995, I was 30 years old and my wife and I could still be qualified as "youth" because by definition, youth are all those 40 and below. However, my wife was about to give birth (due that month) but I remember that we heeded the call of the church to let the Christmas lights on for the Pope to see the beauty of the country still full of lights. Here is the Pope watching our native dance, the *Tinikling*:

Nice. If I just knew how to dance the tinikling, I would have volunteered to perform. But then that time, who would have thought that the Pope would become a saint? He was reported to be the cause why a French nun was cured of Parkinson's disease.

This book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was compiled and edited by a Vittorio Messori who is a journalist wanting to interview the Pope in 1994. But the Pope was busy and so he just sent his questions and the Pope answered in writing. The book was published originally in Italian by Messori in 1994 and translated and published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1998 two years before the millennium. It was a timely book because people were apprehensive (millennium bug, end of the world, etc) at that time so the people slogan of "Be Not Afraid!" echoed in the heads among believers and even non-believers as they entered the new millennium. "Do not be afraid" is repeated many a times in the Bible. My favorites are these:

"The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6)

"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." (Matthew 10:26)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the

One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

"But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." (Luke 1:30)

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

"One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent." (Acts 18:9)

"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

Anyway, I digressed. About the book...

It is in the form of Q&A and useful for anyone who would like to know how Pope John Paul II stood on not only about the important issues during his papacy but also those that the Church is still facing nowadays. I enjoyed tremendously those anecdotes that he mentioned especially when he was still a child or a young man in Poland. His father was the one who introduced him to Christ by giving him a book and this was before they went underground before WWII. He first shied away from venerating Mary because he would like to concentrate on Christ but later he learned that the road to Christ is through Mary being the Mother of God. I also enjoyed his story growing up with Jewish friends and witnessing them practicing their faith in the synagogues. Now the synagogues are gone because the Hitler armies destroyed them but then his friends were thinking of building them up and even if Pope John Paul was not Jewish he helped his friends to build those. I think this was something he carried to his papacy that was why he was open with communicating and talking to other faiths and pushed for ecumenism.

There are many other insights and learnings that one can take away from this book. One thing is sure though: when I finished and finally closed this book? I love Pope John Paul more.

That should not be surprising though. By 1998, this book had sold several million copies and was published in forty languages, and over one million copies were sold in Italy alone, says Wikipedia.

booklady says

Read this when it first came out and loved it ... even then. Just finished listening to it again. I “hear” so much of his philosophy now that I'm sure I didn't appreciate 15 years ago—both because of my age and spiritual immaturity then and also because of how little I knew about and understood the profound depths of his wisdom and holiness. Even now, I wonder how much of it I begin to grasp...

The book reminded me of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's* Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium - An Interview With Peter Seewald in the respect that it revolves around a question/answer format. Initially the interviewer wanted to meet with the pope directly but his busy schedule never allowed for that. Instead, the intended questions were left with Pope John Paul II and the answers received to those original questions comprise the text of the book.

Every question is answered fully, directly, completely and without equivocation. It makes for fascinating reading, listening and meditation. Highly recommended!

*Pope Benedict XVI

Minh Quan Nguyen says

I am trying to read books about Christianity. This book is a collection of Q&A by Pope John Paul II about religion, especially Christianity.

The good side, this book expresses many view of Christianity by one of the most important figure in 20th century. The bad side, most of the questions are answered indirectly. Sometimes I feel that the Pope didn't answer the question at all. And the answers are highly theological and confusing.

I don't like many of the points expressed in this book, especially theological points. I respect people who have these views (except when they force them into my throat). They are just not my taste.
