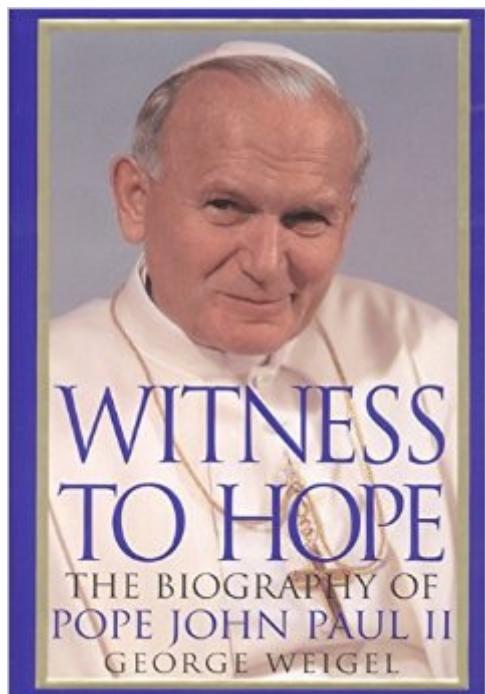


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Witness To Hope: The Biography Of Pope John Paul II



Synopsis

Given unprecedented access to Pope John Paul II and the people who have known and worked with him throughout his life, George Weigel presents a groundbreaking portrait of the Pope as a man, a thinker, and a leader whose religious convictions have defined a new approach to world politics -- and changed the course of history. John Paul II has systematically addressed every major question on the world's agenda at the turn of the millennium: the human yearning for the sacred, the meaning of freedom, the glories and challenges of human sexuality, the promise of the women's movement, the quest for a new world order, the nature of good and evil, the moral challenge of prosperity, and the imperative of human solidarity in the emerging global civilization. By bringing the age-old wisdom of biblical religion into active conversation with contemporary life and thought, the Pope "from a far country" has crafted a challenging proposal for the human future that is without parallel in the modern world. Weigel explores new information about the Pope's role in some of the recent past's most stirring events, including the fall of communism; the Vatican/Israel negotiation of 1991-92; the collapse of the Philippine, Chilean, Nicaraguan, and Paraguayan dictatorships during the 1980s; and the epic papal visit to Cuba. Weigel also includes previously unpublished papal correspondence with Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Deng Xiaoping, and draws on hitherto unavailable autobiographical reminiscences by the Pope. Witness to Hope also discusses the Pope's efforts to build bridges to other Christian communities, and to Judaism, Islam, and other great world religions; presents an analysis of John Paul's proposals for strengthening democratic societies in the twenty-first century; and offers synopses of every major teaching document in the pontificate. Rounding out the dramatic story of Pope John Paul II are fresh translations of his poetry; detailed personal anecdotes of the Pope as a young man, priest, and friend, sketched by those who knew him best; and in-depth interviews with Catholic leaders throughout the world. A magisterial biography of one of the most important figures -- some might argue, the most important figure -- of the twentieth century, Witness to Hope is an extraordinary testimony to the man and his accomplishments, and a papal biography unlike any other.

Book Information

Hardcover: 1008 pages

Publisher: Harper; 1st edition (October 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 006018793X

ISBN-13: 978-0060187934

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 2.1 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (116 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #641,114 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #186 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Rome #424 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Biographies > Popes & the Vatican #4007 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious

Customer Reviews

I did not expect to find Weigel on the Pope so engrossing. I decided to buy it because I have come to realize just how significant a figure in both Christian and world affairs the Pope has been. Karol Wojtyla's biography has inspired me to look beyond the present. As I read I realized how deeply I had misunderstood the Pope. There is little doubt that he is one of the greatest figures of our time. Some of my misconceptions of John Paul were due to my own personal discomfort as an Anglican with various facets of Roman Catholicism. However, our own limited perceptions should not distort our recognition of greatness. Just as I brought my own preconceptions to the man, so have the media who have been covering him since that day in 1978 when he was elected. The press have distorted this man because they have read him through glasses tinted by their own secular conditioning. As a result there is a "good" John Paul who affirms some of their social agendas, and then there is the "bad" John Paul, who seems not to understand their progressive preferences. Weigel makes it clear that they have profoundly misunderstood him because will not measure him on his own Christian terms. To grasp the significance of John Paul, we need to come to terms with the complexities of his personality and his origins in a family beset by tragedy in his early years. But that is not enough. From there we need to explore his own personal Christian journey, his theological formation, his philosophical studies, and the tough environment in which he grew to adulthood and exercised the first 30 years of his ministry. Furthermore, this man who cannot be understood unless we see him first and foremost as a priest, a pastor, and a man of mystical prayer.

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