



Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of Our Age: A Theological Portrait

D. Vincent Twomey

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Fr. Vincent Twomey, a former doctoral student of Joseph Ratzinger, and a long time friend of the Pope's, felt the need to respond to the common question he read and heard often after Ratzinger's papal election, "What kind of person is the new Pope?" So often Twomey had read in the past false depictions of both the man, and his thought and writings, especially the image presented by the media as a grim, hard-line, enforcer, "panzer Cardinal", etc.

Twomey offers here a unique double-presentation of the man, Pope Benedict XVI -- a "theological portrait" that encompasses both an overview of the writings, teachings and thought of the brilliant theologian and spiritual writer, as well as the man himself, and his personality traits and how he communicates with others.

Since Ratzinger came in to the papacy already well known and highly regarded as one of the greatest theologians of our age, and having written so much on almost every theological subject touching on the faith, morality, the Church and State, it is important to know his mind on these topics and how he approaches the major spiritual and social issues of our times. Twomey shows his style is really the opposite of how he has been depicted in the past -- that he is indeed very pastoral and will first win the hearts of people who will then read for themselves his writings. His very first encyclical, *God Is Love*, underscores that approach.

Twomey shows that the secret to the serene dignified behavior of Benedict is that, as a man who is an accomplished pianist, he is open to beauty as much as truth, that he lives outside himself, and is not preoccupied with his own self. He also is a man that Twomey says "has the courage to be imperfect", showing he has a deep humility and strives for teaching the truth even when misunderstood or not presented as well as he would like.

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