Pope predicts man’s – and Church’s – future amid crisis of faith

SAN FRANCISCO, June 12, 2009 – What the future holds has always been of great fascination for people. It has also become a theme for Pope Benedict’s new book, *Faith and the Future* (Ignatius, 160 p. hardcover).

With growing concern among believers about the future of faith, many wonder how in all the confusion of modern trends faith could subsist. How does man’s faith affect how he lives now, and his eternal blueprint?

In his philosophical, very understandable, and surprisingly prophetic presentation, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) approaches this issue from a variety of angles and finishes off with a sketch of the future of the Church. The book’s five chapters were originally presented in 1969-70 by then-Fr. Ratzinger as radio addresses on German and Vatican radio.

“Faith is being shaken to its foundation by the crisis of the present …”, says the Pope. “How great is the fascination of the future in a period when we witness history being set unusually in motion and see human possibilities beginning to develop, positively and negatively, along roads that lead we know not where.”

In *Faith and the Future*, the Pope addresses key issues that both synergize – and can work against – a genuine and loyal Church of Christ. They are knowledge, existence, philosophy, hope of men, and the state of the Church.

On the future of the Catholic Church, then-Fr. Ratzinger paints her scenario rather prophetically.
From the crisis of today, Fr. Ratzinger says, the church “will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes … she will lose many of her social privileges. …As a small society, [the Church] will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members.”

Ratzinger goes on to predict that the Church “will be a more spiritual Church, not presuming upon a political mandate… It will be hard-going for the Church, for the process of crystallization and clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek…The process will be long and wearisome as was the road from the false progressivism on the eve of the French Revolution – when a bishop might be thought smart if he made fun of dogmas and even insinuated that the existence of God was by no means certain… But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church. Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty …”

He wraps up his analysis with this:

“The Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult … but the Church of faith. She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man’s home, where he will find life and hope beyond death.”

Pope Benedict XVI is widely recognized as one of the most brilliant theologians and spiritual writers of our age. He has written over 50 books covering a broad range of important topics for modern man. A well-known sampling of the Pope’s works includes Jesus of Nazareth, God Is Love, Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures, The Spirit of the Liturgy, Introduction to Christianity, Europe: Today and Tomorrow, God and the World, Salt of the Earth, and Milestones.

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San Francisco-based Ignatius Press, founded in 1978, is one of the largest Catholic publishers in the world. Ignatius Press is the primary English-language publisher of Pope Benedict XVI. Dedicated to publishing and distributing information on the Catholic faith, Ignatius Press publishes over 40 books each year (with over 1,800 titles in print), and produces and licenses many fine films for distribution in North America. Its author-roster includes some of the foremost names in the Catholic Church. Ignatius Press is also the publisher of Catholic World Report and Homiletic & Pastoral Review magazines. www.ignatius.com
His Holiness,
Pope Benedict XVI

The 265th Pope in the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI (formerly Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) is widely recognized as one of the most brilliant theologians and spiritual writers of the modern age. He served as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for 24 years under Pope John Paul II, and had been one of the most influential men in the Roman Curia even before his elevation to the papacy in 2005.

Pope Benedict XVI has written over 50 books, and several encyclicals, having spoken on everything from sexual consumerism, private revelation and the "crisis of faith," to human rights, roles of men and women today, marriage, the priesthood, the truth about the Catholic Church, and the future of the world.

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Germany (Bavaria) on Holy Saturday, April 16, 1927. In his writings, he has depicted his early life as quite happy, with family and Church being ‘inseparable’ for him. In 1939, he entered minor seminary in Traunstein. Ratzinger and his brother Georg were ordained to the priesthood on June 29, 1951, in the Cathedral of Freising on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. He received his doctorate in theology in 1953 from the University of Munich. Beginning in 1959, he taught theology at the University of Bonn.

Ratzinger became more widely known when, during the Second Vatican Council and at age 35, he was appointed chief theological advisor for the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joseph Frings, for the four-year duration of the Council. After continuing his teaching at several German universities, Ratzinger was appointed by Pope Paul VI in March 1977 as Archbishop of Munich and Freising. In June 1977, he was elevated to Cardinal.

Pope John Paul II summoned Cardinal Ratzinger to Rome in November 1981, naming him Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and President of the International Theological Commission. Additionally, Ratzinger worked with some 40 collaborators and over a thousand bishops to produce the 900+ page Catechism of the Catholic Church. He then co-authored Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church with former student Christoph Cardinal Schönborn.

Ratzinger worked more closely with Pope John Paul II than perhaps anyone else. As papal biographer for John Paul II, George Weigel, has said, "…not even his [Ratzinger's] implacable enemies ever questioned Joseph Ratzinger's erudition: his encyclopedic knowledge of theology; his command of biblical, patristic, scholastic, and contemporary sources; his elegance as a thinker and writer."
In addition to his native German, Benedict XVI fluently speaks Italian, French, English, Spanish and Latin, and has a knowledge of Portuguese. He can read Ancient Greek and biblical Hebrew.

Books by Pope Benedict XVI available from Ignatius Press:

- Behold the Pierced One
- Benedictus: Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI
- The Blessing of Christmas
- Called to Communion
- Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures
- Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology
- Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine
- Co-Workers of the Truth: Meditations for Every Day of the Year
- Credo for Today: What Christians Believe
- Daughter Zion
- The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion (with Jürgen Habermas)
- Faith and the Future
- Europe: Today and Tomorrow
- The Feast of Faith
- God and the World
- God Is Love/Deus Caritas Est
- God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life
- The God of Jesus Christ: Meditations on the Triune God
- God’s Revolution
- God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition Office
- Gospel, Catechism and Catechesis
- Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief
- Images of Hope: Meditations on Major Feasts
- Introduction to Christianity
- Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- An Invitation to Faith
- Jesus, the Apostles and the Early Church
- Jesus of Nazareth
- The Legacy of John Paul II
- Many Religions, One Covenant
- Mary, The Church at the Source (with Hans Urs von Balthasar)
- Meaning of Christian Brotherhood
- Milestones: 1927 – 1977
- Nature and Mission of Theology
- On Conscience
- On The Way To Jesus Christ
- Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion
- Principles of Christian Morality (co-author)
- Principles of Catholic Theology
- The Ratzinger Report
- Saint Paul
- Salt of the Earth
- Saved In Hope (Spe Salvi)
- Seek That Which Is Above: Meditations Through the Year
- The Spirit of the Liturgy
- The Theology and History in St. Bonaventure
- Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions
- Values In A Time of Upheaval
- What It Means To Be a Christian
- Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam
Faith and the Future

Author: Pope Benedict XVI
Publisher: Ignatius Press
Release Date in U.S.: Spring 2009
Length: 120 pages, hardcover
Price: $14.95
ISBN: 978-1-58617-219-0
Order: www.ignatius.com or 1-800-651-1531

Description:

In an easy-to-read five chapters on how today’s crisis of faith will affect both man’s and the Church’s future, Pope Benedict XVI synthesizes how both our earthly and eternal future is entirely dependent on man’s cooperation with God on all fronts.

Faith and the Future likewise contains then-Fr. Ratzinger’s prophetic view of how the Catholic Church would be humbled and simplified, and undergo extreme suffering, prior to a great rebirth of influence and believers.

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Broadcast Interview Questions

For

Fr. Joseph Fessio

*Faith and the Future*

By Pope Benedict XVI

1. This book seems a bit different from the others that the Pope has written. It looks at how the promise of an eternal future affects present life. How does the Pope do this in such a short work … only 120 pages?

2. What areas does the Pope explore to show what affects – or threatens – man’s faith?

3. What is faith’s relationship to truth, according to the Pope?

4. And finally, how does the Pope view man’s faith – and the degree of faith in the Catholic Church as a whole – affecting their collective futures? Here, the Pope has had some prophetic statements of what would happen to the Catholic Church – and how she would ‘weather the storm’. Please talk about that – and its connection to faith.