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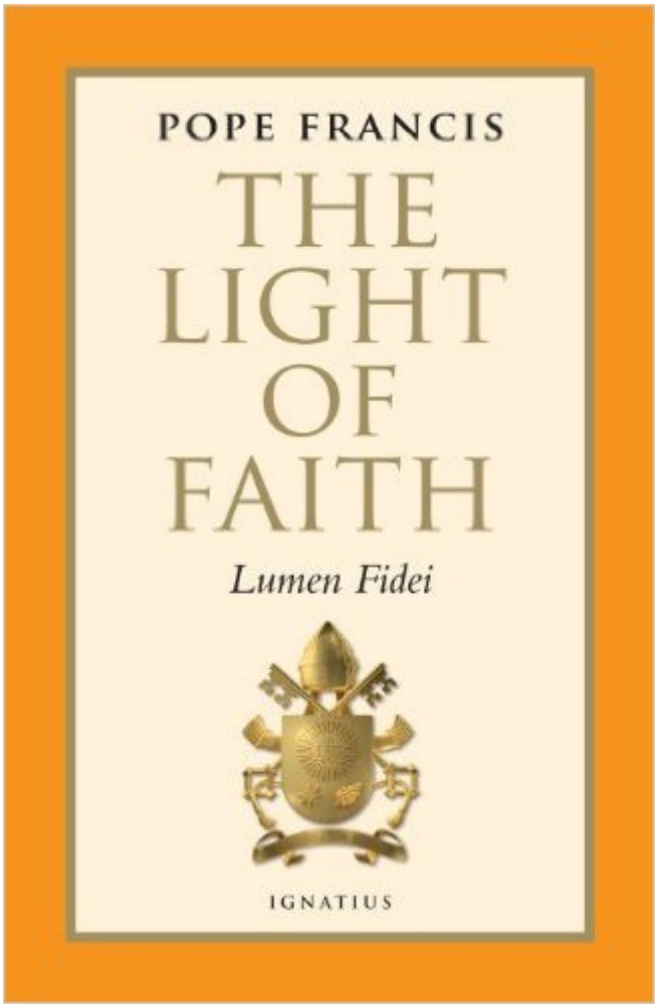
The Light Of Faith: Lumen Fidei (Libreria Editrice Vaticana)



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Synopsis

Faith is the source of light, of guidance for the Christian life. "We walk by faith, not by sight", wrote St Paul. In his first encyclical Pope Francis reflects on the meaning of faith, the beginning of God's gracious salvation.Faith is the means by which man encounters the living God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Francis draws on key themes of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote encyclicals on charity and hope. He intended to complete the set with a reflection on faith, which would also have underscored the Year of Faith that he launched. Benedict's history-making retirement meant he was unable to finish his encyclical. Francis took up the task, adding his own insights, themes, and emphases to the work begun by Benedict XVI.According to Pope Francis, Light of Faith is a "four hand document". Pope Benedict, Francis notes, "handed it to me, it is a strong document. He did the great amount of work". Thus, although officially Light of Faith (Lumen Fidei) is an encyclical of Pope Francis and reflects his teaching ministry, it is also reflects the work of Pope Emeritus Benedict. This is not only Francis' first encyclical; it is also the first encyclical to have been openly written by two successors of St. Peter. "There is an urgent need, then, to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God. Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives." -- Pope Francis

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lumen Fidei is both the last encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI and the first encyclical of Pope Francis. It was appropriately released on June 29th, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. Those two great saints and apostles helped build the Church. Likewise, the two great popes who authored this encyclical help to teach, guide, and protect the Church today. This work starts out by appropriately discussing the light and dark imagery that pervades the entire Gospel of John. It then goes on to briefly discuss the Year of Faith and the importance of this year and faith in general. This leads us to the four different chapters of this encyclical.We have Believed in Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16)Unless you Believe, you will not Understand (cf. Is 7:9)I Delivered to you what I also Received (cf. 1 Cor 15:3)God Prepares a City for them (Heb 11:16)I am in no way qualified to review the quality of the writing, nor the message. Instead, I will speak of my favorite part of this encyclical, which was Chapter 1. In this chapter, the reader is treated to a chronological walkthrough of our faith. It begins by discussing Abraham, the father of our faith. We mainly remember that his faith was put to the test when God told him to kill his son Isaac, but it was tested in more ways than just that one trial. We next move to the people of Israel, which shows both their belief and unbelief through the ages. Then, we reach the fullness of faith, which is Jesus and His love for us demonstrated in His death for us. Faith has now been focused and centered on Jesus, which leads to salvation.Apart from the content, which is brilliant and enlightening, the format this book was printed in is superb. There are several publishers who have released editions of Lumen Fidei.

Pope Benedict XVI planned to write a trilogy of encyclicals on the three theological virtues: Deus Caritas Est on love, Spe Salvi on hope, and a third on faith. He retired before completing the encyclical on faith, handing over the draft he had to the newly elected Pope Francis. Francis made his own revisions and has published it as his first encyclical, Lumen Fidei.Trying to tease out which parts were written by Benedict and which by Francis completely misses the point of the encyclical. It is a teaching on the Catholic understanding of faith, not a personal account or opinion. While different persons may come at it from different angles or focus on different facets, the same core jewel, the faith given by God to men through grace, is the substance. Having two view points blended gives a richer view; breaking them apart focuses on the person of the author rather than the subject at hand.Faith is looked at in the historical context, from Abraham and the Jewish tradition into the Christian era and even as it is seen in modern times. Even though the history of faith is

dominated by individuals, those individuals work in service of their society to make the faith grow and to be a witness to God’s love and fidelity in their lives.The emphasis on community may surprise modern ears used to radical individualism. The continuity of faith through time and space, i.e. from the Jewish roots in the Middle East spreading out to the whole of the earth, requires the transmission of faith from person to person, from people to people. The individual is limited and cannot grasp the fullness of the faith merely through solitary study. We are called to be brothers and sisters through Christ, to help each other in understanding and living our faith.

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