

“The Two Popes” starring Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce, Juan Minujín, 2019, PG-13, 125 minutes

Major themes:

- Catholic Christianity
- Friendship
- Prayer
- Confession
- Forgiveness
- Reconciliation
- Understanding
- Regret
- Grace
- Authenticity
- Silence
- God’s voice

Major characters:

- Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger (Pope Benedict)
- Jorge Bergoglio (Pope Francis)
- Cardinal Cláudio Hummes
- Cardinal Peter Turkson
- Father Franz Jalics
- Esther Ballestrino
- Cardinal Arinze

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- Pope Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17th, 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina) was elected head of the Catholic Church in March 2013. Before he was ordained as a Catholic priest at age 32, he worked as a bouncer, a janitor, a chemist, and a food science lab technician.
- Pope Benedict XVI (born Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger on April 16th, 1927 in Bavaria, Germany) served as head of the Catholic Church from 2005 until his resignation in 2013. Prior to his appointment as an Archbishop and Cardinal when he was 50 years old, he worked for many years as a professor of theology at several German universities.
- Francis is the first Jesuit pope, the first from the Americas, the first from the Southern Hemisphere, and the first pope from outside Europe since the Syrian Gregory III, who reigned in the 8th century.
- Director Fernando Meirelles discovered Jonathan Pryce when searching on the internet for photos of Pope Francis. Even Pryce's son texted him on the day that Francis was elected, *"Dad are you the Pope?"*
- Jonathan Pryce received his first ever Academy Award nomination for Best Actor for this film, his fourth time to play the role of a Cardinal.
- The Sistine Chapel scenes were filmed in a studio in Rome in which Michelangelo's famous artwork was replicated in eight weeks using ink tattoos applied on plaster.
- The backgrounds for Rome's St Peter's Plaza were all computer generated.
- Anthony Hopkins is an accomplished pianist who performed his own piano improvisations.
- The two leading actors are both Welsh.
- The word "diavola" heard around the 1:34:00 mark means "the devil" in Italian.

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Scriptures:

John 17:20-23 (ESV) – *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”*

1 John 1:5-10 (NIV) – *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”*

James 5:16 (NLT) – *“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”*

1 Kings 19:11-13 (NLT) – *“‘Go out and stand before me on the mountain,’ the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”*

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Discussion points:

1. What did you like most about this film?
2. How did the confession of sin impact each of the characters? How did viewing their confessions and absolutions impact you?
3. How did you feel about the film's portrayal of difficult issues facing the Church and how they have been / are being handled?
4. What kind of legacy do you want to leave?
5. In what ways does the Church need to remain the same? In what ways does the Church need to change?
6. How did Benedict's and Francis's early years inform their theology and practice?
7. What helped to bring understanding and friendship between these two popes?
8. What gifts did Francis receive from Benedict? What gifts did Benedict receive from Francis?