

# The file on Benedict

News in the [April 18, 2006](#) issue

The following materials, all of which appeared before Joseph Ratzinger became Benedict XVI, are essential background for understanding the pope.

**John Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI* (Continuum, 2000; reissued 2005).** Allen, a well-known Vatican reporter, has lately foresworn the largely negative tone of this volume and written more favorably about Benedict. But this remains useful as a running criticism of Ratzinger's thought and work.

**Aidan Nichols, O.P., *The Thought of Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Burns & Oates, 1988; reissued 2005).** One world-class theologian writes about another. Nichols gives a step-by-step account of Ratzinger's theological work through the late 1980s.

**Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (German edition 1968; Ignatius, 2000).** In this book, as in his work at Vatican II, Ratzinger appears as a liberal reformer. After Vatican II and the tumult of the 1960s he moved in a more conservative direction.

**Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "*Dominus Iesus*": *On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*.** This 2000 document (available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) issued by Ratzinger's office seemed to pull back from the Catholic Church's previous statements on openness to non-Catholic Christians and adherents of other religions.

**Catechism of the Catholic Church (Doubleday, 1995).** Ratzinger was a key figure in the development of this catechism.

**The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Eerdmans, 1999).** Ratzinger's familiarity with Lutheran theology and his friendship with Lutheran theologians and pastors helped bring about this ecumenical achievement.