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THE MODERN CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

MICHAEL GLAZIER & MONIKA K. HELLWIG, EDS.
LITURGICAL PRESS, 2004
\$59.95, 898 pages

Reviewed By Lisa Swartz-Medina

How modern can a book be when discussing the ideals and history of a culture deeply rooted in ritual, tradition, and convictions? *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* attempts just that. Examining the historical and spiritual context of the Catholic Church, the authors inform readers and researchers about the basic concepts of Catholicism. With a long history, the research could be focused on the past. As a vital living community, however, current issues, both political and social, that influence the Roman Catholic Church and its followers are addressed.

The authors discuss openly the contemporary issues of the English-speaking Church today. The clergy sexual abuse crisis, the right to life, capital punishment, abortion, annulments, politics, and other religions are some of the entries that are available. For centuries, these issues have impacted the Church with little acknowledgement given to the laity. This encyclopedia confronts the facts, the effects, and the teachings of the Church on these difficult, modern-day topics in a neutral and informative manner, while remaining faithful to Church doctrines.

As an encyclopedia, the main objective of the text is research and review of information. The encyclopedia does offer a variety of indispensable information that would improve a person's fundamental knowledge and understanding of the Roman Catholic Church dogma, the people, concepts, practices, and ideas that give shape to Catholic identity. The Bible, Canon Law, Vatican II documents, constitutions, encyclicals, decrees, and other writings from the United States Catholic Conference are cited frequently as references and sources giving validity to the entries listed.

In an informal survey, graduate-level lay teachers of Catholic schools were able to answer 82% of their essential questions of interest or study with

The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia. The range of inquiries were theological documents, saints (past and present), historical periods of importance, Church traditions, practices, and Church teachings. Although not all questions were answered, it is still an accurate, instructive, and valuable resource enabling further analysis with numerous cross references per entry.

The authors acknowledge that the Church has gone through many periods of turbulence especially early in the 21st century, but there have been and continue to be a tremendous group of people that remain faithful and are able to revitalize the Church in the process. This book also recognizes the people, past and present, who have enriched the spiritual history of the Church. Their witness to the living Lord is documented within these pages as testimony to their faithfulness. Among these are: Mary, Peter, Paul, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton.

The authors also recognize the influence of scholarly, lay men and women and comprehend their acceptance of Scripture study daily. Like the saints, the deepening of their understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings can enlighten their spiritual journey. Unlike other encyclopedias, this book gives a foundational knowledge of the Catholic Church to pursue a spiritual faith within a parish church.

The font size and format made reading the entries trouble-free. The information was slightly more difficult to access as the cross referenced sections are not numbered. Also, it should be noted that *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* was published before the passing of Pope John Paul II, and therefore, there is no mention of Pope Benedict XVI.

Although there is more than a 2,000 year history filled with ritual and traditions, over 1,400 succinct entries and 250 illustrations address the most common teachings of the Church. *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* would make an excellent resource for middle or high school classrooms as well as for college students. This book should be on the shelf of every Catholic school, elementary through college, as an informational resource. It would be useful for everything from researching reports to evangelizing the most universal teachings of the Church, to establishing a strong foundation for catechesis.

Lisa Swartz-Medina is principal of St. Mary-Hannah Catholic School in Kingsley, MI.