

Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week – Tele-Press Conference

Maximus Group

**Moderator: Alexis Walkenstein
March 9, 2011
2:00 p.m. ET**

Operator: Good afternoon my name is (Andrea) and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week tele-press conference call. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speakers remarks there will be a question and answer session. If you'd like to ask a question during this time simply press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key, thank you. I would now like to turn the call over to our host Ms. Alexis Walkenstein with The Maximus Group. You may begin your conference.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Good afternoon, on behalf of Ignatius Press, I welcome you to this unprecedented tele-press conference, an advance of the global release of Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week from the entrance, into Jerusalem, to the resurrection by Pope Benedict XVI. A special beginning note to all members of the media, the news and information derived from this press conference event will remain under embargo until tomorrow March 10th, 3 am Eastern time, 9 am Rome time. The only portions that you may write or report on in advance of the embargo include the excerpted content which has already been released as of last week.

That material includes Chapter 3 Section 4, The Mystery of the Betrayer, Chapter 5 Section 1, The Dating of the Last Supper, Chapter 7 Section 3, Jesus before Pilate. A written transcript of this call as well as an audio MP3 will be available by request but to maximize our time for questions and for our panel please approach me after the completion of this call by telephone or

email. I want to point you all to the website for Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week which is www.jesufnazareth2.com any questions about obtaining copies of the book will be answered again after the call and I'll be happy to help you with that.

Right now I am pleased to introduce our very distinguished panel, comprised of renowned theologians and scholars from a cross-section of faith denominations, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant, who today will share meaning and insights on the Holy Fathers latest great work on the figure of Christ. Joining us today Jesuit Father Joseph Fessio, founder and publisher of Ignatius Press. Father Fessio is a personal friend of Pope Benedict XVI and former student of then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. He joins us today from Rome and will be with the Holy Father for tomorrow's global release of Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week.

Next we have Mark Brumley, who is president and CEO of Ignatius Press as well as editor and co-author of the study guide to Pope Benedict's the XVI's Jesus of Nazareth and a study guide to Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week. Dr. Craig Evans, Protestant Scripture scholar. He is Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament from Acadia Divinity College of Acadia University, Nova Scotia. Author of Jesus, The Last Days and editor of The Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus.

Next we have Dr. Jacob Neusner, who is an American academic scholar of Judaism and Distinguished Service Professor of the History and Theology of Judaism and Senior Fellow Institute of Advanced Theology at Bard College. He is the author of A Rabbi Talks with Jesus.

Dr. Brant Pitre, Catholic theologian and Professor of Sacred Scripture from Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, and author of Jesus the Tribulation and The End of The Exile and Jesus and The Jewish Routes of the Eucharist, Unlocking The Secrets of The Last Supper.

Next we have Father Thomas Weinandy, Capuchin Franciscan Priest and Executive Director for The Secretariat for Doctrine at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops where he has served since 2005. Father

Weinandy has written or edited 16 books including *In The Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, an essay on *The Humanity of Christ*, and *Jesus The Christ*.

Finally, we are joined by Dr. Ben Witherington III, Protestant Biblical Scholar an Amos Professor of The New Testament for Doctor Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

At this time I'd like to begin with Father Fessio and invite you Father to present opening remarks on Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week.

Father Joseph Fessio: Thank you Alexis. First I'd like to express my appreciation for being here but also I don't know whose idea this was but I think it's an extraordinary opportunity for people whom – different perspectives to come and talk about something which I think is a major publication in our time. Since I'm the first one to speak let me just give a general overview which the Holy Father does himself in his forward, but as he says there, good teacher that he is – he clearly describes what he's going to do, he wants to combine a historical community with a faith community – you know that's – those are large words but basically it means that he wants to take the results of the historical criticism and the scientific history that's been done on Jesus and on the bible in the late 19th century and compliment that with an understanding based on faith and an awareness of what the disciples of Jesus have thought and said over the century and in doing that he's not writing as he says a Christology or even a life of Christ in the traditional sense, but rather he's trying to present the figure and the message of Jesus as he says, the figure, the message of Jesus in a way that can lead to a personal encounter with him.

For me that was very beautifully exemplified in a passage that was related to the one that the media has mainly spoken about since the extraction made available mainly who is responsible for the death of Christ, and in that section he talks about in Matthew's gospel where the whole people say, 'His blood be upon us and on our children.' And of course that's been misunderstood and used in a way that has (inaudible) a lot of anti-Semitic attitudes on the part of Christians over the centuries, but very beautifully the Holy Father stresses it, the blood of Christ is not the same as the blood of Abel.

He simply speaks a different language and to quote him here he says, 'It does not cry out for vengeance and punishment, it brings reconciliation. It is not poured out against anyone; it is poured out for many, for all.' And then he concludes his section by saying, 'When in light of faith.' And again here he is emphasizing the faith community and trying to integrate with the historical community (inaudible) of faith; it means that we all end in either the purifying power of love, which His blood.

These words are not a curse but rather redemption, salvation. I don't think he is simply making that up, I think that arises from the text but it exemplifies the way he's reading with the eyes of faith these scriptural passages which the scholars have mined over the last couple of centuries to (gain) the meaning. So that I'll kind of stop right there, that's just an overview of what he, intends to do and I think he achieves it in the book.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Wonderful, thank you Father Fessio. And we'll now move to Mark Brumley.

Mark Brumley: Thank you Father Fessio and thank you Alexis and all the featured participants in this discussion, listening to all those scholars and all their credentials made me feel smarter just by being here. So I hope – I hope that we're able to facilitate a good discussion. I don't have too much to add to what Father Fessio said he did a very fine job of introducing and overviewing the father, excuse me the Holy Father's goals and writing not just Jesus of Nazareth II Holy Week but the first volume as well.

I will say what I appreciate about this book and I think it's one of its key newsworthy elements is the fact that so many people can come to this work from different perspectives. We have here representatives from Jewish, Protestant, Catholic communities of faith and different theological commitments and I think each of those perspectives or even perspectives within those various communities can take from this something that's valuable. I'd also say we have – we have theologians, we have pastors, we have laymen, I'm a layman, we have people who have expertise in Scripture scholarship, all bringing to their consideration this work different gifts and different perspectives. So I think that's very important.

I would add that – it seems to me that this book is – as the figure of Jesus himself is, is someone who can both bring people together and also he's a point of division but the way in which Jesus has been a point of division in the past is not I'll say an authentic way. I think that reading this book helps Christians, especially Protestants and Catholics, and Christians and Jews, and believers and unbelievers overcome unnecessary differences, differences that arise from misunderstandings, misreading, and I would say even within our own Christian tradition misreading of the gospel passages, the father did a great job of summarizing one of those misreading, but also they're going to be – our differences will be clearer.

And I think that actually serves the cause of unity when we are clear about the things that we disagree about where our fundamental theological convictions take us where we must stand apart and there is an interesting sort of Ratzinger perspective here and in an essay that he wrote on Christian unity speaking in the Christian context. He said that there are musts that we have to uphold – points of difference that we have to stand for if we're going to be meaningful participants to any kind of discussion with people with whom we disagree – we can't just cave on everything.

But it's that fundamental commitment because we see this must of division on a particular point as coming from God that actually unites us, that we can actually respect one another. So Catholics and Protestants can actually respect one another on points of difference even though we don't agree but we can see that the other approaches this matter as a matter of integrity with respect to the Word of God.

Likewise Christians and Jews will have disagreements over the person of Jesus. Who he was, what his significance is, but we can respect one another because of our commitment to a belief that God has revealed himself and God has spoken in human history. So I see this as a book that brings us together even though we have these differences, it brings us together in a way that's perhaps paradoxical.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Excellent, thank you Mr. Brumley. And on a side note the study guide for Jesus of Nazareth Holy Week will be available in a couple of weeks. Next we go to Dr. Craig Evans.

Dr. Craig Evans: Thank you very much; you know I enjoyed reading this book. I spent the weekend – just previous weekend reading it. It was a blessing, I enjoyed it as an academic, as a scholar reading it very critically, but on the other hand, as a Christian too in reading it – I was impressed by the exegetical insight, the historical critical insight, and yet at the same time the attempt to always keep in line the big picture, what Christian faith is all about, the history of the church and how some of Jesus' teachings and things that He did, and things that happened to Him contributed to major Christian teachings and some of the great creeds.

It was just a – it's a remarkable achievement. It's the best book I've read on Jesus in years. A couple of things that stuck – that stood out to me too was the sensitivity and I think historical accuracy in the assessment of the factors leading up to the Jewish revolt, the destruction of the temple. I think Benedict is quite right in seeing how the policy of the aristocratic priesthood was just almost faded to result in that catastrophe.

And the way he talks about it, there's nothing anti-Semitic, there's nothing anti-Jewish here. He could have documented further if he had wanted to but the dislike that many – very pious Jewish people, rabbis and sages, the dislike they had for the aristocratic priesthood and of course that legacy is still seen in the rabbinic literature and so – which leads to my next point and that is Benedict was very, very right and I think in – just well-spoken and making it clear that the death of Jesus was not the responsibility or because of the Jewish people in general.

He rightly talked of the Roman authority and also a small handful of temple aristocrats and these were the people that opposed Jesus, these were the ones who felt threatened by him, these are the ones ultimately who are responsible for maintaining law and order in their collaboration with Rome and therein is the irony, in their attempt to maintain law and order as they understood it, in their fearful reaction to Jesus and the popularity that he enjoyed and that

enthusiasm that swept into Jerusalem, the Passover time, their reaction to it, their reaction to him enabled them to maintain this policy of power and coercion that in the end would explode 40 years later in revolt and eventually destruction.

I appreciated how the Pope made it clear that there were many Jewish people who were supportive of Jesus, in one place he refers to them I think as the other Israel, and that a point that needs to be made crystal clear, especially for Christians who might not understand that.

In the end, this is a book that I think all Christians should read, be they Protestant or Catholic, and it's a book that I think any Jewish person who's interested in the Christian story and who Jesus was, I think would profit from it. So I say it's a great book, it's a remarkable achievement and it will be a benefit to everyone and anyone who reads it. Thank you very much.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Thank you Doctor. Next we'll go to Dr. Jacob Neusner.

Dr. Jacob Neusner: The perspective that I bring to the work of Cardinal Ratzinger goes back for about 25 years when he wrote an article in which he took issue with the quest for the historical Jesus, and he – and I began a correspondence which went on for – from that time to this on how we can turn an ancient text into a biography of a living human being.

This is a radical claim, he asked for the union of theology and critical history, a response to the failure of critical historical scholarship during the last century. The work (based) upon the study of a variety of religious documents, of Judaism and Islam as well as of Christianity. Since all three religions claim to represent a prophesy and holy revealed truth, he figured – the figures of Moses and the Torah Muhammad and the Quran, as well and Jesus and the bible, enter into the program of study. And he's accomplished something that no one else has achieved in the modern study of Scripture.

How are we to transcend the outcome of critical history with its paralyzing obstacles, theological affirmation? That's a question that he answered in this book.

I of course agree with what was said earlier about the importance of the teaching concerning Mathew, 'His blood be on our hands'. And that's a very courageous and very learned allegation which I think is going to have a lot of impact. So it's a book of – which a Jewish reader can benefit from and which I think will do a lot of good in general.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Thank you Dr. Neusner, now we move to Dr. Brant Pitre.

Dr. Brant Pitre: Thank you so much for having me here, I am very excited about this book. As a catholic I have to admit that one of the (most) things that struck me about this work is how unprecedented it is. That never before in the history of the Church have we had a reigning Pope write a full-length study of the life of Jesus.

So just on that level this is truly a historic publication, and for me as a catholic very gratifying to be able to listen to the Pope work through and meditate on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, especially these mysteries of Holy Week.

Now that said, I also found – and I was really struck by in the second volume, the fact that in the (prefix), and Father Fessio already alluded to this, Pope Benedict clarifies exactly what kind of book he sees himself as writing. As a biblical scholar, as a (historical) Jesus scholar, that was my question when I heard that the Pope was coming out with a book on Jesus. What I asked is, is it going to be a historical Jesus book, the kind of book that tries to get behind the gospel of what Jesus really did and said, or is it going to be more of a Christology, written from the perspective of faith, and looking at the mysteries of faith?

And as usual, Benedict in his usual style surprised us by offering us really both. He really is combining history, historical reason as he puts it, and hermeneutical faith in approaching the gospel from the light of the canon of Scripture, especially Old Testament background, anyone who reads this book will see very clearly that Benedict pays close attention to the Old Testament background of Jesus' words and deeds, the living traditions of the Church and also the doctrines of faith.

Ultimately what he seems to be a pastoral goal, which is this personal encounter with Jesus through the study of the gospel. So that was very interesting to me that Benedict here is trying to hold together in both Volume 1 and then even more explicitly in Volume 2, what in the modern period has often been divided, namely faith and history.

So – and what’s interesting about that too is that in that forward, at the very beginning of the book, Benedict says that the reason he’s doing this is because this is what the second Vatican council in the 1960s actually called for Catholics to do whenever we interpret sacred Scripture, that we would throw on the very best fruits of history, language, culture or historical – modern historical study of Scripture, but that way we’d unite these things, to a hermeneutical faith that draw on the canon of Scripture, the tradition of the Church, and the doctrines of the faith.

And what struck me about the beginning of Pope Benedict’s book is that he says, and I’m quoting him here on Page 15, he says that this is essentially a matter of putting into practice the principle interpretation formulated by Vatican II “a task that is unfortunately scarcely been attempted this far”. So it’s very interesting because sometimes Benedict is presented as the Pope that’s trying to turn back the clock on Vatican II. But to the contrary, he sees himself actually in this book as trying to implement, particularly the biblical renewal – the renewal of biblical studies that the Second Vatican council called for more than 40 years ago, but which in his opinion has not yet taken root.

And as any of the other panelists who work in Scripture scholarship can attest to this, this is really been a question in the last 20 or 30 years, how do biblical scholars study the text using the tool of historical criticism, historical reason, and yet do it from a perspective of faith. How can faith and history go together?

And I think that in his book Benedict has very successfully shown us how to do that, and then applied it to, what are arguably some of the most difficult, but also rich, exegetical and historical questions in the gospel. Things like what did Jesus teach about the end of the world, how did He understand His

own suffering and death? Did He see His death as an atonement for the sins of Israel and of the nations? And why was He put to death, what were the reasons for His execution as the king of the Jews in Jerusalem?

And he takes up all these questions, not to mention the bodily resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, was that a historical event, was it a transcendent event, how do we understand it? Was the tomb really empty? He applies all of these to the gospel, through the light of faith and gives us something that is a truly remarkable book. I think that long after the myriads of other books on Jesus have been forgotten, his is going to stand and will be read for many centuries to come.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Wonderful, thank you Dr. Petri. We now move to Father Thomas Weinandy.

Father Thomas Weinandy: Thank you Alexis. I'm going to reiterate what has already been said a number of times, and that is Pope Benedict's book testifies that he possesses a profound understanding of Scripture, I think we usually think of Benedict as being more of a systematic theologian – a doctrinal theologian, but what's impressed in this book as well as the first is his deep knowledge of Scripture, both the Old and New Testament.

And having said that, his knowledge of the Old Testament is so profound, he sees it as essential for understanding the New Testament. It's impressive how much insight he gives to the New Testament passages through his use of the Old Testament. I really marveled at the insights that he had concerning this – concerning the writings of Paul, the sayings of Jesus, the gospels, really came to light in light of his use of the Old Testament in illuminating those passages.

Pope Benedict also in his book demonstrates that there's a close relationship between doctrine and Scripture, between doing theology and doing Scripture studies. So often today systematic philosophical theologians – doctoral theologians just sort of do the doctorate and stay away from the Scripture and the Scripture people stay away from doctrine, but Pope Benedict sees that there's a fruitful relationship between doctrine and Scripture, that Scripture really gives life to theology and to the Church's doctrine, but doctrine is also

seen as a guide that helps us deeper understand the sacred text. And again, I think that's something that very few theologians have done successfully in recent time and Pope Benedict has done that very, very well.

The other thing that was mentioned by Dr. Petri was that I'm just surprised how often Pope Benedict talks about the true Scripture and the study of Theology, we can come to encounter Jesus in person, that we can have a personal relationship with him. He doesn't see his book or the study of Scripture or the study of Theology as just an intellectual exercise, but he sees it as a means of growing in faith and coming to faith, and I think that's very important and had that impact when readers, especially lay readers, who think that the Scripture or Theology is just beyond them, I think Benedict's book will help them grasp that they can really come to know Jesus through the study of Scripture and Theology and that this book will help them.

And lastly, this is – besides (being a) book of Theology and Scripture, it's very pastoral. He tries to apply the Scriptures to the daily lives of people and to our world situations. And he is not just again doing an academic exercise, he sees Jesus as something that the world is longing to meet and get to know and he's doing his best to try to provide that opportunity. Thank you.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: (Perfect). Thank you Father, and last but not least, Dr. Ben Witherington III.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: Well, I could just pronounce the Nihil Obstat and (Imprimi Tus) on what's been said before, but I would like to say a few extra things. I was very impressed with this book, and like Craig Evans said I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and one of the thoughts that occurred to me is this book I don't think could have happened before Vatican II.

I mean I've spent a lot of time in Jesus scholarship and writing books about Jesus, and one of the things I have seen in the (guild) of biblical scholars worldwide is that Catholic and Protestant (exegy) have come closer and closer together in their understanding of both historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, and then worked together to better understanding of (inaudible) and intellectual faith, seeking understanding. And I think this book is a very

significant book that does precisely that, it helps us both with our knowledge and understanding of Jesus from a historical and critical point of view, but also with our faith, you see knowledge and vital piety in this book, and it's a very welcome sight indeed.

My one desiderata or wish for this book is I do wish that the Pope had been able to interact more with the last 30 or so years of biblical scholarship in this book because he really sort of – he's interacting with scholars from the fifties, the sixties, the seventies primarily, including my doctor father, (inaudible) with whom I was very pleased to show up in various places in this book, but I understand he's been more than a little busy the last few years.

But I think this is a wonderful book, it's a book I would very happily assign to my students to read as a book about both the Jesus history and the Christ of faith. I was impressed with his scholarly acumen, I mean his knowledge not only of medieval theology but ancient Greek philosophy, historical scholarship, exegesis, intertextuality between the Old and New Testament, I mean this is a remarkable book and it led me to ask the question has there ever been a Pope who was capable of writing a book like this at a scholarly and yet pastoral level, and honestly, my lack of knowledge doesn't allow me to answer that question, my guess would be no. And so I was very excited by this and thankful for what the Holy Father has done.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Wonderful, thank you so much Doctor. At this time I just want to make everyone aware of the time, it's 30 minutes after the hour and we have about 30 minutes remaining for this call. We will now open this up to questions and (Andrea) could you give instructions to the members of the media who might need to have a refresher for how to approach?

Operator: And so this time I would like to remind everyone in order to ask a question please press Star one on your telephone keypad, the first question comes from the line of Rabbi Seidman with the Orange County Register. Your line is open.

Rabbi Seidman: Thank you, I really appreciated the scholars commentary frequently about the integration of critical approaches to bible study and the faith approach, and the

Pope himself in the text refers – makes statements like redaction criticism, literary criticism, and highlights for example, discrepancy between John and the synoptic gospels about the Last Supper. So what's striking is acknowledgement – we're moving towards acknowledgement that perhaps the-

Male: Hello?

Male: Hello?

Male: Hello?

Male: I think we've lost him, hello?

Operator: Sorry, (inaudible) has been promoted, (Kevin Clarke) from the (Zenith) News Agency, your line is open.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: We can go to Rabbi so he can finish, I'm not sure what happened.

Male: Yes, I can go to the Rabbi (unless you want to) pass me through later.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Is it – Rabbi are you still on the line?

Rabbi Seidman: I'm on the line, are you not hearing me?

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: (Inaudible) continue.

Rabbi Seidman: How far – how much let's say did you hear?

Male: The last words were something to the effect that are we moving towards.

Rabbi Seidman: OK, so are we moving towards acknowledgement that perhaps the text is not literally correct, that perhaps there are words here that were not in fact spoken by Jesus or are not contemporary, that perhaps the Mathew citation was inserted later as part of the rivalry between the Roman Church and the Jerusalem Church? What's your expectation of where the Church is going to go in those kinds of acceptance to criticism?

Male: To whom is the question directed?

Rabbi Seidman: Anybody who cares to answer.

Male: I can (inaudible) this is – go ahead (inaudible).

Mark Brumley: I was just going to say my reading of this is – this is Mark Brumley, is the particular passages that you're referring to I think Benedict certainly acknowledges that Mathew's comment is a theological comment when he speaks of the response of the crowd as being the response of the whole people. And that he sees given a theological reading of that.

I don't know that that necessarily underwrites the other points that you were making in your – you made with respect to your question is this the Jerusalem community versus that community or something of that sort, but there is an acknowledgement that – it's an implicit acknowledgement that sometimes the sayings of the Lord or sayings of other people recounted in the gospels are given a theological spin that if you were standing there and you were just to – you were a historical observer hear what is said you wouldn't necessarily come away with that theological spin.

But the theological spin is not given as a way of distorting the historical record, but to help its meaning be more deeply appreciated. At least that's my take on reading the book.

Male: Something else I wanted to ask you, several times in the book where he does acknowledge (surface) contradictions between say the synoptics and John, or between one of the synoptics, he always points out the (inter unity) that's there and that's it's true that people are writing for different audiences and different concerns and so on, but he sees that as an even greater witness to the (entire) Scripture, that you have these witnesses who did not come together to make sure they were saying exactly the same thing.

But that when they reported on the sayings of Jesus or the deeds of Jesus, they were substantially correct even though you have these inconsistencies on the surface. Is that (inaudible) discussing in the book?

Dr. Brant Pitre: This is Dr. Petri; yes he actually does address this on Page 27. In the first chapter on the (exegetical) discourses, the Holy Father points out that if you compare the all of the discourses in Mathew and Mark and Luke, there are three versions of them there, and the synoptic, there are to be sure differences of details and differences of content, and he attributes these to the work of the redactors, editing the material, synthesizing the material for their perspective audiences, clarifying certain things like when Luke says the time of the Gentiles, clarifying what that time of the spreading of the gospel among nations means.

But he does say on Page 27, he says “the redactors (inaudible) could take the continuation a stage further in light of their particular situations and the audience’s capacity to understand, while taking care to remain true to the essential content of Jesus’ message”. And I think that’s the way the Holy Father sees this, it’s very much based on the (inaudible) document of Vatican II on the (inaudible) to the gospel, which said the same thing, that there are differences in detail but that in synthesizing and editing the material for their respective audiences.

The gospel writers have always told us the truth about what Jesus did and said while he lived among men. So I think that’s what the Holy Father is getting at here. Difference is the detail but true to essential content of Jesus’ message.

Rabbi Seidman: Thank you very much.

Mark Brumley: You’re welcome.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Nicole Winfield with the Associated Press, your line is open.

Nicole Winfield: Hi thanks, two questions. First one I guess directed to Mark Brumley or Father Fessio, just on numbers – I know that there have been 1.2 million books printed, how does that compare with the first part of Jesus of Nazareth? Is this a similar print run or greater? And then a second question to Dr. Evans, could you speak a bit about the part of the book where the Pope goes into the whole question of Christian unity, the need for the visible unity that he’s

spoken about before but how do you read that in light of this book – in light of what we know the Pope has said in the past, in light of (inaudible) et cetera.

Father Joseph Fessio: Well this is Father Fessio for the first part. Ignatius Press is not the publisher of the original hardback edition of volume 1 and I wasn't involved therefore at the time when they discussed the initial print run. But I do know that the seven languages that are now available already are already in print, 200,000 copies have been printed. We got about 90,000 in the US and then we've got partners in Asia, Africa, England, and in Australia we've got about 40,000 more and Germany has done 200,000, Italy is doing 300,000, France is doing 120,000 so those are the basic numbers for the print run on Volume 2, but I can't answer your question on how it compares with volume one.

Dr. Craig Evans: Hello, this is Craig Evans here, could you repeat that question? I'm not too sure I understood it.

Nicole Winfield: OK just, there is a section in the book I think at least in one version of it around pages 97 to 103 where he talks about Christian unity and the need for a visible, that the unity between – among Christians must be visible and I'm just wondering how that strikes non-Catholic Christians and in light of what we know the Pope believes about the ecumenical process, ecumenical dialogue, so it was just a question on – if you could respond to that section of and that argument of the book.

Dr. Craig Evans: Well I think presenting to the world a unity, a unity in purpose but also a unity in respect and mutual support, I think that's very important and I say that as a Protestant. How exactly that gets worked out especially in terms of ecclesiastical structures or lines of authority or connections I have a feeling they'll be some significant differences on that point, but Ben Witherington alluded to this earlier when he talked about Catholic and Protestant scholars working in this area on the historical Jesus have drawn together and I often find myself closer in academic perspective, faith commitment to people like (John Myer) whom the Pope quotes and refers to many times in this book and the late Raymond Brown and a number of other Roman Catholic scholars and I think from a scholarly point of view this is exhibiting an important element of unity but that doesn't mean structurally or ecclesiastically there is that kind

of unity and so in any case that's a very important way of showing the world that we may be Protestants, we may be Catholics and Protestants of different stripes and so on but there is a unity of purpose and witness and commitment, a working together, a striving together for truth and for getting at the essence of faith and what it is we believe and why we believe it in a way that I think, you know, from my Christian point of view in a way that would make Jesus happy to exhibit – exemplify true discipleship. And I'm sure the Pope has a little more in mind than just that but I think that's a very important part of this whole question of unity.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: And this is Ben Witherington, I would just add to that even at the ecclesiastical level, I mean you may know already about the wonderful discussions between Lutherans and Catholics on the Doctrine of Justification by Grace through Faith and some of the concord that came out of the that and remarkable documents that came through that and so it's not just the informal level between scholars but there have been since Vatican II very significant discussions about unity and doctrine and in faith pushing towards the goal that I think the Holy Father has in mind and certainly I think most of us would say this is a very good thing and it needs to continue to happen. So I'm happy to see an element in the book continued to nudge us in that direction.

(Tom Wayne Eddy): This is (Tom Wayne Eddy), the point I think that the Pope was making here was that the Lord Jesus said that by doing – by being one, the world will come to believe in me and so there has to be a visible unity, you can't have a spiritual church that the world cannot see, you have to have a visible church, a visible unity that the world can see so that they come to know that Jesus is the savior.

Father Joseph Fessio: This is Father Fessio briefly here, I was wondering how Dr. Evans and (inaudible) would respond to this because when I read it I thought, you know, he's using a (scalpel) which is very sharp and I think it might not be so but he even though he talks about the (both man)'s idea of unity there is a proclamation and a faith but then Benedict very gently goes on to say, you know, the son of God became flesh, became visible, became man that we could see and touch and then when you (inaudible) one there's also got to be a unity which is somehow tangible and visible, you said (inaudible) but

apparently to (inaudible) our two (inaudible) and friends here didn't see it quite as sharply as I thought it was (inaudible).

Nicole Winfield: Thank you.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of (John Alan) with the National (Classical) (inaudible). Your line is open.

John Allen: Thank you, this question is directed in the first place to Father Weinandy although anyone who wants to respond I'd be very grateful. Father I'm interested in the section of the book that the Benedict refers to as the time for the Gentiles pages 27 and the following in which he talks about among other things Israel's role in evangelization and it seems he quotes Hildegard of Bingen to the effect that the Church must not concern herself with the conversion of the Jew.

It would seem the Holy Father is saying that at least in this order of history – it's the Church should not be worrying about the conversion of the Jew. I'm wondering first of all, is that an accurate reading, do you think, of what the Holy Father is saying? Secondly, what would the theological significance of that be?

Father Thomas Weinandy: John that struck me too when I read it, I think the context in which the Pope is quoting both Hildegard of Bingen and also Bernard of Calvo is he's talking about the age of the Gentiles that we first need to have the true number, the full number of Gentiles coming to faith in Christ and after we have the full number of Gentiles coming to faith in Christ then in the Lord's own time the conversion of the Jews will be accomplished.

But he's stressing here first of all, that to say should not concern herself with the Jews because it's a fixed time for God is that our major concern right now should be with regards to the Gentiles but he's also saying I think that there's no specific program that the Catholic Church has to convert the Jews, again that's in God's time, leaving open the freedom of the conscience that Jews can become Christians as Christians could become Jews. So that would be my

overall answer, now did you have – what was your second part of it again John?

John Allen: Well the point was the theological significance of that and of course what I have in mind with that is you're very familiar obviously with the debate over covenant (admission), the criticism that was raised by Cardinal (Douglas), the debates around the so called dual-covenant theology and I'm just wondering if anything the Pope says here bears any of that.

Father Thomas Weinandy: Well I don't think the Pope would be here sanctioning a dual-covenant kind of theology, I think he would very much uphold the fact that the Lord Jesus came to save all peoples and nations, both Jews and Gentiles and that while the emphasis, the desire is that all be converted at this point in time we don't know when the conversion of the Jews will take place and it one sense we shouldn't be too anxious about that because that's going to happen at the Lord's time but I don't think (inaudible) anything about the dual-covenant theory or that we should not at least have any care or whether or not Jews become Christian or not.

Dr. Ben Witherington: This is Witherington again, I read what the Holy Father said as a reasonably clear acts of Jesus Romans 11 and in specific where Paul says that in terms of the timetable we're on this is the age in which Gentiles are added to the people of God which is from Paul's vision Jew and Gentile united in Christ but that as from exegetical time may be specifically when Christ returns there would be a large number of Jews who would respond to Jesus when He returns so that that was in Jesus' hands.

Now that seems to me to be a perfectly possible reading of Romans 11:25, for example. And I took the Holy Father to be referring to that the timing to that is in God's hands and therefore it doesn't need to be a direct mission program of the Church.

Operator: So our next question from a line of (Kevin Clarke) with (The Zenith) News Agency, your line is open.

(Kevin Clarke): First thanks to our panelists. My question primarily is for Father Fessio and then also for the panel. First of all Father Fessio the Pope reference is St. Maximus the Monothelite controversy and (Cardinal Farn Bourne's text). What do you think – why do you think he is highlighting this controversy as relevant to our day? And then to our panel just in general, in what way does this book discontinue with the caucus of Joseph Ratzinger's writing? Like has he adjusted anything in his opinions about this or that? What would you comment on that?

Father Joseph Fessio: Well, let me comment on the second one first. I'm preparing some online courses that are based on some of (Cardinal) (inaudible) works, and I was reading on the plane here to Rome re-reading (intellectual) Christianity. And I was struck by the fact that that's one of his earliest works and how close it is to what he says in (inaudible). I mean surely he's more widely read now and he's older and wiser but I did not detect any change not even a minor change in his approach to scripture, in his approach to theology, in the way he's treating these questions.

So others who are maybe better scholars than I am may have some nuances there but I did not – I saw this perfectly in line with what he's been teaching for as long as he's been teaching. And then as far as bringing (inaudible) especially the question of the two worlds in Christ, again he's trying to – he's a (synthesizer) I mean he's the one who brings unity here.

He's trying to show that you can't have Jesus be who He is as both God and man unless he has two worlds, and yet they're not two worlds that are in opposition to each other or of the same order, one is elevated by the other within the other and (of course that) he focuses on the classical place there regarding Gethsemane where Jesus says not my will but thy will be done.

So I don't think he has any particular agenda in (hiding) that issue. It's just that that is a very crucial part of Christology and he takes it with a very scriptural, biblical approach to show the unity in Christ at the same time the distinct with his human and His divine natures.

Mark Brumley: This is Mark Brumley, very good answer Father; I was very impressed by your ability to recall that passage and to articulate it so clearly. One thing I would add is that he also sets for us an example of what Vatican II talks about when it talks about scriptures being the heart and soul of theology because on the one hand he articulates formulation of an issue, a theological issue regarding the nature of Christ that in a way that comes much later on. In fact he refers not just to Maximus but the (forming) of Leo the Great and so on. This is something that comes much later on in the history of theology and yet he wants to root our understanding of that more refined theological concept in the Scripture.

So it's not like he's saying well this is all spelled out there sort of in a kind of simplistic fashion in the Bible. He's not just kind of proof texting but at the same time he's trying to show that our faith in this wonderful theological expression that comes much, much later in theological development are rooted in the scripture they should be rooted in the scripture.

(Tom Wayne): This is (Tom Wayne). One of the things that I noticed that was in conformity with his earlier writings is his emphasis on liturgy and worship. And he does this a number of times when he speaks about the Old Testament prayer and worship, how Jesus passion death and – in a sense it's a liturgy of his offering, of his life and how we're all drawn into this liturgy and prayer of Jesus.

And so I think his emphasis on liturgy within this book is based upon and builds upon his previous interest in writing on the liturgy as well.

Dr. Brant Pitre: This is Dr. Brant Pitre I was just going to add along those lines. I feel a remarkable line of continuity between Joseph Ratzinger's earlier writings in this book particularly with regard to the Gethsemane chapter that you mentioned. In one of his earlier writings Joseph Ratzinger said that the church's dogma and the Christological council they're really nothing other than the working out of the Church's interpretation of the scripture.

I think he really exemplified that in his discussion of Maximus the Confessor and of the Christological council regarding the will of Christ, showing that

these are really at the end of the day – I mean they’re very theological and philosophical in the way they’re formulated but they are exegetical debates too.

How do we understand the revelation of who Jesus was, what He did, what He said, in particular how He prayed to the Father not my will but Thine be done in Gethsemane. How do we understand that in the light of the Church’s dogma and see the dogma really as a working out of exegesis, and exegesis scripture?

Operator: And we have 15 minutes left. And your next question comes from the line of Kevin J. Jones with the Catholic News Agency, your line is open.

Kevin J. Jones: Yes, my question is primarily directed to Father Weinandy but I would also appreciate any input from Ignatius Press folk. Father, you spoke how this book helps to bring together doctrine and scripture. Can you suggest how a parish priest, religion teachers and catechists can use this to help bring together doctrine and scripture for those they are educating? And for the Ignatius Press people can you speak more about the study guide? Thank you.

Father Thomas Weinandy: I don’t know if I have a real clear answer on your question of how parish priests or religion teachers could use – but I think they could – what they need to learn from this book is how they themselves in the classroom can synthesize Catholic doctrine and the sacred text. And I think the catechism of the Catholic church already does this for them in a way because all the doctrines in the catechism have multiple scripture passages and multiple references and I think since Cardinal Ratzinger was very much involved in that catechism we see him applying the same methodology in his book that as it was just said like with the doctrine of the incarnation, that’s really a Biblical doctrine that rose out of the scripture. And so it’s a matter of the teachers helping the students see that when they recite the creed on Sunday, all those Biblical truths all those truths that we proclaim are found within Scripture itself.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of (Anna Vasquez) with the (phoenix.org). your line is open.

(Anna Vasquez): Please reiterate to me what you said a little bit about how people generally see Pope Benedict as the one trying to turn back the clock in Vatican II – maybe to expand on that a little bit. And why that point is significant to Christians.

Male: Is this (inaudible)?

(Anna Vasquez): Yes.

Male: I missed the beginning of your question. I couldn't hear you.

(Anna Vasquez): OK. Please reiterate to me what – that point you made about how people generally see this Pope as trying to turn back the clock on Vatican II and just expand on it a little how you feel that might be of significant to Christians.

Male: OK great, yes. What I meant by that comment was in the wake of the Holy Father's promulgation of the Motu Proprio Letter, Summorum Pontificum where he approved the use of the traditional – what you call the traditional Latin Mass Pius V from before the Vatican II council.

Some people were disturbed by the Holy Father's promulgation of the extraordinary form in Latin Mass and were worried that he was somehow trying to undo the liturgical reforms of the second Vatican Council. And that was a misapprehension of his intentions on that part.

I'm sure Father Fessio could say a lot more about that liturgical renewal and what Cardinal Ratzinger and now Pope Benedict had – what role he had to play in it. What I was trying to show in that comment was that when you look at what the Holy Father has done with sacred scripture in light of the second Vatican Council you see that the idea that he was somehow opposed to Vatican II; undoing Vatican II simply is baseless.

But there is one of the other renewals which is sometimes gets less press that the Vatican II called for was a Biblical renewal to really make sacred scripture the soul of sacred theology and to unite history and faith in the interpretation of sacred scripture.

And so what I was trying to say is in the same way that Paul VI was the one who implemented the liturgical reforms of Vatican II and you can say John Paul II really built upon the social teachings of Vatican II (inaudible) and other writings. So too Pope Benedict XVI is really the Pope of the second Vatican Council when it comes to sacred scripture. That he is – sees himself exclusively as implementing the directives of Vatican II with regard to how Catholics read the Bible, how we interpret scripture, both with history, language, culture and literature, but uniting those to tradition, to dogma and to the canon and the sacred scripture.

I think the implications are broad both for ecumenical directives in terms of unity between the Christians and finding common ground in scripture, but also in calling for a real return to scripture in the lives of Catholic faithful, really making sacred scripture a part of our lives which you see very clearly in this new apostolic letter – 200 pages *Verbum Domini* on the word of God and the life and mission of the Church.

This is very, very important to the Holy Father's heart, very close to his heart, the sacred scripture.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Phillip Pulella with Reuters, your line is open.

Phillip Pulella: Hi, I've got two questions primarily directed to Father Fessio and Dr. Neusner. When I spoke to the Chief Rabbi of Rome last week about this book, he basically said about the section of repudiating the idea of collective Jewish guilt for Christ's death. He said so what's all the fuss about? He said this has been the position since (inaudible). And I put it to him well most Catholics probably don't even know what (inaudible) is, so I'd like to ask you – the first question is, how do you think that this will play in the (inaudible) and improve Catholic Jewish relations on the grassroots level and help to reduce the amount of anti Judaism which still exists in the church at a grassroot's level and second I've stopped counting the number of times I've heard the word exegesis, eschatology and hermeneutics in the book and in the conversation. Is this book directed at people who are on this call of that level?

Is it directed to Mrs. (McGill Cuddy) on the streets of Brooklyn who will understand this or both? And could you address that please.

Father Joseph Fessio: Well Mrs. (McGill Cuddy) is probably a very intelligent woman I mean being of Irish descent and living in New York. I don't think it's for people in the pews in the sense of anybody who happens to wonder in a church but if someone is probably well educated, you know, and reads books of a serious nature from time to time I think this is quite intelligible and you can only use words like eschatology, hermeneutics and so on, he explains what they are and what he means and even when he refers to, you know, (Hago), or (March) or you know other figures that may not be as well known to someone who's not in the academic life.

But his naming is it's pretty clear so it may not be translucent, transparent to all but I was struck by how we were (inaudible) in fact I had such as lent. I had (inaudible) water with Nicole Winfield earlier early this afternoon and I asked her and she had had the same experience reading it that was not difficult to get through. As far as your question about what was affected grassroots in terms of a better Jewish-Christian relations again well again it depends if the grassroots read the book and even if a million people read it there's a lot more people out there that won't.

It's one of the advantages of having the media taking interest in this because those who don't read the book will still at least hear instead; the Jews are not responsible as collectively for the death of Christ. That's already been pretty well spread in the media. So it surely cannot hurt the Jewish-Christian relations. The rabbi was correct there's nothing new here not even from (inaudible) but the council itself was a organic development of previous Jewish teaching so even the emphasis was different.

So I think it will help and the more people read the book itself or hear the press accounts to it are going to recognize that there's no basis in Scripture and there's no basis in the teachings in Catholic Church for this (inaudible).

Mark Brumley. This is Mark Brumley and if Mrs. (McGill Cuddy) is having any trouble whatsoever reading Jesus of Nazareth II she can always get our study guide.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: This is Ben Witherington and I just like to say I evaluated this in terms of level as to what level of college or seminary students various Christian person might be able to get the vast majority of the sense of this book. And for one thing there is a big glossary at the back of the book. So in terms of \$25 worth of technical terms you've got help with that at the back as well as key figures.

But my guess would be that this is book specifically user-friendly for entry level seminary students, educated lay people with a lot of theological acumen, and that kind of audience. Obviously clergy of various kinds and it's certainly not just at the scholarly level of discussion; it's accessible at a level below that.

Operator: Your next question come from the line of Mike McManus a syndicated columnist, your line is open.

Mike McManus: What's the impact ultimately do you think this book will have, will it in effect prompt Protestants to rethink their relationship with Catholics for example? Some of the people on this call are implying that but Protestants have rather jaundice the view of Catholics in general it seems to me.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: This is Ben Witherington and I'll be happy to respond to that. I think it depends on what kind of Protestants we are talking about. What are usually called high church protestants or mainline protestants, whether we are dealing with Presbyterians, Lutherans, I'm myself of the United Methodist Episcopalian. I think this effort would certainly be well received by a lot them and it could help promote further discussion and conferencing together about various things.

But I also think that there is a large sloth of evangelical Protestantism as well that will receive this book with gladness and joy and maybe it will disabuse some of jaundice views that some Protestants have of Catholics as their brothers and sisters in Christ and I would certainly hope that, that would help.

Dr. Craig Evans: High (sir), this is Craig Evans I second what Ben just said. My impression is that Protestants too are fairly well read and have some sense of biblical theology, what Christian faith is all about, some sense of the historical Jesus. They would read the Pope's new book and they would be astonished how Protestant and how evangelical he sounds.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: Exactly.

Dr. Craig Evans: That would surprise them and I would not have any hesitation to put this book on the syllabus as required reading for my seminary students and these are mostly Baptists, are very evangelical, are fairly conservative, I wouldn't hesitate at all to say this is the book you ought to read. And if it didn't say Pope Benedict on the cover they might not even be sure they are reading a catholic book, they would read and say this is pretty good.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: And I would say exactly the same thing.

Dr. Craig Evans: Yes, that's why we are so excited about this book, it's a great book but it's amazing how it has bridged a variety of gaps, scholarly and practical and spiritual and devotional and yet at the same time there is an ecumenicity here but yet catholic doctrine has not been sacrificed – compromised either and these comments have been made in relationship to Vatican II and I just think it's a remarkable achievement on many levels.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: The one thing I would say in addition to that which I think would be helpful is that I agree with the Holy Father that Vatican II has not been fully implemented at least in some quarters and in terms of biblical interpretation I can only think that his further push and let's spin out what Vatican to said we ought to be doing, would only further help the accord and ecumenical discussions between protestants and Catholics.

Mike McManus: Thank you.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Sister Ann Flannagan with the Daughters of Saint Paul and the Chicago Tribune. Your line is open.

Sister Ann Flanagan: Hi, actually my more explicit questions have already been handled especially by John Allen, thank you very much. I would especially like to direct this to Dr. Evans and Dr. Witherington because it's a follow up on the question we just had. It seems to me that with the Holy Father not, we could say teaching from on high as the Pope but writing as a private theologian and offering to initiate a kind of a dialogue engaging with Rabbi Neusner in the first volume, engaging thoughts, what is your kind of your reaction as protestant professors to the possibilities that this has coming from the Pope of Rome.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: First of all I consider it an honor to be a part of this discussion and honored to be considered as a person that the Pope or the Catholic Church would want to have at such a discussion and I will be very happy to await my invitation to come have further talks.

Dr. Craig Evans: This is Craig Evans thank you for your question. Let me put it to you this way. If this book had been written this way by (John Myer) or Raymond Brown or Joseph Fitzmyer I would read it and say well done this is a very fine book by a very capable Roman Catholic New Testament scholar I just love it.

But what is such a present surprise for me is that actually it is written by somebody who isn't just a Roman Catholic Scholar but he is the Pope. And so he writes within a context and he might not be writing ex-cathedra which we might say but he is writing as a scholar but he still is the Pope and he is writing in the context of the Vatican and in context of the Catholic Church around the world.

And there are expectations, there are pressures, there are however you want to put it and yet he has written this book this way which I think is in my opinion, it is true to the highest ideals of Roman Catholic biblical scholarship and theology and to step with Vatican II and advances this important area of discussion and thinking and he does it in a way that I find as a Protestant scholar very compelling, very refreshing and very stimulating.

So I just repeat what I said a moment ago, this is a remarkable achievement.

Sister Ann Flanagan: Thank you very much.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Matt Swaim with the Sunday – sorry The Sunrise Morning Show, EWTN Radio, your line is open.

Matt Swaim: Thank you very much and I apologize for quarreling the Protestants continually here but this question is particularly for Dr. Witherington because as a graduate of Asbury College myself I'm acutely interested in your perspective on the question how the pope talks about the historical criticalness. This is obviously something that's been very controversial both in catholic and protestant circles and I wonder what do you think this book will contribute to the ecumenical discussion of the historical method particularly as it pertains to the person of Jesus.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: Well there is a very pregnant remark he makes at one point in the book where he says he feels like the historical critical study of Jesus has not – certainly not run its course but it's gotten pretty much as far as we can go at least at this juncture with the historically recon tractable Jesus. The Jesus of the past based on the limitations of the method and he seems very clear about the value of the method but also the limitations of the method.

And so I think that kind of critical realism about the methodology would simply be amend by most protestant biblical scholars of faith as well that it's a useful tool but it's not an unlimited tool and it has its drawbacks and limitations which we need to recognize.

And so his concern that we go forward and try concentrating on things like the figure of Christ, the character of Christ, the theologies significance of the overall impact of the portraits of Christ in the gospel is exactly right because what's happened in biblical scholarship is this, old form criticism has been gradually dyeing on the line and more genre studies of the gospels as biographies or like ancient historical monograph is what producing more and more fresh insights.

And the Pope is aware of this so I think that what he says would just be further impetus to the right kind of trajectory in further studies of Jesus.

Matt Swaim: All right, thank you very much.

Operator: Your final question due to time constraints comes from the line of John Allen with the National Catholic Reporter. Your line is open.

John Allen: Thank you. Rabbi Neusner, are you still on the call?

Dr. Jacob Neusner: Yes I am.

John Allen: Rabbi thank you for your remarks at the top of the conversation about the Holy Father's comments on the question of responsibility for the death of Jesus. I'm wondering if you could just talk more generally about Pope Benedict's treatment of Judaism in the book and what maybe you think is distinctive about the way he approaches his thinking about Judaism.

Dr. Jacob Neusner: The purpose of the book where he discusses the historical Jesus and which we are being open now is I think a key to the relationship to Jesus to the Jews too. Because his reading of the crucifixion and all of the narrative concerned with that is exculpatory and but it's based on scholarships. I have in front of me the – I will in a minute, the – when in Mathew's account of the whole people he – the Christians will remember that Jesus blood speaks of a different language from the blood of Abel. It does not cry out for vengeance and punishment, it brings reconciliation. Now what's important there is that this is – this represents a scholarly judgment not something that is of a political value and he is talking about truth and not about convenience.

John Allen: Thank you.

Operator: There are no further questions in the queue I turn the call back over to the presenters for any closing comments.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Hi, this is Alexis Walkenstein and I just wanted to invite Father Fessio, do you have any closing comments that you would like to add before we send off?

Father Joseph Fessio: Only that I'm very, very encouraged and impressed by this conversation and I wish we could be in the same room but this is the next best thing.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Mark Brumley do you have anything further you would like to add?

Mark Brumley: Amen.

Ms. Alexis Walkenstein: Great. Well I want to thank our panel and the members of the press who turned out for the telephone conference today and for any members of the media who have further follow-up questions with any of our panelist please contact me directly by email or telephone and we'll try to make arrangements to accommodate anything further that is lingering. And the same goes for the transcript and the MP3 audio. We will make those items available as you request them.

So thank you again to everybody for being here today.

Dr. Craig Evans: Thank you.

Male: Thank you.

Dr. Ben Witherington III: Thanks everybody.

Operator: This concludes today's conference you may now disconnect.

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