

Catholic Summer Reading Suggestions

Carissimi,

An essential component of one's ongoing formation consists in the reading of good Catholic books and publications. We are inundated with the views of the "world," and as a consequence are in peril of losing our Catholic worldview. It would be tragic to go through life never having read a fine Catholic book. And there are myriads of them. I would like to offer some *very few* suggestions of easily accessible tomes that I believe many of you would enjoy.

Hilaire Belloc, the godfather of GK Chesterton, is an English author who died in the 1950s, after a long and inspiring Catholic and literary life. A good intro to him would be his books: *The Path to Rome; Essays of a Catholic* (you could just read chapters); and *Places*.

Of course there is always the famous **G.K. Chesterton** himself. I'd suggest: *The Everlasting Man; Orthodoxy*; and *The Ball and the Cross* for starters.

Robert Hugh Benson was the son of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. He converted to Catholicism and left us many good works, including: *Come Rack! Come Rope!* (about the Elizabethan persecutions of the Church); and *The Lord of the World* (a fictional novel about the End Times).

For a delightful and spiritual biography read the Englishwoman **Caryll Houselander's** (purported to be a modern day mystic) *A Rockinghorse Catholic*.

If you like short stories and essays with a Southern Catholic flavor, you must pick up **Walker Percy's** *Signposts in a Strange Land*; and to add feminine genius to Southern and Catholic, don't neglect author **Flannery O'Connor's**, *The Complete Stories*.

In the early part of the 20th century there was a brief but bountiful Catholic reawakening in Scandinavia that gave the world author **Sigrid Undset** and her magnificent and highly readable trilogy about medieval Catholic Norway, *Kristin Lavransdatter*.

If you have not yet read **J.R.R. Tolkien's** masterpiece (seeing the movie doesn't count) *The Lord of the Rings*, set your mind to it now. It's more than a fantasy tale. Himself a staunch believer, he said of this work that it represents a "distinctly Catholic worldview."

Willa Cather, although not a Catholic herself, gave a splendid account of a missionary bishop in the American Southwest in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

For those interested in a more demanding read, albeit eminently fruitful, pick up any work by **Christopher Dawson**, but especially *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*.

If you like history, try the short but exciting survey of glorious Catholicism, *Triumph*, by **Harry Crocker**; *The Last Crusade* by **Warren Carroll** (the harrowing tale of the Communist persecution of the Church in the 1930s); or **William Thomas Walsh's** *Isabella of Spain* (about the Queen who saved Spain from Islam and sent Columbus to America).

For an insight into the soul of one of Christendom's great Catholic saint, **Augustine's** *Confessions* is absolutely essential.

You've never read anything by a Pope? You will greatly enjoy **John Paul II's** *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*.

If you want to study, then I would urge not to miss the highly acclaimed *Jesus of Nazareth Vol. I & II* by Pope **Benedict XVI** (superb but demanding).

Happy reading!

Don Francesco