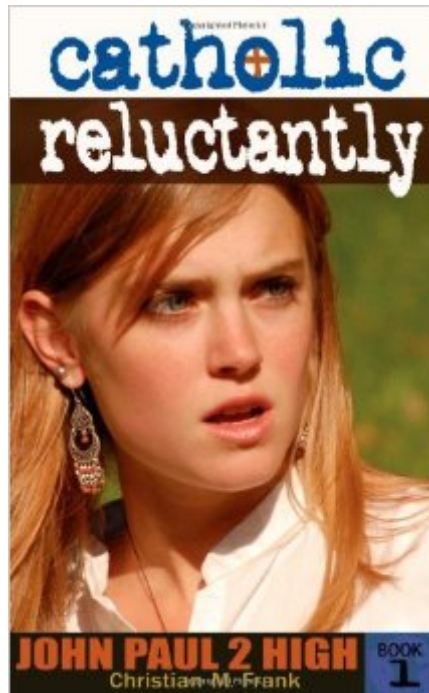


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# Catholic, Reluctantly (John Paul 2 High School)



## Synopsis

George Peterson would rather wrestle at a big high school, but he has to go to a new school run by Catholic parents: John Paul 2 High. Only seven kids in the whole school! The building is falling apart. Weird things keep happening. And then there's Allie Weaver, drop-dead gorgeous, barely Catholic. Why did her parents suddenly transfer her to John Paul 2 High? And what is she so afraid of?

## Book Information

Series: John Paul 2 High School (Book 1)

Paperback: 324 pages

Publisher: Sophia Institute Press (March 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1928832997

ISBN-13: 978-1928832997

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,682,781 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Emotions & Feelings](#) #47 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Mysteries & Thrillers](#) #559 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Collections & Anthologies](#)

## Customer Reviews

Catholic Reluctantly is the first installment in the highly anticipated "John Paul 2 High" teen fiction series by Christian Frank. Set in and around a struggling start-up Catholic high school, the book features a unique cast of characters each finding his or her own way to live out their faith as a teen. The book is aimed at a youth audience, but this 44 year old mom couldn't put it down once I started it! Christian Frank has a great ability to capture the voices and emotions of the teens and to weave a great story. The JP 2 students, each coming from a unique set of circumstances, find themselves at a start-up school in a ramshackle building that's struggling to pass inspection in order to stay open. Some of the kids are enthusiastic about their new Catholic high school, but others feel as though they've been banished to this crazy place. Frank crafts a great story that introduces us to this appealing cast of kids and their varying perspectives. Celia, the principal's daughter, is an eternal optimist. Allie, the recent public school transfer, misses her old friends and wavers with her

commitment to seeking the Truth. George would rather be at a larger school that would enable him to pursue his love of wrestling and ultimately finds a way to make things work. These are real kids with real issues, and their characters are explored in way that is uplifting and inspiring. The plot of the story involves a great mystery and several twists and turns that will keep the reader glued to the book until the end, which ultimately leaves the door wide open for a great sequel. While the book features Catholic characters and topics, it is never overly pious or preachy and should appeal to any young person (or even older ones!) looking for compelling characters and a good storyline. I'm looking forward to sharing this book with my teenage sons and would highly recommend it to anyone looking for a thought provoking read. I'll also be the first in line to buy the next installment of the John Paul 2 High School series!

Interesting plot, good character development, not preachy but the message is discernable. I previewed this before giving it to my older children and it held my interest from start to finish. There are enough surprises along the way that it's not your typical predictable teen book. As far as popular Catholic fiction goes, this book tends to be more realistic and balanced than others. It's gotten a thumbs up from my teens who have read it too. They appreciate a modern story about Catholic kids who are normal and not in their face offering pious advice on every page. It's refreshing to see realistic teen dialogue that isn't weighed down with doctrine, but that can impart a Catholic perspective on everyday experiences.

The title says "Catholic, Reluctantly," but the book's content says, "Catholic, Absolutely." It's about time that a novel, let alone a SERIES, appeared in the teen market revolving around the institution that is the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The refreshing thing about this novel is that it's not afraid to show its love of the Church. Yet there's no preachiness: The author lets the characters tell the story and interact on their own merit, rather than trying to build the characters around a given theme (a Catholic school has opened) and telling the reader what the characters think. Instead, the kids are reading-and-reacting on the run to the school's opening, similar to a wrestler slithering for an escape (2 points) after being beaten on an initial takedown by his opponent. The author is letting the characters develop on their own and is recording things as if he or she were behind them, filming it all with an 8mm video camera. None of the kids were quoting Scripture left and right, which would have given it a preachy feel present in other Christian teen novels. There was a nice balance of dialogue and exposition. Too much exposition weighs it down and too much dialogue makes it another fluffy teen drama. But, like George Peterson's wrestling ability, there's a nice balance and

combination of moves in this book. There's some loose plot ends which will be continued later on. Even though I am 24, I still read teen novels sometimes to see how authors develop characters. There are seven stock characters here: The jock (George), the popular blonde (Allie), the jokester (J.P), the pure good girl (Celia), the moody emo kid (Kosalinski), the serious intellectual (Brian Burke) and another jock (Liz). Yet each is sufficiently developed that none of them are actually stereotypical. The strongest character in here is either George or Allie, the school's resident Next Top Model. I'd like to see if J.P. will get a serious side. A subtle character change in Liz sets us up for good foreshadowing. I liked the development of Burke into a tough, small, scrappy kid. I would've liked to see him develop as a wrestler. Maybe make him awesome like Rocky, but then have his ego get big and have him be humbled. I'd like to see if Liz becomes a superstar athlete. Kosalinski and Getz are prototypical antagonists, but Kosalinski is interesting enough that there's some potential for change. He needs to find happiness. Getz is just evil, but Mahoney and some of his friends seem like good kids. I'd like to see the good, pure Celia develop a dark side someday. :) George and Allie are good, yet flawed heroes. I hope none of the characters die off and I'd love to follow them through their senior year, unlike Ann M. Martin's *Babysitters Club* series, which had all of its characters in the 7th and 8th grade during that series' 14-year run. In real life, charter schools usually have at least 20 to 60 students as a start up program. There's not much else to criticize, however. (As far as I know, the Allie Weaver situation has not happened on a large-scale basis like actual shootings like Columbine, but the actual plot premise there is VERY creative and clever. Terrorists can create as much harm psychologically to their intended populace in some situations without having to fire a shot) What's interesting in terms of plotting and development with these novels is that I could see them creating their own universe, similar to the Jan Karon series (Mitford) or the Katherine Valentine (*A Miracle for St. Cecilia*) series, where there's tons and tons of characters in a fictional town and each one is interlocked tightly with each other in one way or another. There could be an untapped market for Catholic teen models, especially if they're hooked up with the tons and tons of Life Teen programs at parishes across the U.S. As I'm reading this book for the second time I'm starting to develop my own plot lines for the 7 characters. I hope the next set of JP2H are as good as this one. Unlike the book's title, however, I won't read it reluctantly. I'll read it absolutely.

My 15 year old son DEVoured this book in a day and was thrilled with it. He, too, is looking forward to the next books in the series.

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