

***The Wholeness of Being:
Accompaniment, Discernment, and Integration Through the Lens of Pope St. John Paul II***

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Since his ordination in March of 2013, Pope Francis's persistent emphasis on mercy as the defining characteristic of both God and his Church has caught the attention of the entire world. Indeed, since the inauguration of his papacy, the Holy Father has called us all to a renewed sensitivity to the pain and suffering of the souls we encounter in both our public and private ministries. And he has introduced a new and potentially profoundly meaningful term into the lexicon of pastoral ministry and our daily encounters: that of "accompaniment."

The aim of this paper is to propose that the thought of Pope St. John Paul II situates Pope Francis' papacy within the continuity of the tradition on these questions and illuminates what it might mean to "accompany" someone on the road to Christ. John Paul's own insights into Divine Mercy, revealed so beautifully in his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, will shed further light on the profound meaning and significance of the Pope's purpose in turning our attention toward it. John Paul's anthropology, itself a synthesis of metaphysical reflection and a phenomenological analysis of lived experience, will lend clarity to Francis's challenge to us to accompany those we encounter in a spirit of both truth and love. Finally, John Paul's account of the foundations of moral reasoning in his landmark encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, will enable us to navigate the tension between objective moral norms and the complexities of individual conscience and discernment. The investigation will illuminate the way to warm the hearts of those we encounter – and, hopefully, to trace the road to Emmaus anew.