

THRILLER

**Chaplain's Call**

Jim Edge

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Four Stars (out of Five)

Pastor Franz is a hardworking and devout man with two children and an active congregation, yet he still finds time to volunteer as a police chaplain, a position that he finds both exhilarating and challenging. When a mysterious caller phones him to ask forgiveness for a sin that has not yet been committed, Franz is puzzled and mildly disturbed. When the calls become regular and the voice on the other end is leading the police to a series of murder scenes, his puzzlement turns into fear for his own safety. The police and the FBI frantically search for a killer who seems to have inside information, and no matter which direction he turns, Franz is at the center of the action.

*Chaplain's Call* is a gripping thriller that is fast paced and full of unexpected twists and turns. Jim Edge's own experience as a police chaplain add grit and realism to the novel. Some scenes are incredibly disturbing and many readers will be shocked by the desperation and sorrow that Edge is able to capture. Franz is an especially interesting character with great depth because of his perspective as a police chaplain. Faith and cynicism seem to be his overriding traits. He is unfailingly concerned about the welfare of his congregation and the individuals he is called upon to assist in his role as chaplain. He also regularly expresses frustration over the responsibilities he has as a clergyman and often seems irritated with certain members of his church. He spends a great deal of time thinking about the philosophical conundrums he is confronted with, namely, forgiveness and redemption from truly evil acts, and the horror-filled lives some people endure. For example, Edge writes of Franz's thoughts as he leaves the scene of a murder: "He reflected on the difficulty of trying to share the Good News when the people who needed it were blinded by the darkness of their own lives."

The book's one serious flaw is Edge's use of dialogue. The characters all express themselves effectively, but their conversations lack the flow of natural language. Nevertheless, *Chaplain's Call* is interesting and illuminates the field of criminal investigation and law enforcement in an original light. Readers who are looking for a fresh thriller will enjoy this book.

*Catherine Thureson*