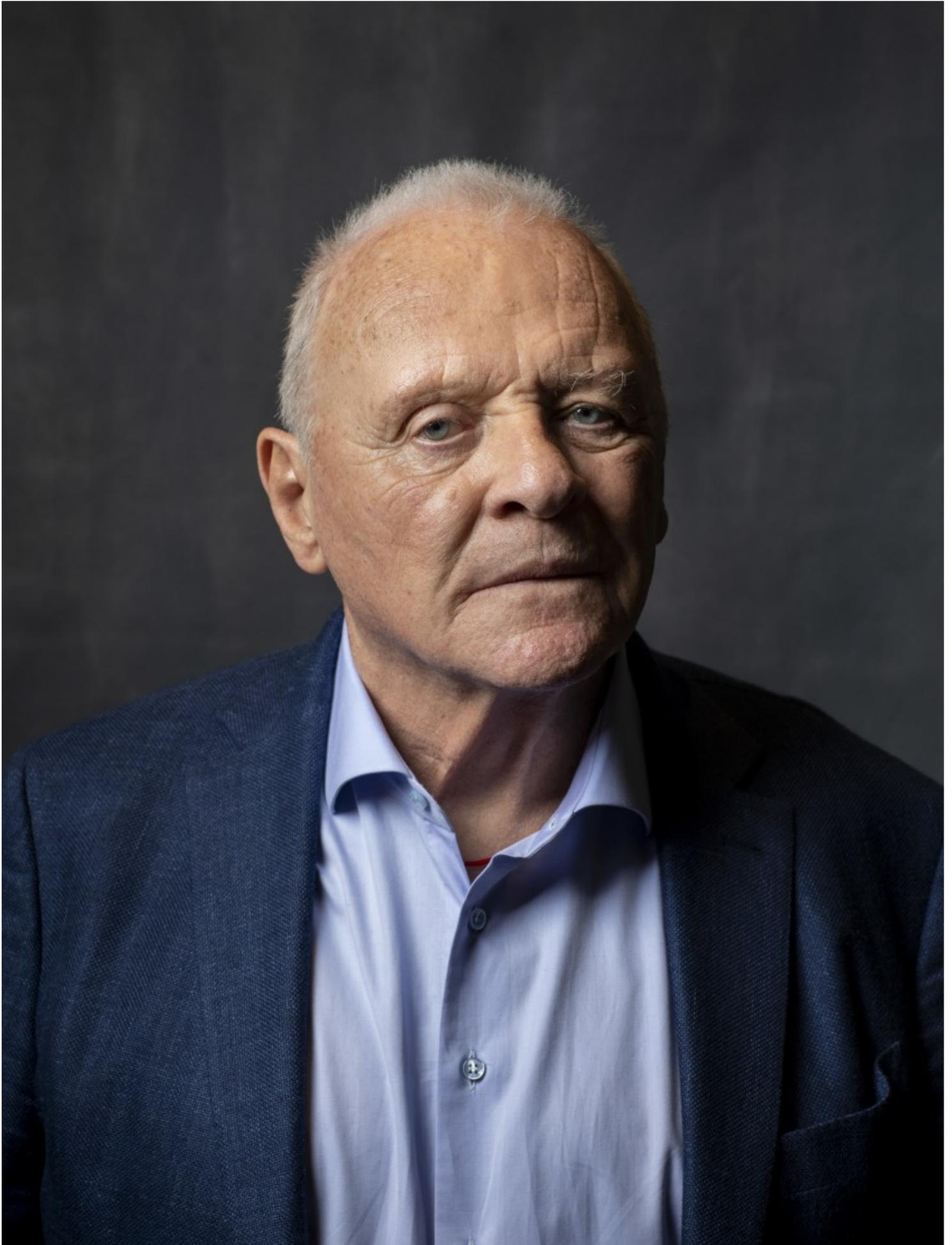




MOVIES

# Anthony Hopkins won't dissect his 'Two Popes' role. Here's why





At 82, Anthony Hopkins isn't sure just who or what is running the great show of life. But he has one thing to say about it: 'Thank you very much.' (Jay L. Clendenin / Los Angeles Times)

By RANDEE DAWN

JAN. 30, 2020  
7 AM



Anthony Hopkins is not playing by your rules. The actor, who earned his latest Oscar nomination this year for “The Two Popes,” has had an expansive, lauded 60-year (and counting) career that’s handed him roles as a prince (“The Lion in Winter”), a god (“Thor”), a psychopath (“Silence of the Lambs” [earned him his first Oscar in 1992](#)) and another kind of god (“Westworld”), to name just a few — so the rules are really his to invent. And as he tells *The Envelope*, he’s not interested in examining or lingering on his past roles, but he does have a lot to say about religion, taking things seriously, and sinning with bread. Let the games begin.

### So you *don't* talk about the roles you've played in the past?

I don't want to sound dismissive, but it's just a job that's offered to me. If I like the script, I'll say yes. [“The Two Popes” came out of the blue.](#) All I know is that I had a wonderful time with it. I don't do much research. The great treasure was working with — apart from [director] Fernando Meirelles — Jonathan Pryce. We're both from Wales. He's from the north, and I'm from the south.

---

MOVIES

**Act with Anthony Hopkins? Even Jonathan Pryce was nervous before filming ‘Two Popes’**

Dec. 18, 2019

---

### Were you more serious about things when you were a younger actor?

I've always been like that. I don't consider myself an intellectual or a very bright person. I'm intelligent *enough*. I was raised in the British theater, but I could never really fit in. Somebody said, "Your attitude is bad. You don't seem to take it seriously." I just turned 82, and I tell you what, 45 years ago I was in New York, strapped down in Mt. Sinai hospital with a needle in my arm.

### **What happened?**

I had a blood clot in my leg. The doctor looked at me and said, "You're not going to make it to 40, the way you're going on. Your lifestyle. I know all about you, the drinking and smoking. You're not going to live long." I remember getting angry with him. I thought, "Screw you, too." Now I'm 82 and I'm on borrowed time. I've no idea how I got here, especially lately.

### **You and Pryce both play papal roles in "Two Popes." He told me he thought he'd find religion as he got older, but was still waiting. You've said you're agnostic. Are you still?**

Agnosticism is a bit strange. An agnostic doubts and atheism denies. I'm not a holy Joe; I'm just an old sinner like everyone else. I do believe more than ever now that there is a vast area of our own lives that we know nothing about. As I get older, I can cry at the drop of a hat because the wonderful, terrible passion of life is so short. I have to believe there's something bigger than me. I'm just a microbe. That, for me, is the biggest feeling of relief — acknowledging that I am really nothing. I'm compelled to say, whoever's running the show, thank you very much.

### **You say you're an old sinner. So what's your biggest sin that we can print?**

Eating bread.

### **Are you gluten intolerant?**

I don't even know what that means. No, I am a sinner. My outlook of lasting life is to be kind to people. Be kind to the guys in the restaurant who are working their butts off. We're all so busy looking up our own backsides. The industry I'm in, I don't do anything. The guy who does my trailer in the morning, or hands me the props, makeup, hair, camera guys — they're the guys who

put my stupid face on the screen. I'm nothing. I'm just a vehicle. People who believe they're special, that is the way to hell on Earth.

---

[2020 OSCARS RACE >](#)

---

## The Oscars need 'Parasite' more than 'Parasite' needs the Oscars

---

Red-carpet fashion: Why Jennifer Aniston and Joaquin Phoenix are recycling their clothes

---

'Jojo Rabbit's' Mayes Rubeo 'euphoric' as first Latina costume designer to be nominated

---

Brad Pitt's awards season charm offensive is in overdrive, and we are delighted

**I know you said you don't reflect much on previous roles, but on your second film you were acting opposite Katharine Hepburn and Peter O'Toole in 1968's "Lion in Winter." Did you learn anything from them?**

[Hepburn] and I were standing on the parapets of this castle in the sunshine and she said [he slips into pitch-perfect Hepburn imitation], "I hope you appreciate this. Here we are making a lot of

money in the middle of winter in the south of France getting sunburned.” I said, “Yeah, I do.” She said, “Good, because if you don’t, I’ll kick your ass.”

## Has retirement ever been an option?

My wife said to me this morning, “You would die if you retire.” No, I want to go on working. If they keep offering me jobs, until all my teeth fall out or my hair falls out, I’m going to do whatever they offer me.

[MOVIES](#)[AWARDS](#)[OSCARs](#)

### Only good movies

Get the Indie Focus newsletter, Mark Olsen's weekly guide to the world of cinema.

[SIGN ME UP](#)

You may occasionally receive promotional content from the Los Angeles Times.

Randee Dawn

---

#### MORE FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

MOVIES

**Review: With restraint, ‘The Assistant’ reveals the true terror of a Harvey Weinstein type**

2 hours ago