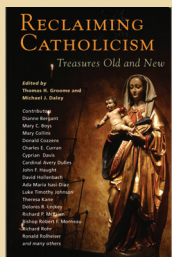


BOOKS IN BRIEF

RECLAIMING CATHOLICISM: TREASURES OLD AND NEW

Thomas H. Groome and
Michael J. Daly, editors
Orbis Books, 2010
250 pages

Who, observing the Catholic Church in recent years, could have failed to notice, whether with



relief or lament, some slippage in the modernizations of liturgy and practice that followed Vatican II? Or failed to hear the murmurs, grow-

ing stronger of late, that too often the changes took effect without accompanying education, leaving the theological rationale that undergirded them poorly understood?

This volume is an effort to address that lack with 45 short essays on multiple dimensions of Catholic thought and culture (perspectives, personalities and practices), written by men and women who comprise a veritable “who’s who” of (mostly liberal) contemporary Catholic thinkers.

For anyone who would like to better understand the Catholic faith today and its relationship to the past, or to consider how some of the “old” practices (fasting, the Rosary, benediction, devotion to Mary) might be integrated with the new, there is much to learn from and reflect on here. A couple of essays have relevance for Catholic hospitals and nursing homes: “From Extreme Unction to the Sacrament of the Sick” and “The After Life.” Selections about forward-looking personalities, such as Fr. John Courtney Murray, SJ, and Monsignors George Higgins and John Ryan, provide another lens through which to view an evolving church.

Some readers will be frustrated by topics left out. (I, for example, would have liked more on the still-developing stance of Catholicism

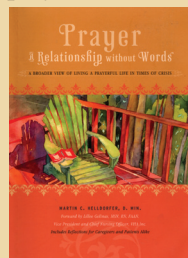
toward non-Abrahamic religions.) Others may be frustrated by the brevity of the selections (four-and-a-half pages, on average.). Still, as Sr. Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, writes in her essay on vowed religious life, “There is something to be learned about a journey back in time. It enables us to retrieve what was valuable and bring it forward in new ways.”

PRAYER: A RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT WORDS

Martin C. Helldorfer, D.Min.
Moss Communications, 2010
70 pages

There is no pressure in these pages to pray or even to believe. But for patients and caregivers, or anyone who has ever had a “sense of a caring presence,” and who might, especially in times of vulnerability, wish to become more intimate with that presence, Helldorfer can serve as a contemporary guide.

His first principle: understand that to pray is to be in relationship, a relation-



ship that, like others, changes and grows, involves shared joys and sorrows, possibly misunderstandings and difficulties. Relationships cannot be forced and do not flourish with stilted expressions or postures. “The language of prayer is that of love,” Helldorfer writes. “We start with words ... and end with silence.” He offers reassurance for those who feel at times unable to pray: Stop trying; learn to wait; find a new path; pray by doing. And then, for those who persevere, a warning: be prepared for change. Though it may take years, those who pray will ultimately have to surrender to the fact that they are deeply loved and then follow where love leads, Helldorfer writes.

Helldorfer knows both prayer and health care. He is a former monk and psychologist, a husband, the author of *Healing with Heart: Inspirations for Healthcare Professionals*, and retired vice president of mission for Exemplar Healthcare, a Colorado-based regional health care system. *Healing with Heart*, reviewed in the March-April, 2009, issue of *Health Progress*, won the American

Journal of Nursing’s Book of the Year Award in the leadership and management category.

IF WE MUST DANCE, THEN I WILL LEAD

Jane Rudden
iUniverse, Inc., 2010
160 pages

This poignant and well-told tale by Jane Rudden, subtitled “a memoir of breast cancer survival,” is worth reading by anyone who has ever had breast cancer, who could be at risk of developing breast cancer, who has ever been a caregiver for a cancer patient — professionally or otherwise — or who has known someone



with breast cancer. Which means: This book has something to offer just about all of us. With the possible exception of the unlucky women who have personally experienced this

dreadful disease, it would be hard to imagine that someone could read Rudden’s account without being in some way changed.

She writes frankly, and with flashes of humor, of her “dance with the beast,” giving an account of her experiences with medical providers, some far from positive; of her growing determination to advocate for herself; of her reactions to the shattering physical and psychological effects of her illness. She survived, but barely, when reconstructive surgery resulted in a massive infection that might have taken her life.

She writes, too, of support and love — from her 10 siblings, her friends, and a “significant other,” a man she invited more than once post-diagnosis to make his escape, but who shines here as a model of maturity and hope. Rudden is a professor of education whose career was stalled and ultimately limited by her disease, but who learned in her time of darkness to dance free of the beast and feed her soul.

— Pamela Schaeffer