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Is it likely that one who entered a religious order thirty years ago at age forty-six will be an expert on today's vocations? To this observer, Friar Guy Lespinay OP's book *Vocations and Their Formation Today* (St Pauls/Alba House, \$14.95) proves that he is. Sentences of every sort on every one of two hundred pages ring true, and there seems to be a balanced thoroughness that deserves being spread far and wide.

On religious-vocation questions, I feel compelled to mention here a set of DVDS that beautifully and gracefully dramatizes a hundred-year-old vocation that seems relevant even in our changed times. In six episodes (450 minutes, 3 discs, \$34.95), it is a mini-series produced in 1989 by Chilean television and now available from Ignatius Press: *Saint Teresa of the Andes*. Much of her short life in Chile (1900 to 1920), apart from some horseback riding, was spent in schools of Religious of the Sacred Heart until her entrance into Carmel at nineteen. Both RSCJs and disalced Carmelites seem very well portrayed, without exaggeration in any direction—as is Juanita/Teresa herself as a lively, if spiritually precocious, girl in a somewhat well-to-do devout family. The high quality of this production was for me a joyful surprise. As in much art and spirituality, all one needs is quietly attentive eyes and ears.

Before or after viewing the DVD just mentioned, many will be happy also with a short new biography of Teresa that in its own way provides more than the three-disc video

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does: Jennifer Moorcroft's *God Is All Joy* (ICS Publications, \$12.95). It quotes Teresa's diaries and letters extensively, and effectively too.

By coincidental compulsion and/or actual grace, I must now mention—vocationwise—Teresa's close contemporary the upper-class Italian layman Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, who lived from 1901 to 1925. He loved to ski and climb mountains. The book is *Letters to His Friends and Family* (St Pauls/Alba House, \$19.95). He, with his intense and activist love of the poor, seems amazingly similar to her who in her love had sought the mountain of Carmel. She died of typhus, he of poliomyelitis. Make their acquaintance.

In *The Week That Changed the World: The Complete Easter Story* (Seabury Books, \$16), Timothy Dean Roth subtly weaves a devotional synthesis (an unobtrusive harmony) of the Gospels pertaining to Holy Week, and adds other scriptural and patristic passages. He uses *Today's New International Version*. The book quietly shows that Gospel harmonies are not at all obsolete, nor should they be. Like oratorios, they can effectively foster devotion.

People like the “togetherness” of symphonies and syntheses, but other works achieve glory with the their amazingly uncombinable variety. *African Saints, African Stories* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, \$14.95) is such a book. Camille Lewis Brown features about “forty holy men and women” and provides a litany of hundreds of real people with real names who are African saints and blessed. The variety includes sketches of Saints Monica, Cassian, Josephine Bakhita, and Charles Lwanga, Blesseds Anuarite Nengapeta (Sister Marie Clementine) and the married woman Victoria Rasomanariva, and Mother Mathilda Beasley and Sisters Henriette Delille and Thea Bowman. God is in the multifarious details of their lives; you can be there too.

Multifarious, too, are people's loves, and their ways of failing in love. Given the human condition, how close is the connection of elaborate theoretical knowledge about love to authentic love itself? Whatever the answer, perhaps few persons have the time or inclination to read the almost four hundred pages of *The Nature of Love* (St. Augustine's Press, cloth, \$40) by Dietrich von Hildebrand. But all sorts of people should give its many excellent passages a chance to jump serendipitously up off their page. Like stars in a clear night sky, they form a context for one another that is broad and deep. “It takes a loving way of looking at another in order to catch sight of the beauty of the person” (p. xxxiii). “How being happy enhances self-giving; how happiness is destroyed when it is made the primary theme” (p. 114). “Goethe wonderfully characterized ‘seeing from without’ when he says

of poetry that it is like a stained glass window in a church. From the outside the window looks black, but the entire splendor of the window is revealed to us when we enter into the church. In relation to another person, there is an analogous ‘seeing from without’; it is a typical misperceiving of the other” (p. 334).

Purity 365 (Servant Books, \$12.99) is Jason Evert’s offering of short quotes from all over for every day of the year on the subject of “True Love.” Singly and clustered they can help individuals and groups to better understand loving and being loved, to better understand each other.

Von Hildebrand’s book about love is philosophical. J. Brennan Mullaney’s *Authentic Love: Theory and Therapy* (St Pauls/Alba House, 500 pages, \$25.95) is psychological and therapeutic. It is clear to me that they can illuminate each other—perhaps best through careful use of their indexes.

Christmas is past, but remains with us. *The True Saint Nicholas* (Howard Books, \$16.99) by William J. Bennett can wait till next year, but it has something for us now. It traces a continuously growing—and continuously fascinating—branch of our Christian family tree. From obscure beginnings have come liturgy and myth and custom and devotion and naming (Nick, Klaus, and even Santa) that have rung with unimpeachable truth and joy through seventeen centuries and even more countries.

Maria: Pope Benedict XVI on the Mother of God (Ignatius Press, \$21.95) is a smallish (and beautiful) coffee-table book and a large-ish pilgrimage-and-prayer book. Appropriately, those who peruse it find themselves in the midst of papal visits, awesomely humble old Madonnas, and Benedict’s words helping them deepen the experience. In *Max and Benedict*, a children’s picture book, it is Max that does the talking (Ignatius, \$17.95). Max is a blue rock-thrush in Rome who gave himself the name after seeing the words Pont.Max. all over the place. From his various vantage points, he engagingly describes a typical day in the pope’s life. Even adults can learn from him (i.e., from them: Jeanne Perego, Donata Casagrande, and Daria Kissel).

Richard Purtill’s *Reason to Believe: Why Faith Makes Sense* (Ignatius, \$14.95) is a new edition of a 1974 book. It could help people discuss religious questions (both theist and Christian ones) with earnest friends; it is clear and fair. But its principal value is probably in the refreshment it can give to our own spiritual life, which may unfortunately be more routine and less robust than it was once or deserves to be now. “Some [errors of relativism] may be a sign of kindheartedness, but they are

certainly also a sign of muddleheadedness” (p. 172). Sometimes we need good *fervorinos*, but at other times we may need a book like this.

For what my opinion may be worth, I recommend Maura Hanrahan’s *Spirit and Dust: Meditations for Women with Depression* (ACTA Publications, \$12.95). Under about eighty headings (such as neediness, relief, running away, regrets, helping others, limping along, and God’s care), brief descriptions of anonymous women’s depressions appear, followed by briefer words coming from about twenty-five renowned women across the centuries. The very brevity of this 144-page book seems to be a principal source of its quiet wisdom. Its author says to read the meditations “as often and in whatever order you please.” I recommend that too.

Theory and practice, hope and history, Vatican Council II and its worldwide aftermath—pairs of words like these encompass all or much of human interactivity, but they do not clarify very much. Microcosms can help us glimpse the cosmos, and neighborhoods can tell us much about the world’s billions of people. A case in point is *The Implementation of Vatican II in [the “neighborhood” of] Eastern Africa* (Edwin Mellen Press, \$109.95) by Richard Gribble. He has studied in documented detail “the contribution of Bishop Vincent McCauley CSC” (1906-1982) to the post-Vatican church there, where in 1961 this Iowa-born veteran missionary became the first bishop of Fort Portal. Gribble quotes Bede Jagoe OP saying that Vatican II “was an updating for older, European churches [but] was to be part of the birth and maturing of younger missionary churches.” McCauley seems to have been someone Christians everywhere can learn from. A colleague said: “His great gift was to get people together and get them talking [and] sharing their resources [that] would be helpful in building the local Church.”

Matthew H. Clark has been the bishop of Rochester, New York, for thirty years. He and a few laypersons in his diocese have put together a quite different book from the one above, *Forward in Hope: Saying Amen to Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Ave Maria Press, \$11.95), but how similar it is, how hopeful! Wisdoms are being shared here as well as in eastern Africa.

It is good to read sincere writings that ring convincingly true. *Chosen: How Christ Sent Twenty-three Surprised Converts to Replant His Vineyard* (Ignatius, \$19.95) consists of fascinating stories of people from several neighborhoods whom the book’s editor Donna Steichen “got together and got them talking” about their lives and resources. We all can use one or another conversion, and sharing is one of the ways it happens.

Those with some extensive experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* will best appreciate *To Whom Do We Belong? An Ignatian Retreat* (Review for Religious, \$8) by David L. Fleming SJ. The book is definitely traditional and yet—in its brevity, even because of its brevity—liberatingly original, so that together you and the Holy Spirit can work out the details.

If only as a Providential linguistic and Christian curiosity, the existence of *The Latin Letters of C.S. Lewis* (St. Augustine's Press, \$12), a second bilingual edition of the Latin correspondence between Lewis (1898-1963) and the now canonized Italian saint Giovanni Calabria (1873-1954), should be known about. Father Calabria wrote initially in 1947 praising Lewis's *Le Lettere di Berlicche* (*The Screwtape Letters*) and describing his hope for ecumenical efforts and for Lewis's literary contributions to such efforts.

Ecumenical efforts remind us of church history, both its complexity and its continuing importance. Among three recent books, no simple comparisons are possible or helpful, but a few observations may be of service. Alan Schreck's *Compact History of the Catholic Church* (Servant Books, \$12.99) gets to the 20th century by the middle of its 230 pages, has a long timeline punctuated by important people and events, and an eight-page index. *At Your Fingertips: A History of the Roman Catholic Church until the Council of Trent* (St Pauls/Alba House, \$19.95) by Laurence J. Spiteri uses two hundred pages in getting to Trent (1545) and supplies an annotated list of popes and patriarchs. Alfred McBride's *Story of the Church* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, \$16.95) in its three hundred pages provides an elaborate timeline, reflection and discussion questions, and a detailed index. All three authors write as believers more than as historians. They desire to engage their readers more by their faith-filled reflections than by their choice and documentation of what they include.

We need to be faith-filled, but also full of hope and overflowing with love. Bonnie Thurston, poet and scholar, addresses this in her “primer on prayer” called *For God Alone* (University of Notre Dame Press, \$18). In a chapter on contemplative prayer that she names “the prayer of waiting,” she says, “When I think about the people I have really loved, I know I just wanted to be with them. I didn't necessarily want to ‘do’ anything.” If someone said he was “utterly incapable” of this kind of prayer, she would wonder if he really loves God, for “it is quite possible to believe in God, to serve God, without loving God. I think that is missing the best part.” In no. 53 of the appendix to Henri de Lubac's *Catholicism*, Augustine says the same: “What if there

is no good that we can do? To the lover, the benevolence, the mere wishing well, is more than enough. . . . Take away the wretched, and works of mercy are at an end . . . but the fire of love, shall that ever be quenched? With a truer love do you love a happy man for whom there is no good work that you can do; purer will be that love, and more sincere.”

—Philip C. Fischer SJ

books received

AUGSBURG FORTRESS: **Holy Spirit: Creative Power in Our Lives** by Lois Malcolm, pp. 94, paper, \$11.99.

AVE MARIA PRESS: **Open Our Hearts: A Small-Group Guide for an Active Lent, Cycle C**, by Donna L. Ciangio OP and Thomas B. Iwanowski, pp. 96, paper, \$5.95; **Forward in Hope: Saying Amen to Lay Ecclesial Ministry** by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, pp. 127, paper, \$11.95; **Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2010** from www.sacredspace.ie (Jesuit Communication Centre, Ireland), pp. 379, paper, \$15.95; **Sacred Space: For Lent 2010** also from JCC, pp. 118, paper, \$2.50; **Through the Church Year: Reflections for Feasts and Seasons** by Msgr. Francis D. Kelly, pp. 192, paper, \$13.95; **Preparing for Christmas with Benedict XVI: An Advent Novena** ed. Lucio Coco, pp. 60, paper, \$2.50; **May I Walk You Home? Courage and Comfort for Caregivers of the Very Ill** (10th anniversary ed.) and **Now That You've Gone Home: Courage and Comfort for Times of Grief** by Joyce Hutchison and Joyce Rupp SSM, each pp. 192, paper, \$12.95; **Born of the Eucharist: A Spirituality for Priests** ed. Stephen J. Rossetti, pp. 187, paper, \$15.95; **A Concise Guide to Adult Faith Formation** by Neil A. Parent, pp. 186, paper, \$15.95.

CHURCH PUBLISHING, INC.: (Morehouse Publishing:) **Speaking to the Soul: Daily Readings for the Christian Year** ed. Vicki K. Black, pp. 352, paper, \$24; (Seabury Books:) **The Week That Changed the World: The Complete Easter Story** by Timothy Dean Roth, pp. 125, paper, \$16.

DECCA LABEL GROUP: **Music from the Vatican: Alma Mater**, featuring the voice of Pope Benedict XVI, CD, no price given.

DUFOUR EDITIONS: (Veritas:) **Meetings Matter! Spirituality and Skills for Meetings** by Phyllis Brady and Brian Grogan SJ, pp. 136, paper, \$16.95; **St Paul: The Man with the Letters**