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The Spiritual Apprenticeship of a Curious Catholic, by Jerry Hurtubise

Carl Loesch

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“an example of someone who came from humble circumstances and lived in service to others” (p. 95).

For the everyday person, the most appealing aspect of the book is that the ultimate model of a person who made a difference in the world is Jesus. He is someone that anyone could befriend and walk with, not an untouchable, high-ranking political figure or distant celebrity. Alongside that, Douglas, Vuillemin, and Hallam present themselves as next door neighbors that suffered the same uncertainties as the reader with the humility to share how they muddled through the confusion. The reader sees that if those three were able to reach an understanding of their role in life, then perhaps the reader can do so as well.

For all those doubting, searching, or needing more, *How in the World Do We Make a Difference?* guides the direction that the journey should follow. This volume does not give research-based answers or statistical evidence proving the definitive steps to success. Instead, it encourages accepting one's faith, realizing that spirituality should pervade all aspects of a life that is meant to be lived for others. Only then will one be successfully satisfied. It endorses communication and asking for help, particularly reciting an easy prayer, “Lord, you are God, and I am not” (p. 23). With those words the burden is taken from the reader's shoulders and shared by a stronger power. Obstacles are no longer insurmountable, but a means of strengthening one's faith in God and in one another.

Patricia Sevilla is principal of Resurrection Catholic School in Jacksonville, Florida.

The Spiritual Apprenticeship of a Curious Catholic

Jerry Hurtubise
ACTA Publications, 2005
\$9.95, 96 pages

Reviewed by Carl Loesch

At the age of 13, Jerry Hurtubise was awakened by his mother in the middle of the night. His father had just had a massive heart attack. In that moment, he was thrust into the adult world. The author states

that “my biggest single regret is that with his death passed untold the stories of his younger days and his own spiritual apprenticeship. How I wish he had written them down for me” (p. 7). The book recounts the lessons Hurtubise learned from the characters he encountered from as early as he can remember until he began his professional career, thus ending his apprenticeship.

Rev. Michael Himes (1995) in his homilies, lectures, and books on Trinitarian theology emphasizes that the Trinity is about the relationship of the three, and because God is in relationship, then God is made present to us in our relationships. Rev. John Dunne, CSC (1975) emphasizes themes such as “things are meant” and “there is a way.” Students and readers of Himes and Dunne will find this contribution from Jerry Hurtubise to be a successful exploration of those themes while being humorous and enriching at the same time.

For the author, people and places are gardens of meaning. Hurtubise has lingered both physically and mentally in varied places from the porch swing of his family home on the day they were moving, to the porch of the Jesuit residence at Loyola University Chicago, and from his cousin’s family farm in Iowa to the large-scale farms of the central valley in California. Each place is pregnant with meaning. It is not just the places that bear the meaning but also the people with whom he shared that part of his journey to adulthood. Each chapter details a memory of someone from whom he learned a key lesson during his spiritual apprenticeship. Most of the experiences revolve around the Catholic Church from religious sisters at the Catholic grade school, the mean Monsignor at report card time, Holy Cross priests and brothers in high school, the Jesuits at Loyola, and the migrant farm workers in the fields. These people represented the Church and God to the author and welcomed his questions.

The writer’s style is humorous and quite visual. Readers will enjoy hearing the story of the second grade confession of adultery, theological puns with Tibetan monks at the Abbey of Gethsemane in Kentucky, and the story of a health food store owner arguing with a Chicago policeman regarding why he was cooking a sirloin on the sidewalk on a hot summer day. Because the author went through his apprenticeship with eyes to see differently and a willingness to ask questions, he was able to draw spiritual meaning from seemingly chance conversations.

This book would be an interesting discussion starter for a Catholic book club or an additional reading for a Catholic high school theology course. After reading this book, adults may ask themselves: What stories are we telling our children? How are we helping them to see meaning in life? How do we help others uncover their vocation? Who have been our mentors, and how have they helped us to see ourselves and our relationship with God in a new way?

The author clearly shows that despite the pains and losses we suffer in our lives, God continually reaches out to us through people and events. We must take the time to wring the meaning from these conversations. The reviewer recommends this book to parents of teenagers, neighbors, and teachers willing to throw a safety net to a free-falling teen, and anyone between careers who is searching for direction.

Finally, the reviewer congratulates ACTA Publications on this first book in a series of “short, accessible, provocative reflections by individual Catholics on their personal experience of God and Christianity and church and life” (Hurtubise, 2005, p. 5). It is encouraging to read the reflections of lay Catholics who care deeply about their faith. We should eagerly anticipate further books in this series.

References

- Dunne, J. S. (1975). *Time and myth*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
Himes, M. J. (1995). *Doing the truth in love: Conversations about God, relationships, and service*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.

Carl Loesch is principal of Marian High School in Mishawaka, Indiana.