

Everyday Encounters of Beauty and Grace

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Bridget Curran, 28, renewed her faith in a big way in 2000, but still had serious reservations about the Church's perceived obsession with Mary. In fact, she nearly left the Catholic Church because of this.

So when Allen & Unwin's Maggie Hamilton contacted her after seeing her blog on the Catholic Youth Ministry website, she did not want to write a book on Mary, of all people.

She was so "blocked" in her feelings towards Mary that she could barely bring herself to pray the Rosary.

"This book was Our Lady's way of helping me appreciate and understand her better," she told The Record. Bridget always wanted to be a writer since she was a little girl – "apart from a dream of being a 'nun-gypsy-princess'"...

But having grown up and started working for a film production company, she let that dream go, and the approach from Allen & Unwin was an opportunity to fulfil that dream.

This is apparent in the book's style. Accounts of devotions to Mary and miracles attributed to her from around the world are written simply, as if being read as a child's bedtime story, yet it has deep theological implications that are easily understood as acts of love.

As such, it is ideal for such a purpose to introduce children to the possibility of a relationship with a woman whose compassion and strength reach through the ages to bring individuals to her son, Jesus Christ, and remains appropriate today.

The stories often involve Mary appearing to the poorest of the poor, and children, or both, showing that sanctity is often achieved through simplicity of faith, as Jesus said: "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 18:3)

In launching the book that covers 32 Marian apparitions and miracles, Archbishop Barry Hickey praised it as "concise and satisfying".

"The stories we are familiar with, such as Fatima, Lourdes and Guadalupe, are sketched lightly and well, and her less familiar stories carry the same imprint of reliability for those who come new to them," he said.

Highlighting one story of local Aborigines remarking that Mary "knows so much" about their environment having saved New Norcia from a raging fire, the Archbishop said: "It would do all of us a lot of good to realise that Our Lady knows so much about us and God, and can do so much to help us in our daily life and particularly in our relationship with God."

He said the book reveals how Mary touches the lives of individuals in many ways, and confirms to us that "the biggest fruit of Mary's apparitions is not the spectacular reminder of how close heaven is to earth, but the personal conversion of so many hearts that brings us closer to God".

In investigating how other people from many cultures encountered Mary and Jesus in their

everyday lives, Bridget discovered an important avenue to the Father. In the same way, in reading this book full of such accounts, it is possible for one to come to understand and even get to know Mary more, and subsequently Jesus, who shared the same loving compassion of hers that we do.

“I am sure Bridget did not write this as a reference book,” the Archbishop said. “But it contains so much of the essence of Mary’s work in the world, and in such easily accessible form, that it would be a very handy reference book for families wanting to talk about Mary, for RCIA teams wanting easy access to illustrations of what one might call Mary’s theology of love, and even for priests looking for examples of what having God in your life is really about.”

This story was found at:

http://www.therecord.com.au/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=263&Itemid=26