

BOOK REVIEWS BY MY FIVE COPY-EDITORS AND MY CONGREGATIONAL LEADER

REVIEW BY ELIZABETH CHARBONNEAU:

As you can imagine it has been a great privilege for me to be even a small part of the labour of love that brings these WORDS FOR LIFE into your life. Thank you Rosemary for this gift and the gift you are to all of us.

Sr. Rosemary's years of study, prayer and a faithful walking in the Médaillan spirit are reflected in this beautiful manuscript. She knows the heart of Fr. Médaille and has brought it to the living out of her own spiritual journey and to countless others of us whom she has mentored over the years. Now Fr. Médaille is available to everyone.

WORDS FOR LIFE has provided to me a re-introduction to the man Jean-Pierre Médaille. I felt I knew him already but Rosemary's deep affection for this dear Abba is contagious. My admiration and gratitude for the little way he modelled for us have been rekindled as he is revealed in his profound humility and uncompromising devotion to and love of God, evidenced on every page.

Forever the teacher, Sr. Rosemary once again excels. (We have come to expect no less.) There was a wealth of information to impart and it is so organized and balanced in its presentation. Sound theological teachings stand side by side with the practical "how-to" of navigating the spiritual journey. It is the work of recovery and radical self-emptying, given to us in the language and insights of the 21st century, but not surprisingly "there's a Maxim for that" every step of the way. Fr. Médaille's vision and wisdom are timeless.

Every page is a study; I could even say every paragraph. There is such richness here that no matter how often you revisit it you will see something new, or awaken to a deeper understanding. In reviewing the texts I have read the books twice and have been rewarded and pleasantly surprised to see the missed gems that floated to the surface the 2nd time through.

Of course reading the books is not a goal. Their power lies in savouring them, reflecting on the questions they pose and incorporating their wisdom into the circumstances of our everyday lives, most often the little, hidden but profoundly transformative opportunities to love Love and let Love love through us.

You are going from this place with a treasure. Savour it. My own self-awareness has been piqued by the discussion of the virtues. Fr. Médaille presents this “easy way” of choosing a virtue and practising it. Eventually it will do the transforming work of self-emptying until it has become such a part of you that you act graciously without even being aware of it.

REVIEW BY WENDY COTTER, CSJ

In working as a copy editor on Sister Rosemary’s volumes, I discovered a treasury of resources and sources, in a multifaceted work that opens out the life and spirituality of Father Médaille, as much to the newcomer as to those who have been guided for many years by his maxims and counsels. The incisive historical review of Father Médaille’s life opens the work, and brings to light the depth of his soul as expressed in his steady outreaching apostolic life, helping women religious respond to the needs of their society while developing and responding to the call to follow ever more deeply the call of Christ.

Having provided a complete collection of his maxims of perfection, Sister Rosemary draws on her own wisdom from years of prayerful reflection and study of Father Médaille’s spirituality to open out to the reader their significance for today. Discussions in each of the chapters, draw on a rich panel of modern writers, specialists in Médaille spirituality for a full and deep understanding of the way the maxims are just as vital in our own spiritual quest for God, today. Moreover, helpful reflection questions have been formulated by her at the conclusion of each chapter to invite the reader to make more personal the teachings found there.

An array of beautiful art, Sisters of St. Joseph creations, but also icons, and photography all contribute to express the message of each chapter in yet another type of invitation for the integration of message in thought and prayer. Sister Rosemary’s many compositions of prayerful meditation enrich this extraordinary presentation of Father Médaille’s spirituality for our contemporary journey in Christ.

REVIEW BY MONICA HARTNETT, SSJ

What a momentous occasion – the culmination of a life’s work of dedication, generosity and courage. It is a joy to celebrate with you - at a distance - on this great occasion! I can imagine the joy in your hearts as your books are launched. Give my love to my friends who will surely be at the Launch gathering.

It truly has been a mammoth work and I am certain once they get out there, people will appreciate their wisdom and guidance. Thank you for the honour of being part of your editing team. Having lived, loved and taught Médaillan Spirituality for several years now, I will be able to share these books as another treasured resource with Sisters and laity. There is such richness, depth and a timeless quality to the writings of Father Médaille, that they could, I believe, revitalize us now, in the 21st Century.

REVIEW BY MARGO RITCHIE, CSJ

Two weeks ago, in my inbox an email announcing a weekend retreat appeared right after a discussion with others about the climate crisis. It was called Grounding: Discovering Our Sacred Gifts in Climate Emergency. These are the workshops and writings which mark our times.

Rosemary O'Toole's four book series on the Spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph also have the theme of grounding. Although the spirituality she writes about rose up in the 17th century, Rosemary has known over many years of research and reflection that this spirituality carries a wisdom and sustenance that cuts across centuries, across world crises and diverse cultures. There is a deepening hunger in our day which usually surfaces in the throes of chaos and disruption. She explores the energy of Love as what can carry us personally and collectively in this 21st century. The groups with whom she and Evelyn work resonate with the desire for communion and community, with mysticism and depth in this fractured world. Reflection questions make the books very practical for individual use but perhaps more for communal use.

At the core of the spirituality of the six founding Sisters and Father Jean-Pierre Médaille is the original fire of the love of God, the desire to respond to this energy of love and a realism about divisions and inequities of the times in which they lived. She incorporates the insights of psychology to talk about the True Self as a continual releasing the grip of ego and a moving toward wholeness. Into the 400-year-old original writings, she lets the spirit of evolutionary consciousness shine new light.

Rosemary has invited artists to speak their language of beauty in the books. She has also collaborated with many people who share her passion. An enthusiastic cohort of Sisters from many countries has offered suggestions and been a steady editorial committee. As a Sister of St. Joseph myself, I want to express my

gratitude to Rosemary O'Toole for her persistence and vision over many years. She has brought forth a gift which will sustain seekers and contribute to the unfolding wisdom of these inspired writings of the 17th century.

REVIEW BY EVELYN MCGOVERN, CSJ

After sixty-plus years in community, and thirty-five of those years living with Rosemary, I can say that these new Médaille Spirituality books are the distilled essence of her life and work.

Over the past year I was so happy to read each of the four volumes of WORDS FOR LIFE. I found that not only was I reading it, but also I was having to stop so many times because the words were reflecting back something deep inside of me. At times, I felt I was making an at-home retreat. I came to understand that I had lived into the realization of this Maxim 10:6: Have only one desire throughout your life: to be and to become the person God wants you to be in nature, in grace, and in glory, for time and eternity. Such comfort, joy and peace.

While it was an honour to be part of the editing team, my deepest hope is that these books will become a trustworthy companion for all our readers who seek out "the more." May you experience Love's unfolding echo throughout the years of your life!

REVIEW BY MARGARET KELLER, CSJ

The process of editing has been a grace filled experience for me. Having the opportunity to have my spiritual DNA revitalized, challenged, and energized was a needed blessing. Living a simple, ordinary and hidden life without controlling power structures characterizes the csj charism. Revisiting this essence has reaffirmed my values, perspectives and voice. Our charism is needed in our world and to be a small part in this publication has been and is an honour. Thank you, Rosemary.