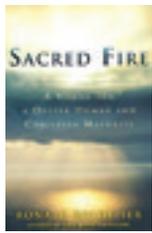


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SACRED FIRE

By Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I. (Image, 2014)



Ronald Rolheiser returns with the second volume of a promised trilogy. Beginning with *The Holy Longing: A Search for a Christian Spirituality* (Image), he emerged as one of the most respected American Catholic guides to adult Christian faith. Rolheiser sees *The Holy Longing* as Spirituality 101 to “help us get our lives together.” For a broad audience of spiritual seekers across the Christian spectrum, it did just that. He now offers *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity* as a graduate-level course in human and Christian discipleship. In essence, he suggests that the primary work of believers who have succeeded—more or less—in getting their lives in order is to learn how to “give their lives away.”

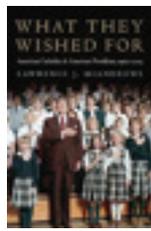
Among Rolheiser’s gifts to middle-stage Christians is his ability to illumine the gospels with new insights. Chapter by chapter, he invites those who think they have achieved mature faith to go deeper. Charting a new course through Jesus’ parables—especially those thought to have already been mined for every spiritual nugget—he floods familiar stories with complacency-shattering light. Under adult morality, he offers advanced insights into the old seven “deadly sins,” which he calls the seven “subtle sins” of mature Christians. Take gluttony, for example. Rolheiser quotes Thomas Merton, who refers to this fault as that of being “carried away by conflicting concerns” and “committing oneself to too many projects.” As an insight for Catholics confused about the value of praying for the dead, he proposes a new set of revised reasons in favor of this hallowed practice.

Rolheiser promises to complete the trilogy with a focus on the last great act of a Christian’s life: “making our dying our last great gift to our loved ones.” Christian readers “of a certain age” eagerly await its arrival and hope he will not tarry in delivering it. —Alfred J. Garrotto

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WHAT THEY WISHED FOR

By Lawrence J. McAndrews (University of Georgia, 2014)



The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 has long been described as the apogee of Catholic political life in the history of the United States. Largely eschewing his Irish Catholic identity, Kennedy convinced the electorate that he was an American who happened to be Catholic and not merely a pawn of the Roman pontiff.

Kennedy and his successors have had to deal, for better or worse, with a Catholic electorate increasingly assertive in its demands. Both clergy as well as lay Catholics have had a profound impact on presidential politics. In *What They Wished For: American Catholics and American Presidents (1960–2004)*, Lawrence J. McAndrews traces both the crucial impact of the Catholic hierarchy on presidential decision-making, and also the more subtle but still discernible influence of presidential politics on the development of the American church. Each chapter on an individual presidency is broken down into three major issues: war and peace, social justice, and life and death.

We meet within these pages an array of secular and religious figures. We see the American episcopate, laity, and occasionally even the pope fight battles across the American political stage—losing many, such as on abortion or a speedy end to the Vietnam War, but winning their fair share as well, as with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

In a time when many of the American hierarchy’s attempts to affect policy in this country seem at best feeble and at worst reprehensible, it becomes important for Catholics to remind themselves of their church’s profound impact on the development of American policies, and especially on the commander in chief himself. McAndrews’ book does just that. Its weight signals its rich scholarship. While his writing perhaps suffers from a facile use of liberal/conservative labels (including a use of the latter to describe this magazine), his treatment of his subject is both consistent and compassionate. —James P. Cahill

briefly noted

Strangers and Pilgrims Once More: Being Disciples of Jesus in a Post-Christendom World by Addison Hodges Hart (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014)



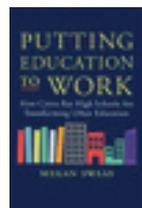
Hart questions contemporary Christians about the type of church we must become and how to salvage real values in today’s post-Christendom world.

Saints and Social Justice: A Guide to Changing the World by Brandon Vogt (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014)



According to Vogt, Catholic social teaching has been forgotten over the years. Using the lives of 14 saints as examples, he rediscovers what social justice means through those who lived it out every day.

Putting Education to Work: How Cristo Rey High Schools Are Transforming Urban Education by Megan Sweas (HarperOne, 2014)



The Cristo Rey Network offers underprivileged urban students an opportunity to succeed. Sweas shares stories of transformation and how others can benefit from this model of education.