

Blood from a Stone: A Memoir of How Wine Brought Me Back from the Dead

Adam McHugh

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Adam McHugh's *Blood from a Stone* is a memoir that brims with love for wine.

Heartfelt, candid, and unsentimental, McHugh's story is about how the challenges of ministry fueled his passion for wine—in a good way. It begins with his time as an overnight hospice chaplain (a profession, McHugh notes, the mere mention of which could kill any party conversation) and follows his path toward working in vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley outside of Los Angeles—a place that held McHugh's imagination and, in time, welcomed him home. The story covers his burnout with chaplaincy, his travels in France to learn about wine in the region where Vincent Van Gogh painted, and his path toward inner healing.

This path is traced at a steady pace, weaving in and out of time and place. The book is rich with reflective metaphors about the ripening and fermenting of fruit and the importance of soil for growth. The history of wine intertwines with McHugh's own history, while lighthearted conversations with friends and family show how he found laughter when he felt lost. Tidbits of historical conversations, including about how a suitor responded to Vincent Van Gogh's marriage proposal, are a light, textural element.

McHugh's story invites deep, personal connections through its universal themes of loss and restlessness. While his Christian ministry is a key element of the book, its work is more focused on daily life than it is on the intricacies of religion. It also shares an overview of the history of wine and how it's cultivated, conveying deep appreciation for this ancient art. As his story continues, McHugh's thirst for knowledge grows—as do his connections to others, and to wine itself.

Blood from a Stone is a compelling memoir about wine and a life of faith.

MELISSA WUSKE (November / December 2022)

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