



Hounded by God: A Gay Man's Journey to Self-Acceptance, Love, and Relationship

Joseph Gentilini

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These moving spiritual journal entries are recommended for those seeking to understand how God's deep, wide love embraces everyone.

Coming out as gay in the late 1960s was fraught with problems and even danger. In *Hounded by God*, Joseph Gentilini reveals the intimate and tumultuous story of his triumph over self-loathing, shame, and thoughts of suicide to truly authentic relationships with himself, his partner, his family, and his God.

As Gentilini awakened to his sexual identity, he found himself in conflict with the Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality, the expectations of his family, and the attitudes of American society towards same-sex love.

In journal entries spanning thirty-five years, Gentilini describes how, even as a child, he was aware of being different and how displeasing this was to his parents. Efforts to change—embarrassing attempts to play Little League baseball, praying longer and harder, dating girls, psychological counseling, and even painful and traumatic conversion therapy—did not work. Journaling was more than a way for Gentilini to work things out in his own mind, get in touch with his soul, and commune with God; for him, it became both a lifeline and a sacred act filled with grace.

Gentilini is brutally honest in describing his confusion, his anger, and the spiral of negative emotions that led him to consider suicide. Intense and moving, his journals reflect his agony as he asks, "How can I ever be holy by living a lie or by being in denial of my true self?" Over time, as he grows and matures, the author comes to see himself as beloved of God just as he is; his deep faith in God's loving nature helps him to stand firm in his belief that all love, including gay love, is from God and is deserving of honor and respect.

Gentilini's journal entries are not always presented chronologically, which makes following the trajectory of his life story a bit bumpy. The inclusion of footnotes helps to clarify events, issues, and terminology that might be confusing or unfamiliar. While some may be disturbed by Gentilini's recounting of his past episodes of sexual promiscuity due to loneliness, anger, or a need for human contact, his desire was to be open and honest in telling his story, and in this, he has succeeded admirably. His intimate sharing of his long-term committed relationship reveals how he and his partner came to know that real love does not express itself just in acts of passion, but in loving acts done in ordinary moments.

Hounded by God reveals Joseph Gentilini to be a contemplative, deeply spiritual man in love with God and committed to his Catholic faith, though for now, his relationship with God has become more of an authority in his life than his relationship with the Church. He continues to communicate with Catholic bishops, working in a prophetic role to model for the Church the holiness of a committed gay relationship. His book is recommended for gay Christians, and for priests, pastors, and parents of gay children who are seeking to learn and understand how God's deep and wide love embraces us all.

KRISTINE MORRIS (October 21, 2016)

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