



Intercession

Louis Romano

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Intense and smart story populated with memorable characters takes on issue of child abuse by the clergy.

In this taut cat-and-mouse adult thriller, a quartet of police officials in the New York City area rush to solve the brutal murder of an elderly priest and stop what may be a serial killer intent on righting past wrongs. Focusing on a topical issue pulled from the headlines, author Louis Romano deals unabashedly with child sex abuse and the religious establishment through the development of his characters.

The team is lead by Vic Gionnella, a brash, no-nonsense detective who pushes his personal issues—he was just served with divorce papers—to the background. Gionnella is intently focused on finding the killer, especially when his team realizes their prime suspect has purchased a dozen crucifixes, the weapon used on the initial victim.

Somewhat unusual for this genre, the killer is identified in the opening pages. Another interesting aspect is the alternating early chapters. One time line follows the police detectives methodically working their crime scene while the other begins more than fifty years in the past for a young boy's backstory; both threads eventually converge in the here and now.

The book's title comes from what readers and detectives learn about their main suspect from an FBI profiler: "He believes he is doing the Lord's work. Sort of interceding on God's behalf." Another agent adds, "His intercession, in his mind, is what his God wants him to do."

It's an intense and smart story populated with memorable characters, such as Detective Raquel Ruiz, a homegrown Puerto Rican girl from the Bronx who catches the ever-watchful eye of Gionnella; Father Vincent Ortiz, a loyal and conflicted colleague of the murdered priest; Gail Gain ("G-G"), a quirky FBI agent; Gjuliana Bashkimi, an Albanian immigrant carrying a decades-long torch for her high-school sweetheart; and John Deegan, a multitalented and wealthy Wall Street businessman whose net worth is nearly two billion dollars.

Romano was born and educated in the New York locales he portrays so well in the book. He's a successful businessman who began writing at the age of eighteen; he's also the author of the Gino Ranno crime-fiction series. A supporter of the Road to Recovery, "a nonprofit charity that assists survivors of clergy and child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church," he has indicated that his work there inspired him to write this book.

Readers don't have to be that familiar with the accoutrements of the Catholic Church in order to understand the plot's never-ending action. Numerous errors in punctuation and a few misspellings, however, do detract from the gritty story, which moves quickly with a sardonic and opinionated omniscient narrator.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (June 25, 2013)

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