

Life: Light and Dark Joy and Anguish

Mary Faith

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Life is a varied, personalized spiritual collection that bases its reflections and discussions on Catholic theology.

Mary Faith's religious collection *Life* derives broad biblical themes and meditations from personal devotions.

Attributed to divine inspiration, this is a short and diverse collection of personal works. Meditations on the role of Mary in Catholicism, and on the roles of the persons in the Holy Trinity, are included in this varied book, which also discusses biblical teachings on suffering and mercy and the events leading to Jesus's death. Poems expand the collection's purview further; one, "Love's Fire," concerns intimacy between two partners. Vague thoughts and reflections about eternity, light and darkness, and the characteristics of love further fill the book out.

More involving are the book's memoir elements, as with its anecdotes about Faith's religious background, and her experiences after becoming a Roman Catholic. Elsewhere, the straightforward use of symbols, as of diamonds being shaped and fireflies in a summer evening, help to make the collection's thoughts accessible; respectively, these are made to represent redemption and light in a dark world.

The book's everyday language works to its benefit in its prose entries, as where Faith discusses finding solace in God during hard times, and where the book interprets biblical passages. But this ordinary language is also used in the book's poems: "Predator," about a strained marriage, is compelling in its themes, but artless in its execution.

The book employs sharp, monochrome photographs to represent its biblical characters and theological themes. While they are engaging in illustrating events like the birth of Jesus, the crucifixion, and Jesus's ascension to heaven, many repeat without need near the book's end.

And the text hold its audience at a distance. While it includes prayers for forgiveness, they are context free; this sparse information extends to its observations, as with those about accommodating volunteer workers, that are not made to apply to outside audiences. The same is true of the book's biblical tie-ins: in exploring subjects like light and darkness, the book references multiple biblical verses, but without explaining how those verses apply. Further, some of the book's discussions, as with those about how the Pharisees attempted to protect themselves and the temple in Jerusalem, and those that discuss the miracles and teachings of Jesus, are shared sans scriptural backing, undermining their credibility.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (February 17, 2022)

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