

Our Father Prayer and Praxis: An Anthology: The Relationship Between the Lord's Prayer, Spirituality and Social Justice

J. Lambert St. Rose

AuthorHouse (Oct 13, 2016)

Softcover \$20.99 (316pp)

978-1-5246-4441-3

Our Father Prayer and Praxis is a beautiful look at a classic prayer that transcends the dividing lines of Christian traditions.

Our Father Prayer and Praxis by Catholic priest J. Lambert St. Rose is a collection of free-verse poetry that urges putting faith in action.

St. Rose proves adept at conveying the deep teachings of the Bible to everyday people in this volume of his poetry. It is inspired by and interprets the Lord's Prayer; poems are ordered by the part of the prayer that they pertain to, with titles that are short and clear, like "Abba's Children," "Creation's Song of Praise," and "Light and Darkness."

While most Christians may be familiar with the Lord's Prayer, the poems shed new light on it as a "a curriculum for apostolic mission" and "a concise and well defined divine mission statement for discipleship and Christianity."

Poems highlight an irrevocable link between prayer and action, with St. Rose's poems suggesting that Christians and the church fall short on the latter today. Guided by discipleship and conscientiousness, lines focus on the depravity of the world, the beauty of God, and the path to healing through prayer and just action—all with keen insight into the political, racial, economic, and personal complexities of the modern world.

The introduction's diction and syntax emphasize the gravity and thoughtfulness of the book's ideas but prove cumbersome. By contrast, the language of the poems is simple and visual. Archaic terms, like "thy," are familiar and used sparingly. God is referred to in various ways—as Abba, Papa, and Daddy—that emphasize God's warmth and closeness.

The book's tone is open to people across generational and cultural lines. Punctuation is direct and helpful. Poems contain spiritual encouragement to love God, show God's love to others, and more deeply understand how God has created people to care for each other. The tone is gentle and warm, yet unyielding, not hesitating to call out and condemn sin.

Bits of imagery and wording from the Bible, such as the image of God as a vine dresser or concepts like anointing and discipleship, make the poems familiar but also provide new insight into age-old ideas. The poems' messages are direct and easy to interpret.

Lines and stanzas are short, and while a variety of poetic elements are used, from metaphor to rhyme, poems favor standard devices like repetition and alliteration, keeping meanings clear and accessible. They serve to woo audiences to action. Notions are explored artfully and creatively, with sometimes surprising word choices and nicely juxtaposed ideas. Here, belief is about the heart, not just the head.

Throughout the book, photos of beautiful icons by St. Lucian sculptors Vincent Joseph and Jallim Eudovic add to the

inspirational beauty of the book. A brief glossary contains words from Greek mythology, Haitian Creole (St. Rose is from St. Lucia), and African religions, as well as other ideas that are helpful to the text but that are not central to the meaning of the book.

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MELISSA WUSKE (January 2, 2018)

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