

When Love Abides Broken: A Memoir of Family Tumult Amid Emotional Deprivation, Betrayal, and Divorce

Aidan Brezovar

ArchwayPublishing (Jun 15, 2022)

Softcover \$28.99 (434pp)

978-1-66571-964-3

When Love Abides Broken peels back the layers of a priest's private life to shows how even spiritual people struggle to make sense of life challenges.

Aidan Brezovar's reflective memoir *When Love Abides Broken* is about his challenge to live out his calling while struggling with family difficulties.

When the book begins, Brezovar is on his way to live with his mother and her significant other, Al, on their ranch, leaving behind the parish where he worked as a priest for twenty years. At the ranch, Brezovar wrestles to find his way, clashing with Al and wondering what he should do next. He finds work as a religious educator at a nearby parish, but it is difficult because of demanding, troublesome parishioners who seek to cow him into doing their bidding.

Early in the book, Brezovar's steady efforts at discernment, which are set against the remote Western landscape, are engaging, as is his frequent sparring with Al and the challenges that he faces while living with his aging parents and feuding siblings. The latter act as a counterpoint to the book's more spiritual work, foreshadowing the fact that all might not turn out quite as Brezovar hoped. Al's overbearing presence and personality are centered, somewhat obscuring Brezovar himself; meanwhile, Brezovar's mother is empathetic as she struggles to be happy despite her stifling, abusive home life. The family crisis becomes more focal as the book progresses and as Brezovar deals with the fallout that ensues when his family breaks apart.

The book's approachable prose and brief scenes establish it as an episodic memoir: it uses Brezovar's parish work as a source of respite from its tougher moments within his family life. However, when it shifts to focus on his work at the church, it includes bits of gossip about its members that are not of general relevance. And because it devotes so much attention to daily stressors and activities, the book's pace grinds to a halt.

The challenges of contemporary Catholic ministry are hinted at, but the book withholds many of its illuminating details until late in its work—including about Brezovar's mother's courtship with Al and about Brezovar's own mental health struggles. Still, there are some pauses in the book's chronology to inject context that was developed in hindsight, too. The final scene carries a hint of mystery but also suggests a faith perspective: God remains, and that is enough.

When Love Abides Broken is an emotive memoir about a priest's family struggles to come to grips with broken relationships.

JEREMIAH ROOD (August 19, 2022)

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