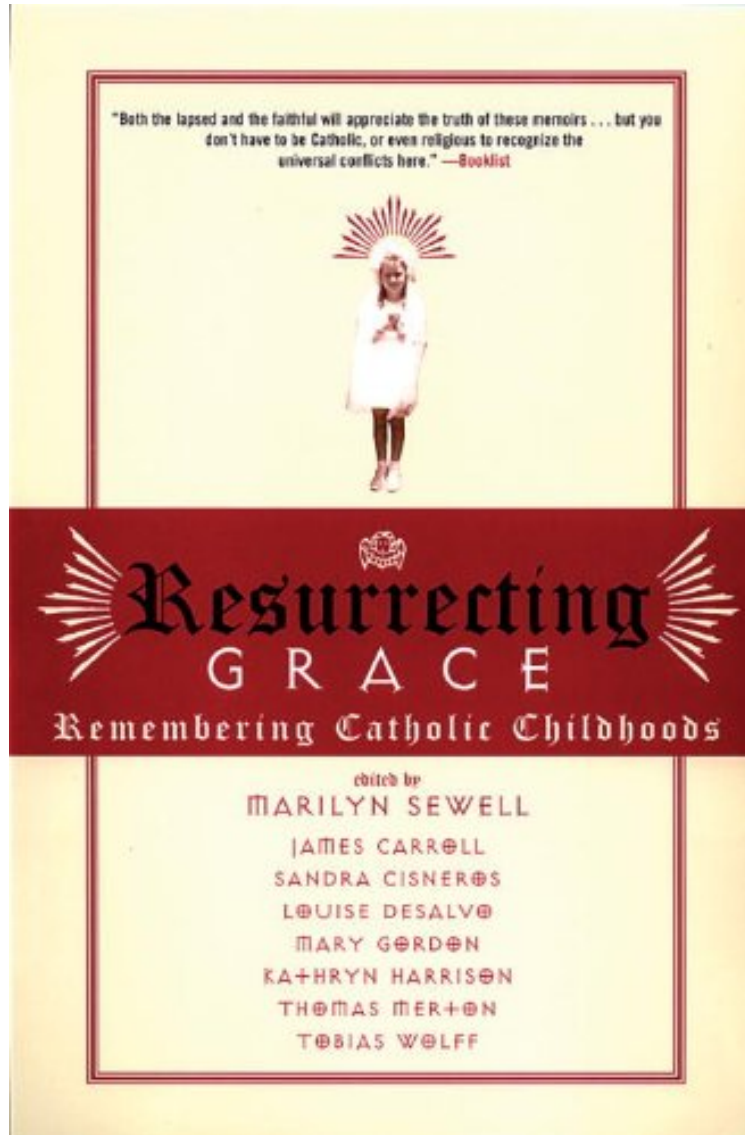


(Library ebook) Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods

## Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods

*From Brand: Beacon Press*

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**From Brand: Beacon Press : Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods:

6 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Overall disappointment By Elizabeth G Melillo Considering the calibre of the writers from whom Marilyn Sewell requested memories, the low quality of both the writing and "storytelling" in this book is abysmal. Most of the memories had little substance, and the tone of many essays was so

poor that I had the impression the authors had scribbled them on cocktail napkins in a rush. With few exceptions (Thomas Merton's section, for example), the recollections were boring and lacked any sort of bite. Neither humorous, nostalgic, nor thought-provoking, the tales would leave one constantly turning the pages, hoping some substance would follow. The quest for the Holy Grail would be less futile than that for any wit or charm in this book. The promise of the title undoubtedly would prompt people to order this book as a gift for a Catholic friend or a hope of memories for oneself. I strongly suggest that potential readers at least take a glimpse at a copy on a library shelf first.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. author/editor review By Marilyn Sewell "A collection for Catholics, former Catholics, and Catholics by association, "Resurrecting Grace" is redolent with the images, sounds, smells, and deep heart experiences that are so much a part of a Catholic upbringing . . . It is an encounter with this complex community of faith that sustains and exasperates those who have been touched by it." (from the jacket cover) These personal recollections are from some of our finest contemporary writers: Frank McCourt, Tobias Wolff, Anna Quindlen, Michael Patrick Macdonald, Brian Doyle, Sandra Cisneros, Rosemary Bray, and Patricia Hampl, among others. The collection contains pieces from writers of various races and ethnicities, and the reader is led to see the One True Church in all its colors and forms, all of its follies, and all of its profundities. The volume is rich with humor, but takes no cheap shots. These writers have reflected deeply upon their early religious experience: they have written to learn what they did not know, and they have grown deeper roots in the process.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. CATHOLIC CHILDHOODS REMEMBERED By James L. Park Marilyn Sewell, editor Resurrecting Grace: Remembering Catholic Childhoods (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001) 314 pages (ISBN: 0-8070-1240-8; hardcover) (Library of Congress call number: PS129.R47 2001) About 35 contributors tell their stories from Catholic childhoods. All of these deal with Catholicism as a religion in which they grew up rather than a freely-chosen system of religious beliefs. Most of the contributions were drawn from longer works by the authors. This could serve to introduce the reader to these other works. The book illustrates the strong hold religious rituals and identity have for this diverse collection of authors. More advanced and mature forms of religious commitment need to take into account how children experience religion, even if they later abandon their childhood religious beliefs. How should we understand the religious impulse? The purpose of this book is not to resurrect childhood beliefs but merely to remember how organized Catholicism affected the lives of these authors when they were children. James Leonard Park, existential philosopher and critic of religion.

Resurrecting Grace features such notable authors as Louise DeSalvo, Frank McCourt, Michael Patrick MacDonald, and Anna Quindlen offering personal recollections about growing up in the One True Church. From the humorous to the painful, the stories in this collection capture the essence of a Catholic upbringing. These authors take us back to their childhoods, reflecting on the gift of faith, the power of ritual, sin and salvation, and the concept of redeeming grace. Featuring a wide range of voices and experiences, this collection is for anyone who has been touched by this complex community of faith.

From Publishers Weekly When Sewell, a Unitarian minister and an ex-Catholic, put out a call for essays from writers who also had grown up Catholic, she expected to receive texts inundated with sarcastic humor and acrimony. She got some, to be sure, but when she found them wanting, she continued to search for works with greater texture. Her willingness to go deeper makes this collection more than another mundane Catholic lampoon. Instead, Sewell has thoughtfully included such treasures as excerpts from Patricia Hampl's *Virgin Time* and Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, both of which reflect the depth and richness of the ancient faith. Other contributors, such as Richard Meibers, convey a certain respect for Catholicism's beauty, even if they no longer consider themselves part of the church. Meibers, for example, writes engagingly in "Chanting Faint Hymns" of the inexplicable attraction he feels for a nun in his graduate hermeneutics seminar and ties it effectively to his memories of the nuns who cared for him in an orphan home. As with any recollections, the ones that Sewell has gathered are refracted through the lens of each writer's present set of beliefs. Thus, readers searching for accurate representations of Catholic life in the past would do well to look elsewhere. Sewell's own remembrance, for instance, contains an inexact teaching about the Catholic Eucharist. But it is her memory, and all she claims to have done in this book is to give voice to individual recollections. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Thirty-four authors reflect on their Catholic youths in this anthology of previously published essays edited by a Unitarian minister who also experienced some of the joys and sorrows of a Catholic childhood. Some of the writers are appreciative of their background, some not, but all are indelibly stamped by such mainstays of Catholicism as teacher-nuns, saints, memorized dogma, family attitudes, clergy, and devotional practices. The authors, who include Mary Gordon, Louise Erdrich, Frank McCourt, and Tobias Wolf, are mostly contemporary Americans and professionals in fields such as journalism, juvenile writing, POETRY, philosophy, and theology; 22 are women. Organized into three sections "The Gift of Faith," "Sin and Salvation," and "Redeeming Grace" the selections reflect ethnic and stylistic diversity and range from comedy to profound tragedy. Biographical information on each contributor and a larger typeface would have enhanced the book. Of more value to literary than to religious collections, this book is recommended as an

optional purchase for public libraries. Anna M. Donnelly, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist "The love-hate lurch of a Catholic upbringing" is what Patricia Hampl calls it, and many writers in this anthology remember that conflict between awesome ritual and terrifying punishment, between guilt and grace. Both the lapsed and the faithful will appreciate the truth of these memoirs, most of them excerpts from longer works, but you don't have to be Catholic, or even religious, to recognize the universal conflicts here. Weaving the immediacy of the childhood experience with the distance of the adult trying to make sense of it are works by Tobias Wolff, Esmeralda Santiago, Frank McCourt, Mary Gordon, and Anna Quindlen, among others. Often it is the child's discovery of one quiet adult that leads to a personal vision of truth and beauty. As editor Sewell says, rueful irony is just formula in this genre. The best writers get beyond that to find a faith of their own. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved