

BOOKS

"Gracias," by Father Henri J.M. Nouwen.
Harper and Row (San Francisco, 1983). 188 pp., \$12.95.

Reviewed by
Father Augustine Hennessy
NC News Service

Some degree of self-revelation is the first courtesy of friendship. Even strangers seated side-by-side in an airplane can relieve the first awkward silence only by evoking the simple self-revelation involved in disclosing their destinations. If they trust each other, genuine communication might add interest and zest to their journey.

But it requires unusual trust for a man to publish his spiritual journal. He exposes his moods, his indecisiveness, his hurts, and even his sins, while he is sharing his hopes, his insights and fondest memories. He exposes himself to the delight of being discovered as an authentic communicator and to the danger of being subjected to mockery, or at least, to gentle debunking.

In writing "Gracias," Father Henri Nouwen has manifested his sturdy belief in the Communion of the Saints. He obviously believes that all of us touch each other's lives as we pursue our destiny. And because he tries to be real in all he reports, he treats his readers as friends.

His book is titled as it is to express his indebtedness to the people of Bolivia and Peru with whom he spent

six months of his life. From Oct. 18, 1981, until March 29, 1982, he immersed himself in their lives while searching his own heart to discover whether or not he was being called to settle down with them permanently. What he learned from them most is to be grateful for life -- even when it is almost unbearably burdensome. He learned that "everything that is, is given by the God of love."

He learned new reasons for saying, "thanks." He expressed his indebtedness for this insight, "What I claim as a gift, my friends in Bolivia and Peru received as a gift; what is obvious to me was a joyful surprise to them; what I take for granted, they celebrate in thanksgiving; what for me goes by unnoticed, becomes for them a new occasion to say thanks."

Appropriately, Father Nouwen dedicates his book, "To all who bear witness to the presence of the suffering Christ in Latin America." Such a dedication is written without any intent to be either patronizing toward the people or envious of the missionaries there.

Father Nouwen learned how "to set the tone" for his own reflections from a creed written by a Third World bishop for those who come to Latin America as missionaries. This creed reaches its climax with this advice: "Be with us and be open to what we can give. Be with us as a companion who walks with us -- neither behind nor in front -- in our search for life and ultimately for God!"

Father Nouwen's pen-pictures of poverty, prison life, comradeship, needless cruelty and other realities of South American life stay vividly in one's consciousness. All is made a little clearer by one sentence, "Liberation theologians do not think themselves into a new way of living, but live themselves into a new way of thinking."

(Passionist Father Augustine P. Hennessy, theologian and editor, preaches parish renewals and conducts retreats for diocesan priests and men and women religious.)

"Paradise," by Dikkon Eberhart. Stemmer House (Owings Mills, Md., 1983). 295 pp.; \$14.50.

Reviewed by
Father Charles Dollen
NC News Service

Who was the first white man to come to North America? We will probably never know, but legend and tradition say that St. Brendan was the very first, even before Leif Ericson.

Dikkon Eberhart takes up the ancient tale of St. Brendan, the Navigator, and weaves his novel around the old Latin text. He makes Abbot Brendan a man of real flesh and blood who sets out to find what is beyond Thule (part of Greenland).

Brendan leads a motley crew aboard his little leather ship. The group includes Finbar, a black pagan educated in Greece; Brendan's uncle, Barinthus; and two young monks, Joseph and Atla. During the first half of the book, including the trip to Thule, the Abbess Ide, a most practical woman who is a credit to her order, also is present.

Brendan is convinced that "Ultima Thule" is paradise, where God rules supreme and evil is totally conquered. What he actually finds is probably our state of Maine. It takes him some time to decide that the American natives are men and not angels.

The most unconvincing part of this fine novel is the dialogue between the voyagers and the Indians. They go from being unable to comprehend each other to serious talks on philosophy and theology in a matter of pages. It just doesn't ring true.

Eberhart provides drama, character development and a fairly warm story in this, his second novel. There is no doubt that he has the potential of becoming a major story teller in our time.

(Father Dollen is the book review editor of The Priest magazine.)

Sarah Child



All in the Family

Discovering The Glory Of Pesto

I suppose that with a garden full of sweet basil, it is inevitable that Supercook, also known as Head of the House, would decide to attempt pesto sauce.

We had first enjoyed this pasta dressing, concocted from fresh basil, olive oil garlic and Parmesan cheese in a miniature ristorante in Portofino, Italy. Modern, charming and shining clean, it was run by the owner and his 13-year-old son.

Tired and overhungry after trying to negotiate the mind-bending traffic on Palm Sunday in this postage stamp hamlet on the Italian Riviera, I was in one of my moods.

Urging the rest of the family to go out to dinner without me, I planned on eating bread and cheese in our room in a tiny hotel, aptly named the Piccolo, which clung to the side of the mountain facing one of the most beautiful views in the world.

Instead I was commanded to go forward and see what the tiny fishing port (pop. 954) could dish up on short notice.

The kids, if I remember correctly, settled for their usual spaghetti with a fresh, light tomato sauce.

I followed my husband's suit and ordered fettuccine with pesto sauce. It was dark green, thick and anti-Italian looking -- or so I thought, having eaten my way from Como through

Milan to the coast on pasta laced with either tomato or cream-based sauces.

One bite and I was a believer. Make that two bites. Pesto is not for the unsophisticated palate and the two younger kids chose not to sample their father's cooking when he made it.

Pesto sauce can be made with a few variations in the preparation. Here's how he made it:

- Combine four cups of fresh basil leaves with ¼ cup of olive oil, two cloves of minced garlic, and 1 cup of Parmesan cheese.

- Place in blender and chop until smooth, but do not puree.

It makes about two cups, enough to serve four to six people depending on the size of the portions.

Pesto can be refrigerated up to a week, and freezes well. Warm to desired temperature and pour over freshly cooked spaghetti or fettuccine. Top with pine nuts which can be purchased in an Italian import store, and more cheese if you like.

Some recipes call for adding a few tablespoons of butter to the pasta before adding sauce. We did not, but you can experiment.

One more note: A few tablespoons of reserved pesto spooned on top of an omelet a minute or so before it is ready to be folded over transforms it to something special. Another hint is to spread a little on tomato slices, top with Parmesan cheese and broil until the topping is browned.

Buon appetito!

Rare Memorial

St. Petersburg, Fla. (NC) — Bishop Thomas Larkin has announced the establishment of a \$10,000 memorial to honor Harold A. Hagen, administrator of a diocesan nursing home who

died July 22. Hagen was a Seventh Day Adventist. The bishop wrote his family, "we shared common beliefs on following the teaching of Jesus Christ in caring for our fellow human beings."

MOVIES

"The Golden Seal" (Samuel Goldwyn)

Eric (Torquil Campbell), a lonely boy living on an island in the Aleutians, gets cut off from his home in a storm and finds himself sharing his shelter with a legendary golden seal who promptly becomes a mother. All three become good friends, but adults, even Eric's father (Steve Railsback), have a different outlook. For the rest of the film, Eric has his hands full defending mother and child seal from not one but three two-footed predators: his father, a cunning drifter (Michael Beck), and a young Aleut (Richard Narita) who considers the seals the rightful property of his people. The picture's strongest asset are its two seals. The human actors fare less well. The film is for the most part static and talky with little dramatic impact. Furthermore, though it seems designed to appeal to children, it will give some parents cause for concern in that there is a lot of profanity and a few scatological epithets, including a couple from the mouth of our young hero. There's also quite a bit of violence. The realism might have been all right had the picture been stronger overall, but as

is, "Seal" falls between two stools. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-II, adolescents and adults, because of the language and the violence. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG, parental guidance suggested.

"The Man Who Wasn't There" (Paramount)

3-D has come a long way since it was first introduced in the '50s; it seems scriptwriting has not made similar advances. Steve Guttenberg (last seen in "Diner") stumbles across a liquid that makes the drinker invisible. He is hotly pursued by American and foreign secret agents, invisibly explores a women's locker room, and falls in love with his fiancée's sister. There is no reason for the 3-D process in this film, and little plot, humor or excitement. In 2-D, this would be a dull and unfortunate movie; in 3-D, a bad movie simply gains a new dimension. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it O, morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R, restricted.

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