

Book details struggles to escape prostitution

I Hear a Seed Growing, by Edwina Gateley; Source Books (Trabuco Canyon, Calif., 1990); 292 pages; \$12.50.

By Sister Margaret Brennan, SSJ
Guest contributor

You can't, of course, hear a seed growing. While you do know its there, you wait for rain, sun and soil to nurture it, change its form and make it flower. If you think you hear it growing, it is only with some inner knowledge and secret sense. Some would call this faith.

Edwina Gateley's *I Hear a Seed Growing* is a story of that sort of hearing. Subtitled "God of the Forest, God of the Streets," this remarkable book chronicles four years in the lives of two very different women: Edwina Gateley, author, lecturer and founder of the Volunteer Missionary Movement, and Dolores, a 27-year-old

woman she meets in Chicago's red-light district.

This story is told entirely through entries from their personal journals. The result is a striking narrative with a dual point of view.

Gateley's journal begins in a forest hermitage in Yorkville, Ill., where she has gone to prepare for a new ministry she wants to begin among Chicago's prostitutes. We follow her through the stages of that ministry: her somewhat naive introduction to street life; the sad, wonderful characters she meets and call friends; the painful sharing of their stories; the establishment of Genesis House as a haven for women from the street's brutality; and especially her bittersweet relationship with Dolores, whose own journal intertwines with hers through this book's fine editing.

Dolores's story begins at Genesis

House, where she has decided to try to join the new community. At Gateley's suggestion, she starts to write down her feelings, activities and prayers.

We are fortunate that these pages have survived. In them we meet a lovely, tortured child/woman whose faith and longing come through in simple, touching words. Long abused, addicted and afraid, Dolores leaves and returns time and again, unable to accept fully the only real friends she knows.

Gateley's vignettes of street life are stark and accurate: the anxiety of the homeless when the weather turns cold; the blank eyes of the children born addicted to drugs; the violent "bag lady" who is transformed as she plays Beethoven on a Salvation Army piano.

In Dolores Gateley sees a beauty and strength that Dolores cannot see, and she is tempted to "rescue" her. She

discovers that when she lets herself be drawn into Dolores's addictions, she loses her own anchor, and learns painfully that all she can do is to let the seed grow in silence as Dolores and the other women try to find their own paths.

This book could well be used as a resource in our Synod discussions on social responsibilities because it goes beyond the statistics and principles to the real stories.



When Gateley first meets street life head-on, she writes: "Sometimes I wish God had not led me here. I would be more comfortable not knowing, not seeing ... I hope I never get used to this poverty and misery. I hope it always bothers and disturbs me ... We have to do better than this. We can do better than this."

Indeed.

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