

Catholic authors strike again with new book

Witty reflections poke fun at faith

Still Catholic After All These Years, by Mary Jane Frances Cavolina Meara, Jeffrey Allen Joseph Stone, Maureen Anne Teresa Kelly, and Richard Glen Michael Davis; Main Street (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, and Auckland, 1993); 111 pages; \$7.95.

By E. Leo McMannus
Guest contributor

Some of the classical Romans, we are told, had as many as four names.

People today with four names are usually distinguished. Sometimes their writings or sayings, for reasons not altogether clear to researchers, are really funny.

For example, last year at this time, a paperback concerning the mangled prose of George Herbert Walker Bush was a scream. A similar paperback about J. Danforth Quayle, though funny enough, did not split your side. After all, when you think about it, Dan Quayle has but three names.

This paperback, with its zany cover, is a delightful potpourri about and for Catholics of all persuasions and nuances (authentic, practicing, dissenting, recovering, reluctant, cultural, mar-



ginal, and cafeteria), written by four Catholics, each of whom has at least four names. It's a real blockbuster.

Within its five short chapters, beginning with "Am I Still A Catholic?" unto its fifth, "Everything's Up To Date In Vatican City," and its unexpectedly ruminative and concluding "God Redux," it has sage and witty observations (10 miles from the front, where peace is seen as a condition that follows victory, Medjugorje is "Not A Place To Visit"), poignant memories (like those of the tolerated mixed marriages performed in gloomy rectory parlors), and sassy prognostications (such as Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago as the first American pope, and women as ordained priests). All are delivered with just a tad of calculated

irreverence.

The authors, who have already penned *Growing Up Catholic* and *More Growing Up Catholic*, acknowledge by name the help of 100 ordinary and not so ordinary people (most of whom have only two names). Included in this generous list are three non-Catholics (for realism), three Mercy sisters (for photographs), a simple nun, a monsignor (with three names), remnant of a once honorable but now vanishing species, a Franciscan priest, a physician, and oodles and oodles of relatives "who helped us grow up Catholic, become more Catholic, and stay Catholic."

The first of the four distinguished yet populist authors, the one freighted with the most names, is Mary Jane Frances Cavolina Meara, an authentic New Yorker and a model Catholic student, who "once received a prayer book for never turning her head during Mass."

Next is Jeffrey Allen Joseph Stone, a native of Providence, R.I., who stands out among the group because he went to public school. When he attended CCD classes at a Catholic school on Saturdays, he was accused, "along with his fellow CCDers, of messing up the parochial kids' desks." That was the way he experienced discrimination in his early years.

The third is Maureen Anne Teresa

Kelly, a Denver native. "In parochial school she won a glow-in-the-dark plastic Madonna for selling Holy Childhood Christmas Seals and was a member of the Junior Altar Rosary Society, an organization of young Catholic girls dedicated to straightening church pews and dusting kneelers."

The final author, Richard Glen Michael Davis, not otherwise remarkable for awards in Catholic schools, received his college education at the University of Illinois.

With their rich and varied Catholic backgrounds, and their wide network of relatives and friends (including folks at Barber's Bookstore, Bill's Unocal 76, Leo's Lunch Room and Midwest Roofing Specialists), they are eminently untimidated by theological subtleties or church dignitaries.

However, as affable observers of the passing scene, they are still part of that valued faithful that Newman once spoke about consulting. That, you can be sure, they would like.

This bit of audacious and outrageous Catholic humor, a delightful diversion from the customary heavy fare of the religious press, should please most Catholics — except perhaps your Aunt Nell, grim and prim, in Peoria.

McMannus, a professor emeritus of English, lives in Venice, Fla.

Beverly Hillbillies clunky, funny

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — 20th Century Fox hopes to strike black gold — Texas tea — with its movie version of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the 1962-71 TV series still seen in syndication.

Director Penelope Spheeris simply re-creates the fish-out-of-water situation of the hillbilly Clampetts transplanted to a mansion in Beverly Hills after accidentally finding oil on their Ozarks property.

The situation that passes for a plot is that widowed Jed (Jim Varney) wants a new wife, so nephew Jethro (Diedrich Bader) advertises on TV and freeway billboards with predictable results. Scheming golddigger Laura (Lea Thompson) shows up on the pretext of teaching Jed's tomboy daughter Elly May (Erika Eleniak) some refinement. Granny (Cloris Leachman in a dead-on reprise of Irene Ryan's original) is suspicious, but fortunately their financial adviser, Jane Hathaway (Lily Tomlin), saves the day — and Granny — just as Pa is getting hitched.

It's the same old corn pone silliness with a new cast. The only difference is the more risqué remarks that were a no-no on TV but are given free rein here. That includes double entendres and crude gestures made by the un-



Twentieth Century Fox
Cloris Leachman stars as Granny in *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

suspecting Clampetts, in scenes that are truly overdone and heavy-handed.

On the other hand, there are also elements of good-natured, down-home humor that fans of the sitcom will enjoy. Tomlin, and Dabney Coleman as bank president Milburn Drysdale, could do these kinds of roles blindfolded and there are assorted ditzzy cameos by Zsa Zsa Gabor, Dolly Parton and the original Jed Clampett, Buddy Ebsen.

It all adds up to a clunky reread of the series with good sight gags and campy moments that are hardly memorable.

Due to some blatant sexual innuendo, coarse gestures and slapstick violence, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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