



shows how they were able to emerge from the darkness.

Gleaning three signs of a dark night from the writings of John of the Cross, Schrock describes “dryness in spiritual life, difficulty or inability to pray, and growing desire to be alone in loving awareness of God” (17). He illustrates what it means to feel abandoned and to be weaned of attachments, even to things that have been spiritually important in the past. Stories of contemporary people show their struggle through the suffering, or “cruciformity” (37), to a deeper love for God.

Because the dark night and depression have similarities, the book contains a chart highlighting the differences. Schrock lists some things that probably would not help during a time of darkness such as trying to “snap out of it” (101–102) or “trying harder” (98–99) to pray better or more often. Suggestions about what usually does help include silence, solitude, and praying in a contemplative style, such as with centering prayer, *lectio divina*, Taize prayer, or walking a labyrinth. Signs of emergence include more receptivity to God, deeper friendship with God, and a willingness to serve others in Christ’s name.

Schrock suggests that someone in a time of dark night connect with a spiritual director who can recognize what is happening and journey with the individual during this time. *The Dark Night: A Gift of God* offers the spiritual director valuable information about presence and guidance for a spiritual directee. The insights, readability, real-life stories, and assurance that God is there in the midst of perceived absence could make *The Dark Night: A Gift of God* priceless for a spiritual directee going through the process of dark night. ❏

Bobbie Bonk is a pastoral associate at a Roman Catholic church in Fort Collins, Colorado, USA. She facilitates retreats, offers spiritual direction, and volunteers with inmates at the Larimer County Detention Center. By participating in workshops for adult survivors of childhood abuse led by Mary’s Hope, she enhanced her spiritual direction training from The Center for Spirituality at Work in Denver, Colorado.

Touching the Reign of God: Bringing Theological Reflection to Daily Life

by Mary Sharon Moore

Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009

94 pages, CAD\$14.53, USD\$13.00

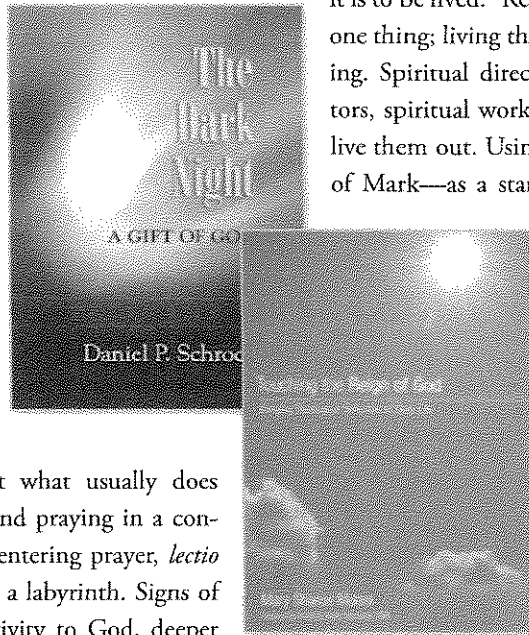
Reviewed by Monique Keffer

Thomas Merton writes, “The spiritual life is first of all a life. It is not merely something to be known and studied, it is to be lived.” Reading and studying spiritual texts is one thing; living that work is another whole undertaking. Spiritual directees come to their spiritual directors, spiritual works in hand, hungry to see a way to live them out. Using Christian Scripture—the Gospel of Mark—as a starting point, Mary Sharon Moore’s *Touching the Reign of God: Bringing Theological Reflection to Daily Life* poignantly models what it means to read a spiritual text, pray with it, and then live out the text daily.

As a spiritual companion and director of Awakening Vocations, a vocation discernment organization, Moore is dedicated to helping people find their calling. Her commitment to listening for the Spirit

while relying on God’s grace is evident from the beginning of the book to the last hopeful paragraphs. The introduction proclaims the world can be transformed by “the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, the reign of God everywhere” (xiv). Throughout the book she celebrates God’s work in her life. One passionate passage reads, “I breathe out *Yes*, and breathe in the sure knowledge of God’s promise of fulfillment in my life... The faintest glimmer of light begins to play on the surface of the river below. Having breathed forth my *Yes*, my task now is to notice things as they unfold in the circumstances of this day” (55). Finally, Moore’s hope echoes forth with the promise of complete peace in all of humanity if we will only “submit” to God’s “deep work of peace” (91).

This book is for all Christians, regardless of whether they believe themselves capable of theological reflection, which may be perceived, in Moore’s own words, as an “esoteric process available to the specially trained few” (xiii).





Moore's book is an approachable look into a real person's struggle to live out her holy text. She is unafraid of honesty. Her best chapters weave heart-touching stories from her life with scriptural meditations. Each chapter ends with thought-provoking questions for prayer, journaling, small-group discussion, or perhaps a spiritual direction session. These questions aid in the integration of life and scripture.

This book's gift to spiritual direction is its vulnerability while illustrating the dance of intimacy with God as one strives to incorporate the truth of scripture into daily life. Spiritual directors can point to this text and say, "This is what the growth of faith looks like for a human being; it is imperfect, but graced in marvelous ways." ■

Monique Keffer, MA, is a spiritual director trained at Sacred Ground in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA. She can be reached by e-mail at monique@moniquekeffer.com.

**Compass Points:
Meeting God Every Day at Every Turn**

by Margaret Silf

Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2009

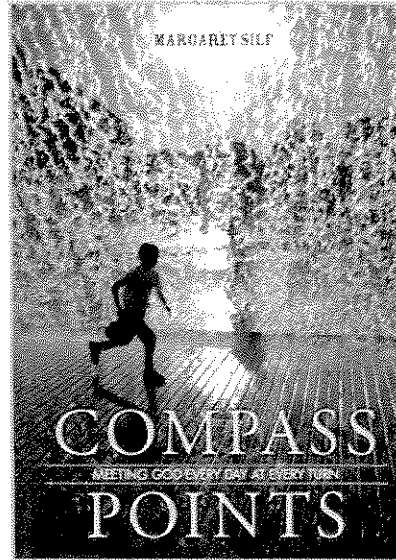
235 pages, GBP£10.50, USD\$13.95

Reviewed by Tara M. Owens

The room is small, cramped, and unpleasant. I rarely expect women's lavatories in public places to be havens of rest, but this one is particularly rank with fumes and apathy. There are two stalls and at least eight women pushing into the waiting space. We bump against each other and, I must admit, my feelings toward my fellow females are less than loving. And then God shows up. A harried mother shoves her way into the room, jumping the line, with a small boy. Despite the fact that he clearly needs to be changed, he is singing softly, with wide, gentle eyes. He brings wonder and joy into the last place I thought to look for it. My irritation evaporates as I marvel at his clear, vibrant voice. He calls me to see the transcendent in this common moment.

Thus, the first line of Margaret Silf's new book,

Compass Points: Meeting God Every Day at Every Turn, springs to mind and heart: "God has escaped from the sanctuary" (xv). Indeed, without Silf's gentle prompt-



ing, my heart would not have been awake to this moment with the young singer. I would have missed God's call to something more and been stuck in fruitless cycles of frustration and self-centeredness. Without Silf's masterful work, I would have missed God's daring—and dare I say persistent—escape from the sanctuaries into which I confine God: my prayer times, my Sunday mornings, my spiritual direction ministry and service, my moments of meditation.

Compass Points, structured as its title implies by the points of the compass, takes us on a journey from our point of origin through a bold

awakening in the light, toward the onset of a dark night, on to the hints of a new dawn, and finally we find ourselves where we began, at our roots but in a different place altogether. Silf draws on her experiences and the stories of others to guide us into a place of contemplation and awareness. Even though there are more than 130 of these stories, each one deserves to be lingered over and cherished, just like my unexpected experience of God.

With humble candor and enough lightness of spirit to take the darkness seriously, Silf makes us aware of the questions that beckon us behind each event while challenging us to wonder what threads connect us to one another and ask ourselves the daunting question "Who am I?" Silf deftly uncovers the contemplative who walks quietly in the woods at dusk in early fall. She does not shrink away from pain and seemingly unanswerable tragedy. In her stories, those of us who live in the darkness of pain, betrayal, or grief also find companionship. There is a point on the compass for pain, and a place for tears. There is also movement toward hope, and a soft dwelling place for the heart that needs to rest before moving on to the more that is to come.

Silf reminds us that "an empty cave warns us not to search for our heart's living dreams in yesterday's graves" (213). With the aid of Silf's compass, everyone in search