



Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Writings

Flannery O'Connor , Richard Giannone (Introduction) , Robert Ellsberg (Editor)

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Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) is widely regarded as one of the great American writers of the twentieth century. Only in 1979, however, with the publication of her collected letters, could the public fully see the depth of her personal faith and her wisdom as a spiritual guide. Drawing from all her work this anthology highlights as never before O'Connor's distinctive voice as a spiritual writer, covering such topics as Christian Realism, the Church, the relation between faith and art, sin and grace, and the role of suffering in the life of a Christian.

Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Writings Details

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From Reader Review Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Writings for online ebook

Alice says

So many authors I've read have quoted O'Connor that when this book appeared on the end display in my library, I snatched it. I've been more curious about Flannery O'Connor herself than I have been about her fiction which I have yet to read. (gasp) I'm also a bit of a geek for writer's diaries, memoirs, letters--I read most of Anne Morrow Lindbergh's diaries when I was raising my own children.

Suffice it to say, I was not disappointed--keen wit, pragmatic wisdom, and solid Catholic faith were bracing, snort funny, and deeply meaningful. I'm so glad I read it. A treasure.

Now, to add her fiction, once again to my lists.

Chris Plemmons says

Wonderfully condensed read that captures the spirit behind O'Connor's life. Her continual rumination upon Grace and and it's affects upon humans will be stimulating to any reader wanting to consider the deep love that prompts God to pursue us in such a manner. The only discouraging thing is at least twice throughout the book in her correspondence she disparages the full of work of the cross, and makes the entrance into eternity dependent upon her work as well. For protestants, this is a wonderfully provocative work to stimulate our thoughts upon "by Grace alone" and for Catholics I pray they would follow her conception of grace to its most logical end.

Leighann says

This edition is truly a gift to O'Connor lovers. I think Ellsberg has chosen insightful writings that give readers a glimpse of who O'Connor was, what she wanted us to know about her fiction, her struggle being categorized as a "catholic" and "spiritual" writer, her impending illness, and of course her humor. And he's managed to do so in a small, portable volume. In my copy, I've underlined more places than not...it's a book I will read again and again.

Makenzie says

This book smacked me upside the head, so to speak. I had not read any of Flannery O'Connor's work, so I was unfamiliar with the themes but knew she was a fellow southerner and a devout Catholic. Her letters show so much wisdom, tempered with a good helping of sass. Her defenses of the faith are both raw and intellectual. This collection also includes excerpts from some of her novels and short stories, so if you are hoping to read those as well there are significant spoilers here. Her writing gave me a lot to think about and I can't wait to read more of her work.

Caroline says

I'm not sure what made me want to read this, considering I've actually never read anything by Flannery O'Connor. There were a few good lines in it, but overall it wasn't for me. The first 50 pages was a biography on O'Connor, and the majority of her letters (minus the excerpts from her novels), felt like constant defense of Catholicism and the Church, while pointing out what she so disagreed about with Protestantism. It was a lot of commentary on "the Catholic Novelist," which I just didn't know to expect so was pretty bored by.

Vince says

I was having a difficult time reading O'Connor's short stories. I didn't understand her points. I had always been aware of people loving her Catholic understanding. Now I understand her better. Wonderful little book to see inside the mind of an important American author.

Willie Krischke says

Ever since I named my daughter after Flannery O'Connor, friends and family have asked me why, and what of hers they should read. And I never know what to say. The odd, gothic stories? Well, I love them, but they horrified my poor mother. The letters? I loved them even more than the stories...but who reads letters (well, me, for one, but not many.) The novels? Yikes.

This book absolutely fills that need...it gathers, from the stories, the novels, the letters, the essays, bits and pieces of Ms. O'Connor that make her one of my favorite and most cherished authors. Here you can get a real sense of her faith, her perspective, her intelligence, and her personality.

Flannery O'Connor has influenced my own walk with God, and understanding of the world, especially the literary world, more than anyone except perhaps C.S. Lewis. Everything in this book can be found elsewhere, but it makes a great Flannery O'Connor primer for those more interested in her philosophy and religious views than in her art.

N.T. McQueen says

We knew O'Connor was a gifted, profound storyteller but her writings and assertions as an apologist are equally impressive. Taken from letters, essays, and her own fiction, the sampling of spiritual writings reveal an erudite woman who discovered the link between faith and fiction. Even among her struggles with lupus, her positive and unwavering faith to God and the church is inspiring.

Sara says

This is a short but wonderful collection for anyone who wants to become more familiar with O'Connor's understanding of life and spirituality. 25% of the book is the Introduction by Richard Giannone, which is actually pretty valuable for making sense of the rest of the book. The core is then organized into five sections, each a compilation of excerpts from letters, stories and novels:

1. Christian Realism (natural first, then supernatural; see the unseen in the seen)
2. Mother and Teacher (relationship to the Church)
3. Revelation (diversity among people, particularly Christians)
4. A Reason to Write (it's a gift, she's good at it)
5. The Province of Joy (largely about her decline in health and God's will, "passive diminishment")

I think it would be difficult to make sense of some of the excerpts if you haven't first become familiar with O'Connor's stories, but the letter excerpts are self-explanatory.

Briannaheldt says

This book was amazing! I LOVED reading Flannery's thoughts on God and religion. I highly recommend this!

Mitch says

This book was incredibly helpful for my understanding of Flannery, and my second time through it confirmed it as one of my favorite books. Before this book I considered her to be one of the funniest authors out there; now she is one of my favorites. Her characters are hilarious and familiar and have me laughing out loud frequently. Now which of her collections is up next?

Shelly Olson says

I read this with my church book club and it probably was a mistake reading it without having read any of Flannery's other writing. It seemed really disjointed.

Moira says

She's a firebrand of an old fashioned catholic. Yuo-chen hates this book because Flannery O'Connor looks like an old librarian, but for me the only negative is that I don't like stories with no plot. This book is filled

with excerpts from her letters, so you never build up to anything. I like a lot of what she says, I think some of it doesn't stand up to time. She makes some good points about "the sea of faith"... where ignorant armies clash by night.

Doug says

This is primarily a collection of letters O'Connor wrote to various people on the subject of her faith. O'Connor is, of course, an amazing writer, and even her personal letters reflect this. She writes boldly, unafraid of the jolt and even the possible misunderstandings of what she writes, leaving the reader to catch his breath and look again to think about what she is really saying. What she says about her stories reveals that she is less a Southern writer and more a Catholic writer than most acknowledge. She is the queen of Southern gothic, but she employs the genre not because of a literary fascination with the macabre. She knew that in an unbelieving world, people must see the grotesque to understand the fall of man and the need for redemption. The book includes her last short story, in which a priggish woman's accounting of the various types around her--black, white trash, etc.--is transformed into a vision of all the types marching upward to heaven, the human stereotypes transforming into something more akin to the choirs of angels, and transforming O'Connor into a sort of Pseudo-Dionysius writing of the modern human race. The editor tries his best to recast her as an up-to-date precursor to the Vatican II era, but by his own acknowledgement, she had almost nothing to say of the council that was going on during her last years, and there's nothing in her letters to suggest she would approve of the deconstruction of the liturgy or the substitution of relativism for legitimate ecumenism that were the cornerstones of the post-council era.

Greta Valentine says

I wish I had made a concerted effort to read Flannery O'Connor when an acquaintance recommended her to me 10 years ago. However, this book met me at the perfect time in my life, and offered frank insight on matters of faith, grace, redemption, and life as a writer. If I could make people think about half as much as she does with her unapologetic but humorous descriptions and obvious understanding of how faith operates, I would consider my vocation fulfilling. I will be working through the rest of her writings now, and consider this an exceptional entry point for me - almost a mentor-in-writing.
