

On Line On Point

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

marymotherofjesus.org

THE BOOK—Danté Stewart, a minister and writer, honors the central place the Bible held in his family: There's an old King James Version Bible sitting on my bookshelf. It is black, rugged; the gold lining on the pages shines as light hits it. The jacket is missing, and the threads have loosened from one another over the years. It has been tried. It has traveled across the South, across time. Now it sits on a shelf where it keeps the company of books written by Black folk. Black folk who have read a similar Bible, who have wrestled with it, been confused by it. Black folk who have held it as tight as I do today. When I open up this old Bible . . . I am suddenly surrounded by preachers and mothers and friends and saints and sinners who tried to love and live well—while failing, learning, and trying again.

When I read these ancient scriptures, I hear the way they flowed from my momma's lips...This was her language. It was the language of my grandmother, the language of her mother...After many years of worshipping and working in white

church spaces, Stewart came to a crossroads in his faith:

As I live and move and have my being in this country, I wonder to myself: How do I be Black and Christian and American? So I return to this old King James Bible, and our Black prayers, and Black sermons...

I have learned that many of us have not given up on faith, just the way our faith has been used to oppress others. We have not given up on the Bible, just the way it has been used to marginalize others. We have not given up on Jesus

...we're not becoming less spiritual or religious. It's just that we have learned to put up with less, much less. Today many people talk a lot about people leaving churches, giving up on Christianity, and rejecting Jesus. In reality, they have

given up on the white supremacist brand of Christianity that cares more about power than Jesus, that does not care enough to take either our bodies or our futures seriously. Like James Baldwin, we are holding on to Jesus while also living with our fear, trauma, doubts, and hope.



Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice, peace and care for creation. Come join us.

Send articles/info by Wed to be published on weekend: rjbannerusa@gmail.com

Our story and the story of Jesus are bound together in faith, hope, love, and community. . . .

Faith—honest, deep, vulnerable faith, as Baldwin writes—is about growing up, becoming more loving, more honest, and more vulnerable. It is facing ourselves and what we desire. It is finding a way to begin again each day. It is not that we have the right answer, or all the right solutions. It is that we have found deep meaning in the story of Jesus. We have learned, as James Cone writes, that “being black and Christian could be liberating.”—*Danté Stewart*

OFFERINGS— We are grateful to everyone who has been so generous in supporting our community. Thanks so much. Please remember to make your regular donations to MMOJ, by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota, FL 34238.

OUTREACH—The current recipient of our offered financial support is **Meals on Wheels of Sarasota** [Oct-Dec]. However, the MMOJ Board recently made a decision, right now, to set aside from our discretionary funds \$500 to be used for relief of hurricane victims. It is made to the Suncoast Disaster Fund at the Sarasota Foundation. It will be matched and become a \$1000 donation for hurricane relief.

MOVIE CORNER

Sometimes we just have trouble finding anything to watch that’s worth writing about so I’d like to mention an old favorite, **Secondhand Lions**. If you’ve seen it before, it’s well worth watching again and if you missed it, head to Prime Video, Vudu, Apple TV or Redbox.

Secondhand Lions is a delightful, warm, comedy drama starring Michael Caine, Robert Duvall, and Haley Joel Osment. It’s a coming of age action movie about honor and loyalty and family. —*Beth Ponce*. Send your suggestions of movies to watch, to ponce.beth@gmail.com

MORE ROHR—Let’s state it clearly: One foundational and yet revolutionary idea of the Bible is that God is manifest in the ordinary, in the actual, in the daily, in the now, in history, in the concrete incarnations of life. God does not hold out for the pure, the spiritual, the right idea, or the ideal anything. Apparently, the biblical God would much rather be in relationship than merely be right in solitude! This is why Jesus stands religion on its head.

But it is also why we have to go through the seemingly laborious, boring, or even disturbing books of the Bible, such as Joshua, Judges, Kings, Chronicles, Leviticus, Numbers, and Revelation. We hear in these books about sin and war, adulteries and affairs, kings and killings, intrigues and deceptions—the tragic and sad events of human life along with the ordinary and wonderful. Those books, documenting the life of real communities, of concrete and regular people, are telling us that “God comes to us disguised as our life” (a wonderful line I learned from my dear friend and colleague, Paula D’Arcy). But for most “religious” people this is actually a disappointment! In the Bible, we see God using the very wounded lives of very ordinary

people, who would never have passed the tests of later Roman canonization processes. Moses, Deborah, Elijah, Paul, and Esther were at least complicit in murdering; David was both an adulterer and a liar; there were rather neurotic prophets like Ezekiel, Obadiah, and Jeremiah; an entire history of ridiculously evil kings and warriors—yet all these are the ones God works through. They are not summarily dismissed.

God's revelations are always concrete and specific. They are not a Platonic world of ideas and theories about which we can be right or wrong.

Revelation is not something we measure, but something or Someone we meet! All of this is called the "mystery of incarnation."

Our temptation now and always is *to trust in our faith tradition of trusting in God* instead of trusting in God. They

are not the same thing! Often our faith is in our tradition in which we can talk about people who have trusted God in the past. That's a sad way to avoid the experience itself, to avoid scary encounters with the living God, to avoid the ongoing Incarnation.

It's not about becoming spiritual beings nearly as much as about becoming human beings. The biblical revelation is saying that we are already spiritual beings; we just don't know it yet. The Bible tries to let us in on the secret, by revealing God in the ordinary. That's why so much of the text seems so mundane, practical, specific, and, frankly, unspiritual! The principle of the Incarnation proclaims that matter and spirit have never been separate. Jesus came to tell us that these seemingly different worlds are and always have been one.—Richard Rohr

STAFF—Russ Banner, editor; Joan Pesce and Dorothy Sadowski, text review; Beth Ponce and Dotty Shugrue, features