



Review of JOYCE RUPP'S *The Cup Of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth*
Oakhurst Baptist Church Library Committee
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There is an ancient story about St. Benedict, the 6th century father of Western Monasticism. He developed a strict rule of prayer and work. Resisting these rules, his follower monks tried to poison him. But Benedict blessed the cup before he sipped and rendered the poison harmless. His symbol is a cracked cup. One morning, Harold Hoffman, the co-chairman of the Library Committee, brought me one of Bea's books, *The Cup of Our Life*, by Joyce Rupp, and challenged me to "experience this book for a week." I read the entire book, then, for 7 days, I studied the devotionals, blessing my own cup each morning, as I hope St. Benedict did every day. I reported to Harold that I loved the book.

The Author

So I thank Joyce Rupp for offering a simple path to greater spiritual strength. Rupp is a Catholic multiple award winning author, essayist, poet, workshop and retreat leader. She is also the author of six other books, published by religious presses. Check out her website at www.joycerupp.com.

The Book

Rupp's thin book has sold 180,000 copies since its publication ten years ago, a fact I can easily understand. She entreats each reader to use his or her own "God-language" during meditation and prayer. The book's purpose is to guide the reader toward a closer relationship with God. To do that, Rupp has written a daily six-week devotional plan, appropriate for a single supplicant or a spiritual growth group of any Christian denomination. She uses the cup as a symbol of the individual life. Each week she introduces a different image of the cup: the Cup of Life, the Open Cup, the Chipped cup, the Broken Cup, the Cup of Compassion, the Blessing Cup. For six days of that week, she offers a short essay on the theme of the day, then a "breathprayer", followed by a reflection, often involving holding the cup, a "morsel of scripture," a suggestion for journaling, a short morning prayer, and finally, a few words nudging the reader to connect that session to his or her life that day. For 36 days the reader ponders mysteries, meanings, and analogies inspired by a simple coffee cup.

The book is rich with quotations and interfaith wisdom. She quotes Aeschylus, Thomas Merton, and Nobel Laureate Rabindramath Tagore. She quotes Celtic Spirituality expert

Esther de Waal: “The Celtic approach to God opens up a world in which nothing is too common to be exalted and nothing is so exalted that it cannot be made common.” In the introduction to Week 2, she quotes one of my favorite modern poets, Mary Oliver: “...if the doors of my heart ever close, I am as good as dead.” Her ample bibliography includes authors as diverse as Marcus Borg and Robert Fulghum. She stretches her arms wide enough to include even a bit of Buddhism.

It’s an extraordinary book, written by a woman especially sensitive to the language of women and to the flaws of human nature. As she writes in her introduction and repeats on her website, “...I have found the cup to be a powerful teacher for my inner life....I have learned that it is through my ordinary human experiences that my thirst for God is quenched.”

My Own Cup

Not long after Harold’s challenge, I experienced an unexpected sea change in my own life journey. For several weeks, “the doors of my heart” were closed. During this time I bought a cup at a Goodwill store in Waco, Texas, a large ceramic cup, still in its box, adorned with bright golden sunflowers. I prayerfully drank from it every day at my Mother’s house. I wrapped it carefully and carried it home in my tote-bag, then carelessly dropped the bag on my kitchen floor. When I removed my cup from its bubble wrap, I saw the chip. The cup was still worthy, but flawed. Like me; like all of us. Like St. Benedict and those murderous monks.

Borrow this book from the Oakhurst library for your own journey of 36 days. Share the blessing of 20 minutes every morning guided in prayer by Joyce Rupp while quietly drinking a cup of hot coffee or tea or chocolate. From a chipped cup, the sipping is even better.

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Bea Hoffman’s Cup—Member of the Oakhurst Spiritual Growth Mission Group

When I was experiencing a period of blues this year, I decided to explore this book. I set aside time each morning to look into *The Cup of My Life*. I saw deep sadness as well as deep joy. I was reminded through Rupp's book that it was *all right* to feel empty and broken. It is an opportunity for growth and God's grace to fill the cup of our life:

*"Look into the emptiness,
Abide with the emptiness,
Do not attempt to fill it with insights or feelings.
Open the door of your heart.
Go inside and be with God."*

There certainly was not an overnight change from depression to joy. But I sensed a new gratitude and reverence for the presence of God in all of life.

Carolyn Copenhaver, member of Library Committee
Co-Chairpersons: Harold Hoffman and Jan Murphy

Rupp, Joyce. *The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Maria Press, 1997. Available on Amazon in both hardback and paperback.