

YSN Reads: 2015 summer reading list

BY YOUTH SPEAK NEWS

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The *Catholic Register's* Youth Speak News team has put together a list of faith-based youth titles we recommend for your summer reading.



Buried Secrets by Irene Hannon (Revell, 384 pages, \$14.99)

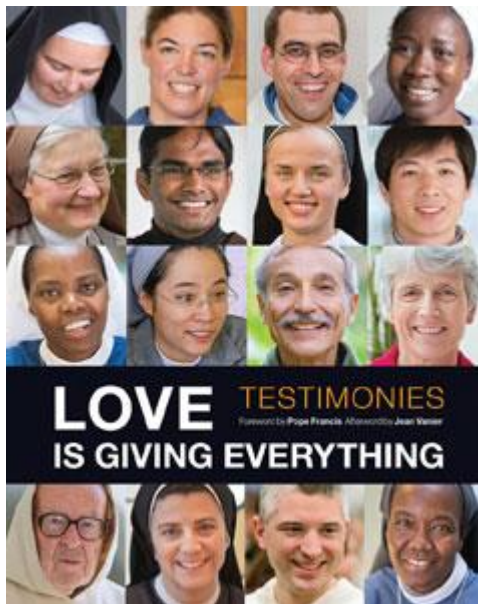
By Erin Jamieson

Irene Hannon has readers digging for truth in her latest novel *Buried Secrets*. The first in her new *Men of Valor* series, this book follows small-town police chief Lisa Grant and detective Mac McGregor as they solve the mystery of a recently discovered skeleton in an unmarked grave. But not everyone wants this mystery solved. Some of the perpetrators stand to lose a lot if this investigation continues, and will stop at nothing to ensure that their 24-year-old secret remains buried.

This book delivers a realistic, intriguing plot. Hannon clearly did her research, providing a believable account of small-town police work, forensic analysis and civilian life. Book jacket testimonials hail Hannon as “the queen of inspirational romantic suspense.” Do not let this mislead you. Aside from a few references to God and prayer, and a clear rooting in traditional Christian family values, this is not a faith-based novel. Rather, Hannon has crafted two characters whose faith is just as much a part of their lives as their jobs

and their families. It may seem mundane, but in popular media, it is a rarity to have faith included in the normal depictions of everyday life.

A perfect read for a summer weekend, *Buried Secrets* takes readers on a journey of light dialogue and fun intrigue. Grant and McGregor work together to piece together this long-dead puzzle, as they navigate dangerous suspects and a budding romantic relationship. This fusion of romance and mystery makes for the perfect cottage reading experience.



Love is Giving Everything (Novalis, 224 pages, \$16.95)

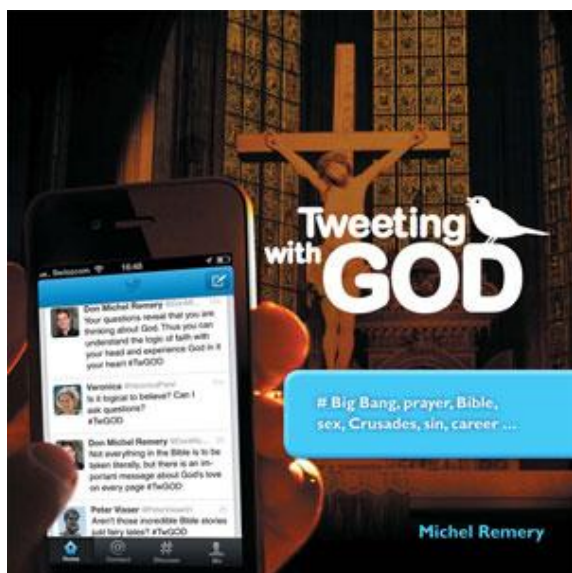
By Kathleen Kennedy

This short, yet insightful book is like a breath of fresh air. With more than 100 testimonies from priests, nuns and youth ministers, this book gives you so much joy and hope for the future generations following in Christ's footsteps. Not only did these stories talk about the good and bad of consecrated life, but they also shared the struggles to accept and follow God's path. Following Christ meant leaving everything behind and placing all their trust in Him. Many sacrifices were made, and these stories are living proof.

A project initiated by Pope Francis for the Year of Consecrated Life, this book draws the reader in by telling the truth about living in a Christ-filled world. There's no sugar coating or fairy tales. We learn about their sacrifices and how even after 20 years of consecrated life, it is impossible to be a perfect human being.

I think trying to be the best version of ourselves is often confused with being perfect. In today's society, we are constantly pressured to be and do everything perfectly. However, when it comes to faith, it's practically impossible.

What really struck me about this book was the role of the parents in a lot of these testimonies. We are all the children of God, therefore He acts as our Father figure. Parents act as our protectors, heroes, shoulders to cry on and our personal cheerleaders. They motivate us to be the best version of ourselves, to be happy and follow our dreams, just like God does. When looking at our parents, they play a huge in our upbringing, part of which is exposure to religion.



Tweeting with God by Fr. Michel Remery (Ignatius Press, 432 pages, \$21.95)

By Meredith Gillis

Tweeting with God is not a book you read in the order it's presented. It's more like a choose your own adventure style journey through Catholic doctrine and beliefs. Start where you're curious and go forward and backwards as you feel drawn.

Each page is topped with its own question — the basic who, what, when, where, how, or why of the teaching it's trying to explain; and ends with a tweet of 140 characters or less summarizing the answer.

One thing I really liked about *Tweeting with God* was that it includes sections

on very modern things like how to use social media in the right way. The book is not organized quite like the catechism, and I think in this way it's a lot more about how to apply the teaching than what the teaching actually is, which makes it a great supplement or companion to the *YouCat* or the Catechism. It also includes helpful references to the supporting Catechism section or bible verse for if you want to look it up and read more for context or information.

Where it excels is in making the teachings approachable. It's not overly wordy, and all of the explanations are kept simple enough to be easily understood by a lay person, without being so simple that you feel like the author is dumbing it down for you.

I've been very much enjoying flipping through to different sections as I putter along and, because it is so approachable, I've read a lot more of *Tweeting with God* than I have the Catechism. I recommend this for young people who are looking for a fun way to engage and learn more about the Catholic Church.



Shadows of the Past by Patricia Bradley (Revell, 352 pages, \$14.99)

By Chanelle Robinson

Shadows of the Past is the first instalment of the *Logan Point* series by Christian author Patricia Bradley. The novel tells the love story of how tragic secrets bring Taylor Martin and Nick Sinclair together. As Taylor searches

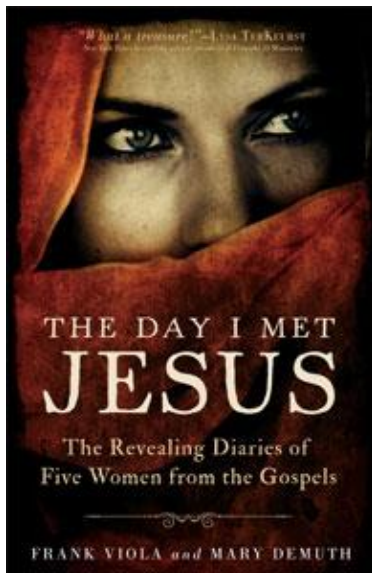
for her stalker and her missing father, Nick wrestles with grief and mourns his murdered wife.

Though the book begins on a climactic note, with a death threat and black roses, I found the plot moved a bit slowly at times and it was difficult for me to ease into the story at first. Also, because of the many subplots and the large cast of characters, I was worried that the novel would be too busy for its length. However, Bradley does a great job of unpacking the story and keeping the reader engaged and interested.

In our society, romance novels have been cast with a raunchy shadow that emphasizes the lesser goods of love. Reading this book was a refreshing introduction to romantic Christian literature that did not require a trip to the confessional afterwards.

Taylor is a young single woman, who balances the demands of her teaching job at the university in addition to her work as a criminal profiler. I thought Taylor was a realistically crafted character. I identified with her frustrations, her moments of doubt.

Suspenseful mystery romance is not usually the genre that I read and so I was excited to read a book, unlike Young Adult (YA) dystopia fiction, that was geared towards an audience in their twenties and thirties.



The Day I Met Jesus by Frank Viola and Mary Demuth (BakerBooks, 208 pages, \$13.99)

By Jean Ko Din

Stories about the Samaritan woman and the woman caught in the act of adultery and Lazarus's sister, Martha, have been told hundreds of times at Mass. Jesus' words to these women have been familiar lessons to us all, but somehow, this book still surprised me.

Frank Viola and Mary Demuth take us through time to better understand the world and the circumstance that these women had come from before Jesus changed their lives forever. The authors beautifully married Scripture with historical research to create a fuller narration of what these women would have been thinking and feeling.

Though our circumstance as women in today's society has changed, I think the women in this book are still relatable and inspirational. Who hasn't felt like they were helpless and broken in some way?

It is a small book, but it's a heavy read. I recommend sharing this book with your girlfriends. The end of each chapter includes the actual Scripture passage, some historical context, spiritual reflections and group discussion questions. It's a great way to open up a conversation about how these women can be lessons about our own encounters with Jesus.

However, I do think that readers have to be careful to remember that this book should be absorbed with a grain of salt. It is a dramatized interpretation of Scripture and should not be treated anything more than that.

Original article:

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