

## Coming Alive – Midwest Review

*Coming Alive* is a memoir that embraces Anne Ierardi's spiritual and psychological evolution as she searches for meaning and revised purpose in her life's faith-based journey.

More so than most memoirs that offer similar-sounding accounts, *Coming Alive* is an artistic portrait in discovery and self-realization that charts the author's fifty-year course to a "theory of relatedness, the I and Thou," narrating the move from Catholic roots to wider-ranging series of religious revelations.

Her move from her childhood faith of Catholicism moves through the social issues and reforms that redirected her course and faith into new arenas, following her effort to form a more authentic life.

The memoir opens with her church job falling apart, reflecting on the impact of a male-dominated religious sector that never has acknowledged her achievements and education. Ierardi is quite candid about the other facets of her life that have butted heads with her chosen vocation: *"Yes, I was there physically, and yes, I did my best to care for them pastorally. Yet I didn't feel safe there. I didn't really know who my allies were. How could I be me? I could not come out without losing my position. I was different in so many ways: educated, urban, feminist, Catholic turned Baptist, and gay."*

From Catholic dilemmas during early days in seminary to the evolution of a special brand of faith and education that embraces the other components of who she is, Ierardi follows the course of her spiritual calling and the evolution of conundrums surrounding it with an analytical eye to contrasting the disparate influences in her life: *"While I thought my life in seminary was moving in a Good Orderly Direction—Julia Cameron's metaphor for call—I was unprepared for what lay ahead."*

LGBTQ libraries, in particular, will find many of her reflections of the process of coming alive socially, spiritually, and emotionally to be thought-provoking mirrors of gay Christian leaders who struggle with their calling and their identity within and outside the church.

As she becomes a pastoral therapist and focuses her energy and work in new directions, Ierardi provides a road map of self-discovery and religious growth that will prove especially compelling to other Christian leaders who struggle with many of the same dilemmas in their vocations, beliefs, and lives.

Through its story of discovery and new paths, *Coming Alive* charts the special process of aligning faith with social interactions, capturing a sense of self that embraces, accepts, and fosters growth.

"Abide in me, and I in you" is the Bible edict mirrored in this engrossing memoir, which is highly recommended for Christian collections that strive to embrace diversity, cultural differences, and the path that lies between being a good Christian and embracing one's authentic self.

Ierardi maintains that *"Life is a bigger mystery than we can grasp. We can either spend our days running away from life or running toward life. I have crossed many bridges in my life and I have tried to make bridges."*

*Coming Alive* is one of those bridges, and deserves a place not just in memoir and spiritual libraries, but on the reading lists of LGBTQ readers and Christians who would better integrate faith with diversity and acceptance.

*D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review*