

Dear Misfits,

We met last Wednesday to discuss our latest novel, The Adventures of Robin Hood. Our discussion was enhanced by the return of Misfit Mark Druffner from Africa. Mark was the one who originally recommended the novel as a good read for our group. Mark arrived at our meeting with a genuine long bow (65 # pull) and proceeded to give us a demonstration of the strength it took to just draw a bow of the type used by Robin and his Merrie Men. (Mark also regretted that we were not dressed in Sherwood green and cooking venison to eat after our meeting. We agreed to do that at a future meeting!)

We all endorsed Mark's recommendation that we read The Adventures of Robin Hood. Though perhaps aimed at a younger audience, the author, Roger Lancelyn Green, managed to create a story that is enjoyable even for adult readers. The characters are often one dimensional and the portrayal of good and evil is drawn rather too sharply. There is little subtlety in the story. That said, you always know exactly who the good and the bad guys are...and *why* they are good or bad! Unfortunately, Green portrayed the Church as particularly bad!

We commented at length on the negative portrayal of the Catholic Church in the story. Green was Protestant so the Church is viewed through that prism. That said, Green did portray the practice of the Faith by Robin and his men as very strong and always quite positive. They had great reverence for Mary, insisted on the Mass, and were men of strong belief. However, Green then portrays the institutional Church in a very negative way. This was particularly true in his descriptions of its officials (Bishops, Mother Superior, etc.) who bear the brunt of Green's negative portrayal.

Misfit Loomer challenged Green's portrayal of widespread corruption within the Church and attributed Green's bias to the anti-Catholicism that came about in the aftermath of the confiscation of the Monasteries and the lands held by the English Catholic Church. Much of the anti-Catholicism in England derives from the myth and propaganda that was designed to justify the "stripping of the Altars" and the destruction of the Faith in England.

Misfit Loomer recommended that we read Eamon Duffy's brilliant book, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580 as an antidote to the misinformation that now surrounds the pre-Reformation Church in England. And so we shall. It will be our book for November (see comments below.)

Now on to our September read. We are excited about reading Piers Paul Read's new novel The Death of a Pope. I have read three of his novels and enjoyed them very much. He is an excellent author and he is professedly Catholic. Misfit Brad Lindberg has also read the novel and recommends it highly. Here is what Ron Hansen, author of Exiles, says about the book: "Piers Paul Read has managed to combine sheer storytelling power with great learning and insight about the inner workings of the Church to fashion an entertainment of the highest order. If John LeCarre took on Vatican politics, his book of suspense might aspire to be much like this one." Loomer Theological Booksellers in Stillwater has it on back order from Ignatius. It should be in soon--call or stop by Loomer's to check on availability (651-430-1092). It is also available from Amazon for \$14.93 in hardcover.

In October, we will return to one of our favorite authors, G. K. Chesterton, when we will read Manalive. As one reviewer observes, "In this long-hidden yet highly entertaining classic, author G.K. Chesterton shows readers, through the delightful story of a windy evening with the mysterious Mr. Innocent Smith, the soul-refreshing secret of the love of life itself. While readers are unlikely to emulate all the adventures of Mr. Smith, each of us can recover the innocent joys we knew or hoped for when we were younger by learning from Smith's 'radically sane' philosophy."

As I mentioned last month, there is another reason why we are reading Manalive at this time. It will help prepare us for viewing the movie Misfit Ahlquist and crew have been busy filming! Misfit Ahlquist's movie, Manalive, is projected to be released in the fall...go to <http://manalivethemovie.com/> for details of the movie, "trailers", news, etc. I will forward more information on this as it becomes available.

Finally, our book for November: we will read The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580 by Eamon Duffy. This is a monumental work that would take months to properly read and discuss. It is a "vigorous and eloquent book, a work of daring revision and a masterpiece of historical imagination...(that) utterly transforms the misinformation and propaganda that still surrounds the late-medieval English Church". It patiently and systematically destroys the untruths created by the reformation. As one reviewer writes: "After you finish it, Shakespeare's haunting line from Sonnet 73, about the destruction the monasteries--'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang' will resonate as never before." The Stripping of the Altars is available from Amazon for \$15.64.

We have several alternatives available for reading and digesting Dr. Duffy's work (it runs to over 650 pages):

1. We can order it now and start reading it for our November meeting.
2. We can select certain chapters of the book and read/discuss those.
3. We can set aside a lot of reading time in November and read the whole thing at that time!

Let me know what you think best. And read on my friends. So many wonderful books and so little time!

Warmest regards,

Misfit Buzz

"Literature is my Utopia. Here I am not disenfranchised. No barrier of the senses shuts me out from the sweet, gracious discourse of my book friends. They talk to me without embarrassment or awkwardness."

Helen Keller (The Story of My Life)