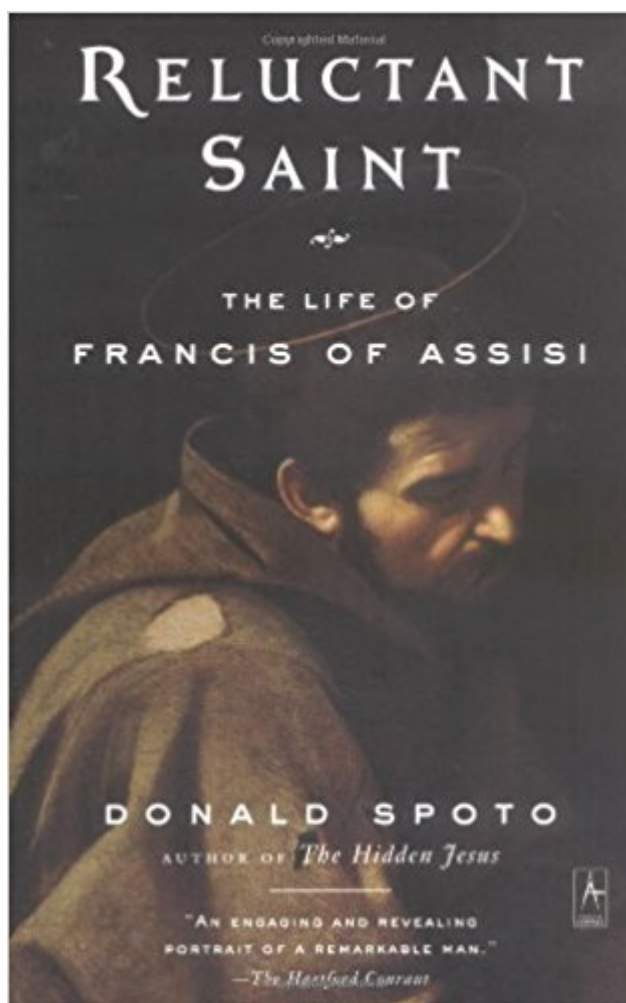


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Reluctant Saint: The Life Of Francis Of Assisi (Compass)



Synopsis

Acclaimed biographer Donald Spoto strips away the legends from the life of Francis of Assisi to reveal the true story of a man who has too often been obscured by pious iconography. Drawing on unprecedented access to unexplored archives, plus Francis's own letters, Spoto places Francis within the context of the multifaceted ecclesiastical, political, and social forces of medieval Italy, casting new light on Francis and showing how his emphasis on charity as the heart of the Gospel's message helped him pioneer a new social movement. This nuanced portrait reveals the multifaceted character of a man who can genuinely be said to have changed the course of history.

Book Information

Series: Compass

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition edition (September 30, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142196258

ISBN-13: 978-0142196250

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 54 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #194,416 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #272 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Biographies > Saints #1203 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious #1650 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism

Customer Reviews

It does not seem possible that the world needs another biography of St. Francis of Assisi, but Spoto (*The Hidden Jesus*) makes a credible case for adding to the glut of books and articles about the medieval saint. (Spoto cites one count taken nearly 40 years ago that puts the number at 1,575.) He argues that new discoveries in several fields and the latest Franciscan scholarship justify this new biography. Although the findings of his research required Spoto to strip away some of the romance surrounding Francis's familiar story, he manages to report them without detracting from the integrity of the saint. He raises, for example, questions about whether Francis actually bore the stigmata, or wounds of the crucified Christ, pointing out that sources interviewed for Francis's canonization denied that he had the marks. Spoto suggests that Francis may actually have suffered from leprosy and that his companions interpreted those wounds as a sharing in Christ's suffering. Spoto's

chronological recounting of Francis's life is sufficiently engaging to retain the interest even of those familiar with the basic facts of the saint's story. Occasionally however, he lapses into seemingly misplaced preaching pedagogy, such as when he holds forth on the subject of conversion in a section about Francis's spiritual transformation- but given the saint's diverse appeal, this book should interest a wide audience. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Spoto is a sometime teacher of theology and a biographer of Alfred Hitchcock, Lawrence Olivier, Tennessee Williams, and Ingrid Bergman. In this life of Francis of Assisi, Spoto's elegant wordsmithing creates a "reality TV" sense of Francis's life-the elaborate details are based on an actual time and place, but the overall effect feels staged. This is nevertheless a very readable portrait of a hope-filled eccentric whose lifelong process of conversion brought him to a never unconfused but always faithful way of life under God's ordinance. There are some things Spoto doesn't get right: on the dedication page, he ascribes to St. Benedict a quote traditionally attributed to St. Augustine, and he fails to appreciate the literary genre of the medieval exemplary story, among other things. But he is a fine writer who provides insight into the saint as well as into the secular and ecclesiastical cultures of the 12th century. One of the best of the modern books to reflect upon Francis, and even to get inside his head and measure his spirit, is G.K. Chesterton's *St. Francis of Assisi*. Spoto's book is suitable for libraries with a circulation of nonacademic religious books. David I. Fulton, Coll. of St. Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a thorough presentation of the Life of St. Francis. It was very readable and kept one engaged throughout. I learned many aspects of the life of Francis of which I was totally unaware. It spoke to heart and mind and I feel I traveled the journey with Francis. His on-going conversion was such a real part of his life and I was able to see this on-going conversion in my own life. I would recommend this book as a biography and a look at the role of conversion in our lives to friends and spiritual groups of which I am a part. We used it for discussion in a group I belong to that is entitled: Food for the Journey. It was certainly that! It is even more meaningful now that our Pope has chosen Francis for his name!

I have always been fascinated by the stories about St. Francis. And about 25 years ago my husband and I had the privilege of visiting Assisi in Italy which furthered my interest in this man. It's a nice

size, well made paperback and comfortable to carry when you travel. I always have a book with me everywhere I go. This book tells the real story of this humble, simple man who was so very much misunderstood in his time. If he could see how his image has been so misrepresented and overblown in our time, he would be not only devastated, but also angry. He had a fascinating life but most of it was a huge struggle with his own church and its leaders, who somehow couldn't just let him be a nobody who wanted to minister to the poor and needy. That's all he ever wanted to do. He would have hated all the pomp and ceremony in today's world and how he is celebrated. He was another of the very few that we can truly call a saint.

A real eye opener, not only about where Francis came from (a dissolute lifestyle), but his drastic conversion and subsequent desire to serve God and mankind. Even in those days he was criticized and mocked for his faith, though many were drawn to his dedication and chose to join his Spartan way of living. An interesting effect after his death was how supposed Christians cashed in on his philosophy and eventually changed his spiritual piety to suit their commercial interests. The book will challenge your own sincerity as to your Christian walk, even though we needn't practice some of Francis's self-denials, you will know if you are true to your faith or just being a Christian when it's convenient.

I was impressed with the author's great abilities in writing. What an impressive compilation of Francis' life activities and words. Francis was inspiring in many ways and gives me a different perspective on life, at times refreshing. With seemingly great abandonment of the flesh, he served diligently. In his times of tragic ailment, he holds faithful to his God. Insights he gives are profound and can be of benefit to the humble seeker.

Very educational.

This is a wonderful reexamination of the life of St. Francis of Assisi. I found I couldn't put it down and I appreciated the new scholarship done by Mr. Spoto. I recommend it as a great update of information to anyone interested in Francis.

This is a well-written biography of St. Francis. Instead of being dry as biographies can be, there is a lot of interesting detail that makes it read almost like a novel at times. St. Francis is presented as completely human with all his faults as well as his wonderful qualities. There is a great deal of

historical background but not more than is necessary to fully understand St. Francis' life. I felt like I got a real sense of St. Francis, who he was, and the background of his personal life and the world around him.

What I really like is that each chapter is chronological so it reads like a novel with the plot unfolding. I also like the way the author adds thought-provoking comments about living out the Christian faith so you get really involved in Francis' way of life, not only the historical record of his life and his Order.

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