

## Holy Envy

Barbara Brown Taylor is a professor of religion at a small college in Georgia. She is also an Episcopal priest but found that pastoring a church was more than she could handle. She gave up the pulpit for the classroom and has had a fulfilling career as a teacher and writer for many years. Her intellect and gift with the written word make her someone to become acquainted with. Let me suggest an introduction to Mrs. Taylor through her recent book, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. Coincidentally, I am leading a discussion of this book at The Red Shoes over the next three Mondays from 10:30 – Noon. You are invited to participate.

Whether you can join the discussion group or not, you can read *Holy Envy*. The book reflects the open spirit of Jubilee Pioneers. It reminds us that God is bigger than any one religion while honoring specific traditions and styles. The book is an experiential affirmation of Rumi's observation that "there are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground." As you read this memoir and travel with Mrs. Taylor and her students on various field trips, you can affirm that no one religious container is Ultimate, but acquaintance with other "containers" can make your container feel fuller.

One of the reasons I like *Holy Envy* is that it scrubs Christianity of its arrogant claim that the "Christian way is the only way." It shows how much is missed when we persist in reducing everything to our own frame of reference. The book is an invitation to discover the spiritual riches God can teach us from the faith of others.

Faith, religion, is not intended to be a competitive sport where only one team wins for all eternity. Sadly, that is often how religion behaves. Barbara Brown Taylor invites the reader to regard religions as "treasure chests of stories, songs, rituals and ways of life that have been handed down for millennia—not covered in dust but evolving all the way—" so that each new generation finds something that nourishes the soul and answers the deepest questions of the heart. She wants others to know and experience the treasures she has discovered in studying five of the great religions of the world. She does a good job of that in this small memoir. In her words, "Part of my ongoing priesthood is to find bridges between my faith and the faiths of

other people, so that those of us who draw water from wells on different sides of the river can still get together from time to time, making the whole area safer for our children.”

In a world and time when religion seems so divisive and downright wacko, *Holy Envy* points to something better than what we get on the evening news. If you are incurably religious, as I am; if you at times feel your head will split open given the turmoil that religion has brought to the world, as I do; and if you know in the deepest part of your soul that there is a better way, as I sense, then this little book might be the best read you have experienced in a very long time. Give it a look.

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