

Title: Radical Compassion, Finding Christ in The Heart of The Poor	Author: Gary Smith, S.J.
Media type: (check one) X Book _ CD/Audio book _ DVD	Call Number: 261 SMI
Review submitted by: Sharon Krieg	Date: April 24, 2016
Subject (e.g. Prayer, Family Life, Sacraments, Saints, Bible Study, Moral Conduct, Social Justice) Charity and Justice	
<p>1. What is this book about? (describe briefly) Father Gary Smith describes his daily encounters with the lowest strata of American society as a priest tending to their needs. This highly interesting and thought provoking book appeals to the reader to look and consider the downtrodden as human beings rather than as just riff-raff. Pope Francis probably would be happy to hear of the good works Father Smith and his co-workers do for these least regarded city dwellers. It is rich with Bible passages to emphasize his messages such as: "Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows." Matthew 10:29 - 31</p>	
<p>2. What main message does the author convey? As Catholic Christians we need to focus our attention to our wounded brothers and sisters. In our efforts to ease their pain we can find Christ in them if we have the spirit of Christ working in us. We can be more compassionate to others rather than, as one street person stated, "It's sometimes cold outside, but not as cold as people." Father Smith said, "I realize that God brought me into this world, blessed with skills and talents. The only thing that makes sense to me is to use them in the service of the poor. It is at their feet that I find myself." He also states, "The poor teach me that serving them is not just some sort of Christian imperative. Rather, it is in serving them that I can discover, like the church, what is best in my own heart." To me this is Christ-like and merciful, as Pope Francis urges us to be</p>	
<p>3. What inspired you the most about this book, and why would you recommend it? There are many stories about many varieties of difficulties that people struggle with. If the reader wants to have greater insight into alcoholism for instance, there are many stories about alcoholics that Fr. Smith has helped. Things that the ordinary person might not be aware of in regards to the devastation that alcohol does to the alcoholic are discussed in the real-life examples of these sufferers. Their stories are touching and give food for thought.</p>	
<p>4. Who would benefit from reading this book? I think those who serve in the legal profession, the medical profession, social services and the religious life would gain insights that would be useful to them as they work with the poor. We all could benefit from greater knowledgeable exposure to these societal ills that befall people. As we search for Christ in our lives, sometimes He is right in front of us, as we pass the beggar in the street.</p>	
<p>5. Any other impressions: Not everyone in America is wealthy. Some lack for good health care, food poverty, lack of education and subsequent lack of job opportunities, and housing. Some are mentally ill and rotate through the mental health system. Some end up in jail over and over again, serving their time and then being jettisoned back out into the community. Some have devastating health problems that make working impossible and end up barely surviving in crummy lodgings. Some end up selling their bodies in order to earn money. Some become prisoners of the sex slavery business. Drug abusers tell horror stories of how drugs have ruined their lives. The score of various societal ills hasn't changed much over humankind's existence. With mercy perhaps we could transform a little bit of hell into a little bit of heaven. After all God sent us his Son with the desire that we imitate Him and be kind. As I said before, this book offers lots to think about for the reader hopefully resulting in something good for another person who really needs the help.</p>	