

Title: Radical Compassion - A Journal	Author: Gary Smith, S.J.
Media type: (check one) X Book _CD/Audio book _DVD	Call Number: 261.8 SMI
Review submitted by: Ramona Kar	Date: November 2012

If you are feeling dulled by pessimism, worn out by failure, cynical about poverty, and unable to see any light at the end of the tunnel, heed the clarion call that emanates from this book! Be wowed by Fr. Gary Smith's positivity and refusal to be deterred by bleak outcomes, rather learn from his belief in the purpose of process regardless of results, and the beauty of a journey regardless of roadblocks. This book is "the beatitudes" in action.

In "*Radical Compassion*", Fr. Gary Smith chronicles his ten-year journey with the poor, homeless, addicts, prostitutes, and other despairing individuals of the Old Town neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Through thirteen chapters, he escorts us through the thuds and crashes and bumps of these people's lives - mental illness, disease, drugs and alcohol, terminal illness and grinding poverty. We get to visit SROs (single-room occupancy hotels), walk the streets, and stand by as Fr. Gary sprinkles the ashes of the deceased into the Pacific Ocean. You might shudder and decline the invitation to walk with him. But once you begin absorbing his narrative, you will find yourself unable to put the book down, except for brief intervals to take some emotional rest.

Every chapter portrayed the beautiful and tender imprint of love - not sympathetic love, rather empathetic love that transformed the lives of the individuals whom Fr. Gary touched.

Chapter 11, "Robert's Story," brought tears to my eyes. "My dearest Fr. Gary," Robert wrote in a death bed note, "...You have been my steady rock in the raging storm. You've been the father to me that I always wished for when I was growing up."

Here is another heartwarming excerpt from Chapter 5, "Crashing and Burning," for all you caregivers and counselors who may feel dejected because of hopeless outcomes: "I don't have any illusions about Melinda's chances. The recidivism rate of addicts is statistically very high, as is the rate of premature deaths of addicts. So I am not kidding myself. But stats don't drive one's life of service down here. The heart does."

So take a plunge, and discover the forces that helped and enabled Fr. Gary to continue to walk this path of hope despite hopelessness, encouragement despite despair, and happiness despite joylessness.