

What We Believe... Why We Believe It

By
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Calvary Road



I've never done this before, but I'm devoting this installment of *What We Believe... Why We Believe It* to a book I read recently. The name of the book is *Calvary Road* by Marty Barrack. Full disclosure: Marty has been one of my closest friends for twenty-five years or more, but I assure you this fact in no way influences what I'm going to write.

Marty wrote this book—his fourth—at the insistence of Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke. They are not only friends, His Eminence and Marty, but Marty is a consecrated member of the Marian Catechist Apostolate under Cardinal Burke's direction. But the Marian Catechist Apostolate has nothing to do with this book.

Calvary Road is Marty's autobiography. Apart from the amazingly interesting life he has led, what makes Marty's story so intriguing is the fact that he was born and reared a Conservative Jew who converted to Catholicism just a few months after my own conversion.

The book's blurb starts by saying, "*What do **Billy Dee Williams**, opera stars **Licia Albanese** and **Renata Tebaldi**, a kid named **Robbie Gilston**, the celebrated Americana artist **Norman Rockwell**, and famed comedian **Jimmy Durante** have to do with one man's journey from Conservative Judaism to the Cross? Everything!*" This should give you a clue into how interesting the life of Marty Barrack has been. (Hint: Marty was in the service with Billy Dee Williams, couldn't have passed his college art appreciation class without Norman Rockwell's personal assistance, and there is a family connection to Vaudeville & film great Jimmy Durante.)

Marty's biography begins with his earliest memories from about age four. His father, who owned a tire store in New York City, was offered a management position over a chain of auto supply stores in North Carolina. This was in 1946, and it's where Marty got his first exposure to Southern racism. Read what Marty had to say about what happened in the first incident: "*My father had one employee, a black man, called 'colored' back then. My father told his colored man to drive my mother and me home. My mother and I got into our car to wait for him, but as soon as he looked inside he turned around, went back into the store, and told my father, 'I'm sorry, Mr. Barrack, but I can't drive your wife anywhere.' 'Why not?' 'She's sitting in the front seat. If I drove past a cop he would arrest me.' 'What!?' 'Mr. Barrack, you're not from the south. Things are different here.' After some explanation my father said, 'Okay, go back and explain to her that you can only drive if she sits in the back seat.'*

"The colored man said, 'Mr. Barrack, I can't tell a white woman where to sit in her own car.' My perplexed father said, 'Okay, what do I have to do to make it possible for you to drive her

home?’ ‘Well, Mr. Barrack, if you were to ask her to sit in the back seat, then I could do it.’ My father went out to the car and said, ‘Freda, you’ll need to sit in the back seat. Around here it’s the only way a colored man can drive a white woman.’ She moved to the back seat, and the colored man drove her and me back to Wrightsville Beach.”

That was Marty’s first exposure to the racism of the South that was so prevalent in those days, but it was by no means his last. His parents became so disgusted that Mr. Barrack quit his job and went back to his store in New York.

We also learn from Marty about the true nature and behaviors of the beloved yenta, how God quite literally saved his life at sixteen, how Norman Rockwell saved his art appreciation class grade in a chance meeting, how God planted the first seed of conversion through a Franciscan friar at Graymoor, and how he later became a border guard for U.S. Customs and Immigration.

Oh, and the second seed of conversion planted by God was Marty’s lovely Catholic wife Irene. Theirs was a love story unlike any you’ve ever read. Irene’s gone now, having past to her reward on June 29, 2011—a date I recall well. Read what happened at her death: *“About 7:30 pm the night nurse came in to ask Irene whether she wanted some pain medicine. Irene’s eyes opened and she said, ‘My Christ suffered so much on the cross for me, the least I can do is suffer this little bit for him.’ The nurse observed a very soft heavenly glow coming from Irene’s body and sensed an odor of sanctity (beautiful odor of roses) in the room. She turned off the light to give Irene peace.*

“About 8:00 pm, holding the crucifix to her heart, Irene passed into eternity with the soft heavenly glow still around her body and the odor of sanctity still in the room. The nurse phoned me immediately.” I’m telling you, this is a book to read! I’ve read several hundred biographies, but this one ranks in the top ten of them all.

Like I said, I’ve been very close to Marty for almost three decades, but many of the things in this book were new to me, thus showing how humble Marty has been throughout our friendship. Frankly, I was captivated from the very first chapter, but it’s not all the biographical information from the first half of the book that got me so excited.

Most of us Catholics really don’t know a great deal about the Jewish roots of our holy and ancient faith, so *Calvary Road* not only gave me tremendous insights into how Judaism and Catholicism are so very much alike, but to see how Jewish cultural life actually prepares every openminded Jew for a conversion to the New Covenant. Marty’s previous book, *Second Exodus*, explains in detail from a Jewish point of view just exactly how the Old Covenant was perfectly fulfilled by Catholicism. Reading *Calvary Road*, then, helped me have a much greater understanding of the things found in *Second Exodus*.

Apparently every reader of *What We Believe... Why We Believe It* is interested in learning everything there is about Catholicism. The one aspect of my studies of Catholicism that has been sorely lacking is the Jewish connection. I suspect most of you are in the same position. Therefore, I can’t recommend highly enough that you read these two books. If you are interested in our Hebrew root, I would read *Calvary Road* first, followed by *Second Exodus*. Both of these books are available in print and ebook format on Amazon. If you’re interested in the print book and don’t do business with Amazon, you can contact me to get your copy of *Calvary Road*. (Sorry, I don’t have access to *Second Exodus*.) And be sure to visit JoeSixpackAnswers.com today!