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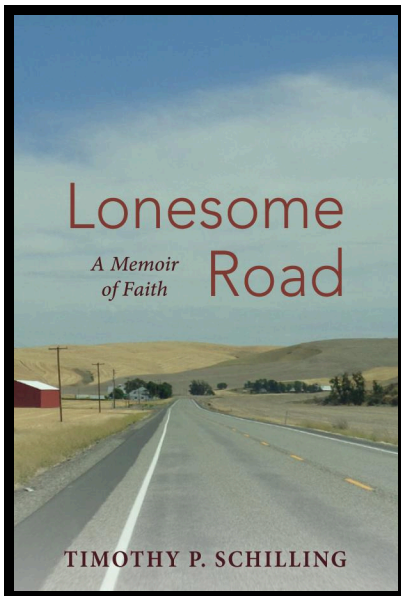
Lonesome Road: A Memoir of Faith

by Timothy P. Schilling

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New Title from Timothy P. Schilling
Lonesome Road: A Memoir of Faith



When are you truly grown up? How do you finally become the person God made you to be?

In a gentle, reflective account that does not spare himself, Timothy P. Schilling explores these questions while recounting his coming of age as the son of a traumatized war veteran. His memoir *Lonesome Road* takes us first west, from Indiana to Washington State, and then east, to Princeton University and a Catholic seminary in Europe. It underscores the complexity of conversion, a process that uses everything from a person's past and every desire that lives within them.

Timothy P. Schilling studied English at Princeton and theology at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He has a Ph.D. in practical theology from the Catholic Theological University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Since 2003 he has served on the staff of the Center for Parish Spirituality, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. His writings have appeared in *Commonweal*, *America*, *Image*, *First Things*, *The Tablet*, *Communio*, and other journals. He is the author of *The Writings of Norman Maclean: Seeking Truth amid Tragedy* (2024).

Interview with Timothy P. Schilling

This memoir seems to be a lot of things at once. It's a road story, a story of conversion, a romance, and an account of one family's dealing with the consequences of war. Is it one of those things more than others?

Primarily it's about maturation, about how one finally grows up. How do we become the people we are called to be? As a Catholic I understand that process through the lens of faith. But I hoped, when I set out to write this, that I could keep it free of pious platitudes. I wanted to write a conversion story that wouldn't make an atheist gag.

In the acknowledgments, you say it took you twenty years to write this. What was the hardest thing about writing it?

Most difficult of all was realizing that I could not tell my own story fully and honestly without intruding on the privacy of others. Early on I kept trying to avoid addressing certain issues – for example, painful or embarrassing things that had happened in our family – but, as my wife repeatedly pointed out, this left me with an insufficient account of how my conversion actually went. This became a huge conflict of interest within me, because I very much wanted to speak of conversion in all its complexity, but I didn't want to hurt anyone in the process. My family's acceptance of my need to tell this story has meant a lot to me.

Have you found other accounts of conversion to be too black-and-white?

Well, there does seem to be an old convention in which the sinner sees the light and never looks back. In my case, my conversion has felt very real to me, but my progress in opening my heart to God and neighbor has been very halting. It frustrates me to see that I still struggle with the same egocentrism that I did forty years ago. I keep wondering why God won't just solve this problem for me, since I am unable to.

In the prologue, you give voice to some of your frustration with God. Did you set out with the idea of posing questions to God?

No. When I started, I mostly just wanted to testify to the "mighty deed" that God had done in my life. But in recent years, I have had more difficulty with questions of theodicy (How can a good God let so many bad things happen?) than I once did. When I was studying theology theodicy was a theological abstraction. Now it's my daily bread.

Is that because of your father's hard times and homelessness?

That and the increased awareness, which I think most of us have, of all the suffering in the world. I sense very strongly God's presence, and I have never found God to be anything but good, but I do wonder about God's way of doing business.

Did you achieve the objectives you set for yourself when you started to write this book?

Happily, yes. I wanted to tell the story truly and completely, but also compactly. I hate wasting words. And I wanted to honor the people and places I knew along the way. I did those things. I also like that the book has a lot of action in it. Stuff happens. It's not just some internal dialogue. You can read it on the porch of your cabin in the desert.

An Excerpt from *Lonesome Road: A Memoir of Faith*

Not pissing away one's life was a big issue for me. For death awaited and life was flying by. You had to squeeze all the juice out of it while you could, which meant refusing any notion of God or an afterlife. Such beliefs kept you from seizing the only thing that was truly available, the here and now. "Death is the mother of beauty," I'd say.

Which annoyed Katie. "I don't want to think about death all day. What does a poet know anyway?"

"It's reality. You want to live in the real world, don't you?"

"Thinking about death all the time isn't living," she said, "it's miserable."

"Well, you don't have to actually think about it. You don't have to stare at a skull all day. You just need to have the awareness underwriting everything you do."

She eyed me skeptically. "Why are you so dark? Mister, you need to lighten up."

And seeing her curves and ample willingness, I conceded she had a point. Death was a drag. So I went back to nibbling at her neck. *Carpe diem.*

Praise for *Lonesome Road: A Memoir of Faith*

“*Lonesome Road* draws the reader into the often-unrecognized challenges that families endure when war comes home. Timothy Schilling layers that life-long persistence with honest queries of ongoing discernment. His disclosure of growth through failures along with the touch of family, mentors, and friends reminds that God’s presence remains in the intricacies of doubt and recognition which realize momentum.”

—**Mark Moitoza, vice chancellor for evangelization,
Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA**

“Timothy Schilling is a walking miracle. His book *Lonesome Road* provides an open window into his soul and an unlatched doorway into the winding corridors of his life, the travelogue of a faith-filled disciple who, at various junctures of his life, has both embraced and bitterly struggled with his Catholic faith. Gradually, subtly, Schilling introduces his readers to the One who accompanied him all along on his lonesome road, ministering to his wounded soul with the medicine of mercy.”

—**George Leo Thomas,
archbishop of Las Vegas**

“*Lonesome Road* is a loving and compelling portrait of how familial wounds shape generational choices and spiritual paths. Growing up in a family living with the deep wounds of war, Timothy Schilling’s quest is not only to understand this burden, but how this has shaped his path and led him to find his spiritual home. It is a careful, quiet, and thoughtful exploration of how we find deep meaning in the insupportable.”

—**Kate Hennessy, author of *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty***



Keep an eye out for Timothy P. Schilling’s next book coming Summer 2024 from University of Nevada Press
The Writings of Norman Maclean: Seeking Truth amid Tragedy