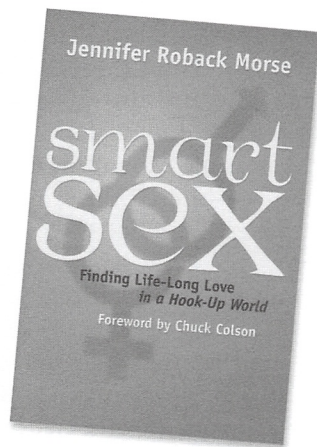


Smart Sex:

Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-Up World

by Jennifer Roback Morse
reviewed by Emily Bissonnette



Spence Publishing, 2006. For centuries, faithful Catholics have attempted to effectively communicate the Gospel to those who say they prefer not to hear it. In today's great struggle against the culture of death, Catholics have truth on their side, but without proving truth to be the attractive and joy-inspiring transcendental that it is, they will be hard-pressed to attract and inspire new builders of a culture of life.

John Paul II's theology of the body is perhaps the greatest contribution to our modern-day battle in the realm of human sexuality. Expressing this theology is the greatest challenge. Jennifer Roback Morse does a marvelous job of presenting the late Holy Father's work, without ever mentioning that this is what she is doing.

Smart Sex: Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-Up World presumes that the reader opens the pages without a faith background or perhaps with a religious affiliation different from that of the author. Avoiding a "preachy" tone, Morse uses fundamental human experiences and the desire for happiness and fulfillment to lead to her conclusion that "smart sex" can be found only in marriage, which is not only a good for the individual but for society as well.

Despite Morse's background in economics, *Smart Sex* does not read like a textbook. Instead, the author

weaves her sense of humor throughout the work and clearly explains at the beginning of each chapter what she hopes to prove.

Because of her own experience in the realms of abortion, cohabitation, artificial contraception, and illicit sex, Morse is able to speak to the hearts of those engaging in similar behavior. She understands. She has experienced pain from her own mistakes and wants to help others to avoid the same.

Morse, a Catholic, is able to powerfully convey Catholic morals and the principles of the theology of the body without mentioning the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Scripture, or John Paul II's teachings. This gives her arguments credence to a secular audience. From the perspective of economics and common sense, Morse proves that the key to happiness is monogamous marriage and that the key to a happy marriage is not no-fault divorce, but looking at one's spouse as a gift from God. Once her credibility is well-established, Morse mentions her Catholic faith and in the final section she even explains the Catholic view of marriage.

Morse frequently uses seemingly irrelevant scenarios or ideas to make a powerful point. Consider it the "sneak attack" of her work: When least expecting a compelling argument for a controversial issue, the reader is suddenly confronted with one. For instance, Morse uses infertility to discuss why "reproductive freedom" is impossible and the beliefs of foster children to eventually prove that our lives are gifts from a loving God.

The book comes with a challenge similar to Pascal's wager. Morse writes, "Even if I turn out to be completely wrong, you won't be harmed by trying the things I propose. This contrasts with the major competitor with the Law of the Gift. The theory that unlimited sexual activity will make a person happy is risky in exactly this sense. A person may certainly discover by trial and error that it is false. But he may destroy his life in the process."

Smart Sex covers a multiplicity of issues—whether or not mothers should work or stay home with their children, cohabitation, why "repro-

ductive freedom" is an illusion, the meaning of freedom, abortion, the meaning of sex, and the benefits of marriage. The final section of the book makes an argument for John Paul II's self-gift philosophy, which Morse concludes by sharing how looking at others as gifts from God can improve our relationships with difficult people, family members, and, in particular, spouses.

Frequent typos in the text are annoying, but the book's content makes it worth the inconvenience. *Smart Sex* would be beneficial to a Catholic seeking to evangelize the culture or an excellent choice for a friend, coworker, or relative who is confused by the lies of the culture of death. You will be evangelizing them without their knowing it.

Song of Kateri:

Princess of the Eucharist

by Marlene McCauley
reviewed by Elizabeth Yank



Grace House Publishing, 2005. My daughter's name is Kateri, and when I introduce her, I often hear the response, "That's a pretty name. Where does it come from?" I then explain that she is named after Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, a Native American.

Who was this woman called "the Lily of the Mohawks"?

Born to a Mohawk Indian chief and an Algonquin Christian mother in 1656, Kateri was adopted by her aunts and uncle at age four when her parents and brother died of smallpox. After Jesuit missionaries came to her

village, Kateri began to study with them and was baptized on Easter Sunday at age 20.

Kateri was devoted to the Eucharist and prayed the Rosary often. Sadly, she was fiercely persecuted by much of her tribe, including her relatives, for being Christian. Wanting to remain a virgin for Christ and seeking freedom from persecution, she fled north with the aid of others.

In *Song of Kateri: Princess of the Eucharist*, the life story of Kateri is illustrated through poetry. While the layout, design, and content of the book make it most appealing to children, adults will find her life story fascinating as well. The unexpected poetic form is not how we typically learn about the life of a saint. Poetry, however, can appeal to children because of the rhythmic scheme and playful rhymes. While not the poetic mastery of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Marlene McCauley's colorful images create a clear picture that enables young children to easily understand the story of Kateri's life.

Unlike most children's saint books, which are either collections of short biographies or simple picture books, *Song of Kateri* is a hefty 300-plus-page volume. While the length may seem intimidating, the poem does read rather quickly due to short stanzas, accompanying illustrations, and plentiful white space.

The poem is unique in that it is not just a short summary of Kateri's life, but engages the reader to relive critical moments that deeply affected her and contributed to her sanctity. Through these dramatic scenes, we learn about daily life in her tribe, the history of the era, and other important and interesting facts.

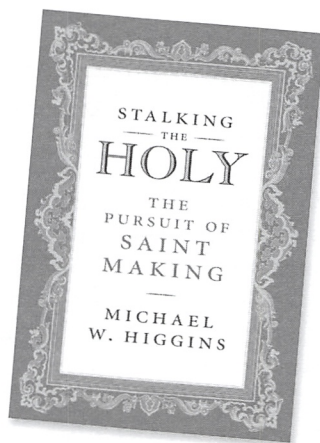
Because of the book's size and vocabulary level, it would make an ideal read-aloud. It is also a book children can read on their own: My 9-year-old daughter was able to read it by herself.

Interspersed throughout the book are black and white illustrations, some of which were created by children. These charming pieces of artwork depict various moments of Kateri's life. It is inspiring to see a love of

Bl. Kateri expressed by children of all ages. Some color photographs and pictures are included as well. A timeline, photographs from her beatification ceremony, prayers, and more accompany the artwork and biography.

Kateri's many virtues—humility, purity, patience, perseverance, cheerfulness, and kindness, all beautifully portrayed in *The Song of Kateri*—can inspire Catholic children, as well as adults, to a life of sanctity.

Stalking the Holy:
The Pursuit of Saint Making
 by Michael W. Higgins
reviewed by Leslie A. Amoratis



House of Anansi Press, 2005. As Catholic Christians, we are called to be saints and are drawn deeper into the Christian life by the model and intercession of the Church Triumphant. Our Catholic lives are surrounded by saints—our parishes are named after them, we are confirmed in their names, and we pray to them in times of need. But have you ever wondered how someone becomes a saint—not only how they become saintly, but how a person's sanctity is officially recognized and declared by the Roman Catholic Church?

In *Stalking the Holy: The Pursuit of Saint Making*, Michael W. Higgins examines the processes of beatification and canonization by which the Church recognizes the holy men and women who have gone before us. Higgins says that in this book, he “hopes to uncover the many dimensions that define sainthood,” drawing upon “juicy bits

of anthropology, politics, theology, spirituality, psychology, history, truth, and fantasy.” In addition to a general look at the business of saint-making, Higgins gives particular examination to the cases of three modern candidates for canonization, namely Padre Pio (now a saint), Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, and Pope Pius XII. In an epilogue, Higgins also gives a brief look at Pope John Paul II, and the Church's possible canonization of this man who was himself the saint-maker par excellence.

While I initially had anticipated more of an inspiring spiritual account of how the Church “makes” saints, I quickly realized that Higgins' examination of canonization is a far cry from the religious sentimentality often encountered in older accounts of the lives of the saints. Even looking at the table of contents gives a glimpse into Higgins' focus: Chapter 1 is entitled “The Process and the Controversies,” and Chapter 2 is “The Causes and the Controversies.” In reading the book, I found that for Higgins, the common tie among Padre Pio, Mother Teresa, and Pope Pius XII, even more than their sanctity, is the controversy surrounding their lives and their causes for canonization.

Still, Higgins presents a tasteful and interesting look at the lives and causes of three great figures of the twentieth-century Church through the lens of a wide range of modern thinkers. Citing everyone from lawyers to historians to feminist theologians to rabbis to atheists to pontiffs, *Stalking the Holy* is a sort of mini-compendium of modern thought on saints and canonization. While not quite what I had expected, Higgins' research does prove to be far-reaching and interesting.

And even amid all of the examination of the controversies of canonization, Higgins still manages to present some inspiring food for thought for those of us striving for sanctity ourselves. For example, Higgins' presentation allowed me to reflect more on the greatness of Mother Teresa's perseverance in prayer and good works in the midst of her lengthy “dark night of the soul,” and on the significance of Padre Pio's quiet suffering above his