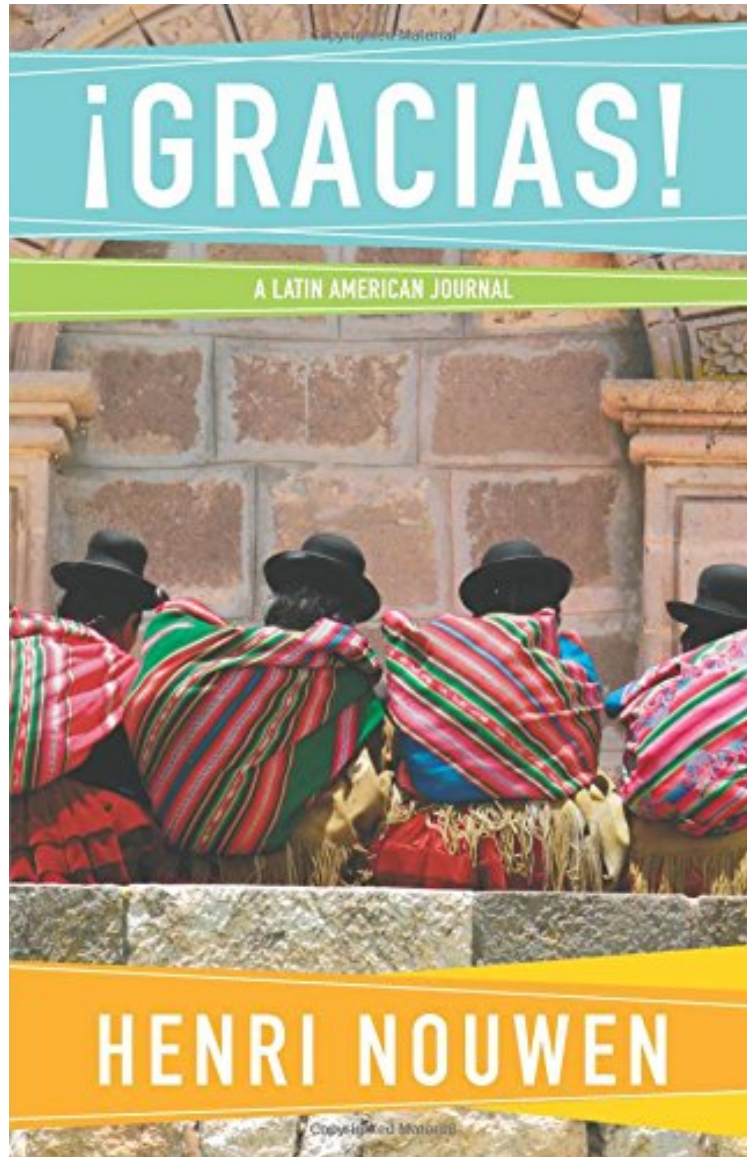


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Gracias: A Latin American Journal

Henri J. M. Nouwen

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Henri J. M. Nouwen : Gracias: A Latin American Journal before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gracias: A Latin American Journal:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. and I have begun to discover him as one who pursued justice for the poor and the oppressed By fromtheashes In 1981 Henri Nouwen sojourned for six months in Bolivia and Peru. He had recently completed his time teaching at Yale and was seeking God for answers on how to spend the next chapter of his

life. For years I have known Henri Nouwen as a contemplative, and I have begun to discover him as one who pursued justice for the poor and the oppressed. I wanted to read this journal to gain insight into the symbiotic relationship of contemplation and action. He had the understanding that a life devoted to God should involve caring for the poor. He seemed compelled to go to South America to learn from the poor and potentially make a home and ministry in their midst. You could sense his eagerness and wonder as he began to experience a new culture and people. He had the privilege of viewing Christian holy days and religious practices with the eyes of a child. As someone who grew up in the institutional church you could sense he was enlivened by seeing fresh expressions of faith. His time in Latin America coincided with a period of religious and political change and unrest. Liberation theology was entering a phase of resistance within the structures of the church. The poor were increasing in their efforts of political and agrarian freedoms. In this setting Nouwen was able to get a first hand experience of extreme poverty. He was able to see how God's people had a key role to play in the pursuit of justice. At the same time he was confronted with feelings of loneliness and uselessness. He was simultaneously motivated to help bring change and wrestling with feeling like an outsider who did not have much to contribute. I was amazed by his keen awareness of the need for missionaries to not try to convert people, rather to try and learn from them. He was devastated by the way colonial Christians had desecrated indigenous culture in the name of their God. He seemed ahead of his time in his perceptions of mission work, in a way that many still fail to grasp. Ultimately he seemed forever changed by his experience. He was confronted with a liminal state where he was no longer satisfied with the religious practices that he previously participated in but where he felt not fully at home in the religious expressions he was witnessing. He began to long for a different type of communal experience. He knew the importance of being among the poor and he recognized the role that played in his own heroes of the faith. I related to much of what he was experiencing. I have known a deep longing to help the poor and have recognized the privilege I come from that prevents me from true union with poverty. His desire to be of use by God and for others was contrasted by his feelings of isolation and depression. I have strong conviction that the Christian life should be lived in service to the poor and oppressed. I also resonate with feelings of ineptitude. Where should I put my efforts? What is God calling me to? Like Nouwen, I realize that more gifts are received from the poor than we could ever hope to give them. I recognize that I have much more to learn from those on the margins of society than I do from other people of privilege. I admire the ability he had to learn from others, to sympathize with their grief and offer himself in any way that might be helpful. I was inspired by his commitment to be a student of those who the world doesn't think it has much to learn. Nouwen was moved by the spirit of gratitude he saw in so many. After reading this journal I hope to carry more of that gratitude in my own life. I also feel a renewed sense of drive to pursue orientating my life towards learning more from the poor and oppressed.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Poignant Read For Spiritual Transformation By Ella Hayes Even though I am clergy of a different denomination, I am grateful to have discovered the prophetic support of Rev. Nouwen's work. I found this book extremely thought provoking in regards to serving the marginalized and looking at the suffering that pastoral serving often entails. It helped my sermon preparation tremendously. Rev. Nouwen uses journaling as a major way of gaining clarity of thoughts about life issues that are unimaginable and terroristic as he observed others ministering in difficult places during their call to serve in Bolivia and Peru. He journals through the pain of loneliness, depression, and feeling marginalize, until he is able to see God working in those painful situations. There is not an over abundance of "God talk", that can be a turn off for some, (me not included). However, there is a deep sense of reverence conveyed throughout the book as he experiences the poor as their gratitude toward God is witnessed. His works may appeal to those seeking inspiration for spiritual transformation. I did not want the book to end so I took extended time to finish the final chapters and "chewed" on the dropped spiritual nuggets. I plan to read more of his works and have recently ordered "Genius Born of Anguish, The Life Legacy of Henri Nouwen", by Higgins and Burns in an effort to learn more about his life and spiritual influences.

Rev. Ella 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great big Gracias Fr. Henri Nouwen By Martha E. Lujan I have read Henri Nouwen's work before and knew some of his story. This diary was like experiencing a type of personal retreat of my own. He is able to clearly state his interior struggles, his own weaknesses and his humility in such a simple but powerful way. A book that many trying to understand another culture and live in a close relationship with Jesus would benefit greatly by reading this book.

In this journal of his travels in Bolivia and Peru, Nouwen ponders the presence of God in the poor, the challenge of a persecuted church, the relation between faith and justice, and his own struggle to discern the path along which God is calling him. "Nouwen puts his inexhaustible curiosity and hunger for religious experience gladly at the service of a worldwide audience."--The Boston Globe.

About the Author Henri Nouwen, a Dutch-born priest and one of the world's most popular spiritual writers, was pastor of the L'Arche Daybreak community in Canada. His many best-selling books include *Adam; Jesus: A Gospel*; and *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life*.