

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

The never-ending journey towards greatness

Love alone is the meaning of life. We belong here in this Universe, and nothing happens by chance. You have been loved forever in mysterious realms of existence we cannot yet even imagine. Your future is already a consummation of that love. The reason I'm writing this at all is to play some small part in building that glorious destiny.

My passion is to encourage, motivate, move and inspire you – to be the very best you can be, striving to fully develop your human potential for love. I know you are already a genuine, decent, loving, honest, and committed human being. Yet you have so much more to give, and you know it. Why is that? You cannot escape your heart's persistent call to other unfulfilled dreams and life ambitions.

Never satisfied with where you are at now, you've already made a life commitment to an ongoing process of self-improvement, ever eager to discover new possibilities for your life. I know, because that describes me too. I am already getting on in years, but I'm still buying new books to study and inspire myself to new heights of love and service. My wish is for death to find me still driving forward, still passionate, still moving.

Striving for Excellence

You know that you can become a person who stands out from the crowd. Someone who is extraordinary, inspired by the highest ideals, principles and values. A person dedicated to the service of

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others, in whatever your background and the family you have. That has been my own lifelong dream and practice. I want to share with you, as you strive for human excellence, the lessons I have learnt from experience, throughout my life's journey. Perhaps what I've learnt most is this: we are all capable of radical, loving and life-changing growth, in every area of life.

I Re-invented myself as a Friar

I was only 18 years old, when I first totally changed my life: from schoolboy to Franciscan Friar. I had been brought up a practicing Catholic, and had a strong personal gift of faith. I wanted to dedicate my whole life to God and felt called, not just to become a priest, but also a member of a Religious Community. This 'calling' meant a wholehearted and total commitment to a completely new way of life. It really was a "reinvention" of myself. I now had my own, ready-made "blueprint to reinvent my life", successfully lived for centuries: a Friar Priest.

I was even given a different name and a new identity. John McCann had become Friar Gerry, now dressed in a long grey Franciscan habit. With faith in God, and the help of the community of like-minded men I had joined, I set myself to devote every day, every hour to living a life of love and service of others. I followed the example of that extraordinary 13th century saint, Francis of Assisi. Members of all such Religious Communities pledge themselves to live the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, pursuing a simple, chaste, social life-style.

Multiple Challenges and Radical Change

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Thus began a way of life that has led me through countless challenges and profound changes, over a period of 40 years. Brotherly love was the very atmosphere we breathed. Our greatest test was to develop massive self-discipline and strength of character, to overcome those weaknesses we all suffer from: negativity, self-doubt, fears, mediocrity, laziness, apathy, ignorance. My life has been that of a “spiritual soldier and athlete” – being coached and trained to be positive, brave, committed, hardworking, learned and wise. Monastic life is no refuge for work-shy people, seeking the easy life! Lazy people are clearly unsuited to this demanding way of life, and are soon asked to leave.

Throughout my life, I have faced many trials and difficulties. I share some of these experiences, and give you the strategies that work for me. My life-journey as a priest has been filled with a multitude of major changes, as I confronted its demanding challenges, obstacles and tribulations. From a distance, a common perception is that priests have an easy life, “Working just one day a week on Sunday” as the old joke says. The reality in fact is utterly different, especially for the vast majority, who are faithful, committed and responsible servants of their parish community. That’s why priests took one day off a week, if possible, and usually away from the parish. At home they were on call 24/7.

My rock has always been a life of prayer, hard work and study, within a joyful, loving and supportive community. One of the massive changes I made was becoming a volunteer missionary, working for eight years in Central America. I now worked in a new, strange yet exciting foreign country, with all that entails. I became immersed in a very different world that engulfed me, with

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unfamiliar language, climate, people, culture, standard of living. Yet I loved it, and those years were a major highlight of my life. So you can imagine my pain then when, totally unexpectedly, I was commanded “under Holy Obedience” to return to work, back in England. I obeyed of course, but left a large chunk of my heart behind. I would never see again in this life so many beautiful people who had become my friends.

Back in England more radical changes awaited me. I was assigned a post as a University Theology Lecturer, designing all the courses I taught. Finally I was moved to another town, to run a parish on my own, whilst still maintaining my post as “full-time” lecturer. Then the most traumatic challenge of all: I began to think of leaving it all to marry someone special I had got to know and love. This would be the most far-reaching of all the radical changes I had made in my whole life. To marry, I would have to abandon my vocation as a priest and monk, and live again as a “layperson.”

Finding my soul-mate and a new revelation of love

In the end I chose to leave: yet another enormous, heart-rending life-change. I retired from my lifelong vocation and married my wife. I was already 58 years old. In leaving my former life I now faced many new and profound challenges: a different identity as a married man, living with my wife and her children. It was yet another personal ‘reinvention’, finding new ways to follow my dreams.

By sharing the many insights and simple strategies I’ve learnt, through my own difficulties, struggles and experiences, my one aim and desire is to help you to achieve your own success in life.

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I've followed my dreams, and have lived a life of deep peace and fulfillment. I wish the same for you. I've "been there and done it." I know from my own experience that "radical change" really is an option for everybody. For you! Achieve the dreams you deserve.