

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Kelly Hughes, 312-280-8126
kelly@dechanthughes.com

“This is a generous, loving, charming book – Catholicism at its best.”
—*Publishers Weekly* Starred Review

Why Stay Catholic? Bestselling Author Michael Leach Gives 50 Unexpected Reasons

The “church of ex-Catholics,” made up of the 20 million Americans who have quit Catholicism, would be the country’s second-largest denomination. Yet there are myriad reasons for former, lapsed, recovering, and weary Catholics to reconsider leaving the scandal-plagued church, says bestselling author Michael Leach. His new book, *Why Stay Catholic? Unexpected Answers to a Life-Changing Question* (Loyola Press, March 2011), charts a new, positive direction for thinking about the Catholic Church.

“Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is beautiful,” Leach says, acknowledging that anger and frustration over the devastating sex abuse crisis, political disagreements, and even simple boredom lead Catholics to question their faith. He shines a light on the “good stuff” in Catholicism: “what Teilhard de Chardin called ‘the chosen part of things’....the things that last because they are *spiritual*.”

He divides these riches into three categories:

•**Ideas:** quintessentially Catholic concepts from the 2,000-year-old “deposit of faith” that have been forgotten, neglected or ignored for too long, including “the church’s best-kept secret,” Catholic Social Teaching; the Seamless Garment of Life; Catholic stories; and the Communion of Saints.

•**People:** exemplars of Catholic ideas such as activist Dorothy Day, author Father Andrew Greeley, “Bicycle Disciple” Father Bob McCahill, who serves the poor in Bangladesh, and anti-death penalty activist Antoinette Bosco.

•**Places:** organizations that express Catholic ideals of love, compassion, and truth, including Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, and Catholic schools and hospitals.

Leach shows that Catholicism is not a joyless, hypocritical religion of rules, rituals and regulation. Rather, he reveals a church that “overflows with the ideas of saints and thinkers who glorify love, not fear, harmony, not suffering, and who encourage us to experience life eternal, starting now.”

-continued-

“Too many Catholics fall away from the church because they think there is no room for them,” Leach says. “Now more than ever the church must shout out that there is room in the inn for everyone. Most of all, the church must make space for those it has hurt.”

Leach, a cradle Catholic and former priest who left to marry, is still Catholic himself “because Catholicism, as I’ve grown to understand it over the years, brings me love, joy, peace, gratitude, kindness, and goodness.” He calls for the church to remember what it has forgotten and emphasize what it has neglected. In doing so, the church becomes like Jesus, he says.

He ends the book by imagining a “Vatican III” that makes forgiveness the theme of the church: “It forgives and asks forgiveness of those it has excommunicated: the theologians who have dissented, the bishops who said Latin Masses when told not to, the hospital sister in Phoenix who saved a mother’s life but was accused of abortion. By practicing what it preaches, the church not only draws more people to a loving God but also is able to reach out to other religions without wanting anything in return.”

About Michael Leach

Michael Leach is publisher emeritus and editor-at-large of Orbis Books. Dubbed “the dean of Catholic publishing,” he has been a leader in Catholic publishing for more than 30 years and has been honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Catholic Publishers Association. He has edited and published more than two thousand books, by Nobel Prize winners, National Book Award winners, and hundreds of Catholic Book Award winners. He has served as president of the Catholic Publishers Association and the ecumenical Religion Publishers Group. He is the author or editor of seven books of his own, including the best seller *I like Being Catholic*. His other books include *I Like Being Married*, *I Like Being an American*, *The Maryknoll Book of Prayers*, and *The People’s Catechism*.

Michael lives in Connecticut, with his wife of forty years, Vickie, who is featured in the book as an exemplar of gratitude. They have two sons and two grandchildren percolating.

###

Why Stay Catholic?
Unexpected Answers to a Life-Changing Question

by Michael Leach
Loyola Press

PUB DATE: March 2011
ISBN 978-0-8294-3537-5

5.5" x 8.5" Paperback, 224 Pages, \$14.95

Visit www.WhyStayCatholic.com