

The *Pastrix* Preaches

Nadia Bolz-Weber on her life as an unconventional Lutheran Pastor

adapted from her memoir,

Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint

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Smiley TV preachers might tell you that following Jesus is about being good so that God will bless you with cash and prizes, but really it's much more gruesome and meaningful. It's about spiritual physics. Something has to die for something new to live.

This faith helped me get sober. It helped me forgive the fundamentalism of my Church of Christ upbringing. And it helps me to not always have to be right.

"God please help me not be an asshole" is about as common a prayer as I pray in my life.

Punk rock proved there were other people out there who also wanted to scream and break shit, which changed my life, but punk rock, screaming and breaking shit was not Christian. That is to say, I was not Christian.

Comics tell a truth you can see only from the underside of the psyche. At its best, comedy is prophesy and societal dream interpretation. At its worst it's just dick jokes.

I had never stopped believing in God, not really. But I did have to go hang out with his aunt for a while, the goddess. When I tell other Christians of my time with the goddess, I think they expect me to characterize it as a time when I was misguided and I have come back to Jesus and my senses. But it's not like that. I can't imagine that the God of the universe is limited to our ideas of God. I can't imagine that God doesn't reveal God's self in countless ways outside of the symbol system of Christianity.

The book that God "wrote" had been used to bully me and others. Who knew that later I would come to love the Bible, once I discovered all the amazing parts no one ever talked about when I was growing up.

I hadn't learned about grace from the church I grew up in. I did learn about it from sober drunks who managed to stop drinking by giving their will over to the care of God and who tried like hell to live a life according to spiritual principles. They taught me that there was a power greater than myself who could be a source of restoration. That higher power, it ends up, is not me.

There I was, pastor of a GLBTQ inclusive congregation, and I felt revulsion at seeing an intersex person. It was humbling to say the least, and it made me face, in a very real way the limitations of inclusion. I only want to be inclusive of some kinds of people and not of others.

I am a Lutheran because the Lutheran church is the only place that has given me language for what I have experienced to be true in my life, which is why I now call Pastor Ross Merkle the Vampire Who Turned Me.

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