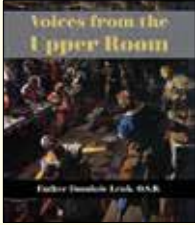


## *Voices from the Upper Room*

By Fr. Dominic Lenk, OSB. St. Louis, MO: En Route Books and Media, 2021. Pages, 170. Paperback, \$14.95. ISBN: 978-1-9567-1516-3.



The author portrays the background stories of a series of familiar individuals who have encountered Jesus in the Gospels, but about whom nothing is known beyond the encounter itself. They are all now gathered together in the Upper Room “during those dark hours between the crucifixion and resurrection” (vii), sharing their grief and waiting together in hope for a future promise they do not understand, but which still draws them together in a vigil of prayer. Key to the experience is the unexplainable attraction to Jesus after being healed or forgiven. This leads them to the Upper Room and telling their story to the assembled community, describing their encounters with Jesus that have changed their lives forever. It becomes an act of shared prayer and faith, an *ekklesia* summoned and convoked.

The common theme in each periscope of Lenk’s is that, precisely because of their experience of being healed and forgiven and valued in Jesus’ eyes, they now have the courage to speak, and are also to pray and wait and hope with others who gather in his name. Individuals become pilgrims together and the reader is invited to join.

The book makes no claims to be a scholarly biblical or historical account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The stories are imaginative fictions of characters familiar to readers of the Bible, but who seem to disappear as easily as they have arrived. The style is simple, in the manner of an exercise in *lectio divina* or an Ignatian contemplation, which imagines what the everyday experiences of familiar but minor characters may offer to the contemporary reader. Religion classes for students unfamiliar with biblical reflection or faith sharing groups in a parish may find the simplicity easily accessible and an opportunity to see the ordinariness of their own lives as sacred opportunities to meet the Lord who heals, forgives, and makes whole. A common reading may allow the Spirit to fashion the same type of community in our own day.

It is not a text for use in graduate classes in biblical theology or spirituality, but it may be a useful pastoral tool for drawing more people into the biblical texts that are often encountered briefly on any given Sunday. The man born blind (John 9:1-41) sums up the hope the author tries to convey: “The third day is upon us. The night is almost over; it will be daylight soon. What will this day reveal to us?” In the re-gathering of ecclesial communities after the wrenching separation of the past few years, maybe these simple stories will give voice to the questions so many in our communities are asking.

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