

THE CRY OF CHRISTIANS:
TRADITION AND TRANSITION

By Thomas Lane, C.M.

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Reviewed by James T. Meehan

In an engaging preface to this collection of talks and articles that span the postconciliar period of Church life, the author describes the pervasive presence of a cry throughout our human journey: "We come into this world with a cry and we leave it with the remains of a cry. In the time in between we go through a whole range of other cries" (7).

Scripture attests to the many cries of the heart in which people expressed their longing for God. Our post-Vatican II experience has evoked not only cries of gratitude and delight, but also of surprise, disappointment or anger. And the cry "glory be to God," though expressive of the very purpose of our existence, can be a cry for help or even indicate shock, dismay or bewilderment. "All the chapters of this book," writes the author, "are attempts to capture some of the tones of some of the cries of 'glory be to God' that are coming from Christians today" (8).

In *The Cry of Christians*, Father Thomas Lane, C.M., has given us a rich series of reflections on the Trinity, doing the will of God, salvation and humanity, the sacrament of reconciliation, prayer grounded in the word of God, the renewal of religious life, developments in the giving of retreats, our mission and ministry to the poor and other such topics. Though originally written for various audiences and occasions (as indicated with specific reference to particular chapters), the author has rewritten much of the original material and has included some new chapters as well. The result is an up-to-date, well-arranged and smoothly written presentation. The twenty-six chapters of the book are distributed throughout eight sections, each reflective of the theme that binds them together: Cry Glory; A Cry To Do God's Will; The Cry of the Saved; Cry Words of Life;

The Cry of the Consecrated; Cry Present; Hearing the Cry of the Poor; A Millennium Cry.

An appealing feature of these essays is the author's readiness to share his personal experience, whether to introduce a topic or even to develop it. For example, in the chapter entitled "Preached or directed?" Lane describes the transition in his own style of giving or making a retreat and yet acknowledges that he has still not resolved the question satisfactorily.

Similarly, one cannot but be touched by the author's love and appreciation of his Vincentian vocation and spirituality which shine through his writings and by his endeavor to bring fresh theological insight to the traditions of Irish religious culture. Not to be overlooked as well is the gentle humor that often surfaces in his reflections.

The author would have us look upon these chapters not so much as essays in theology and spirituality but as "gleanings" from his own reading over the years. But he has read widely and appropriated well the insights of recognized authors who have endeavored to express the theological grounding and spiritual implications of renewal in today's Church. He graciously lists these writers and their works at the outset of the book.

In a word, Thomas Lane has written a work that is sure to enlighten, inspire and challenge serious-minded Christians. *The Cry of Christians* draws continually from the ancient springs of our Catholic faith and life yet keeps asking us to consider where the Spirit is leading us. One has only to glance at the index to appreciate the breadth and depth of the author's knowledge which he shares with us so gently yet so cogently. This book is genuine spiritual nourishment from which we can all profit.