

Review by Warren J. Rouse

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My first introduction to Friar Eric Doyle was his prayer published in The Tablet which profoundly touched me:

Lord of my origin

Draw me closer to you

Lord of my existence

Direct all my ways

Lord of my calling

Give me strength to go on

Lord of my faith

Preserve me from doubt

Lord of my hope

Keep me from despair

Lord of my love

Let me never grow cold

Lord of my past

May I never forget you

Lord of my present

Be near me always

Lord of my future

Keep me faithful to the end

Lord of my life

Let me live in your presence

Lord of my death

Receive me at last

Lord of my eternity

Bless me forever. Amen.

Who was this kindly, scholarly friar (1938-1984) who died at the height of his theological career? I sought out an eyewitness, Joe Chinnici, who recalls:

“I did meet Eric Doyle, several times. He was the type of personality, extremely gifted intellectually, who was totally charismatic, and would light up a room as soon as he entered it. I saw him once in a couple of situations when I was in awe, not at what he said, but at his sheer presence and enthusiasm in saying it. He was really the heart and soul of the English Province's intellectual revival, got cancer (I believe) and died at a very early age, in his forties.

“He was also well known in British circles, both academically and ecumenically. You and I together do not pack into our combined years and work half of his! Unbelievable. But he was also very accessible, and offered to help me when I first got to Oxford, but unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, we never connected at that time, one reason being he was tied up in Canterbury and the other place, Cambridge, which was just too far removed from the airy heights of Oxford!”

Now comes the superb, breathtaking collection of Doyle's writings, My Heart's Quest, edited with great dedication and skill by Josef Raischl, S.F.O and André Cirino, O.F.M.—a loving tribute to his writings and person. In the Preface, his Provincial Minister writes about Eric:

“He alerted us to the wealth of spiritual living, prayer, devotion, philosophy, theology that saturates our Franciscan heritage...He did this in the only real way—not just by talking about it—but by his personal effort and commitment to try, daily, to become what he was first receiving—friar minor.”

Finally we have a wide range of his writings and talks so wisely chosen by the editors. To cite individual passages and chapters is impossible simply because of the high quality and clarity he brought to his audiences. As he dips into this collection the reader almost spontaneously wishes that he had met Eric Doyle and listened to his seemingly informal lectures.

Fortunately, and I enthusiastically commend the editors here, the book comes with 2 recorded talks on CDs: “The Universal Call to Holiness” and “Saint Francis-Saint Clare and Spiritual Motherhood,” giving us a fine taste and appreciation of both content and style. No wonder Joe Chinnici remembers: “I was in awe, not at what he said, but at his sheer presence and enthusiasm in saying it.”

This, then, is a must book for friars and friary libraries. No question about it! Published by the International Study Center at Canterbury, Kent, it is available in this country from the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University.

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