

Grassi, Carolyn. *Brooklyn Beginnings*. San Francisco: Patmos Press, 2022. \$15.00.

Once a Maryknoll nun, poet Carolyn Grassi moved beyond convent confines and into a deep, profoundly devoted relationship and marriage to Maryknoll priest and Biblical scholar, Joseph Grassi. Her heartfelt, meditative collection is refreshingly approachable, accessible, and honest. Her writings take the reader from her childhood in Brooklyn through her monastic experience, world travel, and partnership with her beloved husband until his death in 2010, continuing on to her experiences as a parent and grandparent, her challenges with widowhood, and the recent period of isolation during the COVID pandemic. A marvelous storyteller, Grassi's brings to the reader vivid imagery that evokes memories for all of us—a snowfall, a first communion, bluebells, croissants (“shapely crescent moons...reclining in blond-flaked gowns”)—while gifting the reader with insights and observations arising from her deep Catholic faith and her lifelong engagement with social justice issues.

Opening this book is like being invited into a dear friend's home to hear story after story—and on into her very heart and soul. Grassi sees the magic, the divinity, the beauty in everything she experiences. A line like “wild strawberries / surprised by poppies pushing through stones” brings the image into our line of vision; we see the world through her eyes. A lifetime of insight and experience is gifted to us as we read. *Brava, Carolyn!*

Carolyn Grassi's books: *Brooklyn Beginnings: Poems*, with an Afterword by James Torrens S.J., *Heart and Soul: Poems*, foreword by Ron Hansen, and *Transparencies Revisited: Poems*. She is recipient of an Ingram Merrill Foundation Award grant.

--Judy Clarence