

Gathering Shards: A Franciscan Life
from the Foreword by Sr. Margaret Carney

With uncanny insight, Murray Bodo first unveils his difficult—sometimes tortured path—to adult faith and authentic Franciscan living. He makes sure that we understand his primal parental world, the wise friars who guided his early years as a Franciscan novice, the three friends whose encounters inspired him (Denise Levertov, Bertie Lomas, Francis Harpin). Once grounded in this familiar human soil, the reader finds it easier to enter the more difficult terrain—the study of the hidden maps of a soul’s pilgrimage.

The narrative is wonderful in itself. However, the artful inclusion of poems that mirror the historical memories; the introductory lines from such luminaries as Kierkegaard, Milosz, Waugh and Ibsen; the splendid photos of native pottery—all add delight. They are not ornamental. They are tools for discerning the inner and outer landscapes that are constantly invoked as formative elements that shape consciousness, fill memory, and invite increasingly profound introspection.

Beyond the story of a single gifted and gifting spirit, this life history has yet another layer of importance. His individual story is extraordinary on many levels and Murray comes to see that ever more clearly in the exercise of writing it. What this memoir gives us, however, is a fascinating account of what thousands of Catholics—especially religious men and women—lived in the tumultuous fifty years following Vatican II. Many will find dramatic echoes of their own stories here.