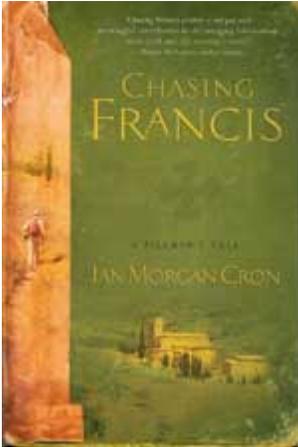


Readin' & Writin' With Lauraine- October 2006



Several months ago, I reviewed a book titled *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning. I suggested then that this was a book people of faith would be wise to read. I know that many of you did.

Recently, I received a book in the mail from a publisher titled *Chasing Francis* by Ian Morgan Cron and endorsed by Brennan Manning. I have said more than once that I don't pay attention to endorsers. Wrong again. This time I did and I'm grateful for Manning's encouragement.

Chasing Francis is a contemporary novel about a pastor who finally admits to his congregation that he is burned out, his faith is in tatters and he cannot tell them how to live any longer because he doesn't believe. You can imagine their consternation, anger, fear and when he asks for a sabbatical, they readily agree. Pastor Chase Folson receives a letter from a sort-of-relative, (who is also a Catholic priest), inviting him to come to Florence, Italy. He accepts the invitation, and, through the men he meets, Chase begins his search for Francis, Francis of Assisi that is.

Through his journals and adventures we learn of his reactions to a wealthy man who gives his all to loving and serving the poor, a man who understands and teaches the value of meditation and corporate worship, and who believes that love and simplicity draw us closer to each other and to our heavenly Father.

In these days of frantic busy-ness, we can all benefit from the lessons Chase learned in his sojourn with St. Francis. Because this deeply moving account was in story form, I cheered for this man and wept with him as he realized great change in his life. The book made me want to go to those places and meet the people Chase met. I've never been on a pilgrimage; do regular people do such things nowadays? And a new thought, do I really need to go there to practice the lessons this man learned? I don't know the answers but I still want to go there.

So what does this have to do with writing? Cron explored deep truths and made them come alive through the story of this man. Can we as writers do the same thing, taking something we deeply believe and turning it into story? *Pilgrim's Progress* did this years ago but that kind of writing is not as popular today. However, the bottom line is that we all learn and the key word, remember, when a story is told. Many of us made up stories for our children and the more entertaining the story, the more the lesson was learned. I remember reading Aesop's Fables, all stories with a moral or lesson attached.

It seems to me that today we think we are beyond this kind of storytelling. But I wonder if we really are. Were I teaching writing, a fun assignment might be to write a modern day fable using things around us that we all know and understand. Ever read the story about the North Wind and the Sun, and their challenge to see who could make the man take his coat off quicker?

Setting yourself assignments as a writer is an excellent way to try new things. Write a poem, a play, an allegory, a fairy tale, a fable. Have fun with it and read it aloud. You might be surprised at the wonderful stories you come up with. Maybe it is time we all went on a pilgrimage of one kind or another.

Until next month,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine