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Pompea's "Flourish: Engaging the confluence of faith, art, beauty & restorative justice" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Pompea, M. (2019). *Flourish: Engaging the confluence of faith, art, beauty & restorative justice*. CA: Urban Loft Publishers. 168 pp. \$16.95. ISBN 9781949625035

At a time when people are attempting to navigate an uncertain world, especially those living in cities, *Flourish* is a welcome guide to the tremendous regenerative power of the arts within ministry and outreach work. Dr. Maria Pompea is a professor at Bakke Graduate University and founder of Flourish, a non-profit company which uses the arts to engage and foster healthy communities. In *Flourish*, Dr. Pompea takes the reader on a journey through the restorative and redemptive power of the arts, demonstrating how they can be effective in ministry especially to those who live in urban areas.

Over the course of ten chapters, Pompea calls the reader to rediscover their “muchness”, a term used by the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Pompea describes this term as “an attitude of the heart.” Muchness is the potential that God has given mankind to live full lives by the power of the Holy Spirit; lives filled with beauty, faith, and healing justice. It is a freedom given to mankind by Christ’s sacrifice thus liberating humanity from focusing on the self, recreating them as “anointed change agents” who then proceed to change the world around them for God’s glory. Just as God imbued humanity with creativity to glorify Him, these same creative forces can be used to facilitate change within communities, cities, and urban areas. Through Christ’s sacrifice, and the power of redemptive, faith-infused art, true change can occur. Pompea closes each chapter with personal testimonials from individuals who work in all areas of the arts who have experienced fundamental life changes via co-operative art projects.

Pompea feels, due to the ever-increasing growth outside of city limits, a distinct separation between urban and suburban areas has occurred. Along with this physical separation, a spiritual separation has also taken place. Within post-modern society, faith has been firmly placed on the back burner and many cities, once vestiges of growth and community, now groan under the weight of hopelessness and heartbreak. Christians and faith institutions are in an excellent position to outreach to these communities and connect with the urban heart of the city and its people. Through the arts, communities can be brought out from under this weight and once again thrive. Art in all its forms has a way of touching the human heart and accessing

the human condition in a deeply personal and spiritual way. Pompea explores how restorative and deeply personal transformations can occur when faith-based arts are used as “creative vehicles for influence” and catalysts for change. These changes allow people to view both God and life in a different way, reorientating their viewpoint and perspective from a survivalist outlook to a life-enriching joyful outlook.

Flourish is an exceptional and thought-provoking book for those working in the arts and ministry. It is an ideal accompanying textbook for university education at all levels, providing plenty of examples of how faith-based arts can transform and regenerate modern society. Pompea also includes a chapter focusing on how to create an Arts Ministry Model which makes this book an essential addition to the library of any faith-centered artist or ministry based in cities and urban areas.

Reviewer

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