



# Swimming with Scapulars: True Confessions of a Young Catholic

*Matthew Lickona*

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Meet Matthew Lickona, a thirty-something wine columnist, sometime cartoonist, avid moviegoer, fan of alternative rock, and wonderfully talented writer. He is also a devoutly religious young man (“I am a Roman Catholic, baptized as an infant and raised in the faith, a faith which holds the exemplary and redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ at its core.”) who fasts during Lent, leads his family in prayer every day, and wears a scapular—a medieval amulet said to protect the wearer from harm.

In Lickona’s “true confessions,” we are introduced to a unique and singular voice, but one that is emblematic of a new generation of believers who combine a premodern faith with a postmodern sensibility. *Swimming with Scapulars* is a modern-day, Catholic, coming-of-age story that takes its author from the austere Catholicism of his Irish-French family in upstate New York to the exotic spiritual tapestry of Southern California. It is the story of the formation of an ardent young believer who is painfully honest about his spiritual shortcomings (“In times of suffering, I look first to myself. God is the backup, to be called upon when I find myself insufficient.”), yet who finds consuming joy in receiving the Eucharist and embracing “the ancient treasures of the faith.”

Lickona doesn’t mind that many of his secular friends and acquaintances regard him as a religious fanatic. As he writes, “Perhaps, coming from a fanatic, the message of God’s love will regain some of its wonderful outrageousness. ‘Listen. I have a secret. I eat God, and I have his life in me. It’s the best thing in the world.’”

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