

Capuchin friar Richard Hart has written another book: How Christian Are You? (Paulist Press, 2009). It is intended as a challenge to Christians who may have become complacent or half-hearted in their commitment to be true disciples of Christ in the modern age. He notes in the Introduction that when he told a woman friend about the book's title, she declared at once, "I don't want to read it!"

The book does have a hard edge to it. Brother Richard asks if we as Christians have become "spiritually impotent," are paralyzed by cheap grace, or may have grown lukewarm from the onslaught of a secularized society.

Beginning with a convincing proclamation of the good news that we are loved by God with a strong and unfailing love, Brother Richard reminds us of the serious demands of the Gospel taught and lived by Jesus. Our love of neighbor ought to mirror God's all-inclusive love. We need to discipline ourselves to make the right choices and endure willingly the requirements of discipleship. We are called to be tolerant of different people and viewpoints, yet intolerant of injustice, greed, and violence. We need to extend forgiveness to those who have offended us, and that forgiveness must also include self-forgiveness for our own wrongdoing. There is a provocative chapter on the role of money and possessions in the lives of Christians, and the book concludes with a fine section on prayer.

While the book is written from a Catholic viewpoint, other Christians will be at home in its landscape. It is solidly grounded in Scripture and is filled with references to contemporary events and real-life anecdotes.

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