Seamus Mulholland teaches at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury, and this book is the fruit of years of studying, meditating on and following the way of Francis, distilled into 33 poems, each about an incident or person in the life of Francis. Each poem is preceded by an historical introduction and followed by a meditation.

The introductions are based on and compare the sources for Francis' life (mainly 1 and 2 Celano, The Legend of the Three Companions and Bonaventure's Legenda Maior). The reader needs to have prior knowledge of Francis' life story; this book gives startling and stimulating insights into that story.

The earliest poems and meditations explore the impact on Francis of the battle of Collestrada between Assisi and Perugia in 1202 which (the author maintains) "may have been the defining moment in Francis' life", because of the trauma of battle, the slaughter of his friends and his subsequent imprisonment and illness. Francis' experience at Collestrada "interiorly destroyed him". The command to rebuild what was in ruins referred not just to the church of San Damiano but to Francis himself.

Another aspect of Francis' conversion often ignored but explored here is Francis receiving (at Poggio Bustone in 1208) assurance that his sins were forgiven - "forgiveness which he experienced within himself for the first time...in this little village".

The poems are not in the chronological order of the incidents they reflect on; most of them are in the voice of Francis himself. The layout of the book is excellent; each of the 33 sections occupies four pages - one for the title, one for the introduction, one for the poem and one for the meditation. But there are a surprising number of misprints.

Seamus Mulholland is already a published poet, and his poetic skill is apparent in each section.

Like A Month with Saint Francis by Brother Ramon SSF (SPCK, 1999), this is a book to live and pray with, a day at a time. Each reading and re-reading will yield new insight, inspiration and guidance and encouragement to follow Jesus in the way of St. Francis of Assisi.

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