

## The Truth about the Gift of Faith

**Kaye Colello**

Dorrance Publishing

(268pp)

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*The Truth about the Gift of Faith is a fascinating memoir that recounts enormous personal growth.*

Incorporating spiritual lessons, Kaye Colello's emotional memoir *The Truth about the Gift of Faith* details her growth from being a wounded, motherless teenager to being a grounded wife and mother of two.

After enduring a childhood that included years in foster care, a chronically ill mother, and four stepsiblings from two different fathers, Colello persevered to become a successful business manager and homeowner—by all appearances a well-adjusted adult. This is where her memoir begins. It then chronicles Colello's work to overcome the emotional turmoil and deep-rooted psychological traumas that she suppressed until love, marriage, and motherhood forced her to confront them. From the fraught decision to give up the small apartment she bought for herself and move in to her husband's big, ramshackle house to the life-threatening illness of her daughter, this book is a catalogue of pivotal moments in her life and the attendant psychological and spiritual work that Colello did in order to overcome them.

The final half of the book focuses on the birth and medical challenges of Colello's second daughter, Faith, revealing a rare genetic disorder known as congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) that deformed Faith's genitalia in utero and led Colello and her husband Joey to expect a son rather than a daughter. It took over a week for the hospital staff to discover Faith's biological sex, during which Colello and Joey referred to her as Biagio and believed they had a son. The joy, sadness, and extreme love that is expressed when they learned the cause of their baby's illness is palpable—a beautiful rendering of the complex devotion of a parent to her child.

Revelations in the form of dreams are a recurring theme, as is a central thesis concerning time. However, the book's explicitly theoretical passages are too muddled to decipher with ease ("Time is the only way *time* can be measured, and at the moment of realization, we feel change has been a positive or negative one"), as when Colello describes time as a powerful force akin to fate that can either be accepted or resisted, providing clarity or sowing confusion. While the idea is esoteric, its expression as a basic shift from confusion to clarity animates the narrative—appearing in Colello's relationship to her history, the metaphor of a boat on the ocean, and in her becoming the very thing she longs for: a mother.

Structurally, the narrative is broken up into chapters that detail spiritual ideas and religious experiences. Some of its interruptions are brilliant and welcome, but others mute the book's emotional force. A similar pattern emerges at the level of language, where inspiring sentences and fresh ideas are mixed in with awkward and repetitive formulations. The choice to capitalize and italicize certain words at irregular intervals makes the prose even murkier.

An account of enormous personal growth that is characterized by stark honesty and a willingness to express the intimate and vulnerable experiences of becoming a wife and a mother, *The Truth about the Gift of Faith* is a fascinating memoir.

WILLEM MARX (August 2, 2023)

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