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## The Unaware Life is not Worth Living

By Dónal Thompson



Dangerous Man

The man in the photograph above was condemned by the Spanish Inquisition. The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the direct descendant of the Inquisition) have said that this man's writings could be dangerous.

They are right. Listen to one of his stories. *'All questions at the public meeting that day were about life beyond the grave. The Master only laughed and did not give a single answer. To his disciples, who demanded to know the reason for his evasiveness, he later said, "Have you observed that it is precisely those who do not know what to do with this life who want another that will last forever?" "But is there life after death or is there not?" asked a disciple. "Is there life before death? that is the question!" said the Master.'*

You can imagine how that sort of story would upset people with rigid religious views. It is surprising then to discover that Antony De Mello was a Jesuit priest. De Mello collected many stories from around the world ;stories that illustrated some point of awareness, of wisdom. He

removed all the cultural references so the readers' prejudices would not impede understanding. The book was called "The Song of the Bird" and was published to great acclaim. Other books followed including "One Minute Wisdom", "Sadhana" and the vastly important "Awareness".

"Awareness" we are invited to wake up and stop suffering. Reading the book is like attending one of De Mello's Spirituality Workshops (which were famous for their effectiveness). But I warn you. The book is, as Cardinal Ratzinger said, dangerous. It could change your life. For better. For ever. As he said... *"I challenge anyone to think of anything more practical than spirituality as I have defined it... not piety, not devotion, not religion, not worship, but spirituality...waking up, waking up! Look at the heartache everywhere, look at the loneliness, look at the fear, the confusion, the conflict in the hearts of people, inner conflict, outer conflict. Suppose somebody gave you a way of getting rid of all of that? Suppose somebody gave you a way to stop that tremendous drainage of energy, of health, of emotion that comes from these conflicts and confusion. Would you want that? Suppose somebody showed us a way whereby we would truly love one another, and be at peace, be at love. Can you think of anything more practical than that? But, instead, you have people thinking that big business is more practical, that politics is more practical, that science is more practical. What's the earthly use of putting a man on the moon when we cannot live on the earth?"*

My aunt gave me the book years and years ago. I am convinced I have avoided some terrible mistakes by reading it. Maybe. Maybe not. I promised myself that I would do what my aunt did - introduce Anthony De Mello to someone, someday. And maybe that person would benefit in the way I did. Maybe that someday is today. Maybe that someone is you. The unaware life is not worth living.