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BROTHER JOHN

A Monk, a Pilgrim, and the Purpose of Life

Written by August Turak
Illustrated by Glenn Harrington

The Templeton Prize winning story of a magical encounter between the author and an umbrella wielding Trappist monk that reveals the redemptive power of a purposeful life. Set in the monastery of Mepkin Abbey and brought to life with 20 paintings by Glenn Harrington, an award-winning artist, this book's inspirational message and rich illustrations will bring the reader back again and again.



"Congratulations, August! We're proud of you and Brother John."

- Rick Warren, author, *The Purpose Driven Life*

"A Powerful Message About What Truly Makes Life Worth Living."

- Carl McColman, author

"A simple story of a life profoundly lived. Deeply rewarding food for contemplation."

- William Cahoy, PhD, Dean Emeritus,
Saint John's University Theology and Seminary

"Turak's beautiful Brother John gently points us inward and upward toward our ultimate purpose."

- David W. Miller, PhD, Princeton University
Faith & Work Initiative



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In 2004, a former student urged me to enter the John Templeton Foundation “Power of Purpose” Essay Contest. Answering the question, “What is the Purpose of Life?” in 3,500 words or less was daunting enough, but I quickly discovered that I was also a novice writer going up against thousands of professionals and previously published material. And just to keep it interesting, by the time I heard about the year-long contest, the deadline was a mere ten days away.



I wasted several days writing furiously and getting nowhere. Then another former student came to my rescue: “Why don’t you just write up that story about Brother John and his magical umbrella that you love telling so much?”

Thus begins August Turak’s story about Mepkin Abbey and his quest for the purpose of life. A story that ultimately became *Brother John*, the winner of the \$100,000 Templeton Prize.



Brother John

*In any case, I feel I can personally guarantee
that St. Thomas Aquinas loved God,
because for the life of me I cannot help loving St. Thomas.*
-Flannery O'Connor



Uncertainty as to life's purpose is much in vogue today. So, too, are the relativistic notions that would consign life's purpose to a matter of taste. The agony of life is uncertainty, and the rationalization is that uncertainty is certain. However, the plain truth is that, for all our anguish, we treasure uncertainty. Doubt forestalls action. The problem with life's purpose is that we know darn well what it is but are unwilling to face the changes in our lives that a commitment to self-transcendence, to being the best human being we could possibly be, would entail. It wearies us just thinking about it. So we rationalize that it's all "relative," or that we're already doing enough and don't have time. Worst of all, we rationalize that those who do accept the challenges inherent in self-transcendence are uniquely gifted and specially graced.

As my eyes adjusted, I made out a dim figure standing under an umbrella outlined by the rain and glowing in the light from the still-open door. It was Brother John in a thin monastic habit, his slouched 60 year-old body ignoring the cold.

“Brother John! What are you doing?”

“I’m here to walk the people who forgot their umbrellas back to their rooms,” he replied softly.

