

'Ragamuffin Gospel' Author Brennan Manning Dies

Brennan Manning, the Christian author, Franciscan priest, speaker and theologian best known for his book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, died on Friday following several years of declining health. He was 78.

Manning's sister and brother-in-law, Gerry and Art Rubino, announced his passing on Manning's website and Facebook page, adding that, "While he will be greatly missed we should all take comfort in the fact that he is resting in the loving arms of his Abba."

A prolific writer who once released nine books over a two-year stretch, Manning was known as a fierce advocate for the marginalized, poor and church-abused. His *Ragamuffin Gospel*, released in 1990, was billed as "good news for the bedraggled, beat-up and burnt-out," and heralded Jesus' gospel of grace over a works-based salvation. The book became an oft-quoted classic for many well-known authors, artists and musicians, including Michael W. Smith, Michael Card and the late Rich Mullins, whose Ragamuffin Band was named after Manning's book.

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle," Manning wrote. "That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."

After graduating from Saint Francis College in Loretto, Pa., Manning was ordained a Franciscan priest in 1963 and spent years as a theology professor at the University of Steubenville in Ohio and the spiritual director of Saint Francis Seminary. He later joined a European order called the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, spending time in France, Spain and Switzerland (where he was voluntarily

imprisoned).

Upon returning stateside, Manning began writing more, especially following a brief relapse into his struggle with alcohol. With a renewed sense of God's grace and love, Manning wrote with raw vulnerability and brokenness—a trait that became appreciated by readers worldwide and ran through such books as *Journey of the Prodigal*, *Ruthless Truth*, *The Boy Who Cried Abba* and *Signature of Jesus*.