



With God in Russia

Walter J. Ciszek , Daniel L. Flaherty

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By Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J. Father Walter Ciszek, S.J., author of the best-selling *He Leadeth Me*, tells here the gripping, astounding story of his twenty-three years in Russian prison camps in Siberia, how he was falsely imprisoned as an "American spy", the incredible rigors of daily life as a prisoner, and his extraordinary faith in God and commitment to his priestly vows and vocation. He said Mass under cover, in constant danger of death. He heard confession of hundreds who could have betrayed him; he aided spiritually many who could have gained by exposing him. This is a remarkable story of personal experience. It would be difficult to write fiction that could honestly portray the heroic patience, endurance, fortitude and complete trust in God lived by Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J. "A man of invincible faith and heroic fortitude, who is sustained by a great love for God and his fellow man. His story is highly recommended as a worthwhile reading experience for one and all." - Best Sellers "...an incisive portrayal of the struggle for existence in a Russian prison camp. The very simplicity of presentation makes it unforgettable." - Louisville Times

With God in Russia Details

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P says

Fr. Cizek's account of his years in Soviet solitary confinement, Siberian prison camps, and finally serving as parish priest while under constant KGB surveillance is all the more harrowing and inspirational for the frank, humble, matter-of-fact manner in which it's told.

Kate. says

True story. A hard-nosed Jesuit priest slipped behind soviet lines during WWII and got trapped there for 23 years. Through tortuous interrogations, 15 years of hard labor in Siberian labor camps, and plenty of laugh-or-else-you'd-cry hijinx, Walter Cizek was convinced that he was made for this struggle. He was possibly the most disciplined and stubborn man of the 20th Century: blown up in coal mines, stuck in solitary for 5 years, nearly executed during a prison uprising, electrocuted while working construction, starved for decades on end. And yet, he was convinced that he needn't worry because God had his back. And seeing how he survived the camps and was returned home in a Cold War spy swap, you have to think that he might have had the cosmos figured out.

I remember an argument I got into in a class on Philosophy of Law -- is Communism just an economic system or is it a violation of human liberty/dignity/whatever? I am not exactly sure, even now. But in this book you really get to see the fascinating and absurd mechanics of life in the USSR, and wonder if that country's experience was just a load of misery and suffering, covered in a shellac of bureaucratic ego and paranoia.

Hey Benedict! Mister anti-woman, retro-fitted bossy pants! CANONIZE THIS GUY ALREADY! We promise not to spend too much time comparing how you both spent your free time during Hitler's rise to power.

Karina says

This is autobiographical, about his imprisonment in Russia.

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Just started reading a couple of days ago. It reminds me of the memoir by Ginzburg a bit (Journey into the Whirlwind) which basically also had to do with the Russian prisons, interrogations and work camps in Siberia and Ginzburg also was a political prisoner, but obviously this author has a rather different perspective as an American and a priest. (As far as I remember, it seemed that the interrogators were tougher on Ginzburg. I wondered if it's due to the fact that Cizek was an American citizen and they were concerned that if he ever went back he'd tell stories about torture, etc.)

I was so happy to read about the first time Fr. Cizek was able to celebrate Mass after 5 years. Oh, and the part where he got the high recognition of "Zvanie Udarnika Kommunisticheskogo Truda" (translated in the book as "Shock Troop of Communist Labor") made me laugh out loud. (I was reading that on my lunch break

at work: not sure what my co-workers thought...) It was just so unexpected; it's a very old term.

I was impressed with the way Cizek argued with the authorities about conducting his missionary work after his release (with restrictions). So brave to continue doing it after numerous hints.

Timmy says

Absolutely amazing book. Edge of your seat suspense coupled with inspirational faith in God in a true life story that follows a priest who devoted his life to spread the faith to the atheistic Soviet Union. His survival in the Gulag against brutal cold, little food, thuggish gangs, sadistic guards not to mention the ever dangerous work in the mines makes for compelling reading. Might be the finest book I've read this year.

Vojtech says

Knihu jsem si víceméně náhodně vybral na Audiotéce, protože téma znělo zajímavě. Nebyl jsem zklamán, příběh mi zcela pohltil. Jedná se o příběh jezuity z USA, který se rozhodnul sloužit v období kolem druhé světové války v číně v Rusku. Jeho působení se splnilo a za své dobré skutky byl po zásluze odměněn patnáctiletým pobytem v pracovním táboře na Sibiři. Podmínky tam zcela dle očekávání naprosto šílené. Ani tam se nenechal zlomit a dál sloužil mše, dál křtil a oddával. Odhodlání a víra opravdu inspirující. Velmi zajímavý a skoro neuvěřitelný příběh.

Anna says

I finished this book in the nick of time for a Catholic book club with one of our parish priests who admires Fr. Cizek. I enjoyed the book, and was amazed by how easily and openly he spoke of extreme hardships. I expect the fruit of reading this book will be revealed when I read his later books; understanding someone's life experience often helps understand the...I don't want to say angle, but choice of words and which lessons to try and pass on. That said, this book on its own is quite good. I am glad I read it and have an appreciation for the level of trust in the providence of God Fr. Cizek always displayed.

Anne-Marie says

From the moment Fr Walter Cizek heard the appeal from Rome to Jesuit priests to serve the Catholic Church in Russia he was convinced that this was God's will for him. Nothing was going to stop him fulfilling it. And he did. Perhaps not in the way he might have anticipated, but there is no doubt he did it. He heroically and faithfully served the Church in Russia between 1939 and 1963 while falsely imprisoned in Moscow and Siberia and while he was "free" in Norilsk and Abakan. How he survived is an absolute mystery and how he withstood the pressure from the secret police was equally miraculous. His fortitude and trust in God was exemplary. His account of his experiences is incredible. A gripping and inspiring read.

Nancy says

WE enjoyed this. (It was a "car read.") Ciszek was a Jesuit priest who chose to go to Eastern Europe to work with Eastern rite Catholics toward the end of WWII, only to be arrested as a "spy" for the Vatican. He spent 23 years in work camps and prisons before being released. And then it was a number of more years before after that before he was able to leave Russia, primarily because of the work of his sisters. He gets discouraged many times but never does he lose his faith or his ability to befriend and support other people in the same situations.

Rosemary Blevins says

Before I get into this, I just want to say that, even as someone who doesn't associate with any form of religion, this biography is very much worth reading.

When I first bought this book, I was at a point where I was questioning religion, and I had stopped into a little religion-oriented bookstore in my town. I'm a very big fan of world history, more specifically, even, Russian history, and so this book caught my eye almost as soon as I walked in the door.

Ciszek's time in Eastern Europe and Russia is so well captured in this book. As you're reading through the years, you can really feel what Ciszek was feeling. You get to know his fears, his friends, his strengths and his weaknesses. I felt massive amounts of sympathy for Ciszek the first time I read this book, especially since, for most of the time passed in the book, Ciszek really believes that he may never return home to America.

I indeed would recommend this biography to anyone, and when I say anyone, I mean it. You don't have to be a devout Catholic to enjoy this; I'm a pretty adamant atheist and I still very much enjoyed it. Yes, Ciszek talks about how he remained a priest through all of those years in Russia, but it isn't a sickening amount of "religious propaganda". Being a priest is a part of his life, and without it, this biography would make absolutely no sense.

Overall, I can say that I thoroughly enjoyed this book, though, perhaps, I would have liked to know what Ciszek's life was like upon returning to America?

Emily says

Incredible memoir of incredible man. Good overview of Soviet Union, gulags, Siberia... it's amazing what people can endure. Would have liked more spiritual account here, but that's in his other book.

Elisa says

A man without faith could not have survived -- psychologically, if not physically -- the ordeals this man endured in communist Russia. From total isolation for years in prison, torture, constant interrogations, brutal work camps in Siberia, Walter Ciszek retained not only his sanity, but his humor, his kindness, and his

ability to serve others as a priest. His faith was often his only sustenance through years of torment, and his relationship with God allowed him to endure even the worst treatment because, as he said, he knew he was never alone, and that God was watching over him. This gave him the ability to help those who were suffering even more than he was, and to minister to people who had even less than he -- people with no spiritual life, no means to access baptism, or the Bible, or faith.

An inspiring, challenging story that puts our own ordinary, wealthy, Western-world troubles in perspective. If he can say "God's will be done" in the midst of such trouble, how can I not?

booklady says

This is Father Ciszek's first book, the one which gives the factual account of his early life, decision to become a priest, seminary years, journey to Poland and behind the Iron Curtain where he lived and was eventually held captive for many years, presumed dead by his family and all who knew him in the US. It's a fascinating account, both humorous and inspiring in turns and yet Fr. Ciszek only wrote it because he was asked to. It wasn't the book he wanted to write. Later he went on to write *He Leadeth Me* which tells the spiritual aspect of his journey inside the Soviet Union and how God used him to do His Will. In fact this second book is the more inspiring of the two books, while this book, is written in a factual, straightforward, explanatory style. Both books complement each other, can be read in either order and are guaranteed to enliven and encourage you spiritually.

Amicizia says

This is Walter Ciszek's first book about his experience as a priest living in captivity in the Soviet Union. Whereas "*He Leadeth Me*" deals with the spiritual side of his experience, "*With God in Russia*" is more of a factual account of what happened, albeit one that is told in a dramatic, suspenseful style that makes it almost read like an adventure novel. A great read and very inspiring. Be sure to read "*He Leadeth Me*" to get the FULL story of this heroic Jesuit's life.

Tanya says

I have now read both "*He Leadeth Me*" and this book. Unintentionally, I read them backwards, but I enjoyed both immensely. I always love a good Autobiography :) . My initial thoughts were "why did he write two separate books? He could of just combined both books into one." But after reading them both, I realized why he had written two books. The reliving of the actual story to share his experience with the rest of us must have been challenging in of itself.

His story is very captivating and thought provoking. I could feel his thoughts, worries and fears right along with him as he shared the hardest years of his life with us. He had an incredible amount of faith and perseverance. He had complete trust in Our Lord, Jesus Christ to protect and lead the way and what a wonderful example of saying "yes" and being totally accepting to God's will.

Sarah says

I read this book on the recommendation of a colleague because I had a group of students who specifically requested a book about Catholicism, but not a book that was instructional or expositional on the theory of Catholic beliefs. These students were looking for a traditional novel structure: plot, character development, themes centered around their Catholic beliefs, etc. This book is definitely structured as such, but the history and the plot sort of overwhelms the theology and doesn't do enough to explore Ciszek's beliefs and actions. However, I'm not sure that there is a perfect balance out there, and everything in this book is interesting, humorous, and worthy of discussion. Overall, I enjoyed it and it's been a good book for small group discussion.
