



The Cost of Community: Jesus, St. Francis and Life in the Kingdom

By Jamie Arpin-Ricci

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At the end of His most central teaching, Jesus says that the wise person is the one *"who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice"*. For nearly two thousand, these words- the Sermon on the Mount- have stood as the foundation for some of the most transformative movements and individuals in Christian history. From St. Francis of Assisi to Martin Luther King Jr., the Sermon on the Mount has produce radical faithfulness that has changed the world.

In this challenging and accessible exploration of the Sermon on the Mount, Arpin-Ricci invites readers into the community of Christ where we are transformed into genuine disciples. Using the fascinating life of St. Francis of Assisi and the journey of his own inner city church community, Arpin-Ricci lays out a model of discipleship that is much needed in the church and world today.

This is an ideal resource for churches, small groups and intentional communities who are seeking to discover what it means to truly hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Though the content of this book is solidly grounded in scholarly reflection, there remains an undercurrent of simplicity. It is not preachy in tone; rather, the writing reveals a fundamental stance of humility in the face of the Paschal Mystery." (Edwin Buettner, *Prairie Messenger*, June 20, 2012)

"Those involved with missional or intentional faith communities, or interested in neomonasticism, may find much to glean from *The Cost of Community*. However, this book is worth a read if for no other reason than it beckons the reader to consider the implications of the Sermon on the Mount for one's own life." (Steve Gioielli, *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, 2012, Vol. 5, No. 1)

"This gentle memoir combines the life of St. Francis with the Sermon on the Mount. The treat to this book is to see how this combination is working itself out in a humble place in Canada; it makes both the Sermon and St. Francis real for us today." (Scot McKnight, Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies, North Park University, and author, *One.Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow* and *The King Jesus Gospel*)

"Following Jesus is not simply about learning a few important lessons that we apply to our lives to make us better people. Through moving stories of hope and failure, *The Cost of Community* reminds me that following Jesus is both a dangerous and demanding undertaking if we honestly embrace his invitation 'to hear my words and do likewise.'" (Richard Twiss, Sicangu Lakota, president, Wiconi International)

"This thought-provoking, challenging and often heart-rending book had a profound impact on me. I heartily recommend it to all followers of Christ who want to be challenged to take their faith more seriously." (Christine Sine, executive director, Mustard Seed Associates)

"*The Cost of Community* is more than just a re-examination of a medieval saint who modeled what it means to take Christ's words literally and live them out. It is also a moving record of how some Christians have endeavored to re-embody the Franciscan movement in the twenty-first century. This book deserves two thumbs up from any who read it." (Tony Campolo, Eastern University)

"Jamie Arpin-Ricci lives and writes authentically in conversation with his community, the hard neighborhood he lives in, a thirteenth-century saint and Jesus. I love his humble honesty as he wrestles in that all-important place where ideals and reality meet." (Kent Annan, author of *After Shock* and *Following Jesus Through the Eye of the Needle*)

"By interweaving his experience as leader of an inner-city Christian community and the life and experience of Francis of Assisi with recent writing on the Sermon on the Mount, Jamie Arpin-Ricci has succeeded in producing a volume that is both fresh and challenging. It has helped me—and I hope it helps many others—to understand anew what it means not only to hear the words of Jesus but to put them into practice." (Dewi Hughes, theological advisor, Tearfund, and author of *Power and Poverty*)

"In the middle of holy wars and prosperity preaching, Francis of Assisi said no to a Christianity that had grown sick, and he said yes to Jesus. He heard a little whisper from God say, "Repair my church, which is in ruins." His life is as prophetic today as it was eight hundred years ago. Jamie Arpin-Ricci's book invites you to follow Francis as he follows Jesus—away from the war drums and shopping malls, and into the streets and

slums. It is an invitation to live daringly?to love the earth and all God's creatures, to care for the poor and suffering, and to consider the innocence of the lilies and the sparrows. It is an invitation to strip off all the clutter and truly be free." (Shane Claiborne, author, activist and recovering sinner, thesimpleway.org)

"Filled with the sweetness of good stories well told and the quietness of an evolving wisdom, *The Cost of Community* is as appealing as it is informing. Vowed communal living is not for every Christian, but this chronicle about it certainly is." (Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*)

"If you want to go beyond theological speculation to living out the Sermon on the Mount, then you need to get this book, read it and live it. Jamie Arpin-Ricci weaves together the life of St. Francis, the Little Flowers Community and his own life to help us honestly wrestle through what it means to follow Jesus in our world today. His vulnerability is refreshing, and his life stories are inspiring. If you read this book carefully, and reflect on how Jamie and his faith community are following Jesus, you will soon realize that while the cost of discipleship is great, the cost of nondiscipleship is even greater." (J. R. Woodward, cofounder of Kairos LA and the Ecclesia Network, and author of *ViralHope*)

"Get ready to be challenged to live the gospel. Arpin-Ricci aptly exposes the spiritual laziness of Western Christianity and invites us to examine the way we live our faith. With thought-provoking analysis and reflection, Arpin-Ricci illuminates the teachings of Jesus and the life of St. Francis, compelling us to live the way of Christ. Through the lived stories of the Little Flowers Community we are reminded that the way of Christ is the way of the cross?it will cost you everything, most importantly, your very self. You will be simultaneously challenged and encouraged?encouraged that as you give your life away, you will receive a life more abundant and fulfilling than you can imagine. Read and be ready to be transformed." (Phileena Heuert, international director, Word Made Flesh, and author of *Pilgrimage of a Soul*)

"The familiar terrain of the Sermon on the Mount yields fresh insights and challenges in this grace-filled book. Wisdom gained from St. Francis and from life in the Little Flowers Community illuminates Jesus' central teachings in ways that help us see clearly their beauty, relevance and possibility." (Christine D. Pohl, Ph.D., professor of social ethics, Asbury Theological Seminary)

"Walking in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, Jamie Arpin-Ricci challenges us to stop searching for convenient compromises and interpretive roadblocks when we hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Arpin-Ricci understands that if we are to follow in the way of Jesus, we must pay steep costs, but that in dying we will find the community and resurrection life that we all long for." (Adam S. McHugh, author of *Introverts in the Church*)

"With the insight born of experience and a careful reading of the text, Jamie Arpin-Ricci leads us through the Sermon on the Mount and asks us a simple question: are we willing to take what Jesus says seriously? Weaving stories from the life of Saint Francis of Assisi and the life of his own community throughout, Arpin-Ricci holds our feet to the fire with the humility of one who himself continues to wrestle with the implications of taking Jesus at his word." (Sean Gladding, author of *The Story of God, the Story of Us*)

"Arpin-Ricci masterfully explores the spiritual genius of St. Francis of Assisi, the radical challenge of the Sermon on the Mount and the inspiring yet unvarnished story of a brave community that earths the values that each has to offer. This book could change the landscape of Western Christianity. Highly recommended!" (Ian Morgan Cron, author, *Chasing Francis: A Pilgrim's Tale* and *Jesus, My Father, the CIA, and Me: A Memoir . . . of Sorts*)

"Insightful, informative, well-written and more challenging than I wanted. Jamie has written a book that will

now sit beside Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* and Watson's *Called and Committed* to be used often and handed out to those who are serious about following Jesus. I didn't want to put it down." (Cam Roxburgh, National Director of Forge Missional Training Network, Canada)

"This is one of just a handful of books since Tolstoy to take Christ's Sermon on the Mount seriously, suggesting Jesus intended us to live his message rather than finding loopholes around it. Arpin-Ricci's community not only endorses such a reading, they are practitioners who've embodied the Beatitudes and built their house upon the Rock. This is their lived commentary of the words of Christ." (Brad Jersak, author of *Can You Hear Me? Tuning In to the God Who Speaks*)

"A fresh and challenging exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, illustrated both from the life of Francis of Assisi and the contemporary experience of an inner-city community in Winnipeg, rooted in the strange but persuasive conviction that Jesus' teaching is to be obeyed rather than admired." (Stuart Murray Williams, Anabaptist Network, United Kingdom)

"In each generation there are those who carry on the spirit of Francis of Assisi. God knows that the church needs them! Jamie Arpin-Ricci is one of these, right here and right now, in his life and in this important book." (Jon M. Sweeney, author of *The St. Francis Prayer Book* and *Light in the Dark Ages: The Friendship of Francis and Clare of Assisi*)

"Ever thought what it would be like to take the Sermon on the Mount seriously? Francis of Assisi did and today provides inspiration for thousands of contemporary Christians. . . . With an engaging mix of gospel teaching, the witness of Francis of Assisi and the author's own real-life experiences, *The Cost of Community* chronicles the joys and heartaches of living Jesus' blueprint for holiness?and provides us with the challenge and courage to 'do likewise.'" (Albert Haase, O.F.M., author of *This Sacred Moment, Living the Lord's Prayer and Coming Home to Your True Self*)

From the Author

"*The Cost of Community*" is not a book based on theory. It is the product of both deep Scriptural study and community engagement and mission. Little Flowers Community believed that like St. Francis of Assisi and those in our Anabaptist tradition, the words of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount, were meant to be believed actively. This book takes you through our journey through the text and invite you into your journey of transformation. You won't regret it. -Jamie Arpin-Ricci, author & pastor

About the Author

Jamie Arpin-Ricci is a writer, pastor, and community builder living in the inner city of Winnipeg, Canada with his family. He is the pastor of **Little Flowers Community** (littleflowers.ca), a Franciscan-Anabaptist faith community. He is co-director of **Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Urban Ministries Winnipeg** (ywamwinnipeg.com), as well as the director of **Chiara House** (chiarahouse.ca), a new intentional Christian community who share life "on the margins".

As a writer, he has contributed to several books in addition to *The Cost of Community: Jesus, St. Francis & Life in the Kingdom* (IVPress, Nov. 2011) & write at a blog at missional.ca, as well as a religion blogger at The Huffington Post (huffingtonpost.com/jamie-arpinricci).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Candice Delgado:

As people who live in often the modest era should be change about what going on or info even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era that is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe may update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know what one you should start with. This *The Cost of Community: Jesus, St. Francis and Life in the Kingdom* is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Irving Wile:

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