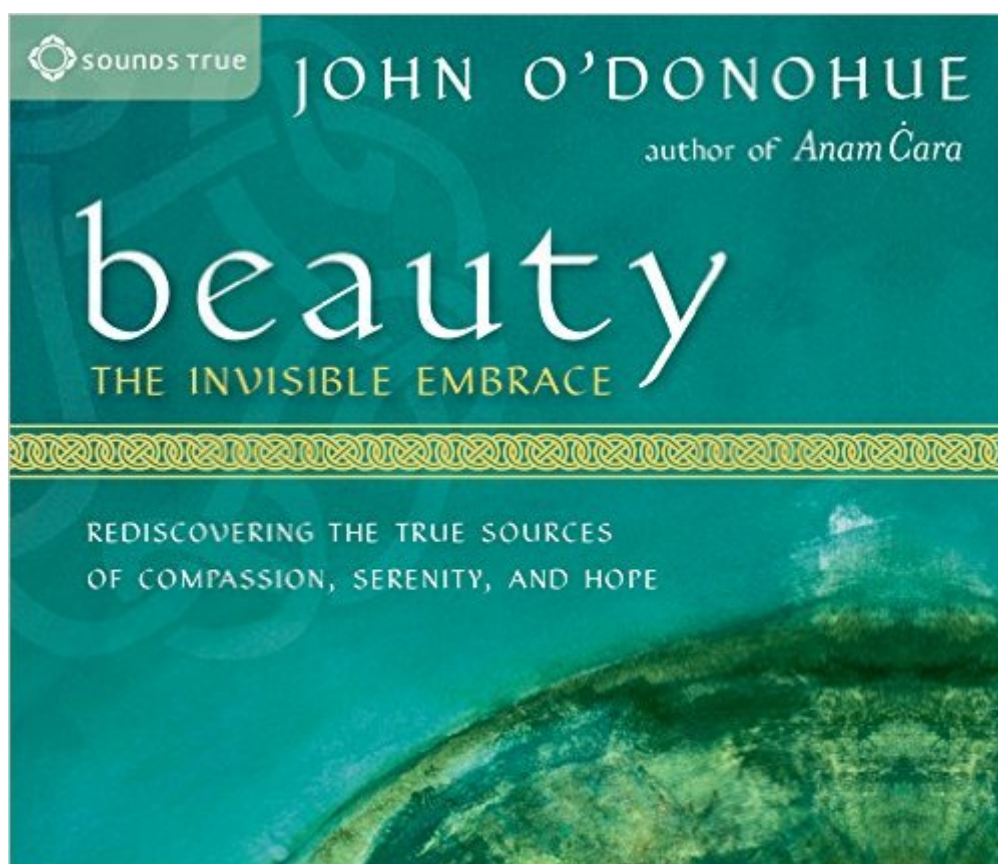


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Beauty: The Invisible Embrace



Synopsis

The human soul is hungry for beauty; we seek it everywhere- in landscape, music, art, love, companionship, religion, and in ourselves. When we experience the Beautiful, we feel fully alive. From Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue comes more than five hours of poetry, vision, and imagination to attune to this awesome force, with *Beauty*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My review of this book can be summed up with a single word: Wow! When I grabbed a copy of *Beauty*, I was expecting a preachy book about some glorified ideal of beauty that us mere mortals cannot attain. I'm happy to report I was proven quite wrong in that expectation. *Beauty* is a hard book to classify - it's not a philosophy book, it's not a religion book, it just... is. It's like hopping on a tourist bus and cruising down the road of the beautiful, with John O'Donohue pointing out the sights along the way. "To your left, you will see the beauty of light dancing across the sky at twilight. And to your right, the misty beams of sun's fading glory illuminating every crevice and boulder on the mountainside..." You're not outright told what beauty is, per se. You are simply guided through the process of understanding beauty as not merely a characteristic, but as a force. O'Donohue illuminates what beauty *does* and where you might find it. This is a magical, wonderful book. It is written in a relaxed and almost lyrical style - as a book on the beautiful should be. True beauty cannot be described by the mere words of men, but John O'Donohue does an admirable job of opening us up to "the eternal grace and generosity of beauty's presence." That, in a nutshell, is what this book is all about.

I discovered John O'Donohue this past year (see my review "Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom") and have been working ever since to bring him to San Francisco's East Bay to speak and conduct a retreat. Unfortunately, as I was putting pen to paper to write my review of "The Invisible Embrace - Beauty," I learned he died in his sleep, January 3, 2008, on vacation near Avignon. He was just 53. O'Donohue was an original thinker, a gifted writer, and a philosopher that fully understood the human condition and emphasized the triumphal power of divine love. "Beauty" outlines another encounter with the divine. The majesty of beauty is its gracious wholesomeness. The Beautiful unifies feeling, thought, and dream. The book "endeavors to mirror this one-ment." This acquaintance coaxes the soul to the land of wonder where the journey becomes a bright path between source and horizon, awakening and surrender. O'Donohue begins "Beauty" with the call of beauty; where it dwells; its music; its color; and the joy of its shapes. He then explores imagination (beauty's entrance), attraction (the eros of beauty), and the beauty of the flaw. He concludes with beauty's relationship to death and God. "When we lose sight of beauty our struggle becomes tired and functional. When we expect and engage the Beautiful, a new fluency is set free within us and between us. The heart becomes rekindled and our lives brighten with unexpected courage." The "cry of our times" is to awaken beauty as we feel most alive in the presence of beauty for it meets the needs of our soul. And once awakened, there is a great sense of homecoming as beauty is God. Love of the beautiful is a secret and sacred passion of all as it is embedded in our search for God. O'Donohue has written another "Beautiful" book that will serve as a reference guide for years to come. For those who want to learn more about John O'Donohue and his literary contribution, I have included a number internet posts made on the event of his death: * I too was touched so deeply by John O'Donohue - by his writings which my wife shared with me a few years ago. * I'm very saddened by the passing of John O' Donohue. Though I never had the privilege of meeting him I felt I knew him through his work. He was truly a beacon of light and love. God bless him on his eternal journey. * I am so saddened by John O'Donohue's passing. For over eleven years I have absorbed his books which have made me understand and appreciate my Celtic-Catholic roots. Slan agus beannacht leat. * He was a breath of fresh air and sunshine enfolding wonderful wit and wisdom with a passion for the Eternal. * When I read Anam Chara, I was stunned by how much I was moved by his words and ideas. It was at once comforting and thought provoking. I am so very grateful that John shared himself with the world. * John constantly called us to awaken to the great mystery of which we are apart and to become more and more aware of the intimacy we share with all...I am deeply grateful to him for the way in which he affirmed the deep longing with the past,

present and future. May we honour him by living our own individual lives as authentically as he lived his.* I have often turned to his writing and recordings for solace and guidance through some difficult times in the last few years and had hoped to go on retreat with him in Connamara this May.* When I heard the news of O'Donohue's death, I cried. His books, especially "Anam Cara" and "Eternal Echoes," were personal favorites. His knowledge of Gaelic and rural Ireland, combined with his philosophical training, gave his writings a special beauty. His poetic perception and spiritual wisdom made his writings a wonder of insightfulness.* John O'Donohue's brilliant and beautiful wordcraft has touched my heart and helped bring about great peace and growth in my life over the last decade. May his legacy of beauty and courage reach far into the future and bless many generations to come.* He brings, and will continue to spread through his writings, a timely, universally spiritual message of interconnectedness and common humanity to a troubled world.* His Anam Cara Celtic Wisdom returned me to that world within that opens us to the universe.

This CD fills the very essence of my soul! As a Franciscan religious I appreciate the beauty and splendor of all of God's creation! John O'Donahue has captured the essence of the Franciscan Spirit! St. Francis called everything by the intimate name of "brother" and "sister"! As St. Francis says, "Put on new glasses" "adjust your focus" and you will see beauty all around you." With St. Francis we can all say "My God and My All"! Thank you and God bless you, Sister Rose Therese Di Gregorio OSF.

The very sad news is that there will be no more books by John O'Donohue because of his untimely death in January. The blessing is that we have a treasury of wisdom and elegance in his published writings and various recordings. We can still listen to his Irish lilt and laugh at his humor; we can still read his prose and poetry suffused with wisdom and caring. Beauty is a book which reminds us how we should look at the world around us, expectantly looking for signs of beauty to counter the other signs of neglect, pain, violence, dis-harmony. He takes us beneath the surface, urging us to troll the depths of our souls to find our beauty. Every sentence will call you to ponder more deeply and invite you to look anew at life.

Once again, O'Donahue delivers a treatise on the beauty of life, the beauty of living fully and the beauty of belief. This book is really a marvelous experience. The author challenges the reader to choose being awake, aware and available. I loved it.

Beauty: The invisible embrace is essentially a poetic and theological reflection on the beauty of the world, the universe, of life, and of God, using ideas from Christian tradition, theology, mysticism, and poetry. The ideas in here are deeply Neo-Platonic and will be easily recognised by anyone who has read Plotinus (in a way this book unfolds the ideas in his work 'On Beauty) however they are also deeply tinged with O'Donahue's Celtic appreciation for the beauty of nature. It is perhaps not surprising Ireland has produced many great thinkers and poets who refreshingly don't see the world as a horrible place infected by sin, but rather a beautiful reflection of God's glory. The greatest Celtic philosopher, Eriugena, called the universe 'God's theophany.' Indeed this book treats our world and our life as a theophany of divine beauty, to be celebrated at every moment despite its pain, vulnerability, and tragedy.

I adored this book from page one to the last. It is such an inspiration to me and I felt like I found in this book my "bible" and guide to life as I have created it.

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