



# Feathered Quill Book Reviews

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## Pilgrimage

By: Christine Sunderland  
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Reviewed by: Pamela Victor  
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Twenty-two years have passed since Madeleine's world was devastated by an unimaginable tragedy, the wounds of which continue to cause her psychological anguish. In an effort to heal, her spiritual guide, Father Rinaldi, sends Madeleine and her husband on an exploration of carefully selected churches in Italy. Readers join them on their quest to discover if Madeleine's excruciating suffering can be transformed by pure love.

*Pilgrimage* is a story about guilt, forgiveness and belief. Using a compelling fictional story as her vehicle, author Christine Sunderland contemplates deep matters of faith, such as truth, doubt, suffering, miracles, and martyrdom. While Madeleine visits church after church, she searches for healing through spirituality and redemption. "As I walked through the dusty aisles, I prayed this trip would rebaptize me, cleanse and heal me in my own pool of time. I understood why Father sent me here. I needed to desire this, to want this, to be willing to give up my ghosts, just as these catechumens gave up their past, to be reborn. I had to accept God's grace, his transforming power. Was I willing?"

Sunderland succeeds in engaging readers in Madeleine's search for inner peace through a neat, concise writing style, effective descriptions, and a touch of shadowy mystery. In this well-edited book, Sunderland seamlessly blends ancient and present day Italy as well as fiction and history. In addition, the author imparts a great deal of Italian religious history in her story without being heavy-handed or overly preachy. *Pilgrimage* is a satisfying read, one that certain readers will find spiritually nourishing as well.

Although *Pilgrimage* is a work of inspirational fiction, it also serves well as a travelogue should readers become moved to follow their own journey into the religious history of Italy. The churches explored in this fictional world are quite real indeed. The carefully combed through and clearly summarized history lessons within *Pilgrimage* would bring dimension to anyone's trip. Should you care to embark upon your own tour of Italian churches, Sunderland's book would be something to carry with you on your travels.

In addition to bringing history to life, Sunderland paints a vivid picture of the Italian landscape, particularly the atmosphere, food and wine. For in addition to a dazzling array

of Italian churches, Madeleine and her husband, a wine connoisseur, partake in an extravagant assortment of flavors: cannelloni, curried shrimp, fresh chevre, farfalle con mozzarella, giant meringues, ravioli with Gorgonzola, to name but a few. I dare anyone to read *Pilgrimage* without swooning a bit at the sumptuous descriptions of the meals. “Our dinner arrived. Green, yellow, and red sweet peppers fanned on a plate with darker slices of eggplant. White filets of fish nestled in beds of mushrooms.” As Madeleine says after she samples her dish, “Wow.” Wow indeed.

If you yearn for more spiritual exploration guided by Christine Sunderland after reading this book, take solace in the fact that it is the first in a trilogy. The second book, *Offerings*, takes readers on a whole new quest in France!

Quill says: *Pilgrimage* provides an armchair traveler the opportunity to take a spiritual tour of Italian churches with a history professor as your guide.