

BOOK REVIEW

Once Upon a Time in Asia: Stories of Harmony and Peace

Reviewed by Michael J. Sloboda, MM

James H. Kroeger with Eugene F. Thalman and Jason K. Dy, Claretian Publications and Jesuit Communications, Quezon City, Philippines, 2006, 165 pages, ISBN 971-0305-41-4.

This is a delightful short book. It contains short stories from ancient and modern times from Turkey to Irian-Jaya about faith and life, prayer and suffering, family and hospitality. The accounts are not romanticized; the lives of the poor can be harsh and painful, yet people help one another and rely upon God. The stories are classified under: In the Beginning, Living in Asia, The Importance of Family, Caring for One Another in Community, Culture Matters, Wisdom from the Orient, One God—Many Faith Traditions, and Seed of God in Asian Soil. Each section is introduced by a page or two of theological reflection. Many of the contributors are Maryknoll missionaries, seeing the local scene with foreign but sympathetic eyes. All the contributors respect the diversity of cultures and religions in Asia. Pencil sketches illustrate a dozen stories. Many of these stories can be used to make a point in a homily.

I counted 97 stories in the index. For the next edition, they will need four more to offer 101 stories. A thick book of 1001 stories would be too massive, but it would still capture only a drop in a bucket of the richness of God at work in the world's most populous continent.