

## **Seeking Surrender: What We Can Learn About Trust and How to Embrace Life**

San Francisco, CA— Struggling with infertility, insomnia, the loss of her sister, the declining health and eventual death of her father, and her role as caregiver, Colette Lafia shares how a surprising friendship between herself and a silent monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani, where Thomas Merton lived, comes to life through five years of shared letters.

In her new book ***Seeking Surrender: How My Friendship With a Trappist Monk Taught Me to Trust and Embrace Life***, she tells how she found greater trust and acceptance through the compassion and guidance of her unlikely pen pal.

During an especially difficult time in her life, a good friend suggested she and her husband visit the Abbey of Gethsemani. They went to the monastery and met Brother Rene at the hospitality desk. At one point, she spontaneously asked him if he was ever lonely. His subsequent reply was the beginning of a bond that lasted many years.

When they returned home she decided to write and type a letter to the Abbey addressed to him, not knowing what to expect in return. His reply with a beautiful handwritten letter, cemented their close relationship that evolved over many years.



***Colette Lafia and Brother Rene at the Abbey of Gethsemani.***

“Brother René had absolute confidence in God and in the power of love,” she said. “He was a mirror reflecting faith and trust during a period of great darkness and loss in my life. Over time, with the help of Brother René’s wisdom, I understood I was on the path of surrender. I just needed to have faith in it, embrace it, and learn how to live it.”

To be filled with Love is one thing, but it must always be given away continually. The more you give, the more you get. Never let the ball stop with you. Make an effort to give love and to give love and to give love. Stop giving, and it turns sour. Remember: it’s not feelings that count as much as actions.

***Excerpt from a letter from Brother Rene to Colette Lafia, December 27, 2003.***

“I see surrender as something active, not passive. Surrender is not about shrugging your shoulders and feeling defeated. It’s about stepping through that threshold into uncharted waters, and choosing to trust life. It’s letting life be the mystery that it really is and embracing it—learning how to live in the fullness of life. Surrender is about learning to be the receiver of life, rather than trying to control life.” - Colette -

*“Dear Brother Rene...I am just so vulnerable right now, stripping away my desires, and feeling an emptiness. I trust that this process will allow new things to grow in me, but it’s painful, and at moments I am in distress and feel sorrow piercing my heart...” - Colette -*

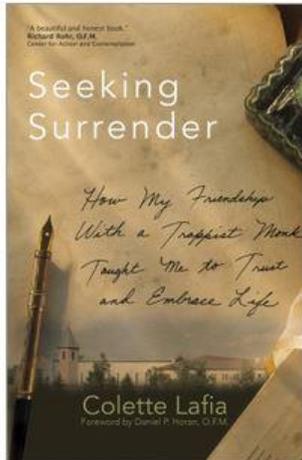
*“Dear Colette, It is a blessing that you are now coming to grips with your feelings and pain...When periods of darkness pass, you will be stronger, and peace will surely return...It is this positive outlook that is the fruit of faith...” - Brother Rene -*

***Excerpts from an exchange between Colette Lafia and Brother Rene...***

## Here are Colette Lafia's *Seven Surprising Truths About Surrender*:

Many of us struggle with surrender because we see it as defeat or giving up. It scares us. But true surrender is a path to freedom and inner peace. Surrender is a grace we open up to receiving, as well as being a practice—one that must be nurtured and cultivated through the choices we make, how we think, how we act, and what we hold in our hearts.

1. **Surrender happens in our daily life, the one we are actually living.** It's not a spiritual ideal for saints and holy people, but rather a living and dynamic force that moves in and through us.
2. **Surrender is neither defeat nor resignation.** Surrender is the spiritual aspect of acceptance, inviting and allowing us to hold our experiences and lives with grace in every moment.
3. **Our everyday encounters create the platform for surrender.** Throughout the day, we can bring the qualities of surrender—trust, acceptance, compassion, and release—into the way we respond to life. It's our relationship to what's happening that forms the cornerstone of our experiences.
4. **The essence of surrender is trust.** It asks us to stop holding on to our lives so tightly, and let the Divine carry us. Surrender offers us an embrace, a way to move from grief to grace.
5. **Every day, we are being asked to surrender.** In work, in love, in faith, in relationships, in the body, and in every breath we take, letting go, yielding to what is, and releasing what we are clinging to, takes great courage. It is not easy. But when we do, we invite acceptance, trust, and Divine love into the center of our lives.
6. **The call to surrender is everywhere.** It is in our daily relationships, in how we handle our limitations, in our work challenges, in the ways we care for our families, and even in the simplest of things, like how we step into a cool swimming pool and plunge into the water.
7. **Living and surrendering are intertwined.** The more we surrender to what is difficult and unwanted, the more we can open up to what is beautiful, profound, and abundant. We stop wanting our lives to be something other than what they are and begin to recognize the sacredness of what is right in front of us, the life that is truly our very own.



***Seeking Surrender***  
***How My Friendship With a Trappist Monk***  
***Taught Me to Trust and Embrace Life***  
**Colette Lafia**

List: \$14.95

Ave Maria Press

Publication date: April 17, 2015

ISBN 978-1-933-4958-8-0

For more information visit [www.colettelafia.com](http://www.colettelafia.com)

***Seeking Surrender*** includes simple exercises and advice for living a more conscious and intentional life, with tips such as, “Know that you are not alone but honor the time you need to be alone”, “Feel your feelings. Cry or shout if you need to”, and “Be gentle and compassionate with yourself”.

Colette provides practices to help us to “learn to let go both in big and small ways” and to reflect on “what needs to be cleared out” in order to surrender more fully. Happy to bring her special friendship out in the open, Colette shares how to discover a new attitude of acceptance while learning how to let go.

**About the Author**



**Colette Lafia** is a San Francisco-based spiritual director, educator, and part-time children’s librarian. Colette has led spiritual and self-care workshops for many organizations and groups, including the Archdiocese of San Francisco, Mercy Center, the Institute for Health and Healing, and the San Francisco Unified School District.

She is also author of *Comfort and Joy: Simple Ways to Care for Ourselves and Others*, which was named one of the best spiritual books of 2008 by Spirituality and Practice.

**What People Are Saying**

*“Colette Lafia challenges our notion of surrender, inviting us to see it as a path of opening to the fullness of life...A beautiful and honest book.”*

**Richard Rohr, O.F.M. Center for Action and Contemplation**

*“...Seeking Surrender is a rewarding read for those searching for an answer in the midst of darkness only to discover he is always with us.”*

**Damien Thompson, O.C.S.O., Former Abbot, Abbey of Gethsemani**

*“...Colette Lafia invites her reader to practice the spiritual discipline of surrender, the soul’s dark path toward a doorway into light, a coming home to accepting—and...loving—life’s hard times that bring graces nonetheless.”*

**Jonathan Montaldo, Coeditor of the *Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton series***

*“In this consoling book...Colette shares letters in which Brother René marks out the path of sweet surrender that we can follow as we learn to surrender to God’s presence in our lives.”*

**James Finley, Former Trappist Monk, Author of *Merton's Palace of Nowhere***

*“In her quiet, gentle, and deliberate way, Colette Lafia guides us inexorably toward a juncture most of us try our best to avoid: the place where suffering and surrender meet. If you are in pain, yet long to find God in the midst of it, this is your book.”*

**Paula Huston, Author of *A Land Without Sin***