**Summer Reading Suggestions from your St. Barnabas’ Family**

Just Mercy by Bryan Stephenson

This Harvard trained lawyer, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, tells the story of his work to provide legal representation for the poor, especially those in the criminal justice system.  He includes excellent information about mass incarceration and powerful stories of the individuals he has known.  No wonder the Diocese of Washington asked every parishioner to read it last year.  It is the most moving book I have read in a while.

The Wings of Invention by Sue Monk Kidd

In the stories of slave and slave owner, this masterful novel brings to life the historical figures of Sarah Grimke and Denmark Vesey.  This excellent piece of fiction takes the reader deep into the realities of slavery and the struggle for liberation.

The Time of Our Singing by Richard Powers

This novel was listed in a theological journal as among the best works of fiction with a spiritual theme in the prior decade.  During Marion Anderson's concert on the Washington Mall, an aspiring young Black opera singer meets a Jewish German physics professor.  They marry and raise three children near Columbia University in a sanctuary of singing where the parents prepare their children for a world where race is irrelevant.  But race matters powerfully, and the story carries each family member through decades of race in America.

* *The Rev. Linda Wofford Hawkins*

In the novel, Tangerine, by Edward Bloor, Paul Fisher and his family have just moved from Texas to Tangerine, Florida. Their new home is located in a subdivision built on top of a termite-infested field, where muck fires burn constantly. Paul has a horrible older brother, Erik, who harasses him (and others), but Erik is beloved by his parents and teachers because he's a really good football player.

Despite his very poor eyesight, Paul ends up playing on a soccer team with a group of kids from the other side of town whose families work in the orange groves. Paul becomes close to his teammates and stays up one night to help them protect the groves from frost.

 I read Tangerine at the end of summer vacation a couple of years ago. I enjoyed "visiting" this quirky town and was engaged by the author's take on race relations, class conflict, and sibling rivalry. Although it's a young adult novel (suitable for readers 10 and up), I think both young and not-so-young adults would enjoy this light summer read.

* *Jocelyn Leatherwood*

My candidate for a good summer read is Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury.  I first heard about this book, being familiar only with two of his other books: The Martian Chronicles and Fahrenheit 451, in a *New York Times Book Review* interview with a currently popular author who said that Dandelion Wine was the best book ever written.  I was really skeptical about that claim but willing to try it.

The book seemed to start out slowly, but by the end of the first few pages I was hooked.   Dandelion wine is made from the petals of the dandelion flowers, and in the book is a metaphor for packing all the joys of summer into a single bottle.  The plot is very simple: it recounts the life and adventures of a 12-year-old boy named Douglas Spaulding during the summer of 1928 in Greentown, which is based on Bradbury’s hometown of Waukegan, Illinois.   The book is an exhilarating whirl through Douglas’ summer, recounting significant events like the death of his great-grandmother and the almost-comical stabbing death of a serial murderer, as well as small touching moments of love and affection between a young journalist and an elderly romantic, and Douglas’ telling his younger brother how important Tom is to him.

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Along the way, the reader is treated to some real gems of Bradbury’s exquisite writing:

*Tom letting the words rise like quick soda bubbles in his mouth…*

*Dandelion wine.  The words were summer on the tongue.*

*Who could say  where town or wilderness began?. . .The thin lapping of the great continental sea of grass and flower, starting far out in lonely farm country, moved inward with the thrust of seasons.”*

*A pack of multibreed dogs pawfooted…*

*The sun did not rise, it overflowed*.

The book is a celebration of the freedom and joy that summers bring, a freedom and joy that are lost on today’s over-programmed children.  At one point, the grandfather chastises their tenant who wants to plant a new kind of grass that doesn’t require mowing: all the things that were put here to savor - like lawn mowing - you eliminate.  *Bill, when you’re my age you’ll find out that it’s the little things that count more than the big ones.*

I highly recommend this book as a good summer read.

* *Anne Radway*

Maybe not page-turners, but I am enjoying Katherine of Aragon by Alison Weir.  Historical novels can be a bit trashy, but I really look forward to picking up this book every evening--even though I know the outcome.

Another, more serious (scholarly) book on a historical subject is White Mughals, set in India at the end of the 18th century.  It is the true story of the romance between a British resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad and the (Indian) niece of the Prime Minister, a direct descendant of Mohammed. While a harder read than Katherine of Aragon, it is very interesting, surprising, and illuminating.

Next on my list is Curtis Sittenfeld’s Eligible, a modern retelling of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice.  Also awaiting me on my bedside table is Helen Simonson’s Summer Before the War.  (She wrote Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand.)

* *Elizabeth Moya*

Try reading any of James A. Michener books, i.e., South Pacific or Chesapeake.  Most of his books are over 900 pages.

* *Larry Goldschmidt*

I recommend The Lacuna by Barbara Kingsolver.  Not a new book, but definitely good summer reading.  It includes a wonderful picture of Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo and their household.  It's full of interesting adventures, told by a half-Mexican, half-American writer who lives with them as a cook and secretary.   The story continues during World War II and after in the US.

* *Maria Macfarlane*

I am reading two books. First is The City of Mirrors by Justin Cronin. It is the third of a trilogy set in America after a viral pandemic in which humanity is threatened.  Reading the first two books helps set the scene for the third, but the story makes sense even without them.

My second book is Deep South by Paul Theroux.  Typical of him it is a travelogue investigation of America's South based on observations and conversations. He seems to learn mostly by going to churches and gun shows.  The book provides few new insights, but is an interesting commentary on race, poverty, and hospitality.

* *Robert Gribbin*