

**Q&A Interview with Award-Winning Author Claudia Cangilla McAdam
Regarding her Biblical Historical Fiction Novel**

Awakening

(The following article may be published in full or in part at no charge.)

Claudia Cangilla McAdam is the award-winning author of 18 published books for children, teens, and adults. A lifelong Catholic, she holds a master's degree in theology from the Augustine Institute. As part of the New Evangelization, she strives to pen works that explore the virtues, build character, and deepen the faith lives of her readers.

QUESTION: Can you give a brief synopsis of your novel, *Awakening*?

ANSWER: *Awakening* tells the story of Ronni, a determined 21st-century teenage girl who is grieving the deaths of her father and brother, who lost their lives saving someone she does not deem worthy of their sacrifice. She believes nothing is worth dying for, even Jesus dying on the cross. When she takes ill, she awakens in 1st-century Jerusalem three days before the crucifixion, where she goes about trying to stop the Lord's death and, in the process, she rediscovers her faith.

The book is rich in adventure and loaded with Catholic teaching. And while the main character is a teen, adults can relate to the story as well. Who wouldn't want an opportunity to view the last days of Jesus as if they were one of the characters in the story?

QUESTION: What is the significance of the title *Awakening*?

ANSWER: It is multi-leveled, actually. The main character, Ronni, wakes up in a different place and time—a "physical" awakening—and because of her interactions in Jerusalem, she goes through a conversion experience; this is her "spiritual" awakening.

QUESTION: What inspired you to write this novel?

ANSWER: It was a book that I couldn't NOT write. For years the characters were running around in my head, and each year during Lent, the Biblical scenes presented in the liturgy would be acted out in my mind by the characters who lived there. Also, I began having the unusual experience of waking up in my pitch-black bedroom thinking that I was waking in the home my family had lived in a dozen years earlier. That got me thinking: what would I do or change if I suddenly woke up in the past, knowing what I know today? Additionally, as I went deeper and deeper into my study of Sacred Scripture, I felt compelled to share what I learned about the richness of our faith, and since I've been writing professionally for thirty years, it was only natural to combine all those ingredients in a book.

QUESTION: How would you describe the main character, Ronni?

ANSWER: In a lot of ways, she is typical of many young people in America. She wants to be liked, she has a crush on an older boy, she's not that "into" religion. Her faith life really takes a hit when her father and her brother die as they are saving someone else's life. She's a very strong-willed person, though, which is why she is so tenacious in trying to stop the crucifixion.

QUESTION: What are some historical truths you would like readers to gain from the story?

ANSWER: I hope the reader finds it intriguing and faith-building to discover things such as (for example) the meaning of Barabbas' name, the significance of "INRI" on the sign above the head of the Lord on the cross, and that Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" is not one of abandonment—it is the beginning of a psalm of thanksgiving. Most importantly, I hope readers come to see why Jesus had to die in order to put an end to the Old Covenant and to establish a new and everlasting covenant with us.

QUESTION: What are some of the reactions you've gotten to this book?

ANSWER: *Awakening* was published by Sophia Institute Press ten years ago, and it continues to be well-received. I frequently visit with groups to discuss the book and share a PowerPoint presentation. I'm gratified by the comments I receive about *Awakening* and how it has impacted readers' lives. Perhaps the most rewarding feedback came from a fourteen-year-old boy who thanked me and said, "This book changed my life."

QUESTION: Explain about your presentations.

ANSWER: At no charge, I visit with adult and youth groups who read the book. I have written a discussion guide and chapter exams for the book, which are available for free at my web site, www.ClaudiaMcAdam.com. Many Catholic schools have incorporated the book into their religion or Language Arts classes, and I have been blessed to speak with hundreds of students, from coast to coast. I either travel to those classrooms or visit via Skype or FaceTime. *Awakening* has also been used by adult book clubs, and I enjoy visiting with them as well. I can be contacted through my web site to arrange for school visits or other presentations.

QUESTION: Where can people get the book?

ANSWER: It is available from online retailers, at book stores, and from the publisher, Sophia Institute Press, who offers volume discounts for classroom purchases. Also, I invite readers to sample the book by reading the first four chapters, the link to which is on my web site.

QUESTION: Do you have any new books?

ANSWER: Yes, the sequel to *Awakening* is on the way, and two faith-based picture books for children are forthcoming—a Christmas one this fall and an Easter one next spring. Information about those titles is on my web site.

QUESTION: What do you hope readers take away from *Awakening*?

ANSWER: Throughout the book, there are invitations from one character to another to “come along.” These are invitations which ultimately change lives. We may receive an invitation to take a class, join a Bible study, hear a speaker, attend an ordination, read a spiritually-uplifting book, go on a pilgrimage. I have accepted invitations in all of these instances, and my life has been greatly impacted. With each passing year, I realize there are no coincidences; God’s hand is at work in all things. I’ve discovered that bringing others to Him is not all on our shoulders. He asks us to extend the invitation to others. The Holy Spirit is there to do the work of changing people’s hearts. In *Awakening*, it’s something Ronni learns; it’s something I’ve learned in my own life, and I hope it’s something my readers will learn as well.

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Note to Editors:

High-resolution digital images of the ones below of the author and/or the book are available by request.

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