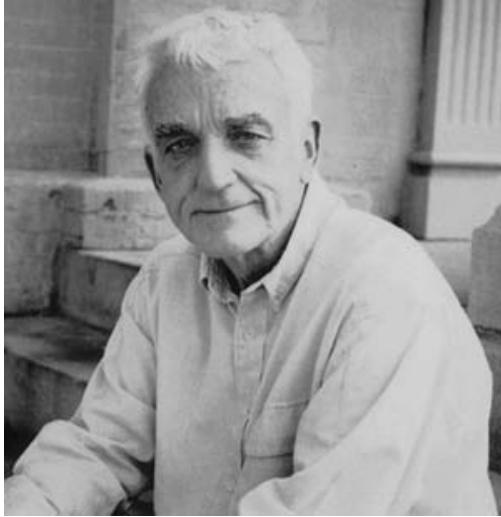


Author Biography for **BRENNAN MANNING**



In the springtime of Depression-era New York City, Brennan Manning — christened Richard Francis Xavier — was born to Emmett and Amy Manning. He grew up in Brooklyn along with his brother, Robert, and sister, Geraldine. After graduating from high school and attending St. John’s University (Queens, NY) for two years, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and was sent overseas to fight in the Korean War.

Upon his return, Brennan began a program in journalism at the University of Missouri. But he departed after a semester, restlessly searching for something “more” in life. “Maybe the something ‘more’ is God,” an advisor had suggested, triggering Brennan’s enrollment in a Catholic seminary in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

In February 1956, while Brennan was meditating on the Stations of the Cross, a powerful experience of the personal love of Jesus Christ sealed the call of God on his life. “At that moment,” he later recalled, “the entire Christian life became for me an intimate, heartfelt relationship with Jesus.” Four years later, he graduated from St. Francis College (major in philosophy; minor in Latin) I and went on to complete four years of advanced studies in theology. May 1963 marked his graduation from St. Francis Seminary and ordination to the Franciscan priesthood.

Brennan’s ministry responsibilities in succeeding years took him from the hallways of academia to the byways of the poor: theology instructor and campus minister at the University of Steubenville; liturgy instructor and spiritual director at St. Francis Seminary; graduate student in creative writing at Columbia University, and in Scripture and liturgy at Catholic University of America; living and working among the poor in Europe and the U.S.

A two-year leave of absence from the Franciscans took Brennan to Spain in the late sixties. He joined the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, an Order committed to an unclioistered, contemplative life among the poor — a lifestyle of days spent in manual labor and nights wrapped in silence and prayer. Among his many and varied assignments, Brennan became an aguador (water carrier), transporting water to rural villages via donkey and buckboard; a mason’s assistant, shoveling mud and straw in the blazing Spanish heat; a dishwasher in France; a voluntary prisoner in a Swiss jail, his identity as a priest known only to the warden; a solitary contemplative secluded in a remote cave for six months in the Zaragoza desert.

During his retreat in the isolated cave, Brennan was once again powerfully convicted by the revelation of God’s love in the crucified Christ. On a midwinter’s night, he received this word from the Lord: “For love of you I left my Father’s side. I came to you who ran from me, who fled me, who did not want to hear my name. For love of you I was covered with spit, punched and beaten, and fixed to the wood of the cross.” Brennan would later reflect, “Those words are burned into my life. That night, I learned what a wise old Franciscan told me the day I joined the Order — ‘Once you come to know the love of Jesus Christ, nothing else in the world will seem as beautiful or desirable.’ “

The early seventies found Brennan back in the U.S. as he and four other priests established an experimental community in the bustling seaport city of Bayou La Batre, Alabama. Seeking to model the primitive life of the Franciscans, the fathers settled in a house on Mississippi Bay and quietly went to work on shrimp boats, ministering to the shrimpers and their families who had drifted out of reach from the church. Next to the community house was a chapel that had been destroyed by Hurricane Camille. The fathers restored it and offered a Friday night liturgy and social event, which soon became a popular gathering and precipitated many families’ return to engagement in the local church.

From Alabama, Brennan moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in the mid-seventies and resumed campus ministry at Broward Community College. His successful ministry was harshly interrupted, however, when he suffered a precipitate collapse into alcoholism. Six months of treatment, culminating at the Hazelden treatment center in Minnesota, restored his health and placed him on the road to recovery.

It was at this point in his life that Brennan began writing in earnest. One book soon followed upon another as invitations for him to speak and to lead spiritual retreats multiplied exponentially. *The Signature of Jesus*, one of Brennan’s early works, challenges the idea of “cheap grace” and calls Christians to radical discipleship. But it is the concept of grace—not cheap but abundantly costly, life-changing, and unimaginably rich—that has been the message of Brennan’s life. *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Brennan’s best-known work and now considered a 20th century Christian classic, explores the riches of God’s non-scorekeeping, abundant grace—not cheap, but free. Many decades later, Brennan’s final book and memoir concludes his writings with a fitting bookend: *All Is Grace: A Ragamuffin Memoir* (2011) tells the story of Brennan’s life through the lens of God’s amazing grace.

Brennan still travels widely as he continues to write and preach, encouraging men and women everywhere to accept and embrace the good news of God’s unconditional love in Jesus Christ.