

A Book of Prayers: To the Heavens from the Stars

By Chuck Spinner

AuthorHouse

2008, 233 pages, \$15.99 (soft cover)
ISBN 978-1-4343-3265-3

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In his book "A Book of Prayers: To the Heavens from the Stars," a compilation of prayers from more than 100 well known celebrities, author Chuck Spinner provides religious educators with a resource that channels the celebrity of 100 well-known and successful people into the more positive modeling of sharing their favorite prayer. The idea for this book came to him during his teaching career, when he would contact celebrities encouraging them to send some words of encouragement to his students. Each week, he would display a different celebrity's picture with the quotation, and found it an effective teaching tool. Religious educators also will welcome in Spinner's story an example of someone "walk-

ing in faith," despite overwhelming adversity.

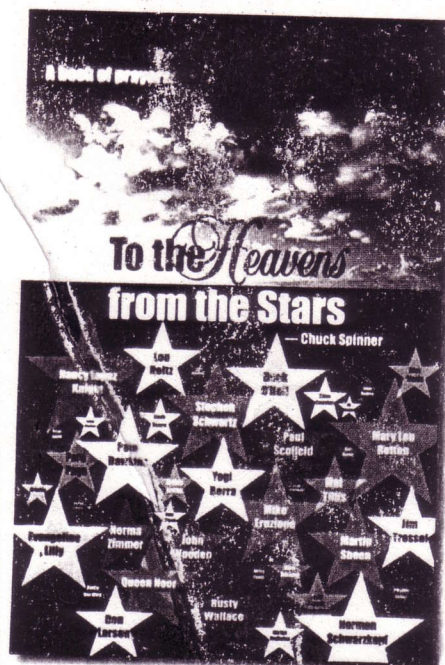
Spinner hopes his book conveys the idea that the power of prayer lightens the difficulties of life, and shares the circumstances of his own life. After the tragic loss of his father, who died in his sleep, when Spinner was 14, he spent his last three years of high school in a minor seminary in Illinois. While in his last year of high school, he again lost a family member, an older sister, tragically, when a medical procedure led to her death two days later.

After graduating from the seminary, Spinner began teaching in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1995, a drunk driver, who had passed out at the wheel, hit head-on the car Spinner's only child, Scott, was driving. The driver had no license or insurance and 26 prior driving violations. Scott made close to a 100 percent recovery.

In the last 16 years, his wife Patrice has had several surgeries—ruptured appendix, total knee replacement, two rotator cuff surgeries, the placement of two rods and crossover brackets inserted into her spinal column, breast cancer, the removal of a cancerous kidney and a total hysterectomy.

The book starts with Spinner's four-page dedication to his mother and wife. Before presenting the celebrity prayers, he gets down to his other purpose, which is to help people answer their questions about how to pray, with a chapter on the four purposes of prayer—thanksgiving, adoration, petition and satisfaction for one's sins. The rest of the book lists the stars, their bios and their favorite prayers, with more than 100 favorite prayers from Oscar winners, Heisman Trophy winners, Olympic Gold medalists, four-star generals, a Noble Prize recipient, one country's monarch, former Miss Americas and other athletes and celebrities.

Religious educators and their students will find many of the celebrity



prayers familiar, and some prayers new but, nonetheless in some cases, a welcome addition to their own prayer life. One of the surprises of the book is the way in which revealing the spiritual prayer that is the foundation of a well-known and successful person can cast our perception of their celebrity in a whole new light.

In getting these celebrities to share their prayers, Spinner moves the spotlight from their objectification in the media and their usefulness in selling products to their full and shared humanity. ■

Elizabeth Pilgrim is a writer who has worked in educational administration (adult learning/distance education) and training in Ontario, Canada, for more than 20 years. Originally from Queens Village, New York, from the mid-80s to the mid-90s she lived in an area of Toronto with a 25 percent illiteracy rate and was a community adult literacy volunteer. She holds an Honors BA in English from York University in Toronto, as well as certificates in technical writing and teacher/trainer of adults with honors. In her free time, she reviews Catholic books and writes freelance articles about prayer and developing one's prayer life for the Canadian Messenger of the Sacred Heart magazine (lizpilgrim@rogers.com).