



BOOK REVIEW

Saved by the Alphabet by Maurice Prater; illustrations by Jason Koltuniak; Divine Providence Press, 2018; soft cover, 32 pp., \$9.95; ages up to 7 years.

REVIEWED BY CAROL BAASS SOWA
TODAY'S CATHOLIC

A companion piece for youngest and about-to-be readers, *Saved by the Alphabet*, joins Maurice Prater's earlier offering on numbers, *Counting on Faith*. With colorful illustrations, again executed by Jason Koltuniak, little ones will progress through biblical figures in our salvation history from A (Adam) to Z (Zechariah).

Elijah, Moses, Queen Esther, Susanna and the duo of Timothy and Titus are among the Old and New Testament personages to be encountered in this early introduction to the Bible as well as the alphabet.

With a nihil obstat and imprimatur from Bishop Peter J. Jugis, J.C.D., of Charlotte, N.C., and a list of scriptural references at the back, this little book has it all.

Saved by the Alphabet can be purchased either direct from the publisher, Divine Providence Press, at www.divineprovidencepress.com or from Baker & Taylor and Spring Arbor - Ingram. Church, school and bookstore discounts are available.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maurice Prater has a master in business administration degree from Washington University in Saint Louis and has worked for the Catholic Church in the ministries of communications and development since 1999. He is director of mission advancement for the Missionaries of the Holy Family, a religious order of Catholic priests and brothers, and was the in-house editor of the community's Holy Family Prayer Book, published in English and Spanish by Liguori Publications. A member of the Catholic Writers Guild, he was responsible for production of the *Family Moment* videos which air on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN).



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The Line in the Sand — Stories from the US/Mexico Border

BY CAROL BAASS SOWA
TODAY'S CATHOLIC

SAN ANTONIO • The one-show-only performance of *The Line in the Sand — Stories from the US/Mexico Border*, presented by Teatro Farolito at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) on July 29, filled Thiry Auditorium with 500 attentive attendees. So intense were the portrayals, drawn from true stories in the lives of real people on both sides of the border and immigration, you could hear a tear drop. The stories were collected in 2005 by five writers and actors (Jared Delaney, Baird Kistner, Kevin Kostic, Gina Pisasale and Elizabeth Pool) as a Catholic Relief Services Drama Project investigating the immigration crisis.

Director José Rubén De León brought together a stellar cast of actors to portray the diverse characters and their perspectives on an issue that grows more urgent daily. He had originally stumbled across the play online years ago, ordered it and in 2008 directed a reader's theatre version at OLLU. Feeling the time was right for a fully performed production, it took him only an hour to round up a professional caliber cast of actors who felt as strongly as he did about the play and volunteered their services.

Among those welcoming the audience to the production was Sister Pearl Ceasar, CDP, superior general of the Congregation of Divine Providence, who briefly shared personal stories of immigration and family separation experienced by her own Syrian grandparents and great-grandparents. Like many who cross our borders today, Sister Pearl's family members were seeking refuge from oppression and a better life for their children and it was necessary for a parent to migrate first and spend years working to earn enough to bring over the rest of the family.

The stories in *The Line*



Carol Baass Sowa | Today's Catholic

Backstage after 'The Line in the Sand — Stories from the U.S./Mexico Border' at OLLU are, back row: Spencer Oldham, director José Rubén De León, Magda Porter and Juan Calderon. Front row: Luis Garcia Jr., Andrew Thornton, Amanda Ireta-Goode, Eraina Porras, Kelli Rosa Carbuncoc, Alyx Irene Gonzales and Carlos Alvarado. Not pictured: Marisa Varela and Josh Segovia.

in the Sand tell of life and death, dreams and despair. There is the woman determined to reunite with her husband who has been working in a northern state, but is now prevented from traveling back and forth as he did in the past. Her searching father later finds her scattered remains in the desert. He recognizes her rings. A young housewife signs up for a church trip to Mexico, thinking it will involve shopping and is changed forever by what she encounters in a migrant shelter.

A medical examiner speaks of the necessity of numbness in handling the growing number of decomposing, scarcely recognizable bodies brought in from the desert.

After the play, audience members were able to sign

postcards to be sent to their senators and representatives, urging a bipartisan policy giving DREAMers a path to citizenship and calling for rejection of any unjust treatment of immigrants. The cards were collected as part of a larger archdiocesan campaign. It was also announced that, by texting the word SAND to 30644, one could receive an immediate text to respond to write their senators and representative.

Future performances of *The Line in the Sand* will take place at the University of the Incarnate Word on October 24, at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin and for students at OLLU in the fall.

Hopefully, there will be more. Do not miss this show.

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