

## FOREWORD

**W**hat a crazy, eventful history this book has already had, even before it has hit the bookstores! The story I'm about to tell you is completely true, but I'll understand if you don't quite believe it. Even though I have lived it, I sometimes have a hard time believing it myself.

I wrote the basic manuscript for *Wisdom from the Batcave* in 1999, while I was a chaplain at Duke University. I wrote it because of my love for the Batman (and what he represents) and my desire to help regular people—starting with myself—translate his heroic ideals into their everyday lives.

What I didn't expect—didn't even dream!—was that soon, because of “the Batman book” (as I called it), I would be working as a consultant to the FBI. But that's what happened. Since Spring 2001 I've had a chance to teach a whole bunch of real-life law enforcement heroes, and I've even written another book for the law enforcement community. Here's the story:

Late in 2000, a high-ranking official from the FBI happened to hear me speak about the pursuit of spirituality. He was intrigued by my remarks, which, he told me later, were spiritual in nature without being too heavily religious. He explained that one unit within the FBI, which uses behavioral science to develop good police practices and techniques, was attempting to identify spiritual tools that could be used to combat severe stresses from which law enforcement officers suffer. They were looking for clergy who, without pushing a particular religious system, could help law enforcement officers connect spiritually.

He found my observations promising. But one talk by me wasn't much to go on. So he asked whether I had any experience or familiarity with law enforcement. I told him I'd been a prison chaplain for several years. Did I have any other materials that would let them know more about me, my interests, and my ability to contribute to this research of “identifying best practices of spirituality”? Was I sensitized to the unique realities and pressures that confront law enforcement officers?

I sent him a copy of my “Batman book” manuscript. He looked it over. Apparently it was authentically spiritual without being heavy-handedly religious, and it identified many of the themes that confront law enforce-

ment officers. So he contacted me and invited me down to the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

I was invited on one condition: That I never mention Batman or any other “juvenile” ideas while I was there. Law enforcement officers aren’t joking around, he explained, and they would, understandably, resent being told anything by a comic book-reading civilian! Someone else hinted to me gently that it wouldn’t be a bad idea if I got a haircut before I came and wore a suit while at the Academy.

Thus began a five-year association with the FBI, during which time I have spoken and lectured and written at the FBI Academy. I have worked for a section of the FBI that conducts behavioral science research and provides cutting-edge resources for the larger law enforcement community. During these five years I have met, observed, listened to, and interviewed countless real-life heroic law enforcement officers.

I didn’t rest on my Batman knowledge alone, of course. In preparation for my involvement with this project, I read thousands of pages on the topic of police stress. I familiarized myself with religious sources and what they might say to someone suffering such a stressful situation. The more I’ve read and the more I’ve listened and the more I’ve learned, the more I see that the insights I’ve developed flow from and rest solidly on the foundation that the Batman comics gave me.

I’ve attended and spoken at conferences held in Quantico on the topic of providing meaningful spiritual resources for law enforcement officers, not just FBI agents. As a result of my work and experiences with the FBI, I produced a book for law enforcement officers entitled *Spiritual Survival for Law Enforcement*.

I’ve learned a lot, too. Perhaps most of all, I have a newfound appreciation for and love of this simple book I offer you, *Wisdom from the Batcave*. At the end of the day, it still contains most of what I really want to share with the world, and which forms the bedrock of my approach to life. With all my admiration for the Batman, even I never really fully realized the power and universality of his message and what he stands for. This book is about recognizing the larger truths in a character of fiction.

When I first wrote it, I had hoped to teach “regular” people how to take these truths and apply them to their lives, how to be heroic in the course of “regular,” everyday lives. I have had the supreme honor of discussing these truths with real-life heroic people who actually do all these things. Many of them do it on an intuitive level without even realizing what they do, and most of what I try to do is to make them aware of what they are and do. When I look at them carefully, I notice very few differences

between them and the superheroes I have always loved to read about, even my beloved Batman.

I like to think of *Wisdom from the Batcave* as a civilian version of *Spiritual Survival for Law Enforcement*. I have tried to identify and present certain truths culled from both the Batman mythos and Jewish tradition that are relevant for you and me—everyday citizens who wield an enormous amount of power to change the world and make it a much better place.

Enjoy the book! Live its message!