



A Hand on my Shoulder: Memoirs of John Willem Gran (2 Volume Set)

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From the jacket: "Neither my established Protestant family background nor my becoming an avowed atheist at fourteen, nor indeed my persistent ambition to follow an artistic career, in any way foreshadowed my ending up as the Roman Catholic Bishop of Oslo at the age of forty-three." John Willem Gran left his home in Norway as a teenager to pursue a career as an opera director. His path took him to England to study theatre, to Munich just before the Second World War, and then to Rome. As he recounts the many humorous, spiritual, and life-threatening adventures he had during these difficult years of the mid-twentieth century, he also shares his personal pilgrimage from atheism to Buddhism to Roman Catholicism, and his eventual entry into the Cistercian monastery on Calday, a rugged island off the coast of Wales. From the jacket; "The Holy See had long since followed the practice that neither Carthusians nor Cistercians of the Strict Observance were to be appointed bishops. Of course, there have been exceptions." In the second volume of his memoirs, John Willem Gran describes the existence of a Cistercian monk in the 1950s and tells of the lives and hardships of the monastery on the weather-beaten Welsh island of Caldey. Having joined the community seeking prayer, contemplation, and study, he found himself playing the organ, teaching theology, repairing tractors and rebuilding and operating amphibious vehicles, in Rome administering the Cistercian generalate and students' premises, and finally back in his native Norway as bishop of Oslo. As a Catholic bishop in a Lutheran country, he participated in, and provides a profoundly thoughtful and sometimes humorous insider's view of the Second Vatican Council.

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