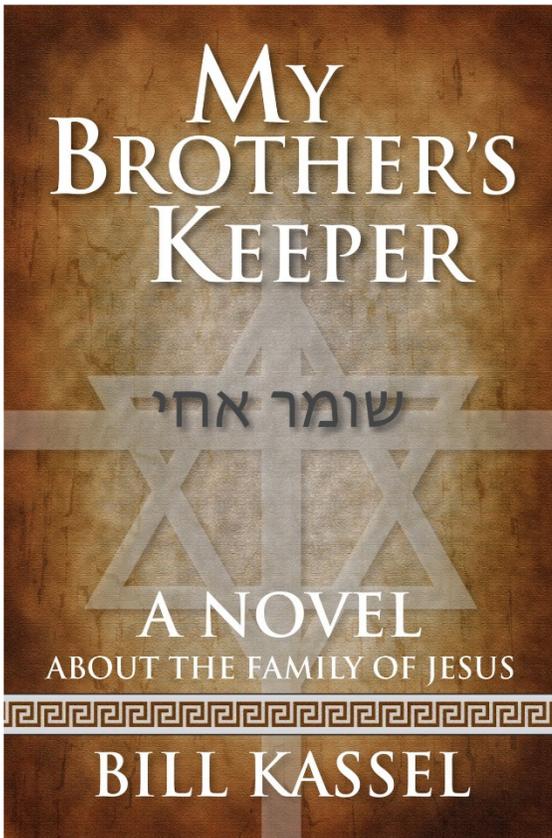


Circle of Sisters Book Club

My Brother's Keeper

By Bill Kassel



What if you were Jesus' protective older brother? Historical fiction novels covering the ministry of Christ are a dime a dozen among Christian fiction, but Kassel throws a fresh new spin on the genre by telling his story from the perspective of James the Just, Bishop of Jerusalem, student of the famed rabbi Gamaliel and protective elder brother of Jesus of Nazareth.

"But," you might say, "Jesus didn't have a brother! His mother was a perpetual virgin!" Don't you worry, there's no heresy here. There are actually two oral traditions about what the Bible means by referring to James as Christ's brother. One tradition builds upon the fact that even today, the Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew languages have one word for brother and cousin, and that James is Jesus' cousin. The other tradition is that St. Joseph was a widower when he married Mary, and James was a son by his first wife. Kassel borrows from the latter tradition. He even has St. Joseph on his deathbed, charge his son James with the protection of his younger brother Jesus, whose strange birth portends the tumultuous life of a prophet.

The book begins before Mary is even on the scene. When Mary does show on the scene and some more miraculous events start happening, Kassel portrays the family of St. Joseph reacting with a natural dubiousness, fear and doubt.

Amidst all of this, though, James is growing up. His father misses his Bat Mizvah because he is away in hiding in Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Shortly after his father does return, James is accepted into the school of Hallel, the most famed rabbi in Israel.

As James grows, he visits his family and younger brother Jesus on holidays and begins to climb in political influence, so much so that even Pilate begins to go to him for advice. When Jesus begins his preaching, James hopes to use this political influence to protect his younger brother and fulfill his deathbed promises to his father.

Please join us for the discussion on this book!

Wednesday, January 18, 2023

6:30 p.m. in St. Pius X Education Building

Contact Deb Scaravilli (541-884-6905; vicdebscaravilli@gmail.com) for more information.