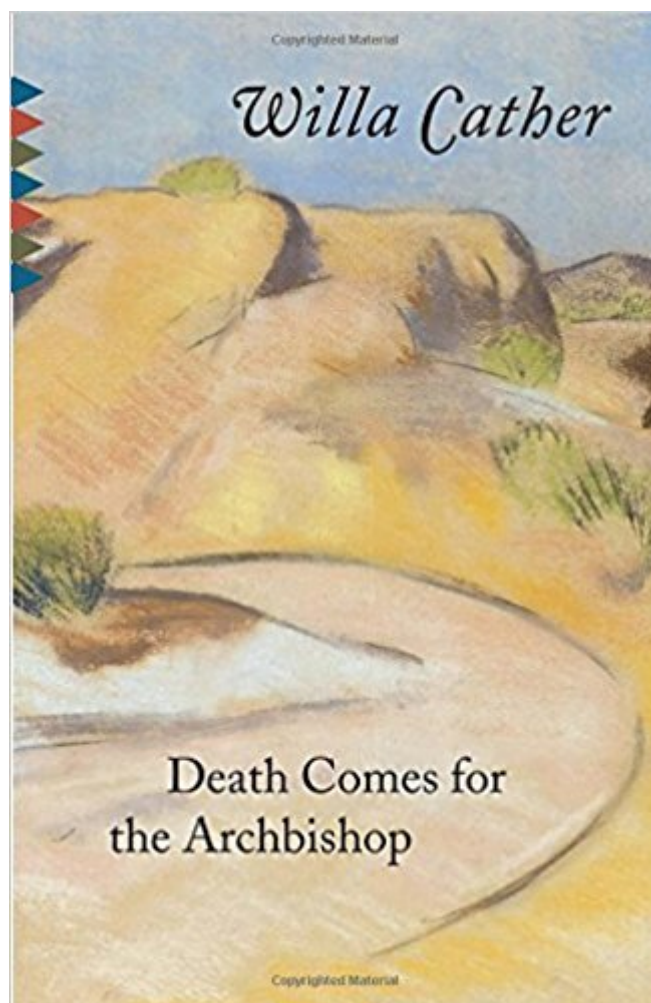


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# Death Comes For The Archbishop (Vintage Classics)



## Synopsis

Willa Cather's best known novel is an epic--almost mythic--story of a single human life lived simply in the silence of the southwestern desert. In 1851 Father Jean Marie Latour comes to serve as the Apostolic Vicar to New Mexico. What he finds is a vast territory of red hills and tortuous arroyos, American by law but Mexican and Indian in custom and belief. In the almost forty years that follow, Latour spreads his faith in the only way he knows--gently, all the while contending with an unforgiving landscape, derelict and sometimes openly rebellious priests, and his own loneliness. Out of these events, Cather gives us an indelible vision of life unfolding in a place where time itself seems suspended.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nebraska pulls out all the stops for this superb scholarly edition of Cather's 1927 novel. This edition includes a newly restored text along with several historical essays and explanatory notes by several scholars. Academic libraries supporting hardcore American literature curricula will want this volume. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A truly remarkable book . . . Soaked through and through with atmosphere . . . From the riches of her imagination and sympathy Miss Cather has distilled a very rare piece of literature. It stands out, from the very resistance it opposes to classification." --The New York

Times. "The most sensuous of writers, Willa Cather builds her imagined world as solidly as our five senses build the universe around us." —Rebecca West "[Cather's] descriptions of the Indian mesa towns on the rock are as beautiful, as unjudging, as lucid, as her descriptions of the Bishop's cathedral. It is an art of making, of clear depiction of separate objects, whose whole effect works slowly and mysteriously in the reader, and cannot be summed up. . . . Cather's composed acceptance of mystery is a major, and rare, artistic achievement." —A. S. Byatt

Although this is written as a novel, it is based on the history of two real figures (see Wikipedia). It is given to us under the names Bishop Jean Marie Latour, of course a French missionary, and a priest friend Father Joseph Vaillant from Ohio. This comes to us as a fictionalized account of the early roots of the Catholic Church and clergy in southwestern U.S., mostly New Mexico, but there are certainly many references to other geographical areas and events. Probably the most surprising inclusion, a name that for me calls to mind the Wild West, was that of Kit Carson, totally unexpected, and his conversion to Catholicism. In true story-telling form, Cather gives us an education, or better, a picture of missionary life in our country at that time, and the land where they worked. She feeds this to us through the eyes of a Bishop sent to take over a huge Diocese and nourish the Church and its people. It was a rugged life—certainly not the Church of the 21st Century. Her words, describing all of this, have the ability to be able to continually fascinate the reader. Very much worthwhile! Most people agree Willa Cather is always worthwhile!

Willa Cather's literary genius stands in 2015 as high as ever and this novel's reflection of the times it portrays in New Mexico warms the reader to a tune from different times. Yet, those times trickle down to the present as the cathedral in Santa Fe remains along with other remnants from the past in locations throughout the West that are referenced in the story. I read this in follow up to reading the history of one of the early German merchant families that settled in Santa Fe who had close ties to the real Archbishop and found this a warm and pleasant reading experience that I may have missed when I read it years ago. Try it and I am sure you will enjoy it too.

What a joy to read a well written book like this one! The prose was lovely and the whole effect was a calming, informative, interesting experience. The book is very pertinent today in that it lends more understanding of the Mexican culture which is present now in so many different areas, not just the

Southwest. It touches on two current concerns, how we take care of the environment and how we treat immigrants, all the while weaving a beautiful story of strong faith and the indomitable spirit of the early Catholic missionaries as they spread the faith throughout the new territory of the United States. And the description of the geography of New Mexico and some of the surrounding areas was beautiful. I think I will read it again; I enjoyed it that much!

Willa Cather's writing sings. It's too bad that we have had to read so many books by dead white men in school as examples of fine literature. She wrote in the days of Steinbeck, Hemingway, and the like, and her books tower above them in imagery and clarity. This is one of her finest.

Catholics are at their core a sacramental people. Reading about the life and times of Bishop Latour and father Valliant will give you a much deeper idea of what that means - how the people, the landscape and the palpable faith in God all combine to sometimes reveal and sometimes veil the magnificence of the Spirit.

Willa Cather paints a wonderful picture of not only the countryside but also her characters and their various cultures. Living in the Desert Southwest with paved streets, cars, planes, and trains, it was interesting to go back-in-time and really think about how traveling these parts of the world once were - how desperately hard.

The depictions of the wild territories in the American West of the 1800's are breathtaking. When I think of the fact that Willa Cather wrote this beautiful story in 1927, I am even more impressed with her polished literary skill. The character development is done with a very artistic hand. I continue to enjoy remembering the tender scenes of the friendship and mutual respect of the Archbishop and his Vicar. Added attractions were Cather's historical perspective and the interaction of the diverse characters and communities, European/American, Mexican, and Indian, and the hardships and complexities of the Church in its early American missionary period. A moving story with warmth and humanity.

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