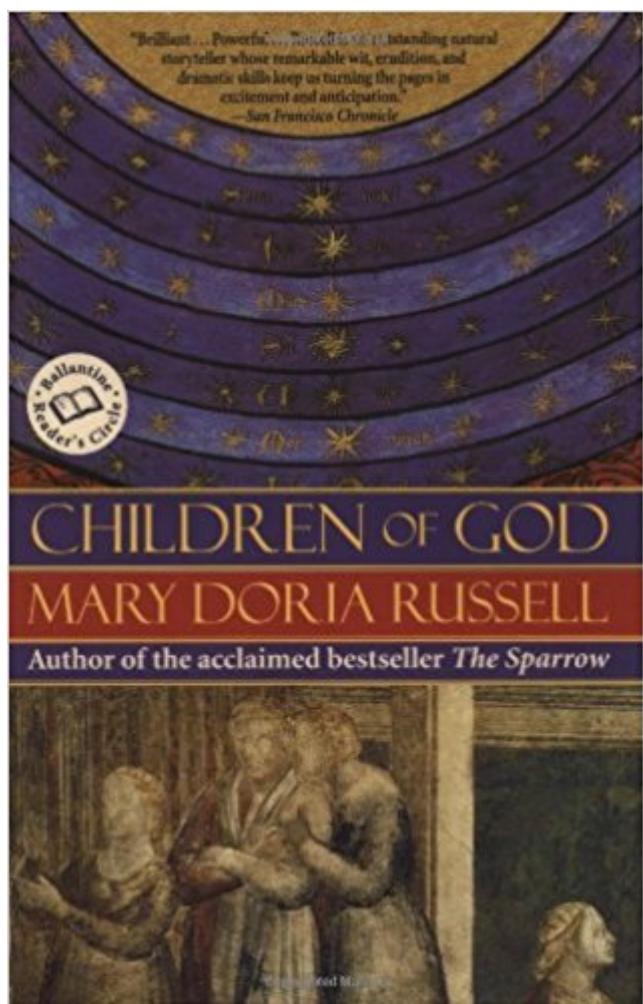


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# Children Of God (Ballantine Reader's Circle)



## **Synopsis**

Mary Doria Russell's debut novel, *The Sparrow*, took us on a journey to a distant planet and into the center of the human soul. A critically acclaimed bestseller, *The Sparrow* was chosen as one of Entertainment Weekly's Ten Best Books of the Year, a finalist for the Book-of-the-Month Club's First Fiction Prize and the winner of the James M. Tiptree Memorial Award. Now, in *Children of God*, Russell further establishes herself as one of the most innovative, entertaining and philosophically provocative novelists writing today. The only member of the original mission to the planet Rakhat to return to Earth, Father Emilio Sandoz has barely begun to recover from his ordeal when the Society of Jesus calls upon him for help in preparing for another mission to Alpha Centauri. Despite his objections and fear, he cannot escape his past or the future. Old friends, new discoveries and difficult questions await Emilio as he struggles for inner peace and understanding in a moral universe whose boundaries now extend beyond the solar system and whose future lies with children born in a faraway place. Strikingly original, richly plotted, replete with memorable characters and filled with humanity and humor, *Children of God* is an unforgettable and uplifting novel that is a potent successor to *The Sparrow* and a startlingly imaginative adventure for newcomers to Mary Doria Russell's special literary magic. From the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

*Children of God* is the sequel to Mary Doria Russell's 1996 *The Sparrow*, which saw a Jesuit

mission to the planet Rakhat end in disaster. The sole survivor of that mission, a priest named Emilio Sandoz, returned a beaten and broken man, having suffered rape and mutilation at the hands of enigmatic aliens. Now the Jesuits want to go back to Rakhat, and they want Sandoz aboard the new mission. But Sandoz has renounced his priesthood and even found a measure of happiness with his new wife and stepdaughter. Meanwhile, on Rakhat, contact with the humans has thrown the local culture into turmoil, precipitating a war between Rakhat's two sentient races. As forces conspire to send Emilio back to Rakhat--and toward a possible reconciliation with God--the planet verges on genocidal destruction. Children of God is a more polished novel than *The Sparrow*, and the story is equally compelling. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Russell follows her speculative first novel, *The Sparrow*, with a sequel that will please even readers new to her interplanetary missionaries. Having returned from a disastrous, 21st-century expedition to the planet Rakhat, Jesuit Father Emilio Sandoz, the sole survivor of the mission, faces public rage over the order's part in the war between the gentle Runa and the predatory Jana'ata?fury more than matched by the priest's own self-hatred and religious disillusionment. In the sequel, he is forced to return to Rakhat with a new expedition more interested in profits than prophets. When they discover the planet in turmoil and the Runa precariously in power, the temptation to interfere is more than they can withstand. As in her first book, Russell uses the entertaining plot to explore sociological, spiritual, religious, scientific and historical questions. Misunderstandings between cultures and people are at the heart of her story. It is, however, the complex figure of Father Sandoz around which a diverse interplanetary cast orbits, and it is the intelligent, emotional and very personal feud between Father Sandoz and his God that provides energy for both books. 50,000 first printing; BOMC selection; audio rights to Random House Audio; author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I just finished reading this book (after already reading the other one) then I sobbed for 15 minutes straight. Not because I disliked the book. Not so much because of sadness that it was over but more for relief... & for my own happiness at the end. I so loved reading this book as well as it's predecessor. The writing is superb, the characters so vivid & real that I felt like I could reach out & touch them. The story is so unique & well developed... I can't say enough. Why didn't I know about these 2 books before now? If you enjoy sci-fi you'll enjoy this. If you aren't into sci-fi don't worry, chances are you'll like this anyway... it's just a great story. This 2 book series has already won many accolades and so you don't need to hear me go on and on about how wonderful it is. Also I'm sure

many other reviewers before me have given a detailed synopses of what the story is about. I'm sure many people have even told you who the characters are and what the plot is. So I don't need to do that. I will say this, yes the book has deep religious and spiritual themes through-out. All the main characters seem to go through real tests of the human spirit - dark night of the soul type of stuff. So it's a heavy book that makes you think just because so many topics are brought up. If you 'hate' this type of book then it may not be for you. However, I'd recommend that you get out of your comfort zone and try this. It'll be good for you to put yourself in the place of some of these characters and think about what you'd do if you were them. Wishing you the best if you choose to try out these books. They are going to the top of my Top 10 list.

Worthy ending to the Sparrow. I resisted this book for years. How could anything live up to The Sparrow? Oh, me, of little faith, the circle is so beautifully completed. Read The Sparrow first, and then this wonderful book takes you on the same journey as the crew of the Stella Maris, because what you think you understand, what seems obvious to you, is utterly wrong. The villains of the first piece have agendas so different from your assumptions that, after surviving the shock of the first book, you will have to rethink everything. Ms. Russell didn't lie to us, she just let us make all the wrong conclusions. Of all the ideas these books present, this feels the truest - As Fr. Sandoz says of Voelker in The Sparrow, "...It's human nature. He wanted it to be some mistake I made that he wouldn't have made." We all made exactly the same mistake at the end of The Sparrow. We thought we'd sorted it out. That the characters I so loved could come back into my life and make me cry all over again is a testament to Ms. Russell's amazing skill with a story. And her depth of knowledge in so many fields weaves a tapestry of ideas, emotions and people. Philosophy and physics, theology and revolution, genetics and music, an amazing, emotional roller coaster of sentient life and intelligent reading. Impossible to classify, these two books together cover the whole spectrum of fiction, should have their own wall at the book store. Courtroom style drama, space travel, religion, love story, communication failure and success, personal drama, time travel, cosmic misunderstandings and even an invented botany lesson or two. What a feast! In a lifetime of hungry reading, The Sparrow is my favorite book. This is the end of The Sparrow.

4 1/2 stars actually! This 2 volume set is, imo, exceptionally well thought out; and, for this reader, another crack in the cosmic egg of my world. For anyone who is in any manner committed to honest self examination, expansion, or continued personal growth, so to speak, this book (as well as "The Sparrow") accomplishes just that, and more. Aside from the story of the revolutionary, cultural,

upheaval on the planet Rakhat (which is interesting enough in and of itself) the reader is almost forced to go beyond the confines of our ordinary way of looking at our own civilization. Some of us will even come to face the notion that many of us are not much more than meat or food for the ruling class. Thank you Mary Doria Russell for a most thoughtful, useful, and interesting excursion!

Just Not Up to the Sparrow. So much of the Sparrow's appeal hinges on the mystery of Emilio Sandoz's priesthood--his celibate sacrifice, questing faith and selfless love of others. All the more mysterious in a man so effortlessly charming and obviously in love with life. When he is broken on the wheel by his alien tormenters, then ruthlessly interrogated by his Jesuit brethren, I felt deeply for him and longed for the return of his faith and joy. The ending of that novel, leaving him half-healed, his future unresolved, is perfect, and calls for no sequel. I found Emilio's decision (in Children of God) to leave the priesthood for marriage and an (apparently) posh life a definite let down, a "maybe saint" settling for bourgeois gratification. His "rescue" from this fate feels like something out of a comic book. I have read about 200 pages and there is some good writing, but it cannot possibly equal The Sparrow.

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