



AWARENESS

*The Perils and Opportunities
of Reality*

ANTHONY DE MELLO

"This is your wake-up call!" —Charles Osgood

AWARENESS

*A de Mello Spirituality Conference
in His Own Words*



ANTHONY DE MELLO, S.J.
Edited by J. Francis Stroud, S.J.



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FOREWORD

Tony de Mello on an occasion among friends was asked to say a few words about the nature of his work. He stood up, told a story which he repeated later in conferences, and which you will recognize from his book *Song of the Bird*. To my astonishment, he said this story applied to me.

A man found an eagle's egg and put it in a nest of a barnyard hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them.

All his life the eagle did what the barnyard chicks did, thinking he was a barnyard chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. And he would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air.

Years passed and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents, with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" he asked.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth—we're chickens." So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was.

Astonished? At first I felt downright insulted! Was he publicly likening me to a barnyard chicken? In a sense, yes, and also, no. Insulting? Never. That wasn't Tony's way. But he was telling me and these people that in his eyes I was a "golden eagle," unaware of the heights to which I could soar. This story made me understand the measure of the man, his genuine love and respect for people while always telling the truth. That was what his work was all about, waking people up to the reality of their greatness. This was Tony de Mello at his best, proclaiming the message of "awareness," seeing the light we are to ourselves and to others, recognizing we are better than we know.

This book captures Tony in flight, doing just that—in live dialogue and interaction—touching on all the themes that enliven the hearts of those who listen.

Maintaining the spirit of his live words, and sustaining his spontaneity with a responsive audience on the printed page was the task I faced after his

death. Thanks to the wonderful support I enjoyed from George McCauley, S.J., Joan Brady, John Culkin, and others too numerous to single out, the exciting, entertaining, provocative hours Tony spent communicating with real people have been wonderfully captured in the pages that follow.

Enjoy the book. Let the words slip into your soul and listen, as Tony would suggest, with your heart. Hear his stories, and you'll hear your own. Let me leave you alone with Tony—a spiritual guide—a friend you will have for life.

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