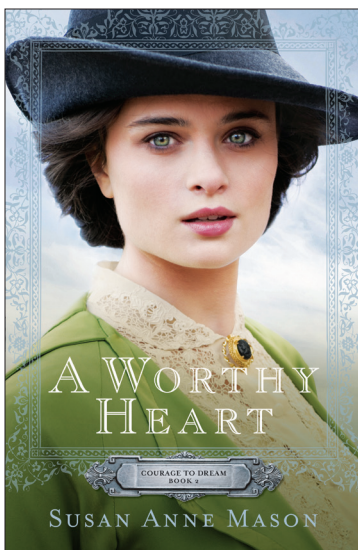


QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH SUSAN ANNE MASON

A Worthy Heart

COURAGE TO DREAM #2

by Susan Anne Mason

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Media Contacts

 FICTION PUBLICIST: **Amy Green**

952-829-2596

agreen@bethanyhouse.com

 CANADIAN MEDIA: **Ellen Graf-Martin**

519-342-3703

ellen@grafmartin.com

Please send tear sheets to:

Amy Green

Bethany House Publishers

11400 Hampshire Ave. S. #200

Bloomington, MN 55438

1. In *Irish Meadows*, Adam O’Leary came across as a bit of a villain. How did you make him into the hero of the next book?

This was indeed a challenge! To be honest, at first I didn’t like Adam O’Leary much! That’s why I moved him “offstage” in *Irish Meadows*. I didn’t know much about him, only that he would end up in prison. But the more I delved into Adam’s character, the more I understood what drove him, and I began to see his potential as a hero!

At the beginning of *A Worthy Heart*, Adam is newly released from prison and looking for a fresh start, which he discovers is not so easy to achieve. Adam meets Rylan Montgomery’s sister, Maggie, visiting from Ireland, and right away he is intrigued by the feisty beauty. Unfortunately, he decides that no woman would want to become involved with an ex-convict. Even if Maggie is able to see beyond his mistakes, Maggie’s brothers will make sure she stays far away from the “black sheep” of the O’Leary family. If you enjoyed *Irish Meadows*, I hope you’ll come back for Adam’s story, and cheer him on in his adventures with Maggie.

2. What is the theme of *A Worthy Heart*?

The underlying theme of my story is worthiness. Adam has never felt worthy—not of his place in the family, and certainly not of love or respect after he ends up in prison. So I hope Adam’s journey back to his family and to his faith, and his ultimate realization that he is indeed worthy after all, will touch a chord with my readers.

3. Is there a second love story in *A Worthy Heart*?

Oh, yes! I couldn’t resist adding a love story for the third Montgomery sibling, Gabriel, who accompanies Maggie over from Ireland. He’s really only on the trip as a chaperone for his sister, but as a fireman, Gabe is intrigued to observe a New York City fire hall and see how they handle the challenges in a big city. When he saves a wealthy banker’s daughter from a blaze, Gabe becomes entranced by the beautiful Aurora Hastings, who dreams of becoming a nurse, and who only has eyes for the handsome doctor helping her. Gradually, however, Aurora comes to admire the strapping Irishman, especially when they become involved in a typhoid outbreak at the orphanage.

4. Maggie has an interesting profession as an organist. What intriguing research did this entail?

Maggie’s quest to find work as a church organist leads her St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Manhattan. I had been there myself years ago and tried very hard to remember what it looked like. The Internet was a great source of information, but when my thirtieth wedding anniversary was approaching, I decided to incorporate an anniversary trip with some hands-on research. It was so interesting to go into St. Patrick’s Cathedral and envision Maggie walking there one hundred years ago! We couldn’t get up to see the organ because of security issues (yes, there is security in a church after 9/11), but I could see the pipes from below, and one of the guides told us about the almost hidden staircases up to the loft. It was very exciting!

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5. What is the next book in the COURAGE TO DREAM series? Will we see more of the O’Leary family?

The third and final book in the COURAGE TO DREAM series is called *Love’s Faithful Promise*. This book deals with the two youngest O’Learys, Deirdre and Connor. Deirdre is a medical student who is forced to deal with a rather cantankerous Canadian doctor while treating her mother after a stroke. Connor is working hard at Irish Meadows, following in his father’s footsteps, but his efforts to prove himself to James O’Leary are thwarted by a stable hand—who turns out to be a girl! I hope this last book in the O’Leary saga wraps up the series in a sigh-worthy fashion!