

CATHOLIC PIETY — A FAMILY OF SPIRITUALITIES
by Paul Ford and Janice Daurio. Paul teaches theology and liturgy at St. John's Seminary. Janice is completing a doctorate in philosophy at the Claremont Graduate School. They are oblates of St. Andrew's Abbey (Benedictine), Valyermo, California, and make their home in Camarillo.

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONAL SPIRITUALITY—SAYING YES TO GOD'S YES.

It is a puzzle of singular perplexity that the most important human experience is the one least acknowledged. One of the great unspoken mysteries of life is the urgent sense of waiting implicit in ordinary activities.

There is the hope that accompanies the beginning of a new day, full of promise. Why? What is it people are hoping for?

You go to the mail box. Perhaps you had been checking at the window to see if the mail carrier is on the block. There is something exciting about checking for the mail. When you open that box, the possibilities seem infinite. What are you waiting for?

You begin reading a book, a story, a letter, this paper—half-consciously searching—searching for what?

There are the precious moments between ringing a doorbell and getting a response—again, a time of infinite possibilities. Will the door be opened by those who welcome us with open arms, embrace us, welcome us into the intimacy of their home?

People clean their homes, remodel the patio, tidy the porch, as if preparing. Preparing for what?

Sitting in a park, sitting in a train, walking in a museum: We absentmindedly scan the faces of passers-by, as if looking for a certain face.

The human experience of falling in love; the human experience of being young and full of energy and promise; the experience of just waiting . . . waiting for what? A desire for what?

C. S. Lewis, in an address called "The Weight of Glory," writes this.

In speaking of this desire...which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the insoluble secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward. . . .

What is he talking about? Why is it we feel as if we both know and don't know what he is talking about?

The mostly-unacknowledged but absolutely crucial experience of expecting, our whole lives, that something unspeakably wonderful is about to happen,

that someone unutterably wonderful is about to show up—these are the indications in ordinary life of the hole in the middle of even the fullest human heart—in fact, the people with the greatest hearts seem to be most aware of the hole.

These people know that the hole was put there by the Only One Who can make us whole, the Only One who can liberate us from our false desires so that we can know our true Desire, that deepest desire of the human heart. This is the One who made us restless so that we can rest in Him alone, as St. Augustine so famously said on the first page of his Confessions. (“Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.”)

What most characterizes human nature—and all human beings most in touch with their nature—is how desperately we want to be loved, loved not out of pity or duty, but loved because of who we are.

People who seek Fame, for instance, are importantly right and importantly wrong. They are importantly right because they know, indirectly, what they want. But they are importantly wrong for two reasons. First, they could be famous and not deserve it. (You can think of dozens of examples without even trying.) Second, even if they achieve this fame—and, here is the important part: even if it is fully deserved—it will fail to satisfy. All natural experiences fail to satisfy.

Some people who make romantic movies, and some people who enjoy them: They, too, are importantly right and importantly wrong. They are importantly right because they know their need for perfect love. They are importantly wrong because they think that any purely human love affair can satisfy that longing of which we are all strongly though inchoately aware, that longing to which we hardly ever advert.

Astounding as it is—too good to be true, cynics say—we are completely and unconditionally loved by an Infinitely Lovable Other: not out of the Other’s pity, or the Other’s sense of duty, but because He sees us as we truly are, as he made us, as lovable, precious in His sight.

The Totally Lovable Other stands at the door and knocks, as He says of Himself in the Book of Revelation, in an image reminiscent of the Lover in the Song of Songs, who also stands at the door and knocks, waiting for the Beloved to let him in. He says Yes; he waits for our Yes.

You may have noticed a certain psychological fact about human relationships—a fact that defies logic. When one person loves another and the latter hesitates, it is ironic that the one who hesitates often stands to gain more by saying Yes than the one who unhesitatingly says Yes. So it is with us and God. The one who stands the most to gain—the human Beloved—astounding as it is, hesitates to answer yes to that Yes thundering down the halls of time.

This is what the Church means by the universal call to holiness. This Yes to God’s Yes is the foundation of all spirituality, public and private, liturgical and non-liturgical.

This is the great, unchanging truth of Catholicism; this is where its true universality lies: that all have a vocation, that all have a call to say Yes to God’s Yes.

Are you called? Yes. Emphatically! Whether you are a priest or . . . a religious or a married person . . . you are called. . . . Your very being is a call. And infinite love calls you forth from nothingness into actuality, into being, into life, into love. (Basil Pennington, Called)

This is the exciting, untame truth of Orthodoxy.

“This is the thrilling romance of orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy.” (G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy)

This truth is so unspeakably wonderful that the human heart cannot bear too much awareness of it. We may, if we are lucky, feel the excitement of it for a few seconds in our lifetime—perhaps at our nuptial Mass, perhaps at World Youth Day when we see that small, stooped man in white. Why do hearts beat faster when they see him? Were not our hearts burning within us?

The sacramentality of youth is its great witness to this unspeakable longing, this infinite possibility. The sacramentality of maturity and aging is the quiet wisdom that comes with knowing that all, all this world offers—and it is considerable—fails to satisfy.

The trick for young people is to keep their excitement, but hold out for the Real Thing, by which we do not mean marriage. Marriage is itself but a promise, a foretaste. The trick for young people is to accept the wisdom of the Church’s teaching on sexuality, because it is founded in the Church’s infinite wisdom that no human relationship will satisfy. Only God satisfies.

The trick for older people is to hold on to the promise and excitement of youth and to combine it with the wisdom of age. Some older people know what younger people sometimes do not—that this Great Desire and Longing will be satisfied, but we must continue to wait. The marks of aging appearing on the human body are the reminders of this promise, as God removes the body’s beauty from this world’s eyes, to save that beauty for heaven. Some blessed people know the beauty of bodies marked by aging; wrinkles are personalized reminders of the heavenly marriage to come.

The most characteristic aspect of human nature is this longing to hear God’s Yes, though few know it is that which they wait for, and that which they already have. St. Thomas Aquinas asserts that grace builds on nature. From nature comes the natural desire to be perfectly loved. From supernature, from grace, comes the One, the only One, who can satisfy that natural desire. We are naturally in love with God.

Thus we stand poised, waiting for the Kiss of the Beloved, when He kisses us awake as we sleep in the Grave. We open our eyes and see that Face: The Face we have longed to see all our lives, The Face we have searched for our whole lives. That Face.

Recommended Reading: St. Augustine, Confessions, Book I; C. S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory; G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (Doubleday); Sebastian Moore, The Inner Loneliness (Crossroad)

PART TWO: FOUNDATIONAL SPIRITUALITY—SAYING YES TO GOD’S YES.

There isn’t one way to be holy. Being perfect and compassionate as our heavenly Father is perfect and compassionate is as individual as each of us are. No one says yes to God in just the same way as anyone else. Your holiness is more distinctly you than your fingerprints or your DNA, although it can be grouped, for the sake of discussion, as married, single, lay, religious, or priestly.

In the past, it was conventional to classify spiritualities historically and to speak of them as schools or ways: Benedictine, Byzantine, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite, Ignatian, Salesian. But these major shades of being holy merely mix in different proportions the primary colors which Jesus introduced into our dark world. This first installment of our series looks at the first organizers of Jesus’ teaching on Christian spirituality, especially at St. Paul and St. Matthew.

“In the beginning, God . . .” Everything begins with God, especially a survey of Catholic spirituality. The human desire for holiness began with God’s desire to make and to be one with the human race. The great Doctor of the Church, St. Irenæus (†200), taught that our Father has forever been reaching out to us with both arms, the Son and the Spirit; or, to put it another way Irenæus puts it: God has forever planned to speak to us His Word of love with His Breath. Spirituality is what we would have said to God in reply, a response spoken with His Word and using His Breath. As St. John the Evangelist, Irenæus’ “spiritual grandfather,” said, “We love because God loved us first” (I John 4:19).

“We would have said”—but because of sin we now need more than God’s help to say yes to God; we need God to turn us around, to convert us toward Him so that we can see the love in His eyes and the smile on His face and be healed of our self-hatred and self-absorption.

“Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life” is the bottom line of what God did for us, His yes to us. Christians entered Jesus’ dying and rising in Baptism, shedding their old lives and donning new ones, faces and bodies glistening with the fragrant Chrism of confirmation, given to eat and drink of His very Body and Blood. In St. Paul’s words, this baptismal life begins with the first of the three “great therefore” in his Letter to the Romans:

Therefore (#1), since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (5:1–5, NRSV)

These are the mercies the Trinity has done for us, giving us the inner trinity of strengths and inclinations (faith, hope, and love) in order to respond in return.

And in what does this response essentially consist?

“I appeal to you therefore (#2), brothers and sisters, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . . Do not be conformed to this

world, but be transformed by a renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God” (12:1–2).

“Offer it up,” in other words (as your mother used to say), and do what you discover God wants you to do. These are the being and doing dimensions of the Christian life, the vertical and horizontal:

B
E
D O I N G
N
G

And in case we wanted a list of the kinds of things God wants done, activities which please Him, Paul describes them extensively from Romans 12:3 to 15:6. This grab-bag of Christian behaviors ends characteristically: “Welcome one another, therefore (#3), just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (15:7). In other words, if God has said yes to you, say yes to each other.

You could identify the early Christians not just by their love but by their passion to be together before dawn on the first day of every week—before they went off to work—to sing the hymn of the risen Christ (an early way to describe the Mass) and again in the evening to eat a meal together. They loved to hear God’s word read to them and the latest letter from their Apostle and, when it was written, the account of Jesus’s words and deeds on his way to die and rise for us.

Matthew’s community (Jewish Christians mostly, with an influx of Gentile converts) was happy to hear his account of Jesus’ inaugural address with its consoling but challenging blessings drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures (blessed are the poor in spirit, mourners, meek, passionate for God’s way, merciful, pure of heart, and peacemakers)—these people knew themselves to be among the persecuted for following this new way. The first three of these seven blessings required them to use their in-built faith and hope; and the last four put their love into practice (a division Thomas Aquinas would make in the Middle Ages).

The new way seemed like the old: The Master still expected his followers to observe the “three pillars of piety,” almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. (St. Paul would recognize prayer as the being-dimension and the other two as the essential doings—fasting as a not-doing.) But Jesus gave them an urgency and an interiority which made them almost new: “Whenever you give alms/pray/fast . . . do it secretly because your Father will reward you secretly.” Their newness seemed to flow from His experience of His Father and Their Spirit when He underwent John’s baptism: The Father affirmed Him in words we all long to hear: “This is my beloved Child”; and the Spirit rushed on Him, compelling Him to go to the wilderness.

How significant it is that the Old Testament begins in a garden with the Old Adam and Eve and the New Testament seems to begin in the desert with the New Adam. The Old Couple had all the nourishment they needed ready to hand, they experienced perfect intimacy with each other and all creation (they were on “first-name basis,” so to speak) and with God (they walked with God in the cool of the evening), and they mattered—they were stewards of all they surveyed. The three great human needs (nourishment, intimacy, irreplaceability) were perfectly met. The mystery is why and

how they said “no” to all of this, occasioning the need for a second Adam who would say yes to God’s way of doing things. Where the first clung, the Second surrendered—we see this in Jesus’ answer to the three temptations: “Humans don’t live on bread alone; they live on God’s word,” “I will not test My Father’s love; I will receive it when He decides to give it to me,” and “It is all right to be a creature and not the Creator.” It was up to the New Eve, the Church, to join her Husband in the struggle to say yes in the wilderness of this life and thus be made ready and beautiful for the Wedding up ahead of us all.

Early Christians saw in this pivotal scene the reason why they should give alms (to demonstrate they trust God for their daily bread and for the Bread of His Word), why they should fast (to interrupt the cycle between any kind of hunger and any kind of satisfaction long enough to receive it as a love gift from God), and why they should pray (to say to God with entreaty, sorrow, praise, and gratitude: “You are in charge, not I; show me what I should do for You”).

These private practices would later evolve into the public vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience of the religious orders of the various schools of spirituality. And each school blends the ingredients of being and doing; each way paints with more of one beatitude-color than of another. But all have their source in the original baptismal spirituality of the early Church.

We hear talk occasionally about the Church’s being or not being a democracy. One way the Church is democratic is in giving freedom to her children in spirituality. How we say Yes to God’s Yes is partly a matter of personal choice. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of every Catholic Christian; but as to whether one is Franciscan or Ignatian, as to whether one makes the nine First Fridays . . . these are matters of individual choice.

There is another way in which God is utterly democratic: He calls all to holiness, to this this Great Dance of Love, the Wedding Feast: Pope and Peasant, Saint and Sinner, Clergy and Lay.

This is the great, unchanging truth of Catholicism; this is where its true universality lies: All have a vocation. All have a call to say Yes to God’s Yes.

Recommended Reading: Simon Tugwell, The Beatitudes: Soundings in the Christian Tradition (Templegate)

PART THREE: BYZANTINE SPIRITUALITY—WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET

The Cross silhouetted against the sky, tying together heaven and earth: Perhaps this is the image that most captures the sense of Byzantine or Eastern Christianity. In one of our Eucharistic prayers we say that Jesus stretched out His arms between heaven and earth on the cross. In Byzantine liturgy, we stand, in awe at the cross and what it unites, witnessing to the miracle of our redemption, heaven brought down to earth. The whole heavenly choir sings. The Numinous One Who lives in Unapproachable Light in heaven is in our midst.

In the first installment in this series, we spoke of the great, exciting romance of orthodoxy, the truth so good it has to be true: Heaven is wedded to earth. The wedding garment appropriate for the Nuptial Feast of the Lamb is awe. That wedding garment is in evidence at the Byzantine liturgy.

There is a silly habit abroad these days of recognizing only one form of intimacy: chumminess and informality. Those familiar with Byzantine liturgy do not make that mistake: They know the intimacy of awe and solemnity. They know that God is God, the Totally Other, the *Mysterium Tremendum*, *Mysterium Fascinans*, the Unknown and the Unknowable—yet closer to us than we are to ourselves.

The unknown is fascinating to us; people respond strongly to “Close Encounters” and “E. T.” But the unknown is also frightening—What if it is hostile? In the Byzantine liturgy the question is well-answered. The God of All Power and Might has joined Himself to humanity in a bond so intimate that the best marriage is only the faintest shadow of that union. The Unknown is not tame, but He is Good, Wholly Good.

God is Terrific but He is not terrifying. God is incomprehensibly distant from us and completely familiar with us.

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. But you have come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Letter to the Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–23. NRSV)

The Byzantine Liturgy is witness to this intimacy in solemnity, this nearness of heaven to earth. But it is not necessary to attend Byzantine Liturgy in order to become aware of the Marriage of Heaven and Earth. The spirit of Byzantine spirituality can be applied to ordinary life.

Everyone’s living space is the meeting place of God and His People. Blessed are the eyes that can see that their own home and their own parish is where the

Kingdom of God begins.

A wonderful book by Dr. Thomas Howard, Hallowed Be This House (originally, The Splendor in the Ordinary), maps the holiness of heaven onto a humble human dwelling. He sees the home as a temple and as a school, a school of holiness whose basic lesson is: “My life for yours.” Room by room, we are taught to lay down our lives for one another and thereby become our true selves.

The front door and entryway are reminders that the home is a place of welcome into the holiness of ordinary living. The presence of those Baptized makes the home holy; our baptism is our “ordination to holiness.” Keeping and using a holy water font at the entry to your home is not a bad idea, a practice of Catholics Eastern and Western.

The Living Room and Dining Room are reminders that mere being-together is holy and every meal is a sacrificial banquet. A simple meal lovingly prepared and served to the poor and despised is a greater reminder of the Sacrament of the Eucharist than the sumptuous meal of a King, taken in solitary, selfish splendor. Here the first lessons in the school of holiness are learned: “Say Please,” “Say Thank you.” Here Byzantine homes erect icons in the easternmost corner and light at least one lamp before the unseen guests, the Christian family album on the wall.

Each of us is called to holiness through service, in whatever way our talents and inclinations and the world’s needs take us. The kitchen is dedicated to service. Coming from the world in which we earn our food and drink by the “work of human hands” (perhaps through the garage and past other signs of service, the washer and dryer), we put it on the table for its final transformation. Those who labor there on our behalf partake of the mystery of salvation: my life for yours. I give up my time and give of my skills for your sake. The laundry room, too: who thinks of it? And yet it is for service; it is holy. These rooms of service mirror the sacraments of service, Confirmation and Orders.

Work, play, exercise, eating and drinking lead us frequently to the room most conducive to the virtue of humility. Rituals of cleansing and grooming take place here. Appliances help us remove external and internal grime and thus restore us to health. Mirrors and scales in bathrooms—whereby we take a hard, realistic look at our physical selves—can be reminders of the aids and models we have in the rich, spiritual heritage of the Church for taking a hard, realistic look at our spiritual selves. But it should be also a look of compassion, because there is an invisible Companion with us as we get ourselves ready to return to human communion (He is “easy to please but hard to satisfy,” as George MacDonald says). Too frequently we have in mind those hard to please or easy to satisfy only temporarily—our idealized picture of ourselves shaped by demanding relatives and relentless advertising. The Sacrament which heals us and restores us to humility—which means the true evaluation of ourselves, the one God gives—is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this sacrament we learn to say the great Byzantine prayer, the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” and we are sent to rejoin our fellow sinners at the banquet of life.

Perhaps the room where the splendor in the ordinary is easiest to see is the bedroom, the room of beginnings and endings, arrivals and departures across the great frontier between heaven and earth—that room of love-making, conception, and birth; of

sleep, sickness, and death. The Sacrament of Marriage begins at the altar, but is consummated in that room; there too the Sacrament of the Sick is ideally administered. Here the deepest lessons of the school of charity are learned. Is it really surprising that in a crucifix and icons and other sacramentals are hung in Catholic homes, Eastern and Western?

In Byzantine spirituality we bring our domestic churches and our inner temples to church on Sunday. The foyer is the place where we unveil the splendor of our ordinary lives by entering into the sacred space, where earthly time drops out and we catch up with all of those ahead of us on our pilgrim way: our departed beloved ones, our martyrs and our saints, our angels and our Mother the God bearer—all those who “have gone before us marked with the sign of faith,” the Cross. (Cardinal Newman had a picture in his room of the saints praying around the throne of God and used to ask whenever he saw it, “What? Are you all at it it still?” He said it reminded him that the real work of the universe was the “perpetual intercession of the saints perfected, waiting for Christ’s coming.”) We return to our world renewed and refreshed, ready to resume our pilgrimage.

Perhaps you have found yourself ineluctably drawn not to splendid church buildings but to the dusty, dark corners of churches in inner cities where the holiness is palpable; years of prayer in them leave a mark, as if one can hear the whispering of silent prayers still, even in an empty church. That sense of the presence of the supernatural in the natural, of the extraordinary in the ordinary, is the essence of Byzantine spirituality.

Byzantine spirituality is the ancient and living witness to the holiness of Ordinary Time and Ordinary Space; the silent witness to the truth that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves—not just at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, but at all times, and in all places.

Where there is great love there are always miracles. One might almost say that an apparition is human vision corrected by divine love. . . . The Miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always. (Bishop Latour to a priest friend, in Willa Cather’s novel, Death Comes For the Archbishop)

Recommended Reading: Jean Corbon, Wellsprings of Worship (Paulist); Thomas Howard, Hallowed Be This House

PART FOUR: MONASTIC SPIRITUALITY—THE BALANCE OF WORK AND PRAYER.

“God looked at everything he had created and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1: 31). Endowed with being, all created things are good.

We human creatures participate in divine creation in a number of ways. The first to come to mind, of course, is procreation. But there are two others: work and prayer.

The value of human work comes from its being a participation in God’s creation. Honest human work is a good to the worker and the world. Meaningful work may indeed be one of God’s greatest gifts because, as C. S. Lewis said, God has left the universe unfinished and our work is meant to help Him finish at least this tiny corner of it. The methodical performance of tasks within the rhythm of a structured day is—or can be—a spiritual exercise.

In recent years, in order to correct the mistaken impression that busy people holding down jobs in the big city do not have their own way of holiness, the spirituality of the busy layperson has appeared; more reflection in this area is needed.

There is also the spirituality of those who, though they work, are not the typical overly busy, rushed urban-dwelling, big city workers. Perhaps your work is mental or intellectual and keeps you at home; perhaps you live in the suburbs. Or, perhaps, your work is physical or manual labor, and keeps you rural and outdoors. There is a life of holiness awaiting you.

You may take your cue from those spiritual predecessors of yours, the monks (the word monachos means “solitary” and applies to men and women) who withdrew from the hustle and bustle of the city in order to seek God in the countryside. They lead (and continue to lead) lives in a rhythm of prayer and work, physical and mental. Their motto is *Ora et Labora*, Prayer and Work. They are Benedictines.

Washing out a pot dirtied in service to God’s people is holy in His eyes. A plowed field, mingling divine and human creation, is breathtakingly beautiful to those who see as God sees. Monastic spirituality concentrates on the holiness of the rhythms of sunrise and sunset, Sunday and the rest of the week, and the seasons of the year. Monks believe in the sacredness of tools and the readiness to drop everything to help neighbor or to praise God.

A difficulty in some people’s lives is that they are too busy. The difficulty for others is that they do not see the meaning of the work they do. Their lives seem too ordinary to them, the tasks they perform too trivial. This is where the other co-creative activity comes in: prayer, interwoven in the life of work, clarifies the value of human work for the worker. The spiritually and psychologically healthy life of work and prayer is the gift of monastic life to the church and the world.

The Psalms are the heart of this life. These 150 prayers were once memorized by monks and nuns (a practice which inspired laypeople to invent the rosary, first as a set of 150 Our Fathers and, later, as fifteen decades of Hail Marys punctuated by Our Fathers).

Praying the psalms daily is to join one's voice to countless hosts of angels in heaven and innumerable men and women on earth who raise their voices night and day in this hymn of praise. We bless the work we are doing and the place we are doing it with the psalms we pray before, during, and after that work.

“The hymn of praise that is sung through all the ages in the heavenly places and was brought by the high priest, Christ Jesus, into this land of exile has been continued by the Church with constant fidelity over many centuries, in a rich variety of forms.” So begins the introduction to the Church's prayerbook, the Liturgy of the Hours. Primarily this collection of psalms, divided for use throughout the day and across four weeks, it is used by lay and religious alike, and meant to be chanted (To sing well is to pray twice, as St. Augustine said).

The joy people find in singing is a faint foretaste of the joy of heaven. Monks and nuns, who cannot wait for heaven to sing unceasingly, have taken up the heavenly song Jesus brought to earth. They sing it in choir day and night. When they are not in choir, when they are at work, they sing phrases from that song in their hearts. Members of what may well be Western Christianity's most influential spiritual movement, the followers of St. Benedict, see every aspect of life as liturgy, part of creation's hymn of praise to God.

You don't have to be a Benedictine monk to continue that heavenly song Jesus brought to earth. In the past people might have thought that it was necessary to holiness and prayer to withdraw from the world. But there is no reason at all why the Benedictine spirit cannot be brought to the busy life of a bustling megalopolis. One's workplace, one's neighborhood—these can be one's monastery. The history of Christian spirituality is clear: Holiness must be an interior disposition, a way of the heart.

In the Benedictine tradition, the song in the heart is called lectio divina (“holy reading”). Lectio (pronounced (léx-ee-oh) has four stages.

First there is the reading itself. Sit down where you will be comfortable and pick up your Bible or your missal. Before you open it, open yourself to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to nourish you with God's Word. He is about to knock at the door of your heart with this Word. Quiet yourself by paying attention to the rhythm of your breathing; feel your heart beat with the life God is giving you at this moment. Select a scripture passage, maybe one of your favorite psalms, maybe a reading from last Sunday's or next Sunday's Mass. Read it over slowly, rhythmically, preferably aloud. Gently let it percolate through you.

Next, read it again, slowly, peacefully. What word or phrase stands out? Think about that word or phrase. God, who loves you far more than you can love yourself, is speaking something to you in that word or phrase. Ask Him what it is. The word or phrase does not have to “make sense.” You do not have to have a reason for why it seems to stand out. Say the word or phrase again and again with the rhythm of your breathing (this is what the ancients called meditatio). Christians down the centuries

have known that the Bible is not a text you read; it reads you. The Bible is not something you read to have read (“Did you see that article in *Time*?”—”Yeah, I read that.”) but something you read in order to continue to read. According to the ancient monks and nuns, Christians are ruminating animals, so to speak, who needed to chew the cud of the Word in order to receive its nourishment.

Then, gently, pray over that word or phrase—aloud if you wish. Tell God how you are feeling. This is the stage called oratio, prayer as such. If you are inspired to ask for something for yourself or another, ask. If you are moved to sorrow, expose your wounds or the world’s to God’s healing touch. If you are reminded of a blessing God has given you or another, thank Him. If you are swept up in awe at how wonderfully He works, adore Him.

The last stage of lectio is what the ancients called contemplatio. This is the most grace-filled part of this grace-inspired process because your part is to “waste time” on God, to create a space into which He can reach to raise you to His lap, so to speak, to hold you in His arms. Most of the time we do not feel this happening because our feelings are the last part of us to be converted. The important thing is to do nothing but just wait in God’s presence. Then, after a time, either continue reading your missal or Bible; or finish your prayer with a “Glory be” and go about your day.

When I was a child, I was told to listen very carefully to the sermon, because there was always going to be one part that God was speaking “just to me.” The spirit of that remark is the spirit of lectio divina: the word just for you, and maybe just for today. Pray that word throughout the day. Sing it in your heart.

Recommended Reading: Abbot Andre Louf, Teach Us to Pray (Cowley); Norvene Vest, Preferring Christ (Source) and Bible Reading for Spiritual Growth (HarperSanFrancisco); Book of Catholic Prayer (Oregon Catholic Press); C. S. Lewis, “Work and Prayer,” in God in the Dock (Eerdmans).

PART FIVE: MENDICANT SPIRITUALITY—TRAVELING LIGHT

Our goal in this series has been to counteract two mistaken but popular beliefs.

The first is that evil people are intriguingly different, and saints are monotonous. In fact, it is just the reverse. Most evil people are selfish, boringly selfish, and vary only in the degree of sophistication they use to hide their selfishness. Good people are as varied as the virtues they specialize in. The virtues that the saints of mendicant spirituality “major” in are poverty and humility.

The other strange idea is that Catholics are trying to foist their ideology on an unsuspecting public. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ideology can be described as a group of beliefs pressed on people in spite of their natural inclinations. The first principle of Catholic spirituality is that we are naturally inclined toward intimacy with God and toward goodness. We are naturally in love with God; union with God—the goal of spirituality—answers to the deepest longing of the human heart, and therefore Catholic spirituality is the very opposite of ideology.. Hence, to be more spiritual is to be more fully human.

We have to remember this natural inclination when we turn to the mendicant saints. People in a materialist society think, about people who voluntarily live in poverty and simplicity, that they must be different from us, must not enjoy luxury and security and a good meal as much as “we” do. They must be giving up the life of riches because they don’t “need” it as much as “we” do.

There is an easy way to correct this mistaken impression: point out to rational materialistic people that they would give up all they owned in exchange for something that could give them far more pleasure and happiness than they now have. And that is what these mendicants have done. Loving luxury as much as anyone, they have found a Real Bargain. The treasure they have found is For example, we might argue, what these mendicants have is something which is not subject to theft, fire, or destruction. What these mendicants have found is not something but Someone. They have found the Pearl of Great Price and He is Jesus. They have traded all they had to buy the Pearl.

Originally, this barter left them in need of even the basics of life, and hence they begged for these. The word “mendicant” is derived from the Latin “mendicare,” meaning “to beg.” Historically, mendicants are Franciscans and Dominicans, members of two orders originating in the twelfth century.

When it comes to mendicant spirituality, there are other mistaken notions in people’s minds. Take the founder of the Franciscans.

The sentimentalism popular today would have us conclude that St. Francis of Assisi probably loved animals because they were so cute and cuddly, and so much easier to love than people. It’s so much easier to love a puppy than a poor person, a kitty than a cantankerous person, or so some think.

But St. Francis loved what was humble and lowly—people as well as animals, people more than animals—because they are humble and lowly, because they reminded him of Jesus. In addition to picturing cuddly, lovable animals when you think

of St. Francis, think of fierce, unfriendly, and unbeautiful, unwell animals—and people. Now you are beginning to get the hang of Franciscan spirituality.

St. Francis also gets associated with adolescent rebellion, with a hippy pop philosophy of naive renunciation of ordinary decent human living and values. But it was not because it was evil that St. Francis turned away from ordinary life, but because he was extraordinarily good at seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. In the natural he saw and loved the supernatural. He knew that there really is no purely ordinary life; he also knew, as C. S. Lewis puts it, that there are no ordinary people.

St. Francis' freely taking less than "his share" was the result of his wanting to have more, the more which lasts to eternity. In ordinary decent morality, we are required to give of ourselves in service to others in all sorts of ways which demand sacrifices of us. After the initial burst of enthusiasm for such an attractively heroic life, many find it understandably hard to sustain. Why love and serve unpleasant, ungrateful creatures who are always demanding more?

Occasionally, God raises up some man or woman outstanding in holiness in this way—people for whom the irritability of the poor is no obstacle, but a reminder of the fierce Beauty of the Beloved residing in His poor. So God raised up St. Francis.

For Franciscans, Christian life is to be lived in radical imitation of Christ who preached the Gospel to and lived in service of the lowly. At first, it seems as if Franciscan spirituality is not the spirituality of the many, but of those hearty few who can work under the most seem adverse conditions of poverty that dedication to a life of service requires. It is not a pretty spirituality.

But Franciscan spirituality is also for the many. All Catholic Christians are invited to live lives of material simplicity, even if they are in a position of enough monetary wealth to live in opulence. Ads sometimes try to attract us to buy the luxury items they are selling by saying, "Go on; you're worth it."

The truth is that you are worth it, that each of us is, to God, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Son of God has given up all the privileges of divinity when he came among us in his humanity to buy the buy us back. But meanwhile we live in a world of limited wealth, and in justice we are to share wealth with others who are also "worth it." Yes, God has favorites: each of us.

Such sacrifice for others is easier as we learn to see as God sees. Were we to see the beauty of the poorest or sickest person as God does, we would sorely tempt us to fall down in worship in awe of the beauty and dignity of that person. The light from the Pearl of Great Price would shine through the human weakness. (In heaven, we shall see each other this way, as we truly are—as God sees us—but without the temptation to worship each other!) So you are "worth it," worth all the indirect honor that a life of luxurious living gives us. Unfortunately, we live in a world of shattered promises, and those ads tempting us to more luxury are really tempting us to more emptiness, to giving up our chance at Real Wealth.

The Kingdom of God is here already, and the Kingdom of God is not yet. Because of the latter, the redemption Jesus won for us has not been fully displayed here below, and the world is unfinished. In this unfinished world, unfortunately, there is not

enough wealth to make it possible for all of us to be treated as we deserve. We must, until heaven, set aside what is truly owed us for the sake of our brothers and sisters who do not even have the minimum and normal levels of goods that they too are owed.

We are called to give up opulence, but not beauty. Indeed, the beauty of a few simple things is a great blessing. Living a life of simplicity and poverty is to remember not our greatness as kings and queens—our eternal condition—but our lowliness as mortals who will die, and who, from the point of view of what you keep forever, are truly poor; you can't take it with you.

The mendicant life has, in addition to its Franciscan branch, its Dominican branch. St. Dominic, like St. Francis, founded an order of begging religious, whose begging was a reminder to them and to others of the relative dependence we have on others and the total dependence we have on God.

Its goal is “‘being useful’ to others. ‘All our concern should be primarily and enthusiastically directed to this all-important goal, that we should be able to be useful to the souls of our neighbors.’ If you want to do anything well, you must be prepared to begin by doing it badly. Preaching is too urgent to wait until people feel that they are ready for it. Our final enjoyment of the ‘contemplation’ of God in the beatific vision depends on a whole Christian life in which the crucial factor is that we should do whatever God wills. ‘Obedience is the manifest sign of love’ and it is by obedience that we are fitted for the vision of God. We can never know for certain that we possess charity; the most we can look for is ‘indications’ (signa) of the presence of charity. A typical Dominican list of such signa is offered by Peraldus: it is an indication of God’s love if we enjoy thinking about him, if we enjoy being in God’s house, if we enjoy talking about him or with him, if we enjoy listening to his word, if we enjoy practicing generosity for his sake, if we willingly endure hardship for his sake, if we obey his commandments, if we love what he loves and hate what is displeasing to him, if we lose interest in worldly things and finally if we show great respect for God’s ministers.”

Recommended Reading: G. K. Chesterton, Life of St. Francis (Doubleday Image); Simon Tugwell, Ways of Imperfection (Templegate); Gerald Vann, The Divine Pity: A Study in the Social Implications of the Beatitudes (out of print but worth looking for in your parish library or by interlibrary loan); Margaret Quigley and Michael Garvey, The Dorothy Day Book (Templegate)

PART SIX: COUNTER-REFORMATION SPIRITUALITY—THE MILITANT AND MYSTICAL WAYS TO UNION WITH GOD

There are several subterfuges by which we try to convince ourselves that we cannot get serious about the spiritual life yet. One such way is our “conviction” that the circumstances of our life—its unavoidably secular character—make keeping up with nuns and priests frankly impossible. If only we had the chance of a thirty-day retreat, like the Jesuits, then we could do it. Or if only we could be in a Carmelite convent, away from the world’s distractions, then we could do it.

Another way to avoid the spiritual life is “persuading” ourselves that religion is for stodgy or middle-aged people who have lost the zest for life. One in this sorry state might adapt the prayer of the young St. Augustine, “God, make me holy . . . but not yet.”

Each excuse postpones experiencing the joy that awaits us. “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drinks and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.” (C. S. Lewis)

Putting one’s spiritual life in order, though never easy, is not as hard as it might be, thanks to the availability of the great spiritual directors of the Counter-Reformation era, Ignatius (1491–1556) the first Jesuit, and the Carmelite reformers Teresa (1515–1582) and John (1542–1591), through their major works, through their disciples, and through the spiritual disciplines they inspired.

As a young man, St. Ignatius realized that all the zeal and vigor and liveliness he naturally felt as a young person could be used for the greater glory of God, and that is exactly what he did. In his Spiritual Exercises, he made a gift to the Church of a way of praying which, if anything, is even more accessible to a film-going, TV-watching populace than to the people of his own time. This way of praying involves choosing an event from the life of Christ and, with the aid of the imagination, transporting oneself back to Our Lord’s time and putting oneself in the scene. Where would I have stood at the crucifixion? (Do not too hastily assume with “the good guys!”) And Mary? What was her face like? Her demeanor? Our Lord’s expression? Does he look at me?

Ignatian spirituality was and is the way of the Church Militant, not just on the road like the mendicants but metaphorically laying siege to modern institutions like the universities by, among other activities, forming fraternities called sodalities (today’s Christian Life Communities) for the formation of future lay leaders and hitting the beaches of the New World and the Far East under the banner of baptizing not only people but cultures.

The Counter-Reformation was not just about the Church Militant but also about the Church Mystical, where the new frontier was the interior. Not since the effort of the desert fathers and mothers had so much attention been paid to charting the terrain of the heart. Foremost among these are the writings of Sts. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and John of the Cross (1542–1591), Carmelites who have emphasized the contemplative journey of the soul. The Carmelite tradition offers abundant and sensible guidance to the

mystical life.

And the first thing to know about the mystical life is that it produces practical down-to-earth people, passionate when passion is called for but level-headed, too. Teresa and John hardly led peaceful lives tucked away in protected cloisters.

St. John was imprisoned. St. Teresa suffered bouts of serious illness. They were often on the road. Most distressing, they were misunderstood and persecuted by their own Carmelite brothers and sisters. (Suffering caused by our own brothers and sisters in the faith is always harder to take than the world's persecution!) Yet St. Teresa could write this short and shockingly beautiful prayer of utter confidence in God and her determination to stay rooted in Him alone: *Nada te turbe, Nada te espante; Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta. Solo Dios basta.*

Such hardships produced the kind of comforting (that is, strengthening) insight that consoles us who read her today. Dorothy Day, when traveling during World War II, was heartened that Teresa had said: "Life is but a night spent in an uncomfortable inn." And who doesn't smile at her reproach to the Lord who had just broken her drought of eighteen years of spiritual aridity with a special sense of His Love: "If this is the way you treat your friends, it's no wonder you have so few"?

Teresa surprises us still with her answer to the question about which to choose, a holy spiritual director or a well-instructed one. Our pedestrian sense would answer: the holy one, of course! But Teresa who had so many times been misdirected by well-intentioned but hidebound priests advises us to choose the one educated in theology and in the human heart.

It is to her and to St. John that we are grateful for our present understanding of the three stages in the development of the spiritual life, that threefold way of love: the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive. By reflecting on the Beatitudes as they were lived by Christians in the centuries before them, they saw that the connections. The first three beatitudes—Blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek—describe the purification from possessions, prestige, and power. This purification by those who are called to holiness gives them the proper freedom to be about the business of the next two beatitudes: Blessed are the passionate for God's way and blessed are the merciful. Those so illuminated are made ready to enter upon the purity of heart and peacemaking which are the subject of the last two beatitudes; union is the best way to characterize these final stages of holiness in this life.

Ignatian spirituality had quite an influence in every century since the time of St. Ignatius. In the seventeenth century St. Francis de Sales (1567 - 1622) emphasized teaching the ways of the devout life to lay people in books which are still immensely readable and helpful. In the eighteenth Jean Pierre de Caussade (1675–1751) taught "abandonment to Divine Providence" or the sacrament of the present moment, receiving the Now as the place of encounter with the God who is always saying to us: I am with you.

The nineteenth century saw the rapid growth of the Apostleship of Prayer which seized on the growing calls for renewal of the liturgy (the liturgical movement) to promote among the faithful their daily offering to the Father through His Son and through Mary, the first Member of His Mystical Body, all of their prayers, works, joy,

and sufferings to accomplish the mission of God's Son and His Body the Church. The Morning Offering which came from this movement is the shortest of the reliable ways to piety that we know of. It is a form of the Ignatian examination of consciousness (Yes, consciousness). It consists in beginning the day by offering every part of the coming day to God in union with the offering of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that day—even if we do not ourselves attend Mass that day.

It begins this way. "O Jesus, through the immaculate heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." It is helpful to specify the prayers, works, joys, and sufferings one anticipates that day and to offer them for people we love and people we don't, and for the pope's intentions. Copies of this prayer and the pope's monthly intentions for prayer can be had by writing the Janet Erskine Stuart Society, 2515 McAllister Street, San Francisco, CA 94118.

But it is probably a nineteenth-century Carmelite who helped get the Church ready for our own century's rediscovery of the "universal call to holiness" proclaimed by the bishops assembled for the Second Vatican Council. St. Therese of Lisieux (1873–1897) gave the Church the great gift of her "Little Way," a wake-up call to ordinary people about the possibilities for great sanctity in an ordinary life, even in a life of obscurity, a life which, from the world's point of view, was totally unimportant. God's greatness adorns the lives of those whose names never hit the paper, whose lives are so ordinary that even their pastor does not notice them. News of this Little Way—in the tradition of the great Ways of Perfection but so accessible by all—went round the world and caused her to be canonized in just twenty-eight years, almost by acclamation.

What were people acclaiming? They were acknowledging the helpfulness of the spirituality of her one-day-at-a-time confidence in God's love for her and for each of us. They were admiring the spirituality of her one-task-at-a-time fidelity to His love. These helped her to see that life is for loving and that every vocation is about loving. This is what people saw and see in her little way. As Simon Tugwell summarizes, "She shows us that precisely as sinners, as doubters, we are welcome to run to God's love. Her acceptance of darkness [during her painful dying] identifies our darkness as a thirst for God, and at the same time assures us that even in this very darkness Christ is there thirsting for our love."

Recommended Reading: John C. H Wu, The Interior Carmel: The Threefold Way of Love (Sheed and Ward; out of print but your library can get it for you); Thomas Dubay, Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment (Dimension); Segundo Galilea, The Future of Our Past: The Spanish Mystics Speak to Contemporary Spirituality (Ave Maria)

PART SEVEN: CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY—THE CHURCH FOR THE WORLD

It is a gift to be a Catholic in the 1990's, a wonderful adventure.

Yes, there have been terrible stresses and bothersome strains, much muddle and some madness throughout this century, in the world and even in the Church. But we also get to reap for ourselves and others the spiritual benefits of the three great nineteenth century rediscoveries (the Bible, the Liturgy, and Patristics) and the three great twentieth century recoveries (the renewal of the Church's mission and of the place of the laity in that mission, the role of Mary as perfect model of the Church, and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring life and unity to both Church and world).

Even St. Thérèse in her Carmelite cloister at Lisieux was alive to her century's rediscovery of the Bible. Although she had to receive permission to read the New Testament from her spiritual director first, she relished her contact with our Lord in the Gospels and with the Church and the activities and writings of the Apostles. Catholics, hearing again St. Jerome's lament: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ," set about making new translations and not only buying them but reading them prayerfully. Guided by the Constitution on Divine Revelation, the Church of the later decades of our century has formulated a set of readings for Sunday and weekday Mass which has become such the holy envy of our Protestant sisters and brothers that the great majority of Christians now hear the same Gospel proclaimed on the Lord's Day. This ferment could only be the work of the Holy Spirit.

Beginning in French and German monasteries and spreading through the influence of French- and German-speaking missionaries (even to the middle of our country) and endorsed by the three modern Popes Pius and their successors, the rediscovery of the liturgy as the source and summit of Catholic life, holiness, and service may be the most noticeable of the changes definitively blessed by the Second Vatican Council. The first stage of liturgical renewal is done: The texts of our sacraments and sacramentals have been restored to their pristine Roman nobility and simplicity and now cry out for better translations (thankfully on the way) and living, holy translators (in the persons of our priests and deacons and readers and music directors and other ministers) truly in touch with our Catholic Tradition and traditions. Then only can we proceed to the second phase of the renewal: a reinculturation of Roman liturgy into the cultures of our planet which highlights our unity in our diversity. This too is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

The least obvious of the rediscoveries was and is the renewal of the study of the books and biographies of the Fathers (yes, and a few Mothers) who carried and lived our Catholic Tradition from after the apostolic era (turn of the first century) into the age of the schools (turn of the thirteenth). The work of the Second Vatican Council (and this series on Catholic piety) would not have been possible without this low profile but highly profiting work of Spirit-filled men and women, like the selfless parish priest and patristic scholar Jacques Paul Migne (1800–1875).

Our own century witnessed the transformation of our Church from a state (with the loss of the Papal States) into a lamp stand, holding Christ the Lumen Gentium as the light for all the world to see and to draw close to. Every Catholic now knows that he or she must be a Christopher, bearer of the light, to wherever in the world God is

calling. The definition of calling or vocation has been expanded to its proper limit: the individual in her or his uniqueness, called by the Holy Spirit, first, to faith and holiness within the Body of Christ through Baptism and then, through Confirmation, to some role of service in or at least for the world.

Note that although some Christians are called to service in the world, all Christians are called to service for the world. What is the best expression of the relationship of the Church to the world? The Church against the world? The Church indistinguishable from the world? The Church aloof and indifferent to the world? No, The Church in loving service to the world. As the bumper sticker says: Seek the good and praise it.

In 1936, with the Pope's establishment of secular institutes, the Church canonically confirmed not just the possibility of sanctity in the secular world, but the urgent necessity for it. Taking their inspiration from the parable of the yeast, members of secular institutes strive to sanctify the world from within. By their presence in the world, with all its distractions and allurements, and by their ability to reach the highest degrees of holiness, say, on Madison Avenue or on Wall Street, members of secular institutes should be the clearest indication from Rome to ordinary Catholics—those who are not members of secular institutes—that the Church, while calling all to holiness, does not call all to cloisters.

So many spiritual movements—Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students, Christian Family Movement, Opus Dei, Focolare, Christian Life Communities—though different in emphases are the same at root, responding to this renewed sense of the holiness of home and work in and on behalf of the world.

The work of “footwashing” in imitation of Him who washed his Apostles' feet at the last supper sends us back to the continuation of that sacrificial supper to be nourished by His Word and strengthened by His Body and Blood to return again to our places of footwashing.

What the Church has in mind by her call to footwashing is not service as a drudgery and a duty, but a joy and a privilege. The disastrous effects of an unbridled individualism, so popular in the United States at present, can be countered with the Church's wisdom with respect to the joy in the communal nature of Church, both here and now and in heaven. Astounding as it is, part of our delight in heaven comes from our experiencing the light of Christ shining on the faces of the saints. We do not need to wait for heaven for that enjoyment.

Insight into and activities to enact this holiness of the everyday and of ordinary lives of service are available to us in the new Book of Blessings and in Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers and in the new series of booklets and books from ACTA Foundations.

Mary is the perfect model of this learning, worshiping, and serving Church and the Twentieth may indeed be called the Marian Century, especially as she, Mary, and she, the Church, are announcing again to the world that the Mighty God has done His greatest “thing”: He has come in Person to raise up the lowly and to fill the hungry with good things, as well as to turn right side up the world of the proud, mighty, and rich.

Two decades before Mary was proclaimed as the most imitable of the saints by Vatican II, the great English spiritual writer Caryl Houselander had already named Mary the Reed of God, cut by the Shepherd and fashioned into a flute through which He could fill our world with the music of His infinite love.

Our Lady says yes for the human race. Each of us must echo that yes for our own lives. . . .

We shall not be asked to do more than the Mother of God; we shall not be asked to become extraordinary or set apart or to make a hard and fast rule of life or to compile a manual of mortifications or heroic resolutions; we shall not be asked to cultivate our souls like rare hothouse flowers; we shall not, most of us, even be allowed to do that.

What we shall be asked to give is our flesh and blood, our daily life—our thoughts, our service to one another, our affections and loves, our words, our intellect, our waking, working, and sleeping, our ordinary human joys and sorrows—to God.

To surrender all that we are, as we are, to the Spirit of Love in order that our lives may bear Christ to the world, that is what we shall be asked.

Our Lady has made this possible. . . .

Through the power of the Spirit of Love, of course. And the recovery of the work of the Spirit in the Church and in the world is perhaps the greatest grace of the Twentieth Century. St. Thomas Aquinas, summarizing the ancients, spoke of the Spirit as the Soul and Animator of the Body of Christ, its source of life and unity; but this truth had gone into virtual eclipse until our century.

Not only does the Second Vatican Council retrieve and renew Thomas's teaching but it also teaches that the Spirit is in the World calling it to Church and into the Kingdom of God and His Christ. The Spirit is in Orthodoxy and Anglicanism and in the Churches of the Reform, calling them into communion with the Roman Catholic Church. The Spirit is in Judaism keeping the flame of its covenant burning and drawing it into one flame with the fire of the new covenant. And, as Donald Nicholl underscores, the Spirit is in Islam and Buddhism and Hinduism and Taoism and Confucianism and all the world's religions calling their adherents from within and without to the Light of Christ. We have only to send holy heralds of the Good News and the world will awake to its wedding invitation.

The Spirit and the Bride, then, renew the call they make to us from the last page of the Bible: "Come! How happy are you, each of you, all of you, to be invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb."

Recommended Reading: Caryl Houselander, The Reed of God (Christian Classics); Donald Nicholl, Holiness (Paulist); Catholic Household Blessing and Prayers (Liturgy Training Publications); Thomas Green, Come Down, Zacchæus: Spirituality & The Laity (Ave Maria)

Note: ACTA Publications has six booklets in its expanding series, The Spirituality of Work: Business People, Homemakers, Lawyers, Nurses, Teachers, and Unemployed Workers; they also publish a Stations of the Cross "For Those Who Work" and "The Litany of Work." Their second series is called The

Christian At Work In The World: To Protect and Serve (Law Enforcement Officers), Kindling the Spark (Teachers), Caretakers of Creation (Farmers); and Of Human Hands (A Reader in the Spirituality of Work). For further information, call 1-800-397-2282.