

## A Definition of Christian Spirituality

The great, overarching principle of Christian spirituality is that God's action is the *constitutive* dimension of our lives and our response is the *normative* dimension (Michael Crosby, *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes* [Orbis]).

More simply put, God's YES to us seeks our response of YES to God. We say YES to God not only directly but by saying YES to our brothers and sisters. Christian spiritual theology is the attempt to systematically describe this human YES which is evoked and empowered by God's YES (Robert Meyers and Paul Ford).

The practical question is: What does this YES *look like* in the life of the Christian? For this systematic description to be called *Christian* it must be seen in its Trinitarian dimensions. For it to be called *Catholic* it must be seen in its liturgical and sacramental dimensions; and, thus, Christian spirituality is usually seen as "the gradual unfolding of baptismal conversion in the life of the individual believer . . . the gradual unfolding of baptismal conversion in the life of a human being" (Nathan Mitchell, *Pastoral Music*, October–November 1979, p. 31)

## St. Hilary on the Sacraments of Initiation

From a discourse on the psalms by Saint Hilary, bishop  
(Ps. 64, 14–15: CSEL 22, 245–246)

*The river of God is brimming with water. You have provided their food, for this is your way of preparing them.* There can be no doubt about the river referred to, for the prophet says: *There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God;* and in the gospel the Lord himself says: *Streams of living water welling up to eternal life will flow from the heart of anyone who drinks the water I shall give him. He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.* The river of God is brimming with water; that is to say, we are inundated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and from that fountain of life the river of God pours into us in full flood.

We also have food prepared for us. And who is this food? It is he in whom we are prepared for life with God, for by receiving his holy body we receive a place in the communion of his holy body. This is what is meant by the words of the psalm: *You have provided their food, for this is your way of preparing them.* For as well as refreshing us now, that food also prepares us for the life to come.

We who have been reborn through the sacrament of baptism experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit. We begin to have an insight into the mysteries of faith, we are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope and receive the gift of healing. Demons are made subject to our authority. These gifts enter us like a gentle rain, and once having done so, little by little, they bring forth fruit in abundance.