

# SPIRITUAL BOOK NEWS

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## FEATURED SELECTION

April 2009

### THE RECOLLECTED HEART

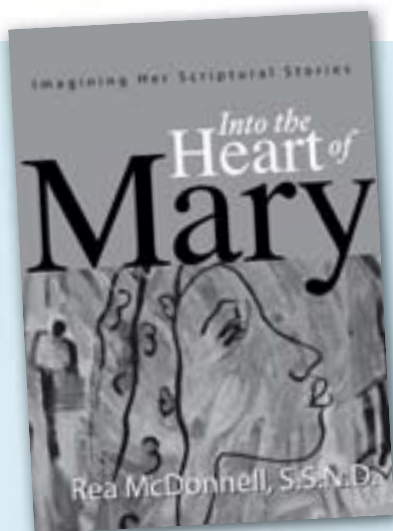
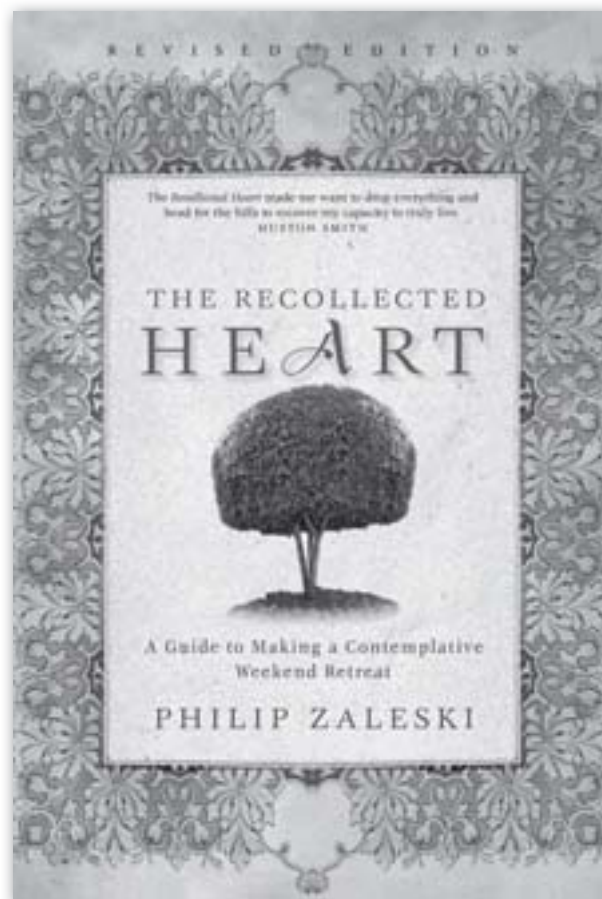
*A Guide to Making a Contemplative Weekend Retreat*

Philip Zaleski

Amid the chaos of work, family, and the myriad responsibilities that dominate our lives, the need for retreat remains ever-present. Calling us to solitude, reflection, and quiet, Philip Zaleski offers his monastic prescription for how to properly and effectively find spiritual refreshment.

*The Recollected Heart* offers readers all the tools needed to construct a tried and true monastic retreat at home or in a special silent place. Zaleski's book is replete with practical tips on packing, preparing, and spiritual goal-setting. He outlines the timeless pattern of *The Rule of St. Benedict* and brings us to a renewed sense of self and spiritual wellness.

ISBN: 9781594711992 / 192 pages / \$15.95



*A Preview of the May 2009 Selection*

### INTO THE HEART OF MARY

*Imagining Her Scriptural Stories*

Rea McDonnell, S.S.N.D.

Drawing on a lifetime of biblical study and work as a retreat director, Rea McDonnell re-introduces us to Mary by teaching us to appreciate anew the spiritual truths found in her scriptural stories. Using Ignatian meditation, McDonnell invites readers to prayerfully ponder Marian passages from scripture and ancient tradition, helping them use their imagination to meet Mary again for the first time.

ISBN: 9781594712074 / 160 pages / \$12.95

## AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP ZALESKI

*Spiritual Book News* reached Philip Zaleski via e-mail at his home in Northampton, Massachusetts, to ask a few questions about retreats and reading.

**Spiritual Book News:** In *The Recollected Heart* it seems clear that it is impossible to make a retreat in a vacuum. When we make a retreat we join the vast continuum of pilgrims, past and present, who have used this method to find rest and revitalization. Who are some of the guides that seem best-suited, in your judgment, to motivate and facilitate retreats in the twenty-first century?

**Philip Zaleski:** In the twenty-first century (as in every other century!) it's best to look for a guide who has ample retreat experience in a mainstream religious tradition. That way you'll stand the best chance of finding profound, time-tested advice. Contemplative monks and nuns are the guides *par excellence*, and I would urge anyone interested in a spiritual retreat to seek out a contemplative monastery in the neighborhood and inquire there about retreat possibilities. There are also non-monastic retreats (for example, retreats based on St. Ignatius's Exercises) that have a great deal to offer. Undertaking a retreat on one's own can be immensely valuable; in this case, the great religious classics can be your guide.

**SBN:** What specific advice can you offer spiritual seekers during these difficult economic times—times during which it may be impossible to get away for a break of even a weekend's duration—who wish to create time and space for recollecting one's heart in the course of active life?

**Zaleski:** Finding a free weekend for a retreat can be difficult for all sorts of reasons—money, children, job, whatever. It's a lot easier to free up fifteen minutes at the beginning or end of each day. Spend that time in prayer, and you'll discover at least some of what you'd find on retreat. Maybe you can devote your lunch hour—if you have a lunch hour—to prayer or spiritual reading. That's a great help as well. It may be possible to cut back on time-wasting pursuits (watching television, for instance) and devote that time to spiritual reading or prayer. Pretty soon, you'll be craving these moments of retreat throughout the course of the day.

**SBN:** In the book you talk about the 1978 meeting of President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. This twelve-day-long meeting of “devout men from different faiths.... often punctuated by prayer,” was “pointedly called a ‘retreat’” by the participants, and it led directly to the 1979 Israeli–Egypt Peace Treaty. Most of us probably have much more modest expectations when we go on retreat, but we tend to be results-driven in most of the things we do. What is the role of expectations? Should we approach a retreat time with an objective, or should we put expectations aside?

**Zaleski:** In my experience, the only goal that pays dividends, when approaching a retreat, is to aspire to be faithful to the

conditions of the retreat. Try to grow closer to God, through prayer, reading, and quiet activity. Try to avoid any activities that draw you away from God. Trust in God's love enough to know that you will receive what is needed, even if there are no visible signs of change.

**SBN:** Another aspect of your career entails being the editor of the *Best American Spiritual Writing* series, which produces a full-sized book toward the end of each year. How long have you been at that?

**Zaleski:** The *Best American Spiritual Writing* series is now in its eleventh year. Working on it has been a pleasure from start to finish.

**SBN:** As *SBN* readers know, reading can be a life-altering experience. When that happens, though, it usually comes as a surprise. As you prepare any given year's *Best Spiritual Writing* collection, what writers have “blindsided” you with insight, freshness, “something completely different” or unexpected?

**Zaleski:** I'm hesitant to single out individual writers, as everyone whose work has appeared in the *Best Spiritual Writing* collections has had something fresh to offer. I will say, however, that I've been delighted over the years by the essays and poems that speak about God or the spirit in unexpected ways: exploring for example, the presence of holiness in a Detroit car factory; the deep faith that underlies Mr. Rogers' work with children; the exaltation of receiving the Eucharist in a dull suburban parish. Such glimpses into the life of the spirit have brought me (and I hope, readers of the series) great joy.

**SBN:** How has the interfaith aspect of your reading for the annual collection influenced your Christian faith journey?

**Zaleski:** As a Catholic, I have discovered everything I need to live a deep interior life (to the extent that I am capable of such a thing!) in the rich traditions of the Catholic Church. Reading about the experiences of other Christians, as well as those of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and the like has been a great boon, both by offering new perspectives on God and the spirit and by reassuring me that believers in other religions are engaged in a similar quest for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

**SBN:** I ask this last question knowing that I hope no one ever asks it of me: What are your desert island books? [i.e., five books you'd need to have if you were Gilligan. . . .]

**Zaleski:** I love this question! Let's see: The Bible, to guide me through feast and famine (on a desert island, I anticipate famine). *The Divine Comedy*, for its incomparable art and for otherworldly vistas to visit when the local landscape starts to pale. *The Summa Theologica*, long and dense enough to occupy me throughout my exile. *Robinson Crusoe*, for the fun of the tale and for practical advice. And—this is a bit of a cheat but I can't help it—a complete set (with player and plenty of batteries) of Bach's cantatas and Passions—because a man without music is half a man, and any music but Bach is music *manqué*.

# READER'S GROUP GUIDE

## SNAPSHOTS: A SEASON IN THE LIFE OF A WILDERNESS RETREAT CENTER

Ring Lake Ranch, Dubois, Wyoming ([www.ringlake.org](http://www.ringlake.org)) • Carl Koch, Director

### JUNE

The season has started at Ring Lake Ranch! We have robust enrollments in our sessions.

Volunteer Week from June 1–7 was a resounding success. A very long list of projects got checked off; we found more projects, and those were finished too. We hope that all of the volunteers from this year will return next June. The cabins may be the cleanest they've been in years. Buildings were stained and sealed, two porches were built, and so on.

The week was not all work, though. One evening we were entertained by a Middle-Eastern dancer who also happens to be an Episcopal priest, EMT, and a member of Search and Rescue. The week closed with a night of fiddle playing by a returned son of Dubois who has performed nationally.

So now we begin the weeks of programs. I am excited by what we will be learning, experiencing, and challenged by. We will roll out the welcome mat to renewal in this sacred wilderness.

### JULY

The summer season is now half over. Once sessions start, time flies. Guests for "Come Apart and Rest Awhile," and Vince Hatt, Bill Brown, and Pam Eisenbaum's sessions pledge that they'll be coming back in the future—a truly welcome sign that their experience here has been good.

We celebrated the tenth anniversary of groups of Elder High School boys coming to the Ranch by honoring Dan Kreimer with an engraved moose antler (done by Ben Verheul, Facilities Manager and artist) that reads: "Thank you, Dan Kreimer, from Ring Lake Ranch. For ten years—transforming the lives of Elder boys. July 11, 2008." Over these years well over 600 sixteen-year-old boys from this Catholic high school in Cincinnati have come on retreat. Now young men who came years ago are bringing their own families to the Ranch.

### AUGUST

August has been exciting, challenging, and inspiring. We began the month with Tink Tinker's program "The Rocks Shall

Cry Out—Consciousness, Rocks, and American Indians." His session was followed by Brother Bill Short, O.F.M. leading us in a review of the many ways that Francis of Assisi is indeed a saint for everyone. Then Indigo Girl Emily Saliers took time off from her touring schedule to join her theologian father, Don, to lead our largest session of the summer—"Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Music and Spirituality Crossing Over."

### SEPTEMBER

On September 20, [my wife] Joyce and I drove through the ranch's front gate on the way to our winter home in La Crosse, Wisconsin. When we waved goodbye to Ben Verheul, Facilities Manager, our emotions were mixed. The summer proved exciting, challenging, inspirational, and moving. It was also exhausting—as could be expected.

We probably had a record number of guests for our programs. Here are some of their comments about their time with us:

"I felt as if I had been given an amazing gift to spend the week there among such inspiring new friends and amidst such unforgettable surroundings."

"The whole place, the whole time, is spiritual. I like being allowed to make of the week what I wished, what I needed, not having anything imposed."

"I think the real beauty of Ring Lake Ranch is in its intimacy—that people can share and be themselves and not posture or hide or project."

"Ring Lake Ranch is a treasure that I hope lasts a very long time—long enough for my kids to bring their kids, at least!"

Well, you get the picture. Thanks have to go to the great staff. But thanks must also go to the guests who open their hearts and minds to each other and create the supportive community so important to the success of each program.

## SUGGESTION FOR A GROUP DISCUSSION

Read, slowly and out loud, these three quotations that appear in *The Recollected Heart*. Then use the questions that follow as a guide for a group discussion. Refer back to the quotations as you discuss.

"Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." —Mark 6:31

"Society is like the air, necessary to breathe, but insufficient to live on." —George Santayana

"And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray." —Matthew 14:23

- How would you describe "a lonely place," and what do you feel when you are in such a place?
- In what type of place are you most able to "rest a while"?
- How do you respond to the quote by Santayana? Is he too critical of society, or has he made a valid point? Why or why not?
- What is the role of society in your life?
- Are you lonelier in a crowd, or when you are by yourself?
- Describe your ideal place for prayer.



## WEBSITES OF INTEREST



### THE ORDER OF SAINT BENEDICT

[www.osb.org](http://www.osb.org)

The official website of the Order of Saint Benedict includes a wealth of information about Benedictine life and spirituality. Here you will find the Rule of Saint Benedict, readings, podcasts, a directory of Benedictine retreat centers, and many other features.



### FIND THE DIVINE

[www.findthedivine.com](http://www.findthedivine.com)

Find the Divine is an interfaith and ecumenical directory of spiritual retreat and conference centers throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and some countries in Central America. The site offers a direct connection through which to inquire about further information about the centers listed.



### CATHOLICLINKS

[www.catholiclinks.org/retirosunitedstates.htm](http://www.catholiclinks.org/retirosunitedstates.htm)

Catholiclinks.org includes this listing of retreat centers with a particularly Catholic focus. It provides direct links to each centers' own website.



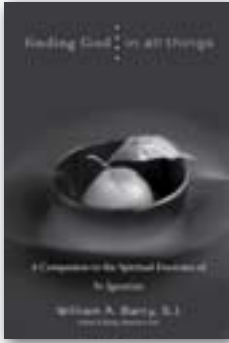
### RELIGION AND ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY

[www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week632/carolphil.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week632/carolphil.html)

This webpage features the transcript of a 2003 interview with Philip and Carol Zaleski conducted for the PBS program, "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly." The topic is prayer in its many and varied manifestations, addressed with the expertise inherent in the Zaleskis' experience researching and teaching religion at Smith College.

# MORE RETREAT RESOURCES

## Ignatian-based Spiritual Retreats



### FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS *A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*

William A. Barry, S.J.

Dispelling the myth that spiritual retreats are only for those who can get away for an extended time, seasoned spiritual director William A. Barry, S.J., gives new life to the spirituality of St. Ignatius and encourages readers to seek the transforming power of the Spiritual Exercises.

ISBN: 9780877934608 / 144 pages / \$12.95



### THE GOD OF OUR DEEPEST LONGINGS *Seven Biblical Meditations*

Peter van Breemen, S.J.

Internationally acclaimed author and spiritual director Peter van Breemen, S.J., draws on the spirituality of John's gospel and Ignatius of Loyola to stress that our deepest desires and God's will for us coincide when we let go of selfishness; and that God's deepest longing is to dwell in us, to make a home in our souls.

ISBN: 9781594712005 / 128 pages / \$11.95



### MOMENT BY MOMENT *A Retreat in Everyday Life*

Carol Ann Smith, S.H.C.J., and Eugene Merz, S.J.

Drawing on the classic retreat model, The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, *Moment by Moment* offers a new and inviting way to find God in our often busy and complex lives.

ISBN: 9780877939450 / 96 pages / \$12.95



### FINDING GOD IN EACH MOMENT

*The Practice of Discernment in Everyday Life*

Carol Ann Smith, S.H.C.J. and Eugene Merz, S.J.

Selections from scripture, writings of St. Ignatius, and documents of Vatican II will lead you to discover how each relationship holds the opportunity to be taught by God.

ISBN: 9781594711008 / 224 pages / \$16.95



### ENTERING CHRIST'S PRAYER *A Retreat in 32 Meditations*

Eric Jensen, S.J.

Jesuit retreat leader Eric Jensen leads spiritual seekers in meditations on Christ's spoken and unspoken bond with his Father, introducing readers to Jesus' life as a life of prayer.

ISBN: 9781594711343 / 224 pages / \$17.95

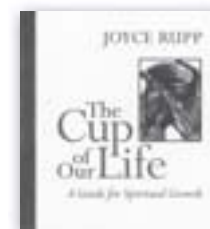


### OPEN THE DOOR *A Journey to the True Self*

Joyce Rupp

Spiritual guide Joyce Rupp explores the rich image of the door as an invitation to spiritual growth and awareness. She leads readers to search more deeply for their authentic selves in fuller union with God.

ISBN: 9781933495149 / 288 pages / \$17.95



### THE CUP OF OUR LIFE *A Guide for Spiritual Growth*

Joyce Rupp

Explores how the cup is a symbol of life, with its emptiness and fullness, its brokenness and flaws, and all of its blessings. An excellent resource for a theme-based retreat based upon the sacredness of life.

ISBN: 9780877936251 / 184 pages / \$15.95

FOR MORE RETREAT RESOURCES VISIT [WWW.AVEMARIAPRESS.COM](http://WWW.AVEMARIAPRESS.COM)

Use promo code B3A040902BA6 when ordering to receive your 20% member discount.



