

# SPIRITUAL BOOK NEWS

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## FEATURED SELECTION

May 2008

### SEVEN SACRED PAUSES

*Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*

Macrina Wiederkehr

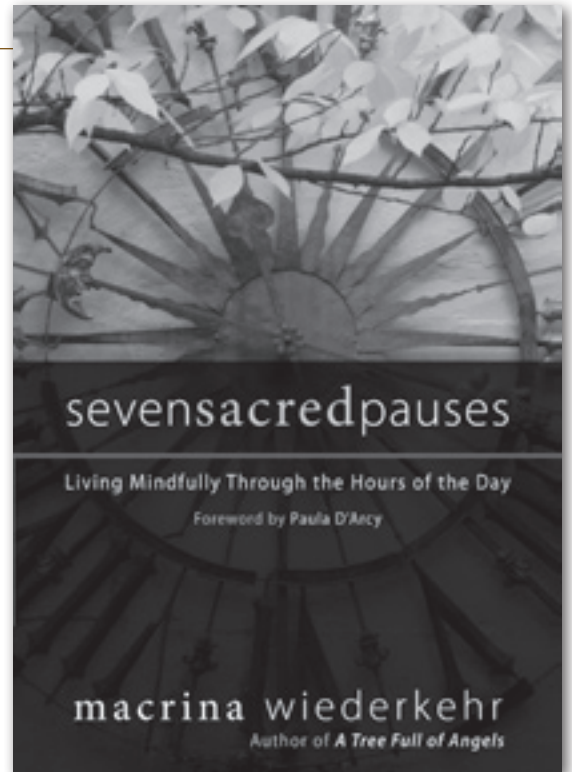
*Macrina's dear self is such a worthy guide. You are holding in your hands not only a book of readings and instruction for the journey, but one monastic's heart of love held out to a searching world.*

**FROM THE FOREWORD BY PAULA D'ARCY**

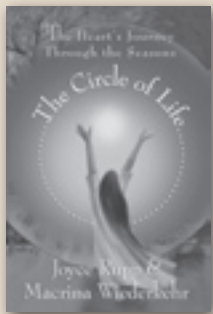
Author of *Gift of the Red Bird*

Author and retreat leader Macrina Wiederkehr opens the monastery door, inviting readers to come in and learn the practice of pausing for prayer at the seven sacred moments of each day. Using scripture, poetry, reflections, personal stories, and quotes from an array of spiritual teachers, Wiederkehr helps readers to live in the present moment while developing a kindred spirit with the rich tradition of the Divine Hours.

ISBN: 9781933495101 / 224 pages / hc / \$18.95



## OTHER BOOKS BY MACRINA WIEDERKEHR



### THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

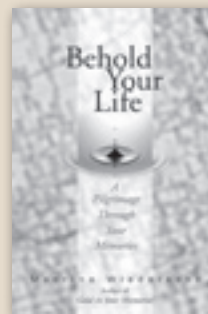
*The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons*

Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr

Artwork by Mary Southard

Reflections, poems, prayers, and meditations help us to explore the relationship between the seasons of the earth and the seasons of our lives. "A reflective resource for individuals and groups whose goal is to deepen the inner life."—*Presence*

ISBN: 9781893732827 / 288 pages / \$19.95



### BEHOLD YOUR LIFE

*A Pilgrimage through Your Memories*

Wiederkehr guides us to let go of bitterness and blame and to prayerfully, simply behold our lives.

ISBN: 9780877939313  
128 pages / \$12.95

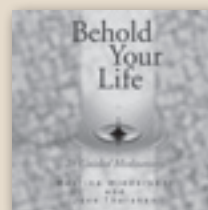


### GOLD IN YOUR MEMORIES

*Sacred Moments, Glimpses of God*

"Wiederkehr will help the attentive reader to do as she herself has learned: to be 'present not only in body but with my whole heart and soul.'"—*National Catholic Reporter*

ISBN: 9780877936640 / 168 pages / \$12.95



### BEHOLD YOUR LIFE AUDIO

*28 Guided Meditations*

ISBN: 9780877939610  
2 CDs, 143 min. / \$24.95



## AN INTERVIEW WITH MACRINA WIEDERKEHR

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**Q: Does your book have appeal to a wider readership than Catholics? Why?**

A: Yes, I see this book as quite universal. The hours, these rhythmic seasons of the day, open like a stage curtain on all our lives regardless of color or creed; they belong to everyone. Throughout the ages various religions have, in some way, honored the hours, pausing for prayer and reflection. It is remembering to pause that is important, not so much the exact words we say, and for this reason I have focused on the spirit of the hour rather than the content.

**Q: How do you envision readers using the book?**

A: I would like for my readers to, first of all, meditate on the spirit of each of the hours, becoming aware that the earth's turning offers us these specific moods. Secondly, I hope that each day they will want to practice pausing at these special times as they are able and according to their work schedules. Above all I see this book as a guide to living more mindfully through the hours of the day, thus PRACTICE is an important word. I would be happy if my readers could grasp the reality that this book is to be a companion to use as needed to help them practice slowing down and remembering who they are, hopefully bringing new meaning, purpose, and presence into their lives.

**Q: How has your personal experience of living monastic life for more than forty years contributed to how you generated the ideas of the book?**

A: Although I love coming together for the hours in community, I am aware that anything you do everyday has the risk of becoming habitual and the heart can eventually go out of it. When this happens to me, I look for ways to wake myself up again. During one of my seasons of renewal it occurred to me that the spirit of the hour in itself is a special prayer and that this would be a marvelous prayer to offer those who are in the work world who do not have the opportunity (or desire) to be part of a praying community. The idea of creating a book that focuses on “being prayer” rather than just “saying prayers” was intriguing to me.

**Q: In your estimation, what is the single quality necessary or most essential to be able to savor a pause in the middle of a busy day?**

A: Awareness and desire for healthy living. One must be aware that “drivenness” is not healthy for the soul.

**Q: In *The Circle of Life* you focus on the seasons of the year as the cycle of time. Now in *Seven Sacred Pauses* you focus on one day. What does the reader gain from developing a specific practice of honoring the cyclicity of time that you feel is most beneficial to one living and working in a busy world?**

A: Soul and Silence! The First World peoples had soul. In our world of constant movement, noise, and obsession, we lose ourselves. We become human “doings” instead of human beings. Watching the movements of nature can help restore soul to our lives.

**Q: In your experience as a retreat director, what are the most common frustrations that people voice as obstacles to living mindfully?**

A: Busyness—the understandable necessity of making a living. Also the tendency of our society to program folks toward material comfort and success.

**Q: Since *Seven Sacred Pauses* was created with busy people in the working world in mind, how do you see the prayers after each hour being helpful to the reader?**

A: This book can be used in a variety of ways. The prayer section is just another option for those who need words rather than just a breathing spell for the soul. The prayer section can be useful for those who work at home or are retired, or for weekend retreats, evening moments, days off, or faith-sharing groups.

**Q: How did you come up with the themes for the hours?**

A: If one pays attention to the earth's turning and the moods of the day, the themes are almost archetypal. I have tried to keep some of the traditional Christian themes, such as the hour of resurrection, the Spirit's coming, the death of Jesus, etc. However, in my personal prayer of these hours, the themes just naturally unfolded. I also asked other people their opinion on the spirit of each hour and was amazed at how similar we felt about the hour's mood. Readers can add to the themes—I have certainly not exhausted all the possibilities.



# READER'S GROUP GUIDE

## THE ART OF LIVING MINDFULLY

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The practice of living mindfully has grown in popularity in recent years. Once seen as an exclusively Buddhist practice, many Christians now see mindfulness as a call to live with increased awareness of the present moment. Pausing to pray at certain hours of the day can draw us into deeper relationship with God. The Liturgy of the Hours, also called the Divine Office, is a time-honored Christian practice that refocuses us on God by asking us to pause in the midst of daily life. Macrina Wiederkehr presents themes appropriate to each of the seven traditional hours, making them accessible and giving us tools to practice living in the present moment.

Sr. Macrina draws on her lifelong experience of praying the Hours with her Benedictine community to make this practice

accessible for us in our everyday lives. For many centuries, the Liturgy of the Hours has been observed almost exclusively by monks, nuns, and priests. But in recent decades both the communal and personal practice of praying the Hours has been growing among lay people. But because it is impractical for most people to pray the formal prayer of the Hours at the appointed times, Sr. Macrina's book is a valuable resource to help people observe the hours, but in a manner that is suitable for their busy lifestyles. She includes her own prayers, poems, and reflections as well as those from other spiritual writers from a variety of religious traditions. She helps us hear the monastery bell calling us to prayer whether we are in the midst of daily household chores, in the boardroom, or making a commute.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP USE

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Use the Questions for Discussion and Reflection as you see fit, either in your faith-sharing group, in your personal journaling, or with your spouse or friend. Groups should not neglect their use in journaling; a journal can be a useful tool for those in groups as well as for those reading on their own. All are encouraged to pose their own questions to themselves and others to make the discussion more meaningful. Deeper faith is always a goal of faith sharing groups—let it be your guide for discussion.

While this type of prayer book does not lend itself well to a typical book club discussion, it is quite useful for faith sharing groups. Members can practice the art of living mindfully by using these prayer pauses over a period of time. Journaling through the weeks and months will facilitate sharing with the group when it is time.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

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As you pray your way through this book, mark passages that are especially fruitful for you. Spend time processing your prayer and asking yourself the questions the author poses to take your experience deeper.

- The author shares the essentials she has learned from praying the Hours over many years. What have you learned from your practices of prayer? What would it look like if you were to write down your accumulated learnings from your life of prayer so far?
- What are the rhythms of your day? Are you aware of the existing opportunities for prayerful pauses in your current routine?
- How will you need to adjust your routine to insert a few prayerful pauses?
- How do you allow grace to break through your busyness?
- What centers you as you move about your day? Are you mindful of your center as you work?
- How is love expressed in what you do?
- Pausing requires that we “be” rather than “do.” How do you experience being without action?
- Which time of day feels more natural for you to stop for a moment of prayer? Which time of day do you need it most?
- How are you living in *kairos* time?
- How has pausing for prayer helped you to live more in the present moment? Have others noticed a change?



## PRAYING THE HOURS, A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The Night Watch is the prayer that monastics make in the wee hours of the morning, long before sunrise. They rise from sleep at an hour that most of us would call “ungodly.” But parents are sometimes summoned to rise at such an hour for a hungry baby or a sick child. Indeed anyone who is a caregiver knows what it is like to be awakened from sleep by a urgent call for help. I learned that this interruption of rest could also be a time of prayer for me.

With three young children at home, I found little time for the centering prayer and quiet I had practiced before children. My two-month-old daughter was up several times a night to nurse, and I felt drained, exhausted, and in need of a break. Each time I woke up to feed her, I felt more exhausted. I longed for a day to myself ending in a full, uninterrupted night’s sleep. But it was not to be.

One night, when waking for the middle-of-the-night feeding, I cried out to God to give me the strength and stamina

to get through another night. And then grace opened my eyes to see my situation in a new light. It finally dawned on me that this was an hour of prayer in the ancient Liturgy of the Hours. Instead of a monastery bell calling me to prayer, I had the hungry cries of a two-month-old infant. With this realization I began to see this time as one to nourish myself with prayer. It became a quiet prayer time for me, and my daughter and I bonded in a special way through our own vigil, our own Night Watch.

Infants feed about every three or four hours, marking naturally the hours of the day for prayer. Each time I nursed her I said a prayer. We were able to pray together longer at night while the rest of the household slept. Through grace, this trying task was transformed into sacred time spent in prayer with my beloved child. The fatigue remained, but it was transformed into a blessing.

## ALSO AVAILABLE

Velma Frye has created a companion CD, *Seven Sacred Pauses: Singing Mindfully Dawn through Dark*, which includes twenty-one songs and chants. The CD and an accompanying songbook are available at [www.velmafrye.com](http://www.velmafrye.com).

## WEBSITES OF INTEREST



### [www.macrinawiederkehr.com](http://www.macrinawiederkehr.com)

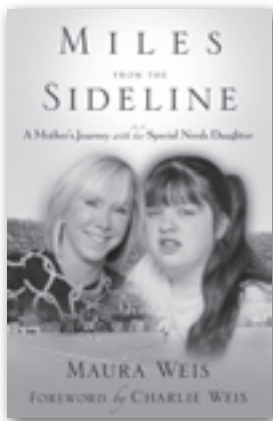
The author’s website gives a window into her life and spirituality. Find beautiful prayers, journal entries, and her retreat schedule among other gems.



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

The homepage of the Order of St. Benedict includes links to general information, the Rule, and prayer resources such as the Liturgy of the Hours, daily reflection, daily readings, and more. You can even listen to a Liturgy of the Hours podcast from the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

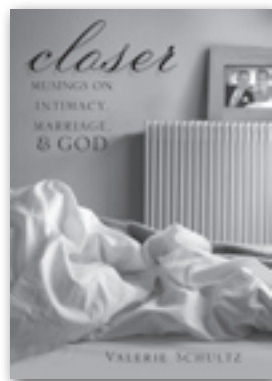
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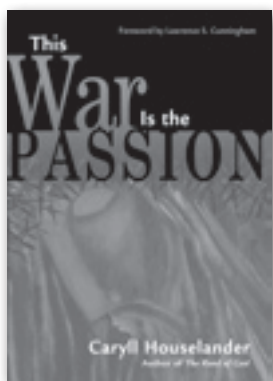
ISBN: 9781933495033 / 192 pages, hc / \$18.95



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**Valerie Schultz**

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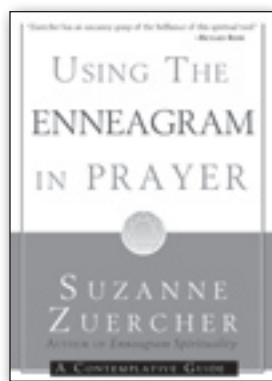
ISBN: 9781594710735 / 160 pages / \$11.95



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THE PASSION**  
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Foreword by Lawrence  
S. Cunningham

Originally published in 1941, this book by the renowned British mystic and spiritual writer Caryll Houselander is once again new as modern readers learn from Houselander's encouragement of her compatriots to view their experience of World War II through the lens of Christ's passion.

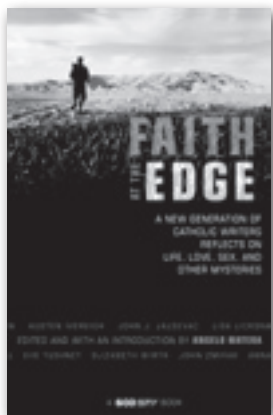
ISBN: 9780870612459 / 192 pages / \$11.95



**USING THE  
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*A Contemplative Guide*  
**Suzanne Zuercher**

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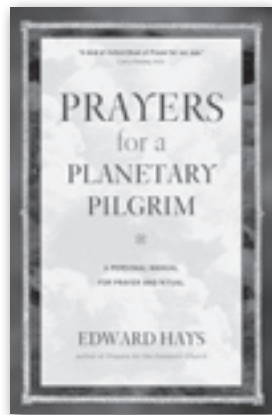
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