

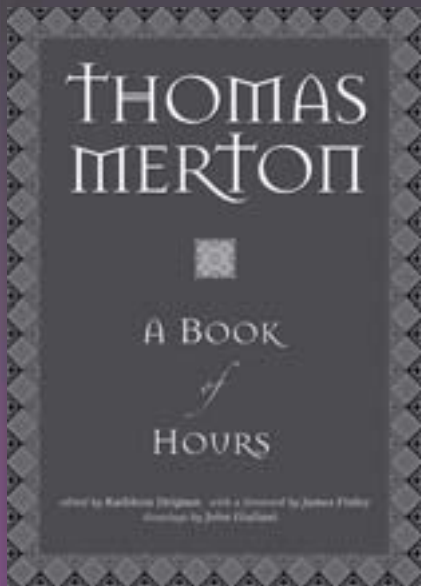
SPIRITUAL Book News

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A PUBLICATION OF
SPIRITUAL BOOK ASSOCIATES



FEBRUARY 2007 SELECTION



A BOOK OF HOURS

Thomas Merton

Edited by Kathleen Deignan

*A gorgeous book, beautifully conceived
and intelligently executed.*

JONATHAN MONTALDO

Editor of *A Year with Thomas Merton*

From Thomas Merton's inexhaustible legacy of spiritual writings comes *A Book of Hours*, both a manual of mysticism, a set of teachings for engaged contemplatives, a guide for the formation of conscience, and a collection of koans, mantras and prayers. With prayers for Dawn, Day, Dusk, and Dark for each day of the week, *A Book of Hours* brings the ancient monastic practice of praying the hours into our hectic modern lives, making the ancient new, and the timeless timely.

ISBN: 1-933495-05-7 / EAN: 9781933495057

224 pages, hardcover



DECEMBER 2006 SELECTION



SACRED SPACE

The Prayer Book 2007

Jesuit Communication Centre, Ireland

Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2007 is a prayer guide inspired by the very popular, successful, interactive website, www.sacredspace.ie. Both the book and the site offer a way to reflect and pray each day of the liturgical year; both present a time to quietly connect with God and a space to be spiritually nourished, healed, challenged, and transformed.

Inaugurated in 1999 by Alan McGuckian, S.J., and Peter Scally, S.J., of the Jesuit Communication Centre in Ireland, the site has logged over nineteen million visits.

Each week, *Sacred Space* presents readers with a new spiritually based theme. The Six Stages of Prayer guide readers in reflecting upon the Weekly Theme. Daily Readings point readers to scripture for deeper reflection.

ISBN: 1-59471-097-X / EAN: 9781594710971 / 384 pages / \$14.95



SACRED SPACE: THE PRAYER BOOK 2007

The website www.sacredspace.ie was originally launched during Lent of 1999 by the Irish Jesuits to bring lenten prayer to people via the Internet, making a ten-minute prayer session easily accessible to busy office workers at their desks. Today, the popularity of the website is immense; the prayers are now available in twenty languages and span throughout the entire year. This third annual volume makes this Ignatian prayer break available to anyone, anywhere, without the need for a computer. In this guide you will find aides to using the prayers, suggestions for group use, information on Ignatian discernment, and a listing of key websites on Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuits.

THE SIX PRAYER STAGES EXPLAINED

The six prayer stages are designed to bring your whole being into awareness and contemplation of God's presence and action in your life. As you move through the six stages keep these suggestions in mind:

- **The Presence of God**—Involve your body in the prayer. Consider using aspects of *Centering Prayer*. Sit upright, relaxed, with your feet on the floor and your hands relaxed in your lap or at your sides. Close your eyes or focus on a specific object. Clear your mind, letting stray thoughts leave your mind as quickly as they enter. Use a mantra or simple prayer phrase if that helps you to return to your focus.

Use breathing techniques to become more aware of the spirit of God moving within you. Focus on the air moving into your lungs, filling you with the Holy Spirit. On the in breathe focus on what you

are asking of or needing from God now in your life. On the out breathe focus on releasing the tension and whatever is holding you back from that which you desire of God.

- **Freedom**—Now that you have allowed yourself to experience the presence of God, you must allow yourself to be freed from what binds you in order to put yourself at the service of God. This is surrendering to the will of God.
- **Consciousness**—In this stage you work on recognizing God at work in your life. Use the *Examen* or *Review of Consciousness*. To begin, think about the events of the last day in a non-judgmental way, focusing on what you are grateful for, giving thanks to God for the gifts you have been given and the gifts you have used in the service of God. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit to help you assess your motivations and feelings. Again, you are not to

judge yourself but to bring yourself to the light of Christ and allow him to show where you have walked with him and where you have not.

- **The Word**—Read the scripture passage slowly a few times all the way through. Read it again, pausing at any words or phrases that catch your attention. Focus on these and make them part of your prayer.
- **Conversation**—Using your divinely given imagination, imagine Christ is with you. You are spending time with your most trusted friend. Speak to him, listen to him. Use an image of Christ that resonates with you: a crucifix, an icon of Christ. If you find praying with icons fruitful, you may also enjoy *Behold the Beauty of the Lord* by Henri J.M. Nouwen.
- **Conclusion**—You may chose to end with a traditional closing or with a more creative impromptu prayer.

READER'S GROUP GUIDE

DISCERNING GOD'S CALL

Imagination, a gift from God unique to humans, is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. By using imagination in prayer, St. Ignatius believed we could better hear God's call to us. Imagination allows us to explore options in the presence of Christ. We use our intellect at the service of our imagination; imagination is the framework for Ignatian prayer.

We can apply Ignatian prayer techniques to discern where God is calling us next, in addition to seeing how God has been working in our lives in the past. Once we are in a peaceful, prayerful place, we can use our conversation with God to explore possibilities we are considering. What do we feel called to do? Where do we feel God is asking us to go?

We can try out the call as we perceive it, living as if the decision were made. We can imagine God with us as we try out this path. What does it feel like? How do we experience God on this path? As we prayerfully imagine living this call, we look for consolations and desolations. Consolations include the peace, joy, serenity, kindness, and awareness of beauty that come with true surrender to God's plans, with answering the true call. Desolations include alienation, hostility, suspicion, doubt, and bitterness that accompany poor choices. Both are beneficial in Ignatian prayer because both can point toward an inner place where we can meet God at the present moment. Both inform our prayerful decision-making.

Doubt can seep in as we reflect on our prayer experience. We question whether

the consolations and desolations we experienced were authentic. Consolations and desolations are better signs if we experience them fairly consistently in prayer over time. To find out what's most consistent, it helps to keep a journal or a diary to write these things in. Just feeling happy about an option on one day could have something to do with liking the weather or just being in a good mood. Feeling nervous about an option on one day might just be a human reaction to the idea that we might be doing something that's not what others expected or something that we don't know a lot about, which causes apprehension.

We can also write down things like images or songs that come to mind or stories or phrases from the Bible that we find ourselves thinking about when prayerfully imagining our possible callings. When we see consistent patterns emerge over time as we bring a particular path before God in our imagination in prayer, we can use that evidence in discernment. A particular path will consistently bring us joy, peace or encouragement, while imagining alternative paths will make us feel sad or restless.

Consolations

- courage, strength
- delight, deep joy
- satisfaction, right feeling
- peace
- sense of freedom
- gratitude, hopefulness
- energy, vitality
- deep desires
- choices are life giving

Desolations

- discouragement
- sadness not due to crisis or depression
- anxiety
- feeling of being trapped, imprisoned
- sense of burden
- feeling emotionally and physically weakened
- shallow desires
- choices are life draining

In the persons who are going on intensely cleansing their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, it is ... the way of the evil spirit to bite, sadden and put obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, that one may not go on; and it is proper to the good to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing, and putting away all obstacles, that one may go on in well doing.

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Second Rule of *The Spiritual Exercises*

GROUP USE

While *Sacred Space* is a personal prayer book, groups, particularly small faith-sharing groups, spiritual book discussion groups, and RCIA sponsor-catechumen meetings, can use it. Choose one prayer leader, or assign each prayer stage to a different person. Beginning with *The Presence of God* for the appro-

priate week, have the leader read slowly and deliberately, leaving several minutes for reflection between stages. Be sure to read the scripture passage for the day through several times slowly. You may wish to have group members say aloud the words or phrases in the scripture reading that grab their attention. Al-

low time for silent reflection to allow the Word to enter deeply. The questions in the *Consciousness* and *Conversation* stages may be answered aloud or in silence, although you are invited to respond aloud. This will allow members to be Christ's presence to each other, a physical presence of the living God.



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

For more information on *The Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian Spirituality, check out the following websites:



www.sacredspace.ie

The home page of the Irish Jesuits includes links to *Sacred Space* and more.



www.ignatiushistory.info

A website collecting paintings, maps, and other aids in presenting the world as St. Ignatius would have experienced it.



www.luc.edu/jesuit/ignatius.bio.html

A brief biography of St. Ignatius of Loyola.



www.jesuit.org

The home page of the Society of Jesus USA contains links to all things Jesuit, including a link to download a PDF of *The Spiritual Exercises* in English.



www.newadvent.org/cathen/14224b.htm

The Catholic Encyclopedia online entry on *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, with lengthy detail on the text, its doctrine, and the criticisms.



www.jesuit.org/sections/sub.asp?SECTION_ID=192&SUBSECTION_ID=207

The Society of Jesus USA Spirituality page offers an extensive listing with links to spirituality websites on prayer, St. Ignatius, adaptations of *The Spiritual Exercises* and more.

SPRING PREVIEW

ACTUAL SIZE!



40 DAYS of INSPIRATION

Discover the richness of the distinctive prayer method that has made *Sacred Space* so beloved around the world.

ideal for:

- Parish-wide Focus
- Campus Ministry
- Small Groups
- Retreat Centers
- On-the-go Prayer

Share the gift of *Sacred Space for Lent* with your parish, campus ministry program, small group, family, or friend.

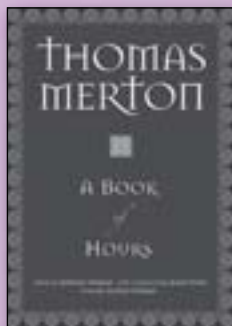
ISBN: 1-59471-121-6 / EAN: 9781594711213
128 pages / \$2.25 each

View sample pages and lenten reader's guide online at

www.avemariapress.com

SBA SPRING SELECTIONS

FEBRUARY



A Book of Hours
Thomas Merton
Edited by Kathleen Deignan

MARCH



Crossing the Desert
Learning to Let Go, See Clearly, and Live Simply
Robert J. Wicks

APRIL



Chasing Joy
Musings on Life in a Bittersweet World
Edward Hays

MAY



Practicing Peace
A Devotional Walk through the Quaker Tradition
Catherine Whitmire

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