

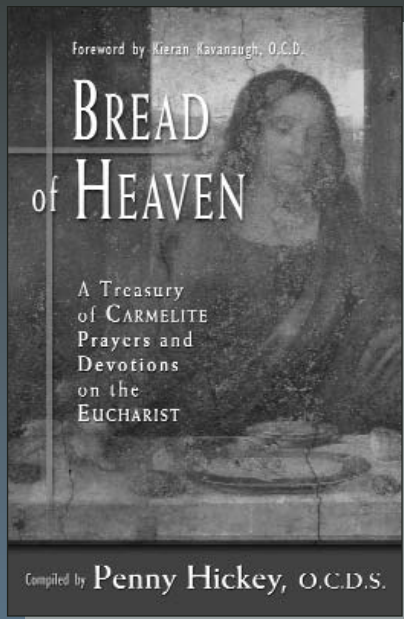
# SPIRITUAL BOOK News

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SPIRITUAL BOOK ASSOCIATES

## OCTOBER 2006 SELECTION



### BREAD OF HEAVEN

*A Treasury of Carmelite Prayers  
and Devotions on the Eucharist*

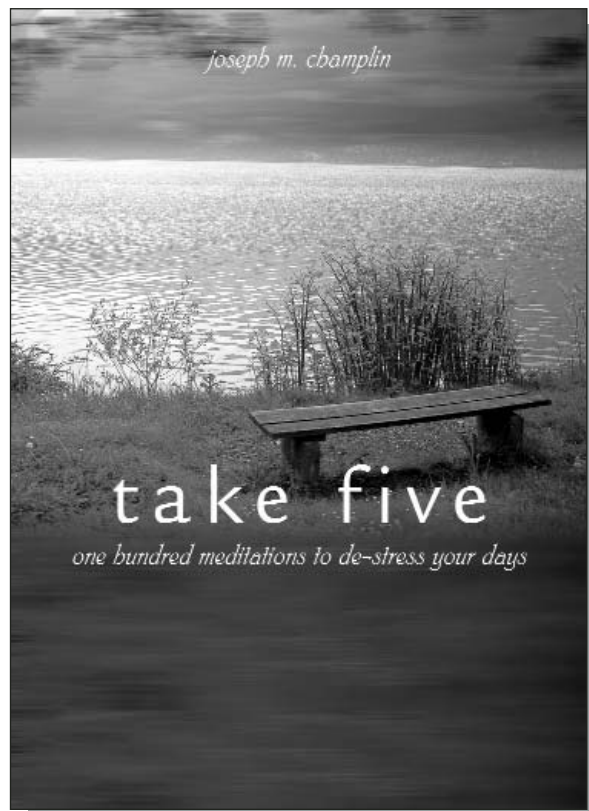
Compiled by  
Penny Hickey, O.C.D.S.

Part Carmelite history and part anthology of Eucharistic prayers and meditations, *Bread of Heaven* is ideal for the growing number of Catholics drawn to Carmelite spirituality and dedicated to Eucharistic devotions.

ISBN: 0-87061-239-5 / 192 pages / \$12.95

See pages 2-4 for this month's  
READER'S GROUP GUIDE!

## SEPTEMBER 2006 SELECTION



### TAKE FIVE

*One Hundred Meditations to  
De-stress Your Days*

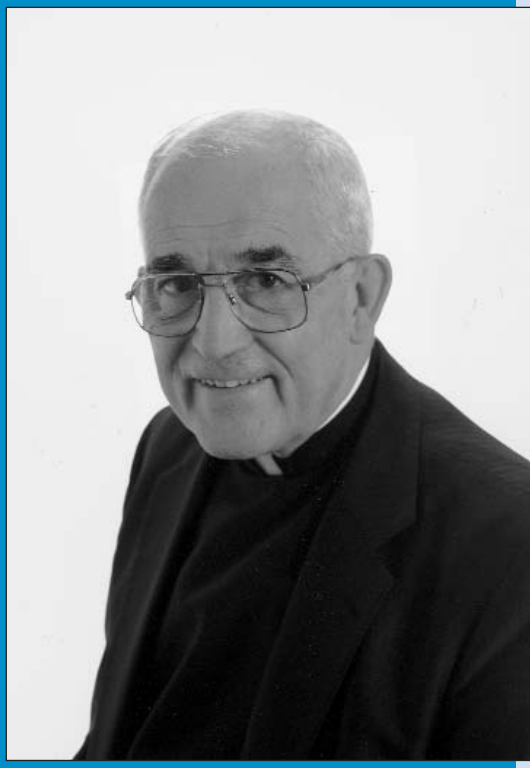
Joseph M. Champlin

Pairing anecdotes from everyday life with a spiritual suggestion and scriptural thought, *Take Five* offers readers 100 spiritual reflections, a refreshing gift for our fast-paced, hectic lives. Originally written as local radio spots in Syracuse, New York, these brief meditations invite readers to focus on the seemingly little things in life, which often take on great significance in the quest for inner peace. *Take Five*, a sequel to *Slow Down*, is Fr. Joseph Champlin's second book of five-minute meditations.

ISBN: 1-933495-04-9 / 128 pages / \$10.95



# READER'S GROUP GUIDE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**FATHER JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN**, former rector at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in his home diocese of Syracuse, now serves as the Sacramental Priest at Our Lady of Counsel in Warners, New York.

*Take Five* and Fr. Champlin's original book of five-minute meditations, *Slow Down*, are based on his radio spots which are aired on Clear Channel Radio in Syracuse, New York.

He has traveled more than two million miles lecturing in the United States and abroad on pastoral subjects. Fr. Champlin has written more than fifty books. His works include *Slow Down*, *Should We Marry?*, *From the Heart*, *Together for Life*, and *Through Death to Life*.

Visit the *Take Five* page on [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com) to listen to selected audio clips of his motivational radio program. Click on the various "audio files" at the bottom of the page.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

You may wish to read the meditations sequentially, or you may choose to use the topical index to find a timely meditation for a particular day. Perhaps you will just open the book, letting the spirit guide you to a reflection. You may decide to keep the book on your nightstand or take it with you. As always, use the book in the way that suits your life and enriches your spiritual journey.

Consider the following questions after reflecting on several meditations. Answer them again after reading another segment of reflections.

- Which meditation resonated with you the most?
- Which one challenged you to change a behavior or way of thinking?
- What impact has simple daily meditations had on my every day life? How has this practice affected my stress levels?
- What suggestion has helped me lower stress day-to-day?

### FOR FAITH-SHARING GROUPS:

- These short reflections make excellent starting points for group discussion. Use one or several of them to relate to members' own personal experiences. The group leader or discussion leader should encourage all members to speak, if they so wish, and encourage all to be respectful of each person's experience. If desired, use the reflection questions above to keep a discussion moving.
- Notice themes that run through several reflections—gratitude, service, surrender and acceptance, friendship, quiet time, joy, gift, openness, prayer, embracing the positive, trust in God. Choose a theme to discuss during your meeting, and use the appropriate reflections as a starting point for your discussion.
- Have group members use the book daily. At your weekly or biweekly meetings, have members present the reflection that helped them the most or spoke most closely to their experience.

# READER'S GROUP GUIDE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A SMALL FAITH-SHARING GROUP

Fr. Champlin provides us with convenient way to use the proven method of meditation to alleviate stress. Another way to reduce stress is to connect with others. Fr. Champlin talks about the multiplying effect of joy when it is shared, such as in the reflection *Joy and Sorrow*, Day 88, and the lessening of sorrow that is shared, such as in *Holiday Sadness and Comfort*, Day 9. Researchers have recently been documenting the key role friendships and connections with others play in stress reduction and health, particularly for women.

In 2000, researchers at UCLA published the results of a study of women's responses to stress (see the abstract online at [www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov), enter ID 10941275). The results revealed that women don't just "fight-or-flight" but "tend-and-befriend." Oxytocin, a stress-regulating hormone, is produced when women interact with their friends. But the benefits are not exclusively for women. Last year researchers

at Carnegie Mellon University found that the immune response in students who felt lonely was lower than in those who did not. Positive connections with others do have a positive impact on our well-being and stress levels.

One way to combine some of Fr. Champlin's suggestions with the positive impact of social connections is to use the book, or parts of it, in a small faith-sharing group. A small faith-sharing group meets on a regular basis to support one another on the faith journey and to better understand the Christian call and Scripture. At its best, small Christian communities such as these can renew and revitalize the larger parish, as well as play a key role in sustaining and encouraging the faith of its members, fostering spiritual growth and self-improvement. Faith sharing involves sharing our lives and our faith, our triumphs and our failures. It often includes sharing hospitality, for we are able to come together around food in a special way, recalling the early days of the Christian church

## HOW TO FORM A SMALL FAITH-SHARING GROUP

A growing number of parishes offer small faith-sharing groups, with trained pastoral staff providing organizational support and guidance. If your parish or community does not offer this as a formal ministry, you can create your own group. You can start by inviting those you know in your parish or community to join you in forming a group. Spread the word and invite those

you think you could be comfortable with in a discussion of your faith journey. Do not be afraid to include friends of friends, those you do not know well. With good get-to-know-you activities and time, your group will grow in fellowship and provide a sense of belonging, which is important for stress reduction.

## GUIDELINES TO FORMING A GROUP

- A good group size is about eight to ten people; groups over 15 tend to be too large for intimate discussions.
  - Groups should meet weekly or biweekly to be most effective. Have the group decide on a day and time and commit to meeting then.
  - Decide on other housekeeping issues at a preliminary meeting. Will you rotate houses or meet at church? Will you include food at your meeting—rotating snack duties, a monthly potluck? If parents of young children are involved, how will childcare be arranged? Are children to be included in some way with age appropriate activities?
  - If your parish or community does not provide a trained group leader, have your group prayerfully discern who the leader should be.
  - A good way to start your first several meetings is with icebreakers and get to know you activities designed especially for faith groups. Taking the time to get to know each other better through fun activities, projects, and meals will give your group a solid foundation, even if all participants know each other already.
- Look for more tips on running a small faith-sharing group in the next issue of *Spiritual Book News*.

# READER'S GROUP GUIDE

## USING SBA IN YOUR FAITH-SHARING GROUP

**S**piritual Book Associates is a great resource to jump-start a small faith-sharing group or to strengthen an already existing small group. Each member will receive eight titles complete with Reader's Guides, two bonus books, and 20% off all regularly priced titles. (For a limited time only, small groups can purchase four or more memberships for only \$32 each. That is a 50% savings off the regular membership price!) Offer valid for new members only(U.S.) Expires 12/31/06.

## STRESS AND WORLD PEACE

**F**r. Champlin gives some compelling reasons to reduce stress and some great ideas on how to do so (for a few interesting Web sites containing more on this, see below). However, *The Art of Living Foundation*, which claims to be the largest volunteer-based non-governmental organization in the world, asserts a novel benefit. It believes stress reduction to be at the root of peacemaking. From their Web site, [www.artofliving.org](http://www.artofliving.org), "Active in over 140 countries *The Art of Living Foundation* offers unique programs that eliminate stress and help individuals develop their highest potential. *The Art of Living Foundation* reinforces human values and brings people from varied social, economic, geographic, cultural and religious backgrounds together in a spirit of service and celebration."

So how does this bring about peace? They believe that achieving the highest human potential is only possible when stress is reduced, which allows us to blossom as individuals, increasing our sense of belonging and responsibility to others. When that happens, we feel a sense of unity and are less likely to engage in violence against others. An interesting analysis of this peace-through-stress-reduction philosophy can be found online by doing a Google search for "Art of Living Julia Tang".

## WEB SITES

- *The American Psychological Association* ([www.apahelpcenter.org](http://www.apahelpcenter.org))

Features numerous articles on the effects of stress, stress management, and the mind body connection. There is a Mind/Body Health Interactive tool which shows how stress affects our bodies.

- *The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation* ([www.actsofkindness.org](http://www.actsofkindness.org))

Provides ideas, inspiration, guidance and resources to encourage the practice of kindness. In addition to offering member support and community involvement ideas, their Web site touts the health benefits (i.e., stress reduction) of practicing random acts of kindness. For more information, click on "Inspiration" at the top of the page, and then click on "Health Benefits" in the column to the left. One article gives a comprehensive yet concise summary of the stress reduction benefits of serving and connecting with others and why that is so important.

- *Christianity Today* ([www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups](http://www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups))

For more information of small faith-sharing groups, from formation and beyond, this Web site from *Christianity Today* has helpful information for those new to groups and seasoned veterans.

- *RENEW International* ([www.renewintl.org](http://www.renewintl.org))

For more support for your faith-sharing group. Click on "Small Christian Communities" in the column to the right. There you will find links to varied organizations, including *RENEW*, *North American Forum*, and the *National Pastoral Life Center* among

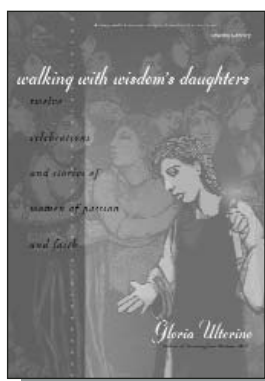
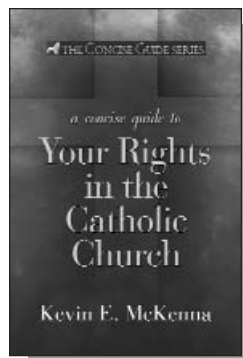
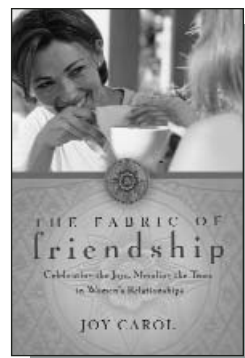
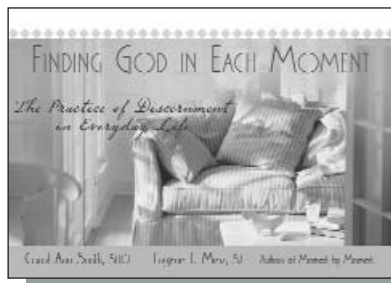
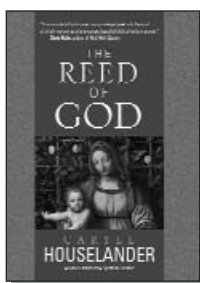
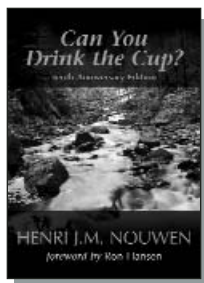
## MEMBER FEEDBACK

**T**here are many different activities and techniques used to reduce stress. We would love to hear what our members do to relieve stress. Send in your de-stressing practices to [avemariapress.1@nd.edu](mailto:avemariapress.1@nd.edu) and be entered in a drawing to win a copy of *God Knows Your Stressed* and *Tickle Your Soul*, both by Anne Bryan Smollin. We will publish some of the most creative stress-relieving techniques on our Web site and in a future issue of SBN.



# NEW THIS FALL

Members  
Receive  
20% Off!



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## THE FABRIC OF FRIENDSHIP

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*The Fabric of Friendship* reveals a simple truth: friendship is never simple. Joy Carol weaves her own experiences together with real-life stories of other women, reminding readers of the amazing gifts friendship holds and inspires them to reclaim the power of their relationships.

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*Great resource for small groups!*

## WALKING WITH WISDOM'S DAUGHTERS

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*New Edition*

## CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP?

Henri J.M. Nouwen  
Foreword by Ron Hansen

The last book published before Nouwen's death in 1996, *Can You Drink the Cup?* has been translated into ten languages and sold more than 138,000 copies!

ISBN: 1-59471-099-6 / 128 pages / \$10.95

## A CONCISE GUIDE TO YOUR RIGHTS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Kevin E. McKenna

This practical, sound reference book decodes complex Roman Catholic Church law and doctrine. It is the third book in *The Concise Guide Series*, a series of books tackling questions of central importance for contemporary Catholics. Other books in the series are *A Concise Guide to Canon Law* and *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*.

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*New Edition*

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Caryl Houselander

Through beautiful prose and meditations, Caryl Houselander depicts the intimately human side of Mary, Mother of God, as an empty reed waiting for God's music to be played through her. With profound theological teachings and appealing imagery, *The Reed of God* is a spiritual classic.

ISBN: 0-87061-240-9 / 192 pages / \$11.95

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Mention keycode B3A090602BA6 to receive your 20% discount.



