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The Return of the Prodigal Son by Pompeo Batone (1708-1787)

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65 Editorial

66 Prayer and Forgiveness: Can Psychology Help?

By Kevin Culligan, OCD, PhD

78 The Layperson As Disciple: A Meditation on Simple Words

By James Keating, PhD

91 Book Notices

92 Books from *ICS Publications*

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OUR DAILY NEWS BROADCASTS constantly remind us of the need for forgiveness in our world. The tragic consequences of a lack of forgiveness in the lives of nations and of individuals soil the fabric of our societies and often result in violence and warfare. Injuries, crying out for healing, are made worse by vindictive acts of retribution, heaping more tragedy upon the victims of violence.

The words of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer challenge us to forgive all who harm us: *"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins"* (Mk 11:25). Our lack of forgiveness perpetuates the cycle of violence and becomes an obstacle to our growing in intimacy with God and with one another. An unforgiving heart deadens our ability to love unconditionally.

Opening our hearts to the inpouring of God's love will soften our hearts: *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 36:26). By being open to the love that God so freely gives, our hardness of heart will be healed. In our response to God's love, we confirm our identity as Children of God, men and women made in God's likeness and sources of love in our troubled world.

Edward O'Donnell

Prayer and Forgiveness: Can Psychology Help?

CHRISTIAN PRAYER REQUIRES that we forgive one another: “When you stand in prayer,” Jesus instructed his disciples, “Forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your Father in heaven may in turn forgive you your transgressions” (Mk 11:25). Jesus also included this teaching in the “Our Father,” now the daily prayer of Christians: “Father,... forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is in debt to us” (Lk 11:2–4; Mt 6:9–13).

Despite Jesus’ teaching, many Christians committed to living a prayerful life choose to remain in a state of unforgiveness. On retreats, for example, I hear comments like, “I don’t care what Jesus says, I just can’t forgive my wife for the affair she had with my best friend. It still hurts too much”; “Am I really supposed to forgive the man who brutally raped my daughter? He ruined her life.” Less dramatic stories reveal secret resentments over offended pride or broken promises. Whether the cause is great or

Prayer and Forgiveness

small, many sincere Christians cling so tenaciously to past hurts that they appear to disbelieve Jesus' lesson in his parable about the unforgiving servant: "That is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt 18:35).

Obstacles to Prayer

An unforgiving heart is probably the single greatest obstacle to a vibrant prayer life. Many devout Christians wonder why their prayer life never deepens. When they complain about difficulties in

An unforgiving heart is probably the single greatest obstacle to a vibrant prayer life

prayer, they often recount distractions, inability to concentrate, meaninglessness, lack of feeling, and dryness.

These problems are real, as spiritual guides well know,

and deserve full attention. Yet, I suspect that boredom in prayer may often be symptomatic of an unconscious resistance to face our hidden anger and resentment over past hurts, which deepening prayer challenges us to confront.

Persistence in unforgiveness, however, takes its toll on us. Spiritually, as John of the Cross would quickly point out, attachment to a hurt arising from some specific past event blocks the inflow of hope into our lives. With faith and love, hope is the

Prayer and Forgiveness

normally expected fruit of Christian prayer, especially contemplative prayer. The deepening of these virtues in our lives both heals and transforms us. Until we forgive, we cannot be healed and transformed—no matter how hard we pray—because unforgiveness blocks the flow of God’s healing and transforming love into our hearts. Clinging to past hurts and grievances also has distinct emotional and physical consequences. For example, unforgiveness, because it blocks hope, can set the stage for depression, which is so widespread in America today. Unforgiving persons also tend to show more symptoms of anxiety, paranoia, and narcissism.

Still, letting go of past hurts is not easy. Without wanting to, we can become obsessed with those we think have harmed or betrayed us. Mentally, we say “I forgive you,” but then find ourselves carefully avoiding them. We take secret delight when we hear them ridiculed or see them fail. In guiding persons trapped in unforgiveness, I often explain to them that their condition is a symptom of sclerocardia, the biblical hardness of heart (Mk 7:14–23; 10:5; 16:14). This is the most devastating of all human diseases, and I counsel them that “prayer alone” can free them (Mk 9:29). Lately, though, I have been rethinking this advice in light of what some psychologists are discovering today about forgiveness. There may be much more besides prayer

Prayer and Forgiveness

that Christians can do to release themselves from their bondage to past grievances.

Psychology and Forgiveness

American psychology is now paying closer attention to understanding and promoting the inherently healthy human traits that enhance the quality of life for both individuals and society. APA president, Martin Seligman, challenged his colleagues to reorient their discipline toward a “new science and profession of positive psychology.” Encouraged by Seligman’s vision, many psychologists today are studying such qualities as moral responsibility, altruism, humility, courage, gratitude, and creativity. These qualities are likely to be regarded as independent dimensions of a healthy personality, with their own dynamics and laws of development that make for a fuller, richer life. Among these more positive human characteristics that contemporary psychology is exploring is *forgiveness*.

The Stanford Forgiveness Project

Led by Carl Thoresen and his associates from Stanford University’s School of Education, this workshop introduced forty-five psychologists to what the convention program described as the “basics of forgiveness training, using the Stanford Forgiveness Project as a model.” The Stanford team

Prayer and Forgiveness

began this project in October 1998. Since then, they have shown “how social cognitive processes create grievance stories” and “how maintaining grievances/hurts/resentments negatively alters psychological and physiological processes.” They have demonstrated the personal benefits of “letting go” of one’s grievance stories and, most importantly, are developing intervention procedures to help people move from unforgiveness or harboring hurts and grievances to the actual practice of forgiving others.

Several working definitions of forgiveness guide the Stanford researchers. One comes from Enright and his colleagues in *Exploring Forgiveness*. They say interpersonal forgiveness is a

“willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgement, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her.”

Interpersonal forgiveness:

- is not pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, denying, or even reconciling;
- does not, as Thoresen emphasized, condone violence, abuse, or injustice;
- does not release others from the consequences of their behavior.
- is essentially a unilateral, private choice, a nec-

Prayer and Forgiveness

essary first step in freeing oneself from carrying the heavy burden of resentment over past hurts;

- sets the stage for such future possibilities as reconciliation and restoring broken relationships, although psychological forgiveness, in itself, does not require this;
- focuses on forgiving others, not on asking others for their forgiveness or on forgiving oneself, although clearly these are all related.

Forgiveness Is a Process

Forgiveness, thus defined, is more a process than a onetime decision. This process first involves an *uncovering* phase in which we become aware that we are unconsciously nourishing hurts arising from past events, or we awaken to the emotionally corrosive effect that anger—over past injustices done to us—has on our present behavior. Next—in the *decisions* phase—we attempt to understand the true meaning of forgiveness and choose to act on this understanding. Then begins the *work* phase. We consciously try to view our offender positively in a new light and to think of this person more compassionately and empathically. We also begin the interior work of recognizing and letting go of our resentments in their first movements within us and of refuting irrational thoughts, such as, “Every person is morally obliged to treat me according to

Prayer and Forgiveness

my own standards of respect and justice.” Finally, in the *deepening* phase, we attempt to expand our vision of life to see meaning in suffering, to accept that life is not fair, and to find new possibilities for spiritual growth arising from perceived past injuries. By such practices, forgiveness gradually becomes an enduring attitude and a habitual reaction to negative interpersonal experiences.

This process of fashioning a *forgiving heart* can be easily learned. The Stanford group teaches participants, in six one-hour sessions, simple visualization and behavioral modification techniques that enable them to see:

- how their minds create and maintain grievance stories from past negative experiences,
- how they damage themselves psychologically and physiologically when they continually replay these stories,
- how they can give up their grievances by taking them less personally and looking at the offending person in a more positive light.

Although some participants choose to hold on to past hurts and not forgive their offender, the majority, who decide for forgiveness, improve measurably in their emotional and physical health and in their interpersonal relationships at home and at work.

To test the effectiveness of their approach, the Stanford staff in January 2000 invited five women

Prayer and Forgiveness

from Northern Ireland to participate in their project. Three were Protestant and two were Catholic. Each had suffered “catastrophic losses” in their country’s “troubles.” Sons of four of the women were killed in the conflict. One mother’s son was mistakenly murdered by a gunman from her own side.

Surprisingly, after a week of forgiveness training, the women showed significant improvement on measures of degree of hurt, depression, forgiveness, and stress, changes that held up when they were retested six months later following their return to Northern Ireland.

Even with these positive findings, the Stanford team modestly admits that their research is only in its infancy and there is still a great deal psychologists have to learn about forgiveness. Nonetheless, the *Stanford Forgiveness Project* demonstrates that anger and resentment over past hurts can give way to more positive feelings, thoughts, and actions. Persons can learn to move

- from hating their offenders to loving and caring for them,
- from ruminating angrily about past offenses to understanding and empathizing with their offenders,
- from avoiding people who have harmed them to communicating directly with them and making efforts to restore broken relationships.

Prayer and Forgiveness

Fortunately, these discoveries are publicized in books like Fred Luskin's recently published *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*. This book describes the Stanford forgiveness research, including the Northern Ireland Hope projects.

Forgiveness and Prayer

Psychologists study forgiveness from a scientific rather than a religious perspective. Their primary aim is to understand the psychological dynamics of a human activity that has vast potential for improving the quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies. Yet, the implications for religion are obvious. The Stanford Forgiveness Project teaches its participants how to “reduce resentments, give up grudges, stop harboring hurts, let go of vengeful ideation, and stop blaming others”—the very lessons Christians must learn if their prayer is to deepen.

As a spiritual guide, I have found new resources in the psychological literature on forgiveness to help praying Christians who struggle with anger and resentment over past hurts. I still encourage them to pray for healing, but now I can also invite them to examine the phases of the forgiveness process to see what lessons they might draw from it. I can recommend Enright's self-help book, *Forgiveness Is*

Prayer and Forgiveness

a Choice, with its step-by-step advice for resolving anger and restoring hope. I can suggest that they read on the web, at www.learningtoforgive.com, the impressive results of the Stanford research.

God's grace alone enables us to forgive from our heart someone we believe has terribly wronged us

In the end, God's grace alone enables us to forgive from our heart someone we believe has terribly wronged us. However, we might better dispose ourselves to receive this grace by practicing some of the methods psychologists are now teaching their clients in psychotherapy and their students in classes and seminars around the country.

The events of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath are again reminding Christians that forgiveness is a necessary element of their prayer. For the goal of Christian prayer is not only self-transformation but also the transformation of society. Forgiveness may ultimately be our most powerful weapon for breaking the dreadful cycle of violence we witness today in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and our own country. Enduring peace demands justice. But is justice possible without the merciful love that Jesus taught in the Gospels and that St. Thérèse Martin rediscovered for our age in a late-nineteenth-century Carmelite cloister in France? And is merciful love possible without forgiveness?

Prayer and Forgiveness

For centuries, monotheists—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—have resorted to killing others as a means of resolving conflicts, righting wrongs, and addressing grievances. This might change if Christians can show that forgiveness and merciful love, not violence and death, are the prerequisites for achieving justice and peace. This change can begin in the heart of each praying Christian.

Conclusion

As Kevin Gillespie shows in *Psychology and American Catholicism*, American Catholics during the last century have assimilated much from modern psychology that has enhanced our teachings, pastoral practices, and ways of living our faith. A more positive psychology in the century ahead promises even better gifts for Catholics, ones that will surely benefit our spiritual lives. Already the psychology of forgiveness is contributing to a more vital prayer life.

Who among praying Catholics might especially profit from the work psychologists are now doing on forgiveness? I believe that all who share the responsibility for helping the Church in the United States grow as a praying and peacemaking community can benefit from their efforts. I would especially suggest that bishops, priests, seminary educators, Catholic schoolteachers, and directors of

Prayer and Forgiveness

continuing education should become familiar with this work on forgiveness and incorporate it into their ministry.

Kevin Culligan, OCD, a priest-psychologist and long-time member of the American Psychological Association, lives at the Carmelite Monastery, Holy Hill, WI. He is co-editor with Regis Jordan of *Carmel and Contemplation: Transforming Human Consciousness* (Amazon Books).

“Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs, or anything else—God is in this person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”

Pope Francis, *A Big Heart Open to God: A Conversation with Pope Francis*



James Keating, PhD

The Layperson As Disciple: A Meditation on Simple Words

DOROTHY DAY, THE FOUNDESS of the Catholic Worker Movement, is revered as a laywoman who integrated spirituality with work for social reform in a manner rarely seen in Western culture. Her concern for the plight of the poor came from a keen sense of her call to practice Catholicism. For her, the Church was not an optional gathering of friends who shared a common spiritual search but was the Body of Christ from whom one drew the life of the soul. This life was given through the sacraments (she attended daily mass) and prayerful devotion to the indwelling Spirit of Christ. The fruit of this attention to Christ was her service to the poor, and it was also the sustenance that kept her with them in their needs.

Dorothy Day was a laywoman in the deepest sense of the word. Christ remained at the center of her life and, from out of that center, her actions emanated to affect culture deeply. This, then, is the lay life: to witness to the faith in such a manner

The Layperson As Disciple

that it affirms the hints of divine salvation within culture while it makes the source of that redemption explicit and powerful in acts of evangelization. Due to the various conditions that qualify the lay

Today, I have a different perspective of why I am here on this earth

life, not all Christians are called to live Day's radical presence to the poor.

Rather, in their discipleship, all laity are called to live out of a centered relationship to Christ. It is this relationship that inexorably influences for the better the secular world, the only location the layperson has to work out his or her sanctity. In leaving behind a life as a "radical street activist" and turning toward the Catholic faith, Day left behind a life centered on strategies and beliefs in ideological action alone for a life of contemplative discipleship:

"I don't look back with regret—they were fine people, their hearts in the right places and their minds awake. But what we were doing—that was what we believed in; and so we were almost completely centered on techniques and strategies....

"Today, I have a different perspective of why I am here on this earth and what I should do, and that's why I encourage all of us to make God a part of what we do, bring God into the midst of all our decision-making.... That is why I am always mindful of prayer when we talk and hope and plan and worry.... So, I listen, and I go to church,

The Layperson As Disciple

and I remember what I've heard, and I think of Jesus, and how he lived His life, and what he told the people he met,...and I sit there and then it wells up in me, a notion of what should happen.”

These words of Day succinctly summarize discipleship. The lay life involves a general call from Christ to those chosen. There is then a specific call within, in which an individual discovers a personal configuration to Christ—marriage, single, religious vows. With these distinctions in mind, I will approach the theme of lay life with the help of Day's vision of contemplative discipleship outlined above. It will be a general overview, leaving meditation upon any one specific vocation for another essay.

The Experience of Discipleship

The lay state assumes the kingly role of Christ—priest, prophet, and king (see AA 2)—by seeking to root out the reign of sin in the affairs of the world. In grace, thereby, the laity are called to further a cultural and moral transformation of society. In this kingly way of life—founded upon faith, hope, and love—believers can come together in worship, service, and witness, and leave an impression upon society. Dorothy Day clearly understood what she centered upon early in life and what she then focused upon after finding Christ in the Catholic Church. She moved from being centered upon

The Layperson As Disciple

“techniques and strategies” to a life of making God present in the midst of all we do and “all our decision making.” This is a profound transformation of the person, not only in action but also in character. As a result, a new center appears that is not simply focused upon discursive ideas but, rather, is fixed upon a Presence. For Day, as for all those similarly called, discipleship begins in the move from living and thinking out of political ideas or actions alone to doing one’s thinking and acting out of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

As Day said, her activist friends were “fine people”—they simply had not yet come to see. Coming to see that the center of our being is God and that God has claims over us does not leave the layperson paralyzed with wonder to the detriment of a public commitment. No, any wonder known in such a relationship with God is not paralyzing but mobilizing. From out of the depths of an ecclesial encounter with God, the layperson is sent on mission.

Discipleship Is Born and Sustained in the Church

Discipleship has action in mind, but its action is not lodged in political philosophy, ideology, or “techniques or strategies.” It is lodged in the love one has for God who is manifest in the Church. This experiential encounter with the divine is the fruitful center of any and all action, study, and doctrine

The Layperson As Disciple

that may follow. This experience is not one that originates in the self alone or leads to isolation. Dorothy Day realized the necessity for participating in Church life on a daily basis: she devoutly visited churches for prayer, went to daily Mass, and served others in need.

Day found that the desire to seek God and serve others, which arose from within her heart, could be satisfied in the already existing life of the Church. After her conversion, she simply took her place within Christ's mystical body, a place that was uniquely hers, as it is for all of us.

The Call

The call of Christ to the apostles was not simply their personal summons from God to become better individuals, although it does include that call. Rather, it was a call that initiated them into a singular community—in, upon, and with Christ. The end or goal of the disciples' call was the formation of a public, witnessing body: what they heard in the dark, they must teach in the light. Salvation is offered to individuals knitted together in Christ, and through them it is offered to the world. William Spohn describes the communal nature of the call this way:

“The choice of the Twelve clearly signaled that Jesus was reconstituting around himself the

The Layperson As Disciple

original Israel, which had been broken up for centuries. A pietist reading of the call to discipleship sees only personal engagement with Jesus, but a more historical reading sees it as a summons to a distinctive new community. The political import of this movement was not lost on those who were the official leaders of Israel.”

The disciple is called to bring forth fruit for the life of the world, not just for his or her own advancement in holiness. In fact, laypersons cannot make advancement in holiness unless their hearts are configured to the obedient heart of Christ who gave his life so that others may live. The laity live the virtues publicly and thus carry with them a moral and spiritual witness that is capable of penetrating the lives of those with whom they work and socialize.

Mission

The transfiguration of the self and the secular society is effected by the laity’s grace-filled presence in the world. As Dorothy Day says above, the laity should get “a notion of what should happen” if they have been living out of the depths of their configuration to Christ. It has been clearly stated since the Second Vatican Council that the laity are the ones that create culture (*LG* 30–8, *AA* 7). Their activity is directed toward the setting up just and virtuous political, medical, and business enterprises, as

The Layperson As Disciple

well as the creation of worthy art, entertainment, and sporting activities. The spheres of recreation, study, and the family are uniquely lay as well. In being disciples, the laity are literally sent to do the will of God in and among their fellow citizens.

This missionary activity is carried on in places where the clergy are not physically present, an absence that is not a failure or due to the present dearth of clergy. Rather, it is not their place, ordinarily, to be in the business world, medical world, or laboring in the trades. This is the place of the layperson and rightfully so. It is in these places that the laity and only the laity, with few exceptions, can labor for the furthering of the kingdom of God.

One can ask that if the laity do not give public witness to the love of God poured forth into their hearts, then how will persons hear the Good News or see it enacted? To have passive laity is to have the public square devoid of sacred witness in all its varied aspects. To tolerate such a social condition is to undermine the opportunities for grace to spring forth from within culture.

Obedience

To be a disciple, then, is not to imitate Christ in a caricature of his Gospel activities but is to let the Spirit have reign over our hearts. In this way, Doro-

The Layperson As Disciple

thy Day's "make God a part of what we do" and her summons to bring "God into our decision making" are vital. The disciple yearns to be a Christ-like presence in society from within his or her depths.

This kind of presence is fortified by having its origin in spiritual listening or obedience. The disciple wants to listen and be influenced by Christ's Spirit who dwells within the human heart and within the heart of the Church. Obedience is the reconstituting virtue for every disciple. It is present at the origin of the call, and it is the way back to that origin if and when a disciple gets lost on the journey to holiness. Dorothy Day characterized this vital virtue of obedience in the lay life under four themes: I listen, I go, I remember, and I think:

The disciple yearns to be a Christ-like presence in society

"So, I listen, and I go to church, and I remember what I have heard, and I think of Jesus and how he lived his life."

For Day, all this listening, thinking, and remembering leads to doing. All obedience is a listening unto doing in the context of one's fidelity to the call heard to "come and follow" (Mk 10:21). The disciple spends his or her days heeding the Lord, attending and waiting for his word. Out of this rapt listening or obedience, the members of the Church continue the mission of Christ in the secular world.

The Layperson As Disciple

Prayer

All of this listening, going to church, remembering, and thinking are dispositions that are in accord with the essential disposition of the disciple—prayer. This listening for God within the heart is a personal and indispensable devotion that can be integrated into the communal worship of adoration. Many have warned of limiting prayer to a specific utilitarian purpose, but no doubt few disagree that prayer bears fruit in people's lives. It may be theologically incomplete to counsel people that prayer always gets you "an answer." There is no doubt, however that disciples who endeavor to listen attentively to God often do get answers or come to know strengthened virtue. The one who prays does indeed want to be influenced by the divine. This is in fact prayer's purpose—to bring the community and its members into union with God.

Common Conscience

We seek a union with God in Christ from out of the depths of our soul. The disciple strives to think like Christ and be like Christ, not in crass mimicking but in behavior that reflects the love between the disciple and Christ. It is a love deep within the heart and in the midst of the Church. In other words, one comes to be an imitator of Christ the more the heart and conscience are inclined to hear

The Layperson As Disciple

him and him alone, even in the many voices that resound in contemporary culture.

Dorothy Day mentioned that she “thinks of Jesus and how he lived his life.” This kind of prayerful meditation develops a common conscience with Christ and his Church even more deeply. In fact, it is only because there is a world other than the ecclesial that the ecclesial and holy can have communion with the secular. The disciple, of the earth and secular, is completed and brought to fulfillment in communion with the divine but remains in the world.

The layperson, who has been so touched from within by the Spirit of God can bring this presence to the secular world but only as a freely bestowed offer. As the Himes’ brothers warn,

“The unequivocal canonization of a political act or policy because it is the will of God [leads to] the danger of sacralized politics...[which] has caused enormous misery in the twentieth century.... Maintaining the difference between the sacred and the secular without placing them over against one another is essential.... Rather than juxtaposition domains, the sacred is the sacramental form of the secular, i.e. the sacred is the secular in its full depth.”

The Layperson As Disciple

Missionary Action

Dorothy Day muses, “I think of Jesus and how he lived his life.” The life of interiority leads to action, to “how he lived his life.” We are summoned in Scripture to “go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37), go and sin no more, go and baptize, and at the end of worship, to “go in peace, to love, and serve the Lord.”

This conscience is not an isolated “I” but a voice that is the fruit of one’s relatedness to Church as it embodies moral goodness in the saints and in its doctrine. One first listens to conscience and then, upon hearing truth, makes this personal dialogue between God’s voice and the self public in a doing of the truth. For the disciple, his or her personal communication with God in thought, affect, and prayer becomes the staging ground for public witness in the secular world—all the more reason to help laypeople develop a lively spirituality.

Conclusion

Understanding what is to be regarded as morally true is an activity that, today, takes much effort due to the enormous amount of change that has occurred over the last fifty years. The need for ongoing theological education of the laity has been one response to these enormous changes. Knowing what is true must precede doing the truth, and the

The Layperson As Disciple

acquisition of truth always involves relationships with others. Coming to know the truth happens, in communal dialogue. Fred Crowe writes about it this way:

“Truth, in all but the most elementary instances, is not won except by the encounter of many opposing viewpoints, and many opposing viewpoints are not provided except by many persons. I do not deny the role of prophets...but even they utter their words of wisdom on the basis of many contributions.”

The words of Dorothy Day serve as a compass for finding one's way through the lay commitment, a commitment that embodies the complexity of bringing together the secular life with religious faith. That is the layperson's dynamic challenge, and such a tension is felt deeply by all who take the call of Christ seriously. No one would mistake Dorothy Day for a social worker. Her behavior had mystical and sacramental origins. This same fount sustains the layperson in his or her unique call to water the culture with signs of grace, with hints of God's presence among us.

Dorothy Day's words succinctly give direction to the disciple

Through prayer, mission, obedience, and conscience, the layperson is formed into a disciple of Christ in the context of the Church and in service

The Layperson As Disciple

to the world. Dorothy Day's words succinctly give direction to the disciple, testifying that these four realities can be appropriated as the core for lay spiritual development.

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SOURCES

1. AA2: *Apostolicam Actuositatem, Decree On the Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965.
 2. LG: *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution On the Church*, 1964.
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“IF WE—all of us—accept the grace of Jesus Christ, he changes our heart and from sinners makes us saints. To become holy we do not need to turn our eyes away and look somewhere else, or have as it were the face on a holy card! No, no, that is not necessary. To become saints only one thing is necessary: to accept the grace that the Father gives us in Jesus Christ. There, this grace changes our heart. We continue to be sinners for we are weak, but with this grace which makes us feel that the Lord is good, that the Lord is merciful, that the Lord waits for us, that the Lord pardons us—this immense grace that changes our heart.”

Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*

Book Notices

***What Does It All Mean?*
A Guide to Being More Faithful
Richard Leonard, SJ**

Paulist Press Hardcover \$19.95 eBook \$13.37

What Does It All Mean? brings together into one volume three previous works on belief and its challenges: *Where the Hell Is God?*, *Why Bother Praying?*, and *What Are We Doing on Earth for Christ's Sake?* This work revises, restructures, edits, augments, and develops the early works into a single coherent case for belief. It does not shy away from the biggest challenges to faith inside and outside of the Church, but outlines a contemporary and accessible response to the issues that confront and sometimes confound believers today.

Becoming Human

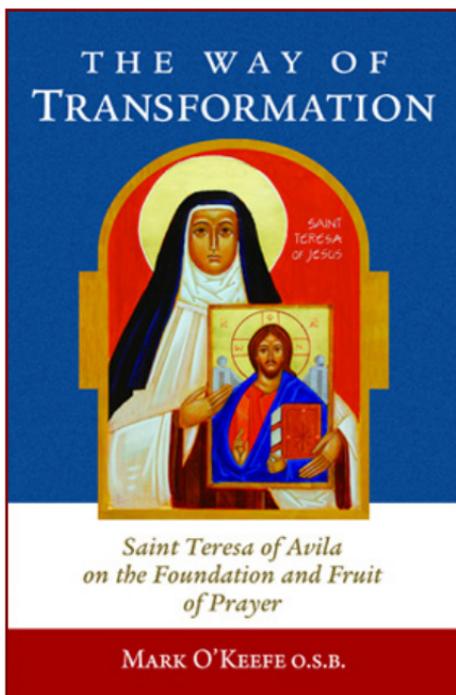
By Jean Vanier

Paulist Press

Paperback \$12.95 eBook \$8.70

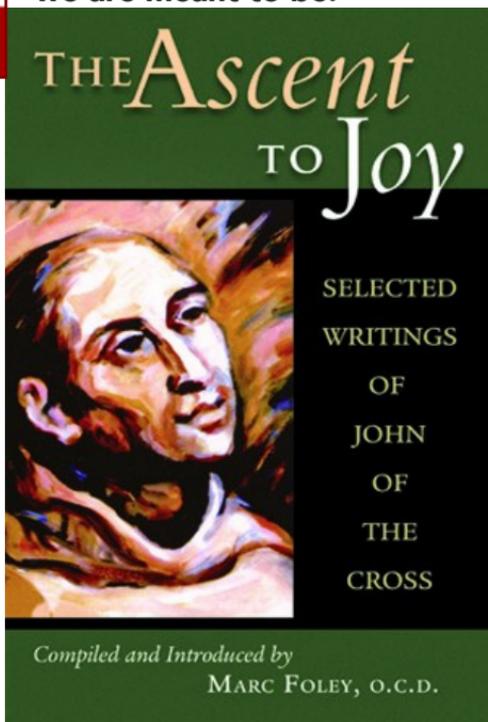
In this deeply compassionate work, Jean Vanier shares his profoundly human vision for creating a common good that radically changes our communities, our relationships and ourselves. He proposes that by opening ourselves to others, those we perceive as weak, different, or inferior, we can achieve true personal and societal freedom. The 10th anniversary edition includes a new *Introduction* by the author.

ICS PUBLICATIONS



The Way of Transformation is a play on the title of St. Teresa's classic *The Way of Perfection*. Written for her Discalced Carmelite nuns, it is nonetheless considered Teresa's "operations manual" for anyone genuinely committed to the spiritual life. But by "perfection" she doesn't intend the futile pursuit of idealized flawlessness, as some might think. Rather, Teresa means achieving an authentic human fulfillment—a true becoming of that person we are meant to be.

Father Marc Foley provides substantial introductions and notes to carefully selected excerpts from John's own writings, presented in a systematic order. This allows the book to function as both a primer of John's teaching and a profound introduction to the contemplative way. The introduction offers a helpful biographical summary of John's life as well as a chronology of key events in his life to situate his texts in a clear historical context.



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