

Section 2

IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITIES ARE RELATED TO A PERSON GIFTED BY THE SPIRIT.

Besides all having their origin in Jesus, one of the characteristics of Christian Spiritualities is a special 'Gift of the Spirit' bestowed on a certain man or woman. This 'Gift of the Spirit' is called a 'Charism'. People speak of a Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian, Carmelite Spirituality, because these Spiritualities find their origin in a special 'Gift of the Spirit', a special 'Charism', lived and practiced by great men and women such as St. Benedict (480-547), St. Dominic (1170-1221), St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) and St. Clare (1194-1253), St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), St. John of the Cross (1542-1581), or Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897).

Some of us may be familiar with the spirituality of spiritual writers, who have lived in modern times, such as Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Russian American, Founder of Friendship House and Madonna House Apostolate (1896–1985); Thomas Merton (1915-1968), the Trappist monk; Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), the founder of the Focolare Movement; Anthony de Mello (1931 – 1987), the Indian Jesuit; Henri Nouwen, (1932 – 1996), the Dutch-born Catholic priest and writer, who authored 40 books about spirituality; or the well-known Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997). Each of these men and women has been directed by the Spirit to live in close relationship with God and Jesus Christ. They practiced the Gospel and served both Church and society in a special way, while showing other people a direction in following a path of life, guided by the Spirit.

Some of us might also feel inspired by contemporary writers, such as Jean Vanier (*1928), the Founder of the l'Arche communities, Willigis Jäger

(*1925) and Anselm Grün (*1945), both German Benedictines; Richard Rohr OFM (*1943), founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in the USA, or Ronald Rolheiser OMI, a spiritual lecturer and writer, who each in their own way, offer us a certain kind of Spirituality of the Heart, by teaching “a way of entering into our hearts”.

Spiritualities of the Heart can be found in many forms, depending on the special gift of the man or woman living and promoting this kind of Spirituality. Some Spiritualities of the Heart find their origin in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For example, we can find a Spirituality of the Heart according to the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) and Jeanne de Chantal (1572-1641), the founders of the Visitation Sisters; St. Jean Eudes (1601-1680), the founder of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary; or St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), whose way of practicing the Devotion to the Sacred Heart has been popularized by the Jesuits, based on her writings. All these men and women lived and practiced the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in their own way. They offered to others a model of living a spirituality, more precisely a Spirituality of the Heart.

A reflective moment

*“Being Christian is not a result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea,
but the encounter with ... a person,
who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”*

Of course, the central person in every Christian Spirituality is Jesus Christ, in whom God has become human.

*However, God “encounters us ever anew,
in the men and women who reflect His presence....”*

(Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est no. 1 and 17).

To read more

If you want to know more about the above mentioned men and women, and the spiritual path they followed, please look for their names on-line, for example in WIKIPEDIA or THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA on-line.