

Living Franciscan Spirituality With Henri Nouwen as a Guide

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Presented to: St. Joseph of Cupertino Fraternity, Secular Franciscan Order (OFS)



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Opening Prayer

Cover: You Are the Beloved,
Daily Meditations

Dear God,

As you draw me ever deeper into your heart,
I discover that my companions on the
journey are women and men
loved by you as fully and as intimately as I am.

In your compassionate heart,
there is a place for all of them.

No one is excluded.

Give me a share in your compassion, dear God,
so that your unlimited love may become visible
in the way I love my brothers and sisters.

Amen.

With Open Hands

This prayer is the daily mediation for July 31.

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Henri Nouwen and My Spiritual Journey

- My favorite Nouwen Books
 - ***Return of the Prodigal Son***
 - *Life of the Beloved*
 - *Can You Drink the Cup?*
 - *Here and Now*
 - *In the Name of Jesus*
 - *Letters to Marc About Jesus*
 - *The Inner Voice of Love*
 - *The Road to Daybreak*
 - *The Spirituality of Living*

Cathedral of The Good Shepherd
Singapore

What is Spirituality

- Spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros (desire).
- And how we do channel it, the disciplines and habits we choose to live by, will either lead to a greater integration or disintegration within our bodies, our minds, and souls, and to a greater integration or disintegration in the way we are related to God, to others, and the cosmic world.
- Spirituality is about what we do with our spirits, our souls.
 - Source: Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, *The Holy Longing*

Christian Spirituality

- Christian spirituality is the lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit.
- Christian spirituality is not so much concerned with the doctrines of Christianity as with the ways those teachings shape us as individuals who are part of the Christian community living in the world.
- Christian spirituality presupposes **a way of life** and not an abstract philosophy or code of beliefs

– Cunningham & Egan, *Christian Spirituality*, p 7,9

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Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi

Incline the ear of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God. Observe His commands with your whole heart and fulfill His counsels with a perfect mind. Give praise to Him because He is good; exalt him by your deeds; for his reason He has sent you into the whole world: that you may bear witness to his voice in word and deed and bring everyone to know there is no one who is all-powerful except Him. Persevere in discipline and holy obedience and, with a good and firm purpose, fulfill what you have promised Him. The Lord God offers Himself to us as to His children. – St. Francis

– Source: A Letter to the Entire Order (1225-1226)

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OFS Way of Life (Article # in OFS Rule)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4. Christ-Centered: Gospel & Life | 12. Love God and Neighbor |
| 5. Encounter Christ in
Community – Scripture – Church | 13. Accept All People & Community |
| 6. Go Forth and Proclaim Christ | 14. Build Fraternal Kingdom of God |
| 7. Penance & Conversion | 15. Promote Justice |
| 8. Prayer, Contemplation, Liturgy | 16. Esteem Work |
| 9. Love and Imitate Mary | 17. Cultivate Family Life |
| 10. Fulfill Duties & Be Witness | 18. Respect Creation |
| 11. Seek Detachment from
Possessions and Power | 19. Seek Unity and
Fraternal Harmony |



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Spirituality of Secular Franciscans

To live the Gospel,
Following Francis,
Through daily Conversion,
In Community,
As Seculars,
United with all Franciscans
Around the world.

Source: CIOFS at <https://youtu.be/Y2eUXrAuWO4>

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Henri Nouwen – A Spiritual Life

- The Formative Years:
1932 to 1957
- Early Priesthood and
Academic Years: 1957 to 1971
- The Yale Years: 1971-1981
- Searching for a Home:
1981 to 1985
- Finding a Home at L'Arche:
1986 to 1990
- Becoming the Father:
1991 to 1996

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Henri Nouwen's Favorite Saint – *St. Francis*

- For a long time I lived with the conviction that Francis Avenue, on which the Harvard Divinity School stands, was named after St. Francis.
- (I learned) that the street was named for a 19th century Divinity School professor and not my favorite saint.

– Source: *The Road to Daybreak*, p. 9

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Why Is Henri Nouwen Relevant Today?

- Henri was a pioneer who laid out a discipline and a language which the rest of us are now using . . . (He) actually wrote *spirituality*, as opposed to spirituality critics who wrote *about* spirituality.
– Ronald Rolheiser, OMI
- Rolheiser dedicated *The Holy Longing* to Nouwen
 - For Henri Nouwen, 1932-1996, our generation's Kierkegaard. By sharing his own struggles, he mentored us all, helping us to pray without knowing how to pray, to rest while feeling restless, to be at peace while tempted, to feel safe while still anxious, to be surrounded by a cloud of light while still in darkness, and to love while still in doubt. – Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

Why Is Henri Nouwen Relevant Today?

- As a trained psychologist in the complexities of the human psyche, Henri unmaskes our hidden motives.
- As a pastor, he calls for us to reach for a higher level that acknowledges the spiritual dimension of life. (*Note: Henri's priesthood was central to his identity*)
- As a fellow pilgrim, he honors our flawed lives and allows space for our failure and bad choices.
 - Gabrielle Earnshaw, Henri's archivist and editor, From the Preface

Cover: *Love, Henri, Letters on the Spiritual Life*

Henri Nouwen on the Spiritual Life

- ...the spiritual life is reaching out to our innermost self, to our fellow human beings, and to our God. (*Reaching Out*, p.9)
- The spiritual life is the life of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Christ who leads us into the intimacy of the life of the Father and the Son. The Spirit makes us sons and daughters of God in the same full way as the Messiah was son.

(Epilogue to Nouwen/Nomura, *Desert Wisdom*, p.111)

Henri Nouwen on the Spiritual Life

The spiritual life has to do with the *heart* of existence. This is a good word. By heart I... mean the center of our being, that place where we are most ourselves, where we are the most human, where we are the most real.

– Source: *Letters to Mark About Jesus*, p. 5

Henri Nouwen on Living Spiritually

- In every phase of my search I've discovered also that Jesus Christ stands at the center of my seeking.
- If you were to ask me point-blank, **"What does it mean to you to live spiritually?"** I would have to reply, **"Living with Jesus at the center."**

— Source: *Letters to Mark About Jesus*, p. 7

A Spiritual Life is a Grateful Life

Henri on Gratitude

"I am simply human" was not a depressing experience for (Merton) but an experience that led him to true gratitude. (The most religious emotion!)

— Source: *Love, Henri*. p. 39, Letter to Timothy

Henri's Last Known Words

"I think I'm going to be OK, but you never know. So if I die, just tell everybody that I am grateful, that I'm enormously grateful. Make sure you tell everybody that!" — Henri to Nathan Ball

— Source: Nathan Ball interview in film *Journey to the Heart*

Discovering Henri Nouwen's Spirituality

- *Here and Now* is Henri Nouwen's statement of faith. It covers almost everything he ever thought or experienced about the Christian spiritual life.
 - Gabrielle Earnshaw, Henri's archivist and editor
- This book (*The Spirituality of Living*) is the life wisdom of one of the spiritual masters of our time.
 - Nathan Ball, friend and former Executive Director, L'Arche, Daybreak

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Living Spiritually Here and Now

- Living in the Present
- Joy
- Suffering
- Conversion
- Disciplined Living
- The Spiritual Life
- Prayer
- Compassion
- Family
- Relationships
- Who We Are: God's Beloved

Cover: *Here and Now*

We are traveling together toward the Light, always encouraging each other to keep our eyes fixed on the One who is calling us home. – Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now*, p. 13

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Living a Spiritual Life With Henri Nouwen

Henri's Key Elements in the Spiritual Life

Spiritual Truths

- God-with-Us
- **Beloved**
- Eternal Life Here/Now

Spiritual Calling

- Live in the Present
- **Trust in God**
- **Conversion**

Spiritual Disciplines

- **Solitude and Silence**
- **Community**
- **Ministry**

Recurring Themes in Henri's Life and Work

Human Condition

- Vulnerable / Wounded
- Suffering / Joy
- **Compassion**

Relationships

- With Ourselves
- With Others
- With God

Essence of Spiritual Life

**Love and
"Living with Jesus
at the center"**

*"...just tell everybody that
I am grateful, that I'm
enormously grateful."*

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Henri's Core Insight: *You are the Beloved*

- (A)t Daybreak, I have been led to an inner place where I had not been before. It is the place within me where God has chosen to dwell. It is the place where **I am held safe in the embrace of an all-loving Father who calls me by name and says, "You are my beloved son, on you my favor rests."** It is the place where I can taste the joy and peace that are not of this world.
- **I have a new vocation now.** It is to . . . write and speak from that place into . . . my own and other people's lives.

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Trust In God: *Let the Catcher Catch*

- “A flyer must fly, and a catcher must catch, and the flyer must trust with outstretched arms, that his catcher will be there for him.”
– Rodleigh Stevens
- The words of Jesus flashed through my mind.
“Father into your hands I commend my spirit.”
Dying* is trusting in the catcher. . . . Don’t try to grab (God); he will grab you. Just stretch out your arms and hands and trust, trust, trust.

– Source: Henri Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift*, p 66-67

*The same is true for Living a Spiritual Life

Henri flying at the circus.

No catcher here. Henri safely lands in net, and smiles like a child.

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Conversion – *Turning to God*

- Do not be afraid. . . let go of your need to control your life.
- A radical change of heart is required; requires trust
- Conversion is a complete turnaround that allows us to discover that we are not the prisoners we think we are
- (An) invitation . . . to turn our hearts to God and so discover the full meaning of our lives.
- In our conversion we turn . . .
 - From our False Self to our True Self
 - From *Chronos* to *Kairos*
 - From the House of Fear to the House of Love
 - From Worrying to Prayer
 - From Absurdity to Obedience
 - From Mind to Heart
 - From Fatalism to Faith
 - From Competition to Compassion

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Spiritual Disciplines

Our Role in . . .	Living a Spiritual Life	
We Seek God	in Solitude	by Holding the Cup
We Share God	in Community	by Lifting the Cup
We Serve God	in Ministry	by Drinking the Cup

- A spiritual life is **living with Jesus at the center**.
- **You are my Beloved** reveals the most intimate truth about all human beings.

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Solitude

- Deep hunger for communion in every human heart
- Solitude is being in communion with God and God alone
- In and through the Spirit we are full participants in communion of love between Jesus and Father
- **Like Jesus, we are God's beloved**
- Solitude is where Jesus listened to God; it's where we do too
- We pray in order to listen to the voice that calls us beloved

Solitude is where community begins.

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Prayer

- There is no bad way to pray and there is no one starting point for prayer.
- All spiritual masters offer only one non-negotiable rule:
You have to show up for prayer and you have to show up regularly.
- Everything else is negotiable and respects your unique circumstances.

Cover: *Prayer, The Holy Longing*, Rolheiser

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Henri Nouwen on Prayer

- “Well when you spend one hour a day adoring your Lord and never do anything which you know is wrong . . . You will be fine.”
– Mother Teresa to Henri
- Spend time with the Lord
- Worry about the things of God: Truth, Light, and Life
- Move from Mind to Heart through simple, attentive prayer
- Set your heart on the kingdom and become one with God’s people
- Contemplate the Gospel
- Choose to live in a spiritual milieu

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Community

- Community is like a large mosaic. . . . When all these little stones are brought together in one big mosaic portraying the face of Christ, who would ever question the importance of any one of them.
- Living the Discipline of Community
 - Forgiveness: to allow the other not to be God
 - Celebration: accept each other's humanity with gratitude
- ***Fellowship of people who together make God visible in the world.***

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Ministry

- All disciples of Jesus are called to ministry
- If we know we are beloved and we forgive and celebrate in community, we will minister.
- Ministry happens when we trust that if we are the beloved, power will go out from us and people will be healed, whether or not we are aware of it.
- Living the Discipline of Ministry
 - *Gratitude*: embracing life's joy and suffering and avoiding resentment
 - *Compassion*: suffering with those who are in pain leads to comfort

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Henri Nouwen on Compassion & Ministry

- Compassion: *to suffer with*; central to all great world religions
- Conversion from Competition to Compassion
- “Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate.”
- We are most ourselves not when we differ from others, but when we are the same.
- ***Downward mobility and joy of solidarity***
- Compassionate life is here and now; be vulnerable, the one who suffers is like us
- Mutuality of giving and receiving
- Living with God’s heart

Cover: *Compassion*, Nouwen et al

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Wrap Up: Franciscan Spirituality & Henri Nouwen

To live the Gospel,
Following Francis,
Through daily Conversion,
In Community,
As Seculars,
United with all Franciscans
Around the world.

Source: CIOFS at <https://youtu.be/Y2eUXrAuWO4>

Henri’s Key Elements in the Spiritual Life	Recurring Themes in Henri’s Life and Work
Spiritual Truths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God-with-Us • Beloved • Eternal Life Here/Now 	Human Condition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable / Wounded • Suffering / Joy • Compassion
Spiritual Calling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live in the Present • Trust in God • Conversion 	Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Ourselves • With Others • With God
Spiritual Disciplines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solitude and Silence • Community • Ministry 	Essence of Spiritual Life <p>Love and “Living with Jesus at the center”</p>

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Conclusion: My Take on Living a Grateful Life

"...just tell everybody that I am grateful, that I'm enormously grateful."

- A grateful life is possible only if know you are **Beloved** and you **trust in God**
- To trust in God is to be grateful for his presence (at all times) in the life we are living (all of it) because God-is-with-us even when we are "in sin."
- When we know we are the beloved and we trust in God we can "do penance" and turn around in conversion.
- We must *choose* – Love, Conversion, and ***Living with Jesus at the center*** plus ***Going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel.***
- Following Jesus and observing the Gospel as a Secular Franciscan is how I aspire to live a grateful life.
- Henri Nouwen is a faithful companion on my journey.

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Visit the Henri Nouwen Society Website

<https://henrinouwen.org/>

- Subscribe to Daily Meditations
 - New meditations drawn from the anthology *You Are the Beloved*
 - Selected from a wide range of Henri's writings
- Watch *Journey of the Heart*, a one-hour video of Henri's life
 - Features an inspiring conversation with Henri
 - Includes interviews with friends, colleagues, and family members
 - Narrated by Susan Sarandon
- Other News and Future Events

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