

Below are summaries of books worth considering for faith formation reading. If you would like to prepare a book summary to add to this list, you can email Dave Rowell at [daverowell52@gmail.com](mailto:daverowell52@gmail.com).

1. *On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity and Getting Old* by Parker Palmer:  
From bestselling author, Parker Palmer, comes a brave and beautiful book for all who want to age reflectively, seeking new insights and life-giving ways to engage in the world. “*Age itself is no excuse to wade in the shallow. It’s a reason to dive deep and take creative risks.*”
2. *Vesper Time: The Spiritual Practice of Growing Older* by Frank J. Cunningham:  
From a writer, editor and publisher in his eight decade, *Vesper Time* addresses the yearning among elders for continued growth, expansiveness of heart, improvement of mind, and a meaningful understanding of their lives. As with Christianity’s age-old practice of Vespers, or evening prayer, Frank Cunningham views it is a time of life when colors deepen and our experience of aging becomes our spiritual practice. With humor and wisdom, he looks at five facets of this integral spirituality – *memory, intimacy, diminishment, gratitude, and acceptance* – offering guidance and encouragement for those who are on this stage in their journey of life.
3. *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* by Richard Rohr, O.F.M.: Drawing on Scripture, history and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God’s constant, unfolding work in the world. “God loves things by becoming them,” he writes, and Jesus’ life was meant to declare that humanity has never been separate from God - except by its own negative choice. When we recover this fundamental truth, faith becomes less about proving Jesus was God and more about learning to recognize the Creator’s presence all around us and in everyone we meet.
4. *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity* by Cynthia Bourgeault: Was Jesus’ most important disciple a woman? – A thoughtful and provocative analysis of the evidence by one of today’s most respected contemplative teachers. Cynthia Bourgeault is an Episcopal priest who leads lectures, workshops, and retreats across the US. She is the author of several other books among them: *The Wisdom Jesus* and *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*
5. *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson: This book is a powerful witness by an African American attorney reflecting his legal work primarily for individuals of color who faced discrimination in the criminal justice system. It describes his thirty-year odyssey since 1983 as an advocate for individuals facing trial, incarceration and in many cases the death penalty in jurisdictions throughout the country though primarily in the South. He started the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) flowing out of his initial internship with the Southern Prisoners Defense Committee (SPDC). The book primarily follows the case of Walter McMillian falsely charged and convicted of murder and ultimately vindicated after any years on death row in Alabama. The book interweaves many other cases touching upon other issues such as unconstitutional conditions in prisons and sentencing of juveniles and the mentally ill to the death penalty and life imprisonment without parole. He details how the institutions of slavery, post-Reconstruction terror for African Americans, Jim

Crow America, and mass incarceration have led to the challenges of racism faced by our society..

6. *The Road to Character* by David Brooks: The author, a New York Times columnist, produces a work that challenges readers to consider the changes in our “moral ecology” – a set of norms, assumptions, beliefs, and habit of behavior and a set of moral demands that arises from those norms. He contends that the “ecology” began to shift in earnest since the end of World War II from mostly “Adam II” to mostly “Adam I”.
- “Adam I” as detailed by Brooks is the “career-oriented, ambitious side of our nature” that “wants to build, create, produce and discover things. He wants to have high status and win victories”.
  - “Adam II” in contrast is the internal Adam that “wants to embody certain moral qualities”. Adam II “wants to have a serene inner character, a quiet but solid sense of right and wrong-not only to do good but to be good.”

He presents biographical essays on the individuals below who reflect the older “Adam II” moral ecology to provide meat to his argument.

- Frances Perkins (FDR Secretary of Labor, social reformer)
  - Dwight Eisenhower, General and US President
  - Dorothy Day, founder of Catholic worker
  - George Marshall, WW II general and impetus for Marshall Plan (European Recovery Plan)
  - A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, civil rights pioneers
  - George Eliot, British writer
  - Augustine, Doctor of the Church
  - Samuel Johnson and Michel Montaigne, essayists
7. *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit* by Donald Goergin: “Fire of Love invites us to recognize the power and ever-expanding presence of the Spirit in our own lives, in the life of the church, in the religious traditions of the world, in the world itself, and in God's evolving creation. The author maintains that the whole world, including the wider creation and cosmos, is the Spirit's sphere of influence." "Augustine and Aquinas, the Hebrew prophets and the Hindu Upanishads, Gandhi and Muhammad, Teilhard de Chardin and theologians of the Eastern Orthodox traditions - all enter the conversation as this book challenges us to pay greater attention to the Spirit in the mysterious workings of our lives.” Beatrice Bruteau