

The Great Spiritual Traditions:

Dominican, Franciscan, Benedictine, Vincentian, Augustinian, Ignatian, Carmelite

The Church is a mine of great spiritual traditions. Many of them are highlighted in the following pages. Some are centuries old; others have emerged out of the experience of believers of this century. Each spirituality is active and influential today. Each author was asked to write because of her or his experience of a particular spirituality. The accounts are very different. They range from personal stories to historical perspectives. Browse, read, and reflect upon the basics of your own spiritual tradition.

Augustinian

Augustinian spirituality is rooted in the life experience of St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. His life experience was restless longing, a yearning to be filled and satisfied. As we can read in his Confessions, St. Augustine saw himself as an intense, unanswered question. His way of bringing a response to this question was common journey.

Even from his youth St. Augustine reached out for friendship. When his restless longing arrived at Christian conversion, his friendship was transformed into communal Christian living. His conversion (386 A.D.) led not only to joining the journey of the Christ of the Gospels, but also to joining the common journey of the early Christians of the Acts of the Apostles.

The hallmark of Augustinian spirituality is that early Christian community described in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35. This community was made up of a “multitude of believers with one heart and one soul.” They prayed and celebrated Eucharist together. They held all their goods in common so that no one among them lacked what was needed. They held steadfast to the teaching of the apostles in witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

The Second Vatican Council proposed the example of this early Christian community as an element in the renewal of religious life and of priestly ministry. The renewal of Augustinian religious life is itself a more intense and faithful rededication to that primitive ideal within the conditions of the modern world. For that reason Augustinian religious life neither exists nor was founded for one particular apostolic task. Augustinians work in schools, parishes, home and foreign missions, hospitals-just about anywhere the Church has need for them. But in whatever work they do, they hold their goods in common. They pray and celebrate Eucharist together. Their ideal is to be people of the Church, holding steadfastly to the teaching of the apostles in witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

Augustinian formation is marked by the general pattern of Augustinian renewal. Appropriate candidates are comfortable praying and celebrating Eucharist together. Their poverty is that of a common life of sharing goods together. An Augustinian

candidate should be a person of the Church, sensitive to its changing needs in the modern world and ready to meet those needs.

Theologians often cite St. Augustine as a major source for the “life story” tradition in spirituality. Augustinian formation and renewal frequently help persons become more aware of their life story and its place in their overall religious and vocational development. Sharing these life stories frequently supports the Augustinian common journey and can be an important mark of Augustinian formation and renewal. Like St. Augustine, Augustinians see themselves as restless longing, their lives as unanswered questions. Thus they try to journey with the Christ of the Gospels by making a common journey in the modern world as did the early Christians in the Church of the Acts.

Fr. John P. Szura, OSA

Benedictine

Tomorrow we have a rite of monastic profession at the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy. In the Benedictine tradition this profession rite has all the essentials that trace this event to the sixth century. Since we pray as we believe, there is no doubt about the essentials.

Monastic way of life is living in common. Monastics follow a specific rule, for us the Rule of Benedict. Monastics work and pray:

The work is secondary to the common life;
The prayer is Divine Office and Eucharist;
Time is protected for lectio, so study and meditation are a priority for everyday.

The structures are set: Each monastery has an abbot/abbess or prioress, and chapter is the membership as a whole. A smaller Council makes lesser decisions. All this is prescribed in the “Rule of Benedict” written about 520 A.D.

Sister Maureen Therese will profess vows of stability to Our Lady of Grace Monastery, obedience and fidelity to the monastic way of life that presumes celibacy and a radical form of evangelical poverty to renounce all personal property and to depend on the monastery for everything and where everything is held in common (cenobitic). St. Benedict wrote a rule that modified the cenobitic life expressed by John Cassian who spoke of the origins of monasticism.

The cenobitic life came into being at the time of the apostolic preaching. It was all there in that crowd of believers at Jerusalem, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. “There was one heart and one mind among the crowd of believers, nor did anyone claim as his own whatever it was that he possessed, but all things were held in common among them” (Acts 2:45). “No one among them lacked anything. Owners of land and of houses sold them, brought the prices of what they had sold and laid them

at the feet of the apostles. And this was divided among individuals in accordance with need” (Acts 2:34-35).

As I say, that was how the whole Church was then, and very few like them can be found today in the monasteries. After the death of the apostles, however, the mass of believers began to burn lukewarm. This was especially true of those who had come from among foreign and different peoples to faith in Christ. Their belief was rudimentary and their pagan habits were deeply ingrained, and so the apostles demanded no more of them than that they abstain from “food sacrificed to idols, from fornication, from strangled animals, and from blood” (Acts 15:29). This freedom granted to pagans because of the weakness of their elementary belief began, little by little, to contaminate the Church of Jerusalem. Every day the numbers of Jews and outsiders grew, and the zeal of that first faith began to grow cool. Not only those who came to faith in Christ but even Church leaders relaxed the original austerity. There were even quite a few who came to believe that the concessions which they saw granted to the pagans were also allowed in their own case and they did not think there was any danger in following and confessing faith in Christ side by side with ownership of goods and wealth.

But as for those in whom there was still the zeal of the apostolic days, these remembered the old perfection and they went away from their own communities and from the company of those who believed that it was quite lawful for themselves or for the Church of God to display the neglectfulness of a more relaxed way of life. They settled in the neighborhood of cities and in more remote places and, individually and in their own way, they began to put into practice those rules which, as they remembered, had been laid down by the apostles for the whole body of the Church. And so there came into being that organized life which, as I have said, was characteristic of those disciples who had withdrawn from the contagion of the multitude.

Gradually, with the passing of time, they were cut off from the mass of believers. Because they avoided marriage and because they kept themselves away from their parents and from the life of this world they were called monks or solitaries because of this life of solitude separated from their families. As a result of this living together on their part they were called cenobites and their cells and their quarters were called monasteries.

This, then, was the only type of monk in the earliest days. They were first not only in time but in grace and they endured safely through all the years until the era of abba Paul and abba Antony. And we see traces of them still continuing in the monasteries where austerity is practiced.*

We are still doing this today. Here at Our Lady of Grace we are retrieving the classic essentials of monasticism and reappropriating it for our times.

Among religious today we are only a trace, but authentically listening to God’s call and following Christ’s teaching and example. We claim the monastic tradition. Sister

Maureen Therese will see this profession ritual repeated year after year.

Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB

*Philip Schaff and Henry Ware, Eds. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second Series. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986)

Franciscan

The city of Assisi is situated on the slope of Mount Subasio in the Umbrian Valley of Italy. There, in 1182, Francis of Assisi was born to merchant-class parents struggling for upward economic mobility during a time of great change and social unrest. Eleven years later, in 1193, Clare di Favarone was born into a family of established nobility. The noble class was threatened by the same socio-economic forces that enabled upward movement of the lower class. From these two very different backgrounds, in the midst of social upheaval, emerged two of the most influential taints in the history of Christian spirituality.

Francis and Clare of Assisi represent light bringing enlightenment into a time of darkness. Like fresh water, their spiritualities cleansed and purified a parched land. Their presence brought forth a rebirth of relationship with our God, who is not only divine but of human estate, a God who knows and understands our humanity.

The influential force which guided both Francis and Clare was the Holy Spirit, who directed them to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and ultimately to embrace his cross. Francis' spiritual journey was shaped by an encounter with the San Damiano crucifix on which stands an alive, victorious, and dynamic Christ figure. In that encounter, Francis heard the call: "Go and repair my church, which you see is falling into ruin." In response, over the course of his lifetime, Francis proceeded to rebuild the church, at first by literally repairing damaged chapels, but eventually by touching the hearts of those human beings most abandoned and untended by a selfish world. The poor held a special place in Francis' heart because, in fact, Jesus was poor at the time of his birth - he was born in a stable - and also at the time of his death when he had no place to lay his head. So fixed was Francis on this mystery of the cross that at the end of his life, carrying the stigmata in his flesh, he became transformed into another Christ.

Clare removed herself from her privileged position at the age of nineteen and, embracing a life of total poverty, claimed nothing as her own. In this action she modeled Jesus, who emptied himself, accepting death on the cross for our sake. In the enclosed monastery of San Damiano, which housed fifty of her followers, Clare assumed the role of handmaid and served her sisters in profound charity and compassion. She intuited that the reason Christ died for us was God's overwhelming love for all human beings. Like Francis, Clare's desire was to imitate Christ perfectly and mirror his compassion to the world. She chose to do this through humility, charity, and absolute poverty. Her central focus was the crucified Christ. So intense was her

relationship with Jesus that some suggest Clare experienced a stigmata of the heart. The twentieth century is not unlike the twelfth century. Our world is filled with social upheaval, economic injustice, and a disintegration of values essential to human dignity. To be a Franciscan today demands that, like Francis and Clare, one be willing to leave behind all that would hinder one in embracing the cross of Jesus. In this unencumbered state, one is then free to enter into loving relationship with all creatures who are part of our world, part of our lives. The ultimate challenge is to focus once again on that cross, to hear and respond to the call: "Go and rebuild my church, which you see is falling into ruin." Those who accept this challenge are ultimately called to bring the light of love, the water of purification, and a rebirth of new life into a world in desperate need of rebuilding.

Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

Dominican

As our name reveals, we Dominicans are called to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus in our world today. Dominic's genius in founding the Order of Preachers was to synthesize both the active and contemplative life into a new form of religious life in the Church of his day. He sought to establish a group of preachers whose way of life would closely resemble that of the apostles as described in the Scriptures. "The Preaching" at the heart of Dominic's vision would flow from the abundance of each preacher's communion with God and with one another.

In service of this mission, the "apostolic life" that Dominic established, and which we seek to live, is four-pronged: prayer that is both liturgical and personal, common life, the preaching, and study. This apostolic life is a preaching in and of itself: out of the abundance of a rich inner life of prayer, study, and communion with God and one another, we preach that Jesus is Savior and Risen Lord.

Holding the four elements of this apostolic life in balance is the life-long task of the Dominican. Applicants to the Dominicans thus need to display a commitment to a life that is both contemplative and apostolic. Their actions and involvements demonstrate a love for Jesus and a desire to make his saving Gospel of compassion and mercy known to others. They are both God-centered and other-centered, able to communicate effectively with others, not simply by speech alone, but also by who they are. They are attracted by the Gospel witness of a life together which was central to Dominic's vision. They can be happy and thrive in the context of a vowed community life.

Those seeking admittance to the Dominicans thus have both a desire and willingness to enter into the depths of contemplative prayer and a capacity for generous service to God's people. They are lovers of study, appreciating and pursuing the truth which informs their preaching. Their own lives increasingly witness to the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit who anoints their preaching and gives it power.

Behavioral assessment seems to me to be the best approach for determining whether applicants have the potential to be truly happy and entirely themselves in living this Dominican way of life. Our task, then, is prayerfully to discern with applicants whether or not the gifts and dispositions given them by the Holy Spirit correspond to the mission and charism of the Order as a whole, and to the unique character of the congregation or province to which the applicant seeks admittance.

Sr. Patricia A. Twohill, OP

Carmelite

The Carmelite Order is an ancient order, going back at least to the 1200s. It began with hermits who lived on Mount Carmel near the fount of the prophet Elijah. These hermits built a church there in honor of Our Lady and became known as the “Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.” St. Albert, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, outlined for them a pattern of life which became known as the Rule of St. Albert. Some of the main features of this rule are the service of Jesus Christ, prayer and meditation on the Scriptures in silence and solitude, daily celebration of the sacred liturgy, obedience to a superior, fraternal gatherings, and a generous commitment to work after the example of Paul the Apostle.

When these hermits came to Europe, they were obliged to become mendicant friars, in the style of the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. They nonetheless always preserved something of the spirit of the first hermits through a devotion to prayer, solitude, and the reading of the Scriptures.

In the 1400s, Blessed John Soreth established monasteries of the Carmelite Order for women and also the third order for the laity, known today as the Secular Carmelites.

In 1535, St. Teresa entered a monastery of Carmelite nuns in Avila, Spain. After a long struggle with the daily practice of mental prayer, she began to receive mystical graces from the Lord. These led her to undertake the renewal of Carmel. As she entered into a deeper experience of the life of the Church, its trials and sufferings, she stressed more and more the apostolic spirit of the contemplative life. The exclusively contemplative life of her small communities of nuns was to be dedicated to the service of the Church.

Finally, St. Teresa decided to include in her project a group of friars who would share in the kind of life lived by her nuns. Her aim was both to provide spiritual directors for her nuns through the assistance of brothers having the same spirit, and to render the Church a manifold service of apostolic activities. Among these activities, the promotion of a deeper spiritual life amid the faithful has always been given special attention by Teresa’s friars. They do this through publications, preached retreats, seminars, spiritual direction, and other works.

These friars and nuns became known as the Order of Discalced Carmelites. They consider St. Teresa to be their foundress and draw their special character and purpose from her. They share with the Ancient Order of Carmelites the same rule and the same devotion to our Lady of Mount Carmel. Besides these two orders, other congregations of Carmelites have been founded. They engage in diverse ministries, for example, education, care for the elderly, and hospital work. All Carmelites share a love for both the ancient tradition and the spirit of the Carmelite saints.

St. John of the Cross was the first friar recruited by St. Teresa and, like her, wrote classic works of spirituality. The mystical writings of these two saints are still popular and widely read and studied. Others well known Carmelite saints are St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Therese of Lisieux, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, Blessed Titus Brandsma, and Blessed Edith Stein.

Those considering a Carmelite vocation today should be interested in cultivating a deep friendship with Christ through a life of prayer and reflection on the Scriptures. They must be willing to live in Christian brotherhood or sisterhood, in the presence of Mary. Their ministry will have close links with their contemplation. Carmelites look for candidates who feel attracted by Carmel's ancient traditions and the spirit of its saints, yet who will also be ready to adapt their ministry and prayer to accord with the needs of our times.

Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD

Vincentian

Vincent de Paul was born in Pouy in southern France in 1581 and died in Paris on September 27, 1660. In those nearly 80 years, many people and events shaped his life: St. Francis de Sales and Cardinal de Berulle directed him at seminal times. He founded the Congregation of the Mission (1625), an apostolic community of men who vowed their lives to preach the good news to the poor. The Daughters of Charity were begun in 1633 to serve the poor.

Throughout France Vincent established parish-based and lay directed confraternities of charity to assist the poor. Women of great families and the royalty of France committed themselves to his foundation of the Ladies of Charity to care for and support the orphans of Paris. Through his organization of seminaries, and through conferences and gatherings for priests, Vincent was intimately involved in the reform of the clergy in this post-Tridentine era of the Church. Although he was a man of tremendous organizational skills, Vincent relied on and was directed by his belief in the Providence of God. His personal spiritual journey was grounded in the Gospels.

The Gospel image of Jesus, evangelizer of the poor, was the source and framework of Vincent de Paul's spirituality. The missionary Jesus, proclaiming the good news to the poor and gathering others to follow and do likewise, was the compelling vision that

inspired Vincent de Paul. Evangelization, Vincent believed, was accomplished by word and action. The word of Jesus in the fourth chapter of Luke, “The spirit of the Lord has sent me to preach the good news to the poor,” spoke to Vincent of the mission that he was called to undertake. It was a mission that became perfected in action: “I was ill and you came to help me, in prison and you visited me...” (Matt. 25:15-31).

The work of St. Vincent is carried out today by his sons and daughters scattered throughout the world. Four thousand priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission continue to dedicate their lives to a variety of works of evangelization. Thirty thousand Daughters of Charity are serving the sick, the poor, and the abandoned throughout the world. The Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul across the globe gather together men and women who continue to incarnate Vincent’s dream of evangelization through word and action.

St. Vincent de Paul believed that the vocation of the priests and brothers of the Congregation was to continue the mission of Christ, but he felt that this could be accomplished only by integrating into their own lives the missionary attitude and the virtues which Christ himself had emphasized and proposed to his disciples. St. Vincent calls simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification, and zeal the faculties of the soul of the Congregation of the Mission because they are the spirit of the mission.

For someone who is interested in the Vincentian vocation today, the Congregation of the Mission looks for a man of achievement who has accomplished something in his life and is grounded in faith and prayer and possesses a concern for the poor.

Fr. Barry Moriarty, CM

Ignatian

The Touchstone: Ignatian spirituality focuses on two gifts: the ability to discover God in all areas of life and the willingness to serve God’s priorities as Jesus did. These are gifts because they come freely from God but they are gifts God wants to give. For Ignatius Loyola and his followers to discover God and to serve God as Jesus did is a single reality; it is to be in contemplative service. Finally, the dynamism behind such contemplative service is love, dramatized uniquely in the life of Jesus.

To love God and neighbor as Jesus did is to ask to be in his company, to be in his society. This is why the Jesuit order founded by Ignatius Loyola is called the Society of Jesus.

In the little handbook, the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius Loyola laid out a practical method for all women and men of Christian faith to learn how to love as Jesus did in contemplative service. The Exercises focus on the following of Christ as the compassionate action of God, on making people disciples. To live such discipleship demands an on-going sifting of motivations and influences, the ability to distinguish, in

a world of conflicting values, those which really lead to life, to peace, to solidarity, from those which lead to death, to unrest, to isolation and enmity. This ability to distinguish influences within and outside oneself is called discernment. This constitutes Ignatian spirituality: to be in Christian discipleship within one's contemporary world and in this way to build up the community of faith, the Church.

Jesuit life is fed by the Exercises. As apostolic religious, Jesuits see mission, the energetic pursuit of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus, as the embodiment of their spirituality. Through the centuries this vision has inspired creative service throughout the world: in schools, in parishes, in retreat houses, in social centers. No work and no place is alien to Jesuits. Their charism is to move where needed, to risk all to make the Kingdom a reality now. Such, then, is a thumbnail sketch of the Ignatian spirituality which informs Jesuit life and work.

Formation for Jesuits. Throughout their history Jesuits have been clear about what they expect in a candidate. He has to be capable of being a man on mission in the likeness of Christ. The apostolic orientation permeates Jesuit formation. Obviously, there are prerequisites for the apostolic personality: a religious experience of being both called and called to serve in contemplative action. Allied to a genuine call is the willingness to respond to that call with generosity, good judgment, and perseverance. In the Constitutions of the Jesuits, the charter of their identity, Ignatius Loyola spelled out a long testing process to insure both the candidate and the order that they are of one mind and heart - to be on mission for the Kingdom preached by Christ. Today Jesuits have specified that mission as a faith that does justice.

To be called to the contemporary Society of Jesus is to be committed to confronting disbelief and injustice, especially as these are structured in social realities which dehumanize the human family. That contemporary mission can be fulfilled in many ways: in teaching, in pastoral ministry, in writing and research, in administration, in direct service to the poor and refugees. But it has to be there as a lived energy, a prophetic concern to bring peace, to labor for justice, to move only out of love.

The Church and world today ask still more of a Jesuit candidate. He has to be a person who can work with others. Our times call for apostolic collaboration or collegiality. Problems are too complex and too pervasive to surrender to any one solution. The forces of evil are subtle and strong. There has to be a companionship in the struggle against all that would extinguish human hope, cripple faith, and belittle love. The Jesuit today must be on mission with all others of good will.

He must be a person of profoundly social contemplative service.

Fr. Howard J. Gray, SJ

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