

Introduction to Christian Mystics

Presented by Kristina Frank
March 5, 2025

Part of the Teach Us to Prayer Series at
Precious Blood Renewal Center
<https://www.pbrenewalcenter.org/>

— Slide 1 —

Mysticism

No book on mysticism can offer any kind of definitive statement about the subject.

Among the many things we can say about mysticism is that it implies a **spirituality** that is **embodied, visceral, experiential** ...

... **a here and now spirituality even as it calls us into the splendor of eternity.**

Put more simply, mysticism encompasses the adventure of spiritual living. (Carl McColman)

— Slide 2 —

Christian Mysticism

When we talk about Christian mysticism, we talk about that **adventure (of spiritual living) as it is embodied in the wisdom teachings of Jesus** ...

... **teachings that have been amplified and illuminated by further insights from Jesus's many followers through the ages**, from the writers of the New Testament down through mystical and contemplative writers of every century since. (Carl McColman)

— Slide 3 —

St. John of the Cross

The Father spoke one word from all eternity and he spoke it in silence, and it is in silence that we hear it.

Thomas Keating

This suggests that silence is God's first language and that all other language are poor translations. Our practices are ways of refining our receptive apparatus so that we can perceive the Word of God communicating itself with ever greater simplicity to our spirit and to our inmost being.

— Slide 4 —

Brother Lawrence

We should establish ourselves in a sense of God's Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation, to think of trifles and fooleries.

Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it.

— Slide 5 —

Meister Eckhart

There exists only the present instant... a Now which always and without end is itself new. There is no yesterday nor any tomorrow, but only Now, as it was a thousand years ago and as it will be a thousand years hence.

We are celebrating the feast of the Eternal Birth which God the Father has borne and never ceases to bear in all eternity... But if it takes not place in me, what avails it? Everything lies in this, that it should take place in me.

You may call God love, you may call God goodness. But the best name for God is compassion.

— Slide 6 —

Twenty Essential Mystical Prayer Practices (Carl McColman)

- Lectio Divina
- The Daily Office
- Participation in the sacraments
- Disciplines of renunciation
- Generosity and giving
- The gift of tears (being open to sorrow and suffering)
- The rosary
- The Jesus Prayer
- Conversational prayer
- Mental (mind-in-heart) prayer
- Imaginative prayer
- Ora et labora
- Whatsoever you do to the least of these (down to earth expression of love, given away to our human neighbors)
- Practicing mercy and forgiveness
- Keeping a spiritual journal
- Silence as prayer
- Acquired contemplation (term referring to practices in which we seek, aided by God, to foster contemplation in our hearts, like intentional silence, heart-centered adoration, serving others, Centering Prayer)
- Infused contemplation (takes us beyond the frontier where our human capacity for control falls away)
- Making a retreat
- Spiritual direction

A Few Resources

- *The New Big Book of Christian Mysticism* by Carl McColman
- Turning to the Mystics - podcast by James Finley, Center for Action and Contemplation
<https://cac.org/podcast/turning-to-the-mystics/>
- Spiritual Direction (and training to be a spiritual director)- Sophia Center, Atchison KS
<https://www.mountosb.org/sophia-spirituality-center/spiritual-direction/>
- *Intimacy with God* by Thomas Keating
- Centering Prayer groups — Contemplative Outreach of Kansas City
<https://contemplativeoutreachkc.org/groups/>