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Franciscan School of Theology, GTU  
Fall, 2001

## HSSP 2460:Lay Spiritual Practices

This class will explore a range of spiritual activities used by lay Christians and will look at the historical origins and early developments of them. Pilgrimage, prayer, contemplation, storytelling, fasting, feasting, sexuality and celibacy, festivals and processions are among the practices we will explore together. The historical and cultural background of these practices brings out new aspects of even the most common of these practices. For example, the act of reading psalms and prayers will be discussed in its medieval mode as a form of body prayer. Through discussion of some primary texts and a range of secondary texts, participants will explore ways to adopt and adapt spiritual practices for the 21st century.

Student evaluation will be based on individual projects, oral discussions and presentations, and reflection papers.

All participants will be asked to actively participate in a wide range of spiritual practices in and out of class. While this class explores the historical background to spiritual practices, it also introduces participants to a range of devotional and religious practices that must be experienced in order to be appreciated and fully understood.

In addition to regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and spiritual practices, students will prepare a project, either written or oral, in which they explore or develop in greater depth a spiritual practice of special interest. This project may be historical research; theological or sociological analysis of a present practice; or creative exploration. All projects must be approved by the instructor.

### Required Reading:

Chittister, Joan. The Rule of St. Benedict. Insights for the Ages (New York, Crossroad, 1992, 1997)  
Jakolski, Helmut. The Labyrinth. Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation (Boston, 1997)  
Johnston, William, ed. The Cloud of Unknowing (New York, 1993)  
Manss, Virginia and Mary Frohlich. The Lay Contemplative. (Cincinnati, 2000)  
Michael, Chester and Marie Norrisey. Prayer and Temperament (Charlottesville, 1991)  
Vauchez, Andre. The Laity in the Middle Ages. Religious Belief and Devotional Practices, ed. D. Bornstein. (Notre Dame, 1993)

### Recommended:

Pierce, Gregory. Spirituality@Work 10 Ways to Balance your Life on-the Job (Chicago, 2001)

Additional required and recommended readings will be distributed on a weekly basis; some of them will be placed on reserve at the GTU Library.

### Weekly Schedule:

Sept. 6: What does it mean to be “the laity” or “a layperson”? What is Spirituality?

Background to development of monasticism

Reading: Vauchez, *Laity in the Middle Ages*, ch. 3 “The Laity in the Feudal Church”; Chapter 7 “Lay Belief around 1200”

Sept. 13: Benedictine Monasticism meets U.S. pop spirituality: Thomas Merton, Kathleen Norris, and Joan Chittister

The Historical Novelty of Benedictine Monasticism

Its relevance for today? The appeal of Benedictine Monasticism and the continued decline in monastic vocations.

Write a two-page reflection paper: Do you think Benedictine Monasticism is an appropriate or adequate devotional system for laity in the 21st century? [make sure you specify which populations of the laity you are focussing on.]

Reading: Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict. Insights for the Ages*

Recommended: Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk*

Thomas Merton, *Seven Story Mountain*; *The Monastic Journey*; *Contemplation in a World of Action*.

Sept. 20: The Labyrinth: A Medieval Symbol of Redemption; A Modern Symbol of Pilgrimage

Reading: Jakolski, *Labyrinth. Symbol of Fear, Rebirth, and Liberation*, Introduction and chapters 1-9, esp.

Sept. 27: Pilgrimage and the Rise of the Cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Spiritual Road-trip

Oct. 4: Feast of Saint Francis—FST Holiday

During this week each participant will take a pilgrimage to the site of their choosing. Write a reflection paper on your experiences of preparation and conducting your trip.

Oct. 11: Devotion of Holy People; Feasts; Processions

Devotion of People vs. official canonization

Reading: Vauchez, chapter 5, “A 12th Century Novelty: The Lay Saints of Urban Italy”; ch 13 “Patronage of Saints and Civic Religion”; ch. 14 “Female Sanctity in the Franciscan Movement”

Oct. 18: Family Life and Holy Life: Sexuality and Religious Devotion

Reading: Vauchez, ch. 6, “Two Laypersons in Search of Perfection”; ch. 15 “Conjugal Chastity”; ch. 16 “Virginal Marriage of Elzear and Delphine”

Oct. 25 No Class; Reading Week

Students are strongly encouraged to attend the 6th Annual Day of the Dead Festival in Oakland on Oct. 27 (Fruitvale District)

Nov. 1: All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day: Story-Telling as a Spiritually Significant Act and Practice; Lay Preaching (embodiment of the Word)

Class Lecture will focus on the range of licit lay preaching in Medieval Europe with special attention given to the case of Rose of Viterbo and the role of story- telling in her canonization.

Each student will be asked to tell a story of a relative or a saint who has special personal relevance.

Reading on Reserve: Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solentiname

Nov. 8: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: The Rosary; Stations of the Cross; and Reading the Psalter  
On Reserve:

Anne Winston-Allen, Stories of the Rose. The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages (1997)

Two-page Reflection paper: Discuss ways in which all the body's senses may be incorporated more in your daily prayer practices. If you are uncomfortable discussing your own prayer practices, write about an abstract person.

Nov. 15: The Lay Contemplative and Mystic

Reading: The Cloud of Unknowing

Recommended Reading: Vauchez, Part IV (Chapters 18-22)

Nov. 22: No Class on Thursday, Thanksgiving

Nov. 29 The Lay Contemplative Today: Is it Possible?

Reading: The Lay Contemplative

Suggested Reading: Spirituality @Work

Dec. 6: Life in Community: From Medieval Beguines to Small Christian Communities

Dec. 13: Personality and Prayer: Individual Responses to the Divine

There is no Final Exam in this class. Instead, we will hold class during Exam Week, on Thursday,  
Dec. 13

Reading: Prayer and Temperament