

# STUDY MATERIALS: The Spiritual Life

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## Contents

1. [Lesson 1](#)
2. [Lesson 2](#)
3. [Lesson 3](#)
4. [Lesson 4](#)
5. [Lesson 5](#)
6. [Lesson 6](#)
7. [Lesson 7](#)
8. [Lesson 8](#)
9. [Lesson 9](#)
10. [Lesson 10](#)
11. [Lesson 11](#)
12. [Lesson 12](#)

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## Lesson 1

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter One: "Nature and Scope of Spiritual Theology," Chapter 5: "Perfection of the Christian Life," and Chapter 6: "Christian Perfection and Mystical Experience."

## Possible Writing Assignments

1. What are the distinctive traits of Christian spirituality that differentiate it from other forms of spirituality?
2. Within Christianity, many particular schools of spirituality have developed. Identify some of the characteristic features of the forms of spirituality associated with St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Francis de Sales.

## Suggested Readings

1. Large portions of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church are quite helpful in regard to the theology of the spiritual life, especially: #1066-1690 on the nature of the liturgy and on the sacraments as aids to our spiritual life and #2588-2865 on the nature of Christian prayer.

2. Some fine works on the subject include the following:

\* Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* (St. Louis: Herder, 1945) and *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* (St. Louis: Herder, 1947)

\* Joseph de Guibert, S.J., *The Theology of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953)

\* Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday 10 Visitor, 1980)

3. Among the classic works of spirituality that one may want to contemplate are the following. Some of them are available in many modern editions.

\* Cassian, *The Institute*, translated and annotated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (New York: The Newman Press, 2000). *Ancient Christian Writers Series* vol. 58.

\* Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (available in various editions)

\* Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises* (available in various editions)

\* Alphonso Rodriguez, S.J. *The Practice of Christian Perfection*

\* Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, translated and edited by E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio (New York: Doubleday, 1964)

\* John of the Cross, *The Collected Works*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979)

\* Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life and A Treatise on the Love of God*

\* Vincent de Paul, *Conferences*, translated by Joseph Leonard (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1952)

\* Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, translated by John Beevers (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1975)

\* Jean-Baptiste Chautard, *The Soul of the Apostolate* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1961)

\* Scupoli, Dom Lorenzo. *The Spiritual Combat and a Treatise on Peace of Soul* (1589), translated by William Lester and Robert Mohan (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Bookshop, 1945)

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## Lesson 2

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter Two: "The Goal of Our Striving."

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. What is meant by *the glory of God* when said about the Holy Trinity? What is meant by *the glory of God* when the term is used with reference to the goal of the spiritual life?
2. Define the terms *salvation* and *sanctification* in such a way as to bring out both some of the distinctions between them and their relation to one another as goals of the spiritual life.

### Suggested Readings

Paul M. Quay, S.J., *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), Chapter Three: "The Inner Structure of Uncreated Love."

## Lesson 3

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitors, 1980), Chapter Three: "Our Life in Christ and Mary."

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. The Church teaches that Christ is truly human and truly divine. Comment on the significance of each of the aspects of the mystery of Christ with regard to our sanctification and our salvation.
2. Discuss the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) as a portrait of Christ and of the good Christian.

### Suggested Readings

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #422-682 on the nature of Christ.

Adam, Karl. *The Son of God* (1934), translated by Philip Hereford (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1960).

Adam, Karl, *The Christ of Faith: The Christology of the Church* (1954), translated by Joyce Crick (New York: Omega Books, 1962).

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## Lesson 4

### Reading Assignments

M. Quay, S.J., *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), Chapter 8: "Fulfillment and Recapitulation," Chapter 12: "Jesus' Recapitulation," and Chapter 16: "The Lord."

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. What is the significance for spiritual theology of the ordering of the two Great Commandments? What distortion would be introduced by reversing them?

2. Read and comment on the comparison between Adam and Christ as the new Adam in Romans 5:12-21 in light of the doctrine of recapitulation.

### **Suggested Readings**

1. M. Quay, S.J., *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), Chapters 9-11 and 13-15 on the various parts of the history of Israel that Christ is recapitulating and Chapter 17-20 on the Church as the New Israel and the need for the Church and the individual Christian to recapitulate the life of Christ.

2. Romano Guardini, S.J., *The Lord*, translated by Elinor Castendyk Briefs (Chicago: Regnery, 1954).

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## **Lesson 5**

### **Reading Assignments**

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter 4: "The Supernatural Organism."

### **Possible Writing Assignments**

1. Explain the meaning of Aquinas's assertion that grace does not destroy but perfects nature.
2. Give a brief account of faith, hope, and charity as *theological virtues* and as *graces* by which we are given to share something of the life of God.

### **Suggested Readings**

Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, cantos 24-26 on Dante's discussion of faith, hope, and charity with Saints Peter, James, and John.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1812-1845 on faith, hope, and charity; and #1996-2029 on grace in general, merit, and holiness.

Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, translated by Sr. Mary Noble (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995). The opening portion of this book gives a very insightful account of the relation between moral theology and spiritual theology. Using St. Augustine's treatise on the Sermon on the Mount, Pinckaers traces the links between the commandments, the beatitudes, God's graces, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## Lesson 6

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter Seven: "Conversion from Sin."

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. What is the general nature of sin? In what way is every sin (even those against our neighbor) an offense against God?
2. What are original sin's main effects on us? How do they tend to incline us toward actual sin?

### Suggested Readings:

St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, #45-90 (the "First Week" that is given toward consideration of sin and the mercy of God).

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

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## Lesson 7

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter 8: "Progressive Purification."

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. Two errors that easily arise in regard to the purification of the soul are the views that natural human strength is enough and that natural human strength can do nothing. Why are these errors and how can one counteract them?
2. Discuss the interplay between intellect and will in coming to feel the attraction of an apparent good, in deliberating about the matter, and in coming to a decision. Then identify some typical cases in which there is need for the spiritual purification of intellect and will.

## Suggested Readings

St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*

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## Lesson 8

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter Nine: "Means of Spiritual Growth."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1066-1209 on the liturgy and the sacraments in general, and #1210-1321 on the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

### Writing Assignments

1. What is required in the person receiving a sacrament for grace to be communicated and for the sacrament to be most effective?
2. In what respects do the sacraments of baptism and confirmation initiate and perfect a person in the divine life through sanctifying grace?

### Suggested Readings

Thomas Aquinas, "Treatise on the Sacraments," *Summa theologiae* IIIa, qq. 60-65, translated with notes and introduction by David Bourke (London: Blackfriars, 1975).

Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Rediscovering Baptism* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1998).

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## Lesson 9

## Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter Nine: "Means of Spiritual Growth."

## Possible Writing Assignments:

1. What importance does sacramental confession (even in the absence of mortal sin) have for the spiritual life? What is so important about explicitly admitting one's sins and weaknesses?
2. What role does the Eucharist have in the spiritual life? It may be helpful to discuss some of the prevalent misunderstandings of this sacrament in order to bring out what is essential about this sacrament for the spiritual life of Christians.

## Suggested Readings

On Penance and Reconciliation:

- John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance* (1984)

On the Anointing of the Sick and the Spirituality of Suffering:

- John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering (1984)

On Marriage:

- Letter to the Ephesians, especially chapter 5 on the likeness of Christ and His Church to husband and wife.
- Kippley, *Sex and the Marriage Covenant* (Cincinnati: Couple to Couple League International, 1991)

On Holy Orders:

- Dulles, S.J. *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), especially Chapter 5: "The Priest as Disciple."
- Another fine recent work on this subject is *Quickening the Fire in our Midst: The Challenge of Diocesan Priestly Spirituality* by George A. Aschenbrenner (Chicago: Jesuit Way, 2002).
- An older but very valuable work is *Christ the Ideal of the Priest* by Abbot Marmion, O.S.B., translated by Dom Matthew Dillon (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1952).



## Lesson 10

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter Ten: “The Theological Virtues” and Chapter Eleven: “The Moral Virtues.”

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. Why is charity called the “form” of the all other virtues?
2. What is the general relation between the Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

### Suggested Readings

1. Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965)
2. Romanus Cessario, O.P. *The Virtues, or the Examined Life* (New York: Continuum, 2002)
3. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

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## Lesson 11

### Reading Assignments:

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter 12: “Grades of Prayer.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2558-2758 (on prayer in general).

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. What is the difference between *meditation* and *contemplation* as an approach to mental prayer?
2. How are each of the four main types of prayer found in the Mass?

## Suggested Readings

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* # 2759-2865 (analysis of the Lord's Prayer).

Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., *Progress through Mental Prayer* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935).

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## Lesson 12

### Reading Assignments

Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), Chapter 13: "Aids to Spiritual Growth" and Chapter 14: "Discernment of Spirits."

St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, tr. Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), #24-43 on the examination of conscience and #313-336 on the rules for the discernment of spirits.

### Possible Writing Assignments

1. What aspects of spiritual direction could one reasonably expect to receive from having a regular confessor and what sort of things would presumably require some more formal arrangement for spiritual direction outside the confessional?
2. What is meant by spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation? How are these like and how do they differ from merely natural feelings of encouragement and discouragement?

### Suggested Readings

Thomas H. Green, S.J., *Weeds among the Wheat: Discernment* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1983).

Jean Laplace, S.J., *The Direction of Conscience*, translated by John C. Guinness (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

Joseph de Guibert, S.J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice, A Historical Study*, translated by William J. Young, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources and Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964).