

The Study Fellowship 2007 - 2008

A Roman Catholic/Orthodox Christian Fellowship

(Meeting 7:30 - 9PM on the 4th Tuesday of the month)

September 25th - a potluck celebration at St. John Neumann (6:30PM)

The Orthodox Way by Bishop Kallistos Ware

The theological foundations of Christian life and prayer are laid out clearly in this classic introduction which Bishop Ware believes could have had the title: what an Orthodox Christian lives by. In this book, he defines "loyalty to Tradition" as "not primarily the acceptance of formulas or customs from past generations, but rather the ever-new, personal and direct experience of the Holy Spirit *in the present*, here and now."

October 23rd

God is Love by Pope Benedict XVI

Everyone desires love. Everyone needs love. But not everyone understands what love is. In fact, love is probably one of the most misunderstood words in society today. In this, the first encyclical of his papacy, Pope Benedict seeks to clarify the Christian understanding and practice of love, examining human and Divine love, *eros*, friendship and charity. He examines the link between charity and justice and writes beautifully of how we as human beings were made for love by the God Who is Love.

November 27th

Gifts of the Desert by Kyriakos C. Markides

What is the Church? In this book, Markides continues his spiritual quest under the tutelage of his spiritual father, Bishop Maximos, who tells him that the ancient Fathers of the Church would have placed the study of theology in the medical school of a university and not in the humanities department. "The *Ecclesia* must be properly seen as being a part of medicine; in reality, a spiritual hospital." Spiritually sick, perhaps already

dead, it is in the Church that one can find the spiritual medicine necessary for the healing and integration of our minds and hearts.

No meeting in December for the Christmas/New Year holidays!

January 22nd

My Life with the Saints by James Martin, SJ

Martin is a former GE executive turned Jesuit priest who relates how he discovered the lives and witness of a variety of holy men and women both ancient and modern and how the example of each one has influenced the direction of his own life. Here we see the theology of the communion of saints in action, not merely as a dry and abstract concept, but rather how the saints may serve as role models of faithful Christian living for us today.

February 26th

Short Trip to the Edge: A Pilgrimage by Scott Cairns

Mr. Cairns is a professor of contemporary American literature at the University of Missouri and a relatively recent convert to Orthodoxy from a Baptist background. This book chronicles his trips to Mt. Athos in search of a spiritual father and a deeper, more intense life of prayer. It is an honest, intensely personal look at the monastic life as lived on Athos that reveals the ultimate purpose of such pilgrimage: to come home to ourselves and the God in whom we live, move and have our being.

March 25th

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas of Kempis (1380 - 1471)

Written more than half a millennium ago, this book is a beloved classic of Western Christian spirituality and one of the most widely read books in western European history after the Bible itself. Its author spent most of his life in a Dutch monastery, but had a broad knowledge of the Scriptures as well as classical philosophy and was a profound student of

human nature. He was completely convinced of our complete dependence on God's love and the necessity of conforming ourselves to Christ, without whom our lives would be empty and futile. "O God," he prays, "make me one with You in endless love!"

April 29th

The Way of a Pilgrim written anonymously and translated by R. M. French

This is a deeply spiritual but immensely practical classic of Christian literature written anonymously in 19th century Russia. It communicates the profound insights of the *Philokalia*, a five volume collection of the writings of the saints on prayer and life in the Spirit, in a straightforward narrative that tells the story of a pilgrim wandering the Russian steppes in search of prayerful communion with the living God while engaged in a quest to understand and obey the Scriptural command to pray without ceasing.

May 27th - a potluck celebration at St. John Neumann (6:30PM)

The Only Necessary Thing by Henri J.M. Nouwen and compiled by Wendy Greer

The internationally renowned priest and author, respected professor and beloved pastor Henri Nouwen wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life. Since his death in 1996, ever-increasing numbers of readers, writers, teachers and seekers have been guided by his books, which have sold over 2 million copies and been published in over 22 languages. In this anthology, Mrs. Greer draws upon Nouwen's teaching on prayer and the spiritual life from a variety of sources and gathers them together under various headings such as unceasing prayer, solitude, forgiveness, listening, community, death, intercession, etc.

(We will see a film this evening entitled *Journey of the Heart: the Life of Henri Nouwen*)