

**Additional Writings
of
Ernest E. Larkin, O. Carm.**

Books

Study of the Ecstasies of *The Forty Days of Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, A*, Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm. (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Angelicum, 1954)

In his doctoral dissertation, Father Larkin studied the ecstatic experiences of St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, a Carmelite mystic who lived in Florence in the sixteenth century. These experiences occurred in a forty-day period following her religious profession, and the accounts of these ecstasies are in the book, *I Quaranti Giorni*. This work is excerpts from his dissertation which is a comparative analysis and evaluation of Mary Magdalen's ecstasies in the light of contemporary psychological and theological principles. The author concludes that the saint exemplifies classical ecstasy and infused contemplation with her own "distinctive and exceptional features."

Spiritual Renewal of the American Priesthood, Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm., Gerard T. Broccolo, eds., (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1973)

Working with a group of eight other priests selected by the American bishops, Father Larkin co-edited and wrote the final draft of this document. The book of 70 pages became an authoritative guideline for priests in every diocese throughout the country. In his introductory chapter, Larkin lists the three themes interwoven throughout the text: 1) Christian spirituality as the living out of the Paschal Mystery in the concrete experiences of our lives and times; 2) a renewed understanding of the meaning of contemplation and action; and, 3) the significance of discernment in our daily lives. The succeeding chapters explore "the spirituality of the contemporary American priest" in his ministry, in his personal relationships, and in his prayer life.

Silent Presence: Discernment as a Process and a Problem, Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm. (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1981)

Father Larkin discusses the process and problem of discernment in the normal development of the spiritual life. The author's thesis is contemplation and discernment go together: the contemporary Christian must seek the same God "outside" in his human activities as he does "within" himself in silent prayer. Quoting the classical method of St. Ignatius of Loyola as well as present-day writers, the author defines discernment as "experiencing what is the will of God" and then acting on that understanding. He examines the process and the various models of discernment, and concludes that discernment is always difficult and leaves us in the "obscurity of faith". In the process we strive for that spiritual maturity which "enables us to be aware of the *Silent Presence* deep within

oneself.” (Revised by the author and reprinted by Dimension Books with an added Epilogue in 2000.)

Christ Within Us, Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm. (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1984)

Written over a period of ten years, this book of essays is based on monthly columns the author wrote for *Alive*, the Phoenix diocesan theological/literary magazine. In the “Introduction”, Fr. Larkin calls the collection “a record of my personal spiritual journey” documenting his own “faith seeking understanding”. He searches the “contemporary experience of Christ, Church and self” seeking the presence of God in human life and the impact of the Christ-event on “subjective and social consciousness.” These “three-minute” essays explore such diverse topics as healing, peace and justice, world hunger, the Charismatic Renewal, Mary, Scripture, wholeness and holiness, and include several meditations on prayer.

Contemplative Prayer for Today: Christian Meditation, Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm. (Singapore: Medio Media, 2007)

Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm., recorded his lifelong pursuit of contemplative prayer in his book, **Contemplative Prayer for Today: Christian Meditation**. The book, published posthumously, is a representative selection of the last of his many papers on prayer. In it he reflects on his personal journey to the center of his “true self” to find God.

Contemplative prayer has long been the bailiwick of the Carmelite Order, and Larkin, a Carmelite priest of 60+ years, traces its beginnings to the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Their practices of prayer were detailed in the writing of John Cassian (c.360-c.430), and *The Book of the First Monks*. When historical circumstances dictated that hermetical life in the desert was no longer viable, they lived in communities, and eventually adopted the “Rule of St. Albert” (c.1247). The “Rule” prescribed practices of contemplative prayer to enable that inner silence which is “emptiness and openness before God.” For the great 16th century Carmelite masters of contemplative prayer, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, this “purity of heart” was necessary to receive “the gift of the loving knowledge of God.” The heart being empty of all distractions might then be filled with God.

The author recounts his own experience with this contemporary method of prayer espoused by John Main, an Irish Benedictine. Main proposed the discipline of mantric prayer in the 1970's, which, he said, made contemplative prayer accessible to all — those busy with the daily distractions of earning a living, raising a family or cloistered religious. Larkin argues that this form of prayer, Christian Meditation, is fully consonant with the Carmelite tradition. In another chapter, he journals his personal experience of an “intensive practice” during his five-week stay at the Camaldolese Hermitage at Big Sur, CA. He notes this prayer form takes “practice, discipline and grace” in order to maintain that “self-less attraction” to God.

In the penultimate chapter of his book, Fr. Larkin presents a brief but compelling case for “aspiratory prayer” as it was known by writers in the French mystical tradition of the 17th century, and favored by the blind Carmelite musician and mystic, John of St. Samson (d.1636). This “intensely human,” sensible-spiritual prayer deeply involves the emotions as God strongly draws our love by his attractiveness. In his last chapter, “Christian Mindfulness,” Larkin again emphasizes the need for continuous prayer, whatever form it takes, so that we are always mindful of God's presence within. Larkin's focus throughout the book points the “end of contemplative prayer is our ultimate union with God.”

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Articles

Alive

Larkin wrote a monthly column for *Alive*, the Phoenix diocesan magazine sponsored by Bishop McCarthy in 1971. The articles were theological reflections; the author's goal was to articulate in “intelligible language” the challenges of the gospel. Larkin commented on current issues that “seemed important for the diocese”. These monographs appeared each month, from December, 1971 to 1981, when he left the Phoenix diocese to engage in an international ministry. Many of these articles were collected and printed in his book **Christ Within Us** which was published in 1984.

Know Your Faith

In 1971, Larkin wrote seven articles for the weekly series, *Know Your Faith*, published by the National Catholic News Service (in cooperation with the Education Department of the US Catholic Conference). The articles were:

“Contemporary Spirituality” in Vol. 1, No. 30

“Permanent Commitment” in Vol. 1, No. 31

“Prayer” in Vol. 1, No. 32

“Penance” in Vol. 1, No.33

“Spiritual Direction” in Vol. 1, No.34

“Religious Experience” in Vol. 1, No.35

“Community” in Vol. 1, No.36

Carmel's Prayer

In 1974, Father Larkin was appointed “coordinator of prayer experiences” for his Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. He promptly launched a “Prayer Newsletter” for the Carmelite Order. The publication was titled *Carmel's Prayer* in the “cause of prayer renewal in the province.” The first issue in October, 1975, was his write-up of the first Province-sponsored 30-day retreat wherein he shared the reactions of the retreatants. Subsequent issues contained articles contributed by various members of the Community with a consistent focus on prayer--personal and communal. Community retreats and workshops were listed, and *Carmel's Prayer* became a “sharing of events, reflections, and opportunities”.

Larkin was editor through the November 6, 1977 issue in which he gave his report on “The Prayer Goal” of the Carmelite Province.

Spiritual Growth through Prayer

In 1986, Larkin wrote the lead articles for the Sunday bulletin series *Spiritual Growth through Prayer* published by Liguori Press. These articles ran from October 26, 1986 to December 28, 1986 in the *Liguori Instructional Bulletin*. Some of the articles were adapted from his articles in the Phoenix diocesan publication, *Alive*. The articles were:

- “Prayer, Our Response to God”, Oct. 26, 1986
- “The Many Forms of Prayer”, Nov. 2, 1986
- “Prayer: A Hunger for God”, Nov. 9, 1986
- “Distractions in Prayer”, Nov. 16, 1986
- “Prayer: God’s Gift and Human Effort”, Nov. 23, 1986
- “Contemplation and Action”, Nov. 30, 1986
- “*Abba*, Father: Jesus’ Lesson on Prayer”, Dec. 7, 1986
- “Liturgy, Celebrating the Story”, Dec. 14, 1986
- “Charismatic Prayer”, Dec. 21, 1986
- “The Cost of Fidelity to Jesus and Self”, Dec. 28, 1986

Prefaces, Introductions, Forewords and Book Reviews

Father Larkin wrote numerous prefaces and forewords as well as book reviews. They are not referenced here at his designation.

N.B. None of these listed as “Additional Writings” is contained in this collection of Published Articles. All of Father Larkin’s writings are housed in a special file at the *Carmelitana Collection* in Whitefriars Hall, Washington, D.C. Copies of the *Alive* articles are in the Phoenix Diocesan Archives.