

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

Ordinary Mysticism and Ordinary Mystics

WE WERE MADE WITH SOMETHING divine in us and it is this divineness (we can call it grace) that energizes and fulfils our humanness. Bequeathed to us by Christ's life, death and resurrection, this Christian anthropology is our glory. Living water flows deep within each of us but seldom are we aware of this depth, seldom is it tapped. This potential to become a mystic, an ordinary mystic, is the most important calling of our life.¹ It is growth in the gradual awareness of experiencing and personally communicating with a loving God; it is a particular person's living faith experienced and integrated into an ordinary but deep, daily way of life.

I believe mysticism is a universal call. I believe that it is expressed, lived and prayed differently in different personalities with their different temperaments and varied spiritual education and/or culture. I believe we are called to let Christ's life permeate ours as we pray or work or enjoy or suffer. The full Christian life flowers in the mystic. It is not a question of the contemplative versus the active but action vitalized by an interior mystical life, nourished by authentic Church, Body of Christ community, and the sacraments. A living flame of love coming from the heart of Christ nourishes the mystics' growth.

'The mystical experience is an experience of the basic orientation to God.'² We all have this drive to God! But our present culture suppresses, represses, 'stuffs' this inner desire. Yet we have, both today and in our past, great ordinary mystics, who overcame the obstacles of culture or false spiritual education, or even of the exaggerations of their period of history. They are a continual gift to the Church, and they encourage and guide us. How did they choose and grow? How did the mystic life express itself in them? I could cite numerous examples but shall limit myself to only a few.

Let us look first to the figure of John Cassian. Born in what is now present day Romania in about 365, he died some 70 years later—about 435. Cassian had many searches and journeys in his life, first in the deserts of Palestine and Egypt; in 399 his journey led to Constantinople, then to Rome and finally into southern Gaul. He belongs to the golden years of early monasticism and is contemporary to John Chrysostom and other early fathers of the Church.

In Gaul he founded a monastery for monks and one for nuns and later wrote his *Institutes* and *Conferences*, probably about 420.

No one who reads Cassian for long can doubt that this is a prayerful and pious mind indeed . . . It is a powerful mind, integrated and constructive. This is one of the leading Fathers of the ancient Church . . .³

His *Conferences* relate his experience in the deserts of Egypt and they bring to the Western world, as did the *Life of St Anthony* by Athanasius, the spirituality of the East, and adapt desert, eremitical-style monasticism to the West.

Cassian, an admirer and probably a disciple of Evagrius, also transmits to the Western world, in disguised terminology, the Evagrian doctrine. Evagrius, a friend of the Cappadocian Fathers, was a follower of Origen. His doctrine

laid stress on the union of mind with ultimate Mind by contemplation. This purity of contemplation was achieved through passionlessness, because passion of every sort distracts the soul . . . this Origenist system was mystical—one to One, mind to Mind by immediate apprehension . . .⁴

We know that the conflict over Origen's doctrine caused dissension among the monks of Egypt and most of the Origenist monks were obliged to flee. This was probably the reason of Cassian's exit to Constantinople. His *Conferences* have been most influential; seeking God, purity of heart, prayer, discernment, community, virtues, friendship were all ways Cassian counsels to live and grow into ever deeper mysticism.

Cassian is immersed in a life lived towards God in a rhythm of *ascesis*, prayer, a goal (the Kingdom of God) and a means (purity of heart). This spiritual journey to the quiet, pure heart is an ordinary journey; it is really the only journey of life, whether we are monks or lay people of God. Cassian reveals this quiet way in simple words: 'To cling always to God and to the things of God; this must be our major effort, this must be the road that the heart follows unswervingly'.⁵ The labour of our mystical journey, ' . . . fasting . . . , spiritual reading, works of mercy, justice, piety and humanity', will one day end for us.⁶ They are necessary now—a means of reaching the Kingdom of God. He puts these words on the lips of Moses, the desert father he is quoting.

. . . the Lord establishes as the prime good contemplation . . . the gaze turned in the direction of the things of God . . . the virtues, however useful and good we may say they are, must nevertheless be put on a secondary level, since they are all practised for the sake of this one.⁷

Cassian is describing the centring necessary for ordinary mysticism. To live this call, 'Pray ceaselessly', says Cassian, quoting 1 Thess 5,17. 'In every place lift up pure hands with no anger or rivalry' (1 Tim 2,18).

But we will not be able to fulfil this injunction unless the mind within is cleansed of the contagion of sin, is devoted to virtue as its natural good, and feeds continuously on the contemplation of the all powerful God.⁸

We are, Cassian continues, constantly being 'reshaped in the likeness of the spiritual and angelic so that all its dealings, all its activity will be prayer, utterly pure, utterly without tarnish'.⁹

Cassian is speaking in the language of his time and we pick up occasional dualistic remarks. If we study carefully the doctrine of passionless *apatheia*, we will notice that this does not mean not feeling our feelings; it speaks rather of an integrated human person, with emotions ordered and flowing from gospel attitudes and values; the ardour and purity of the Holy Spirit lives within and often our emotions are the medium the Holy Spirit uses to speak to our innermost being. Self knowledge, so important in early spirituality, is what is being spoken of here—being aware of our negative and positive movements, not the suppression of feeling. We are being reshaped into the likeness of God; our 'unlikeness' is being restored. Our emotions are ordered; our active works come from our own growing God-consciousness.

In concluding the section on Cassian, I quote a particularly sensitive passage relevant to understanding our ordinary mysticism:

If only we could continue to hold onto those seeds of spiritual thought in the same way and with the same ease as we originate them: they *come alive in our hearts* as we think back to Scripture or at the reminder of some spiritual act or as we contemplate some heavenly mysteries . . .¹⁰

Mysticism truly is 'coming alive in our hearts'. Psychology stresses the danger of not noticing our feelings. I wonder if, also, insufficient reflection on our spiritual, mystical movements (their suppression), has not somehow 'killed' this side of ourselves. Our mystical side needs to be born again—in a rhythm with our emotions—to allow a new life to be born in our hearts.

Moving from Cassian's fourth and fifth centuries to the tenth we meet the Eastern monk, Symeon the New Theologian. An erudite man, Symeon was well read. Born in 949 and raised in Constantinople in well-to-do circles, he studied scripture and the writings of the Fathers. He entered the monastery in 976 at age 27. Ordained one year later in 977, he then became, within the next four years, abbot of Mamas.¹¹

Symeon was a man of inner vision and his exhortations and confrontations with the intellectual theologians of his time give much good thought for a life of lived mysticism. He replies to an attack at a theological meeting at Constantinople in 988:

You theologians are wasting your time by your endless speculations about useless questions . . . God . . . sends his Spirit to those who are humble in mentality and their way of living, to persons who speak simply, who live more simply and whose thinking is simpler still. Such persons will be taught by the Holy Spirit.

He continues, and one wishes one could have seen the faces of the distinguished theologians:

What use is discussion about God if you are not consciously aware of his presence? What value have theoretical distinctions between the Divine Persons if we do not know the difference between them by experience? . . . You have not felt the Divine Light within your hearts, yet you dare to discuss the intricate mysteries of the Trinity.¹²

Symeon's writings truly awaken us to the mystical life within just waiting to be touched and brought forth.

Symeon said when we become Christians we conceived Christ. Christ is born in us not corporeally, as in Mary, the Mother of God, but in a spiritual sense. We become like a woman carrying a child. But surely we should then become aware of this divine life moving in us just as a pregnant woman becomes aware that new life stirs within her . . . Jesus came 'to set the earth on fire' (Lk 12,49). Jesus was referring to the fire of the Holy Spirit which he would infuse into our souls. If this is so, Symeon argues, it cannot happen in an invisible and unconscious manner. For the essence of the soul is knowing and feeling. It must notice the divine flame that soars up in itself and consumes everything.¹³

Symeon continues using vivid images that enlighten and raise our consciousness to the possibilities of an ordinary lived mysticism, that seems almost hidden within.

Paul tells us that we have to put on Christ (Gal 3,27). Whoever puts on clothes, knows what he is doing. A Christian worthy of the name has put on Christ consciously and knowingly. As he

feels his clothes with his naked body, so he is aware of Christ acting upon him. Only a corpse feels nothing. Likewise a Christian who is 'dead' is unaware of Christ's presence within.¹⁴

The more Symeon studied Scripture, the more confirmation he found for believing that a Christian should be able to experience Christ in a conscious manner . . . When a child is baptized, grace is given and the Blessed Trinity make their indwelling. Yet for full Christian maturity this is not enough. The growing child should become more and more aware of the Three Persons acting within him or her. Becoming consciously aware of this divine action is another kind of baptism, a 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' . . . The Son of God, God himself, has come to earth to reunite us to himself consciously through his Spirit . . . The greatest misfortune that can befall a Christian is not to know consciously that God lives within him. God shows himself openly and makes himself known very consciously.¹⁵

To develop this inner consciousness, Symeon counsels that we must acknowledge and be sensitive to our inner experience. This requires adopting Jesus's own frame of mind as seen in the gospel. For 'only the humble, the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst for God, those who are pure of heart, will see Christ clearly'.¹⁶ Symeon acknowledges that many Christians fall short of these requirements; few develop their spiritual eyes to the full.

. . . Symeon laments that, although every Christian could partake of the divine light in a conscious manner, 'only one in a thousand, no, one in ten thousand' arrives at mystical contemplation.¹⁷

Surely this is a challenge to us—to use the rich potential to live Christ consciously and wholly in our lives.

Guigo II, our next mentor, comes from the vibrant explosion of Church reform and renewal in the twelfth century. Very much influenced by the great Bernard of Clairvaux, Guigo has left us two principal works: *The ladder of monks* and *Twelve meditations*. We are not sure when Guigo the Carthusian was born but we know he died in 1188.

In the introduction to Guigo's works, written by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *The ladder* is considered representative of the Western Mysticism school of Augustine, Anselm and Bernard. *Meditations* was written first and represents Guigo's earlier spiritual doctrine; while it is valuable, his more mature and complete doctrine would be in *The ladder*. He is coming from a monastic background and was the ninth prior of the Carthusian mother house, La Grande Chartreuse.¹⁸ The primacy of the contemplative life would have been emphasized in his milieu but also

doing the 'ordinary things' with meaning, sensitive to God's loving action in and through these things.

Guigo speaks through his writings and we learn much of the attitudes that foster our interior unconscious mystical life. 'Speak, Lord, to the heart of your servant, so that my heart may speak to you.' These are the opening words of Meditation II. The Meditation goes on to express openly the anguish of a painful trial and then he speaks of the meaning in it all. 'A soil is rich when it is watered with tears and brings forth fruit a hundredfold. "Send down your rain, Lord, from on high . . ."' (Ps 103,13).¹⁹ In the short two and a half page essay there is a rhythm of 'towards God-ness' intertwined with scripture where the pain of a soul is laid bare but the wound is constantly cleansed by turning to the Lord in misery but full trust. Ordinary mysticism is a rainbow of rain and sun, tears and joy.

Grace and free will were common topics in this period and Guigo, in his *Ladder*, has a beautiful section on grace, putting us in touch with an important element in our mystical life. It is not an extraordinary movement—grace is always there working in the rhythm and freedom that our free will allows. Guigo says:

For 'every gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights' (Jas 1,17). We can do nothing without Him. It is He who achieves our works in us, and yet not entirely without us. 'For we are God's fellow workers' (1 Cor 3,9), as the Apostle says. It is God's will then, that we pray to Him; His will that when his grace comes and knocks at our door (Apoc 3,20) we should willingly open our hearts to Him and give Him our consent.²⁰

We are being invited to ask for 'living waters' (Jn 4,10). The Samaritan woman at the well was very ordinary. Guigo points to her and puts these words in Jesus's mouth: 'I want to fill you with grace and you must exercise your free choice'.²¹ He was asking her, as he asks us, for openness, prayer and consent.

The four rungs of Guigo's *Ladder* are: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation, four traditional spiritual works. These traditional ways of getting in touch with God are also ways of developing our mystic side. I should like to use a section of Guigo's treatment of meditation to give you a 'feel' of Guigo's sense of, or we might say, use of, ordinary mysticism. The 'grape' that Guigo bids us bite and chew is a way to communicate with our loving God and to savour his sweet presence or share in his sweet and arduous passion.

I hear the words read: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Mt 5,8). This is a short text of scripture, but it is

of great sweetness, like a grape that is put into the mouth filled with many senses to feed the soul . . . When the soul has carefully examined it, it says to itself, there may be something good here. I shall return to my heart (Lk 15,18) and try to understand and find this purity . . . So, wishing to have a fuller understanding of this the soul begins to bite and chew upon this grape, as though putting it in a wine press, while it stirs up its power of reasoning to ask what this precious purity may be and how it may be had . . . After meditation has so pondered upon purity of heart, it begins to think of the reward, of how glorious and joyful it would be to see the face of the Lord so greatly longed for, 'fairer than all the sons of men' (Ps 44,3) . . . It thinks how this vision will bring it the fullness of which the prophet says: 'I shall be filled when your glory appears' (Ps 16,15). Do you see how much juice has come from one little grape, how great a fire has been kindled from a spark (Sir 11,34), how this small piece of metal, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', has acquired a new dimension by being hammered out on the anvil of meditation?²²

Guigo uses words that speak of experience melded with growth. Scripture verses flame and clarify and sensitively instil the gospel values; they interweave his writings and enable them to speak to us with vitality. He is another guide, from his own time, of ordinary mysticism; he opens new windows, using meditation, contemplation, reading and prayer to show us how to develop an increased consciousness of our mystical side in our daily life. His writings breathe into us an awareness of this inner mystical potential.

There are many notable woman mystics; these women have a style and experience of God that is often unique—more wholistic, more experiential, with a certain directness in expressing their spiritual/bodily experience. Often revelations or visions form a part of the woman mystic's experience; this is unusual in our men spiritual writers, such as Cassian, Symeon and Guigo. Why there should be this difference, present day scholars are still exploring. We have too often held these seeming extraordinary experiences in awe, put these women on pedestals too far away to touch, and hence we are unable to learn from them. We have blocked the spiritual-human energy they wish to bequeath to us. They too are ordinary mystics, often keenly sensitive to the divine presence as it touches, nudges, guides, whispers within. Women such as Hildegard of Bingen in the twelfth century and Lutgard, Beatrice, Gertrude, the Mechtilds, to name only the more noted in the thirteenth century. These women and their experience need to be demythologized so that our own capacity for ordinary mysticism can be touched, opened and made life-giving.

I have chosen only two women, one from the fourteenth century and one from our own century. Our first guide will be Julian of Norwich. Her famous sixteen showings and consequent meditations on this experience are some of the most beautiful spiritual writing of all time. Julian lived in England and at the age of thirty and a half, she received on May 13, 1373, her revelations. We know that she was still alive in 1413 but we do not know the day or year she died. Julian wrote down, not too long after the May 13 event, her experience of these 'showings'—this is known as the 'short text'. Some twenty years later, after long pondering on these unique contacts with God, she wrote her second rendition of this experience and this is called the 'long text'.

It is in these texts that we find a woman growing in love and union, a woman consumed with God:

God of your goodness give me yourself, for you are enough for me, and I can ask for nothing which is less which can pay you full worship. And if I ask anything which is less, always I am in want; but only in you do I have everything.²³

Here again is the ordinary mystic's centring completely on God—not to the exclusion of life but in life. Her familiar 'hazelnut' experience shows us this rhythm:

At the same time as I saw this sight of the head bleeding, our good Lord showed a spiritual sight of his familiar love. I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us . . . And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me . . . I looked at it with the eye of understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God.²⁴

God and life enfold us together. Blended with this there is in Julian the sense of the mystic's experience of oneness with Christ and all people. She says:

Here I saw a great unity between Christ and us, as I understand it; for when he was in pain we were in pain, and all creatures able to suffer pain suffered with him . . . At this time I wanted to

look away from the cross, but I did not dare, for I knew well that whilst I contemplated the cross I was secure and safe . . . Then there came a suggestion, seemingly said in a friendly manner, to my reason: look up to heaven to his Father. And then I saw clearly by the faith which I felt that there was nothing between the cross and heaven which could have grieved me . . . I answered inwardly with all the power of my soul, and said: No, I cannot, for you are my heaven . . . I would rather have remained in that pain until judgment day than have come to heaven any other way than by him. For I knew well that he who had bound me so fast would unbind me when it was his will.²⁵

The mystic must drink the cup, must truly follow Jesus. Notice how Julian experiences this pain; notice the faith she 'feels'. She is attuned to her emotional and spiritual side; and 'knows', trusts, in this loving God's will for her. Father, Son and Holy Spirit permeate every event of life be it temptation, tribulation or delight. Our culture has lost this faith view. Julian touches us vitally at this dimension. She writes how:

. . . our Lord very humbly revealed words to me, without voice and without opening of lips . . . and said very sweetly . . . you will not be overcome. And these words: You will not be overcome, were said very insistentlly and strongly, for certainty and strength against every tribulation which may come. He did not say: You will not be troubled, you will not be belaboured, you will not be disquieted; but he said: You will not be overcome. God wants us to pay attention to these words, and always to be strong in faithful trust, in well-being and in woe, for he loves us and delights in us, and so he wishes us to love him and delight in him and trust greatly in him, and all will be well.²⁶

As the ordinary mystic cultivates this friend-to-friend relationship with the God who loves and delights in us, faith grows, our cautious defences come down as we dare to believe, as Julian did, in this love. We become aware of our togetherness in the adventure of life, of our innate longing for the Lord, of the mystery of growth on this pilgrim way, of increased interior yearning to be the one body of Christ, and finally of the love-longing of Jesus for each of us. Julian's writings remind us that we must allow the Spirit to draw into awareness the inner mystic voice.

Our last review introduces us to Caryll Houselander, dubbed the 'divine eccentric' by her biographer, Maisie Ward. I first met Caryll Houselander in her autobiographical book, *Rocking horse Catholic*. This unusual and unconventional woman captivated me. Born in England in 1901, Caryll died in 1954, her life ended early by cancer. From childhood

she seemed alive to beauty. Her insight was mature, deepened by much pain in her growing years when her mother and father separated. She suffered much in her life, but also she enjoyed much; these experiences enabled her to give meaning to the life and even to the tragedies of her time (World War II). Her writings have a fresh approach, poetry, beauty and great spiritual depth. She wrote a number of best-selling books such as *The comforting of Christ*, *The reed of God*, *The flowering tree*, *Guilt*, *This war is the Passion*.

Caryll describes three mystical experiences at different periods of her life. Each experience happens in the most ordinary circumstances and emphasizes the mystic reality of Christ living in everyone—each experience expresses this concept ever more deeply and dramatically. Occurring at different stages of her growth—pre-adolescent, adolescent and young adult, these realities penetrate her consciousness as well as her writings. The first incident happened while she attended a French convent school; she would have been about twelve years old. She tells the story most simply:

One day I was passing the boot-room . . . the door was open, and the Bavarian nun was sitting alone, cleaning shoes. I can see her now as if it were yesterday—a tall, gaunt woman with brilliantly red cheeks and eyes so dark that they looked black; there she was, wearing her large, cobalt-blue apron, with a child's pair of shoes on her lap. I stopped and went in, intending to help her to polish the shoes. It was only when I came quite close to her that I saw that she was weeping; tears were streaming down her rosy cheeks and falling onto her lap and the child's shoes. Abashed, I dropped my eyes and stood in front of her, . . . We were both quite silent, I . . . afraid to look up, not knowing what to say: she weeping soundlessly. At last, with an effort, I raised my head and then I saw—the nun was crowned with the crown of thorns . . . I stood for—I suppose—a few seconds, dumbfounded, and then, finding my tongue, I said to her, 'I would not cry, if I was wearing the crown of thorns like you are'.²⁷

This consciousness of Christ in others would become reinforced and be a basic thrust, a central doctrine, of Caryll's spirituality.²⁸

Later when she had left school she was hurt by the gossip of so-called good Catholics and an unkindness at Sunday Mass; difficult experiences had long been shattering her faith and Caryll now left her Catholic religion. During this period, when she was seventeen she received her second mystical experience:

The murder of the Russian Emperor and his family took place in a cellar in Ekaterinburg on the night of July 17th 1918 . . . I was

on my way to buy potatoes, hurrying because I had been warned that they were wanted for dinner . . . Suddenly I was held still, as if a magnet held my feet to a particular spot . . . In front of me, above me, literally wiping out not only the grey street and sky but the whole world, was something which I can only call a gigantic and living Russian icon . . . It was an icon of Christ the King crucified. Stretched on a cross of fire in a vestment which blazed and flamed with jewels, crowned with a great crown of gold which weighed his head down, Christ was lifted above the world in our drab street . . . the wounds on His hands and feet rubies, but molten rubies that bled with light.²⁹

Later that day as Caryll read the posters announcing the Russian Czar's assassination she saw his face to be the face of her vision 'but without its glory'. These experiences enabled her to love with an evident, caring love that reached out especially to the down-and-outs of her world. She was learning to see Christ and sense his presence everywhere; the powers awakened within her spoke and nudged her to live the Christ message. Her sensitive personality was opening itself to the mystic within, in the ordinariness and even eccentricity of Caryll's young life.

And then, several years later, she tells of her third experience of Christ:

This time it was an unimaginably vaster experience than on either of the other occasions; it was not a seeing of Christ in one person, as it had been with the Bavarian nun, or in one particular sort of person, as it had been in the living icon of Christ the King. This time it was Christ in all men. This is much more difficult to describe than the other experiences; I can only do my best to tell it just as it happened. I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together . . . Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them—but because he was in them, and because they were here, the whole world was here too, here in this underground train; not only the world as it was at that moment, not only all the people in all the countries of the world, but all of those people who had lived in the past; and all those yet to come. I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passerby, everywhere—Christ . . . Although it (the vision) did not prevent me from ever sinning again, it showed me what sin is, especially those sins done in the name of 'love', . . . I saw too the reverence that everyone must have for a sinner; instead of

condoning his sin, which is in reality his utmost sorrow, honour must be paid even to those sinners whose souls seem to be dead, because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ. For the same reason, no one of us who has fallen into mortal sin himself must ever lose hope.³⁰

I have quoted at length these experiences to show some of Caryll's personality, her simplicity, but especially to show how her life was being embedded in Christ. She teaches us to perceive, in an ever-increasing new awareness, the Christ presence in others—Jesus in the sinner and in the poor. Caryll returned to the Church and her eventful life continued. She lived in London and through the blitz of World War II; her book *This war is the Passion* gave meaning to this terrible event. She lived her homely mysticism, with her cat, Jones, and all sorts of visitors to her London flat in the chaotic city milieu. She is a model for our times and her life and writings open a window to a deeper mystic reality hidden in each of us.

Caryll bequeaths to us a dynamic ecclesial reality:

The Church is everyone who is part of Christ on earth, everyone who is included in Christ's sacramental life in us. Christ makes us part of his sacramental life by giving His life to be the life of our souls . . . We are one Body, Christ. His life in us is like the blood stream in the body, a torrent which flows through the whole body in each part continually.³¹

She also bequeaths to us an ordinary mystic's prayer:

Descend
 Holy Spirit of Life!
 Come down into our hearts,
 that we may live.
 Descend into emptiness,
 that emptiness may be filled.
 Descend into dust,
 that dust may flower.
 Descend into the dark
 that the light
 may shine in darkness.³²

and:

Breath of Heaven,
 Carry us on the impulse

of Christ's love,
 as easily as thistledown
 is carried on the wind;
 that in the Advent season of our souls,
 while He is formed in us,
 in secret and in silence—
 the Creator
 in the hands of his creatures,
 as the Host
 in the hands of the priest—
 we may carry Him forth
 to wherever He wishes to be,
 as Mary carried Him over the hills
 on His errand of love,
 to the house of Elizabeth.³³

In her poetry Caryll sings from her heart of the ordinary mystic's intuitions, desires with a sense of sacredness the Christ presence everywhere.

This paper has tried to focus on a new and more deeply lived spirituality for our time. It is not new to Christianity or the Church and has been present in all ages and cultures; it has always been expressed according to the *mores* of the culture and the personality of the individual, whatever the period of history, and thus has sometimes been misunderstood by succeeding cultures. Yet each age and each person has something to teach us. This ordinary mysticism spirituality is not subjective and individualistic but is the experiencing of the reality of God in our own lives by many different persons—each with his or her own gifts and talents and limitations. It begins in us with conception, with the beginning of each of our lives; it is part of our very being because the deepest meaning of any of our lives is a loving God who made us in his image and likeness—made us for himself and with a desire for God which pours forth spontaneously in a believing and welcoming culture and environment. Our age needs to regain this reality, this giftedness of the divine within and without us that does but fulfil, most completely, our humanness.

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NOTES

¹ For a background on what I mean by 'ordinary mysticism' see such books as: Egan, Harvey D., S.J.: *What they are saying about mysticism* (Paulist Press, 1982); Welch, John:

Article 'Mysticism', in *New dictionary of theology* (ed Joseph Komonchak, 1988); Graef, Hilda: *The story of mysticism* (Doubleday & Co, 1965); Egan, Harvey D.: 'The mysticism of everyday life' in *Formative spirituality bulletin*, vol X, no 1, February 1989, (Duquesne); Johnston, William, S.J.: *The inner eye of love* (Harper & Row, 1978).

² Welch, John, as above, p 697.

³ Cassian, John: *Conferences* (Western Spirituality Series, Paulist Press, 1985), p 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 42 (Conference 1).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p 103 (Conference 9).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 106 (Conference 9).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 106 (the emphasis is my own).

¹¹ Wijngaards, John, M.H.M.: *Experiencing Jesus* (Ave Maria Press, 1981), pp 62-63.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp 61-62.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 64.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 64.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 67.

¹⁸ Guigo II: *The ladder of monks and Twelve meditations* (Cistercian Publications, 1981), pp 3-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 92-93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p 81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 81.

²² *Ibid.*, pp 69-71.

²³ Julian of Norwich: *Revelations* (Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, 1978), p 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p 29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 210-212.

²⁶ Doyle, Brendan: *Meditations with Julian of Norwich* (Bear & Co, 1985), p 47.

²⁷ Ward, Maisie: *Caryll Houselander* (Sheed and Ward, 1962), p 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 45-46.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 65-66.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 74-75.

³¹ Houselander, Caryll: *This war is the Passion* (Sheed and Ward, 1945), p 65.

³² Ward, Maisie, with prayers by Caryll Houselander: *The splendour of the rosary* (Sheed and Ward, 1945), p 65.

³³ *Ibid.*, p 73.