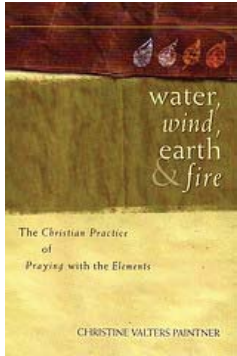


GOOD SUMMER SPIRITUAL READ



Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements

Amid the current profusion of spirituality-and-nature books, *Water, Wind, Earth, and Fire* is a rare treasure: a deeply Christian book that also draws us more deeply into contemplation of and relationship with nature. This fine work of spiritual wisdom and guidance offers to both individuals and groups a companion for all seasons. It can soothe at night, enliven in the morning, kindle the human

spirit during the day, and at all times serve as a reminder of the abiding presence of the Creator Spirit, which is the spirit of Christ on earth and among us.
- Jane Redmont, author of *When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life*

For too many centuries, too many Christians have been taught that a deep reverence for the beauty of nature is incompatible with sincere faith. Christine Valters Paintner's *Water, Wind, Earth, and Fire* thus comes as both a blessing and a gift. Not only is her writing as beautiful as the symbolism she describes, but her wide knowledge of scripture, patristic writing, the mystical life of the saints, and contemporary spiritual poetry makes the reading of this book an inspiring and rejuvenating adventure.

- Paula Huston, author of *The Holy Way: Practices for a Simple Life*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Valters Paintner is a writer, artist, spiritual director, retreat facilitator, and teacher. Her fields of expertise include Christian spiritual practices, monastic spirituality, and the expressive arts.

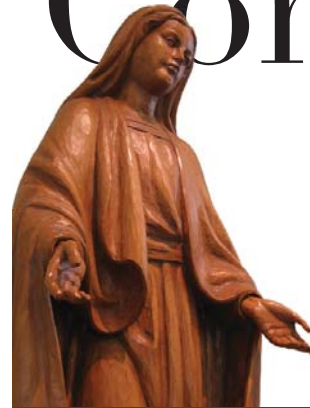
She earned her PhD in Christian Spirituality from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and her professional status as Registered Expressive Arts Consultant and Educator (REACE) from the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA.org).

She lives out her commitment as a Benedictine Oblate in the heart of Seattle with her husband and dog. Visit her website at www.AbbeyoftheArts.com.



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AUGUST 2010 EDITION

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egoFAITH vs. ecoFAITH

by Fr. Chris Piasta, OFM
JFK Chaplain

Finally, it is the time to leave sometimes windowless office and crowded streets and go away for a couple of days. It is vacation time. Of course we need that; we need to relax and recharge our “batteries”, but also we need to reconnect with the nature because of who we are physically and spiritually.

We are the world.

Whether we like it or not, we can't deny the fact that we are a part of the universe. Since the BP oil spill in the gulf, we are learning very quickly how what we do has global consequences. We can see the fragility of our planet and our responsibility not only to

maintain the Earth livable and fairly clean, but also to create a new sense of Eden at the place we all call home. It would be truly depressing if the only connection to the world was the fact that we are dust and to dust we will return. Equally sad it would be if our children knew only that much that milk, butter or eggs are just products you buy in the store at the corner without connecting them to the farm and the animals. By the way, I am wondering if they also believe in 2% fat or low fat cows. Or think of that: the produce we buy. It may look perfect or almost perfect: all tomatoes look exactly the same size, shape and color, just beautiful to look at. Now take a bite. If you never tasted naturally grown produce, which looks somewhat less appealing, you really don't know what produce, in our case here tomatoes taste like. If compared, these from the store taste like water without any distinct flavor. I believe that our tomatoes here are just the tip of the iceberg. In the more and more urban-driven world we focus so much on the appearance and packaging than on the real content.

I am not alone.

It is so easy to get lured by the illusion that the whole world revolves around me, is about me and for me. One of my friends, who had camped out in the Amazon rainforest, once told me that the first thing she real-

ized was that everything wanted to eat her up. I believe that indeed our DNA is constantly reaffirming us that life means survival of the fittest, however it should mean more than just *me*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and theologian who opposed Nazism and was executed a month before the end of WWII, once said: *The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children.* It makes sense for me to ask a question: what kind of world do I leave behind, not only in the ultimate sense of the question, but also in a very tangible one.

Think globally, act locally.

Going “green” should not be edgy, trendy or something that can be done only on a global scale. Just look around and see how much trash we have surrounded ourselves with. You can see both, young and old, littering around with some false sense that somebody else will pick it up or is paid to do so. I truly believe that the issue of trash is a litmus test to the person's or society's self-respect: if you have respect to yourself, you will do everything to in order to maintain clean environment where you live or where you are. I don't think it has anything to do with poverty or status, but everything to do with maturity and respect. If in your travels you see anywhere a clean and neat place, don't think it can happen elsewhere but where you live. Don't overanalyze things, just be the first one to begin.



Brothers and sisters.

Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), who is a patron saint of animals and the environment had a very simple way of relating to the creation. If it can be said that God created the entire world, then all creation has one Father, thus making us all His children. It makes us and all the creation brothers and sisters. It calls for familial respect and love. It calls for a very personal relationship, no matter how distant it may look at the first sight.

In these days, I wish you very successful and loving family reunions; I wish you many new and creative inspirations. Bring them back with you and spread them around or have them with you wherever your travels may be taking you.

