

Introduction

“I’m not a particularly religious person, but I am spiritual” is a line frequently heard. It usually confesses that the speaker is not particularly interested in organized religion, may even be hostile toward it, but is certainly open to the spiritual realm. Indeed, spirituality has become a cottage industry in our culture. Not only do major chains like Barnes & Noble and Borders Books give it a section, but in local bookstores we usually find a space set aside for both traditional and new-age claimants to spiritual wisdom and guidance. There is certainly a hunger in many lives for a connection to something, if not someone, beyond oneself, that will bring inner peace and outer resolve while navigating the shifting currents in our world. This need for cultivating a spiritual dimension of life marks a culture increasingly conscious of the fragility of all that surrounds us: home, relationships, workplace, church, even our planet.

Our Roman Catholic tradition is rich in spiritual resources: from the writings of the biblical authors to the works of the early Church fathers and mothers to the insights of the medieval mystics to the teachings of the doctors of the Church to contemporary spiritual guides. But the working of the Spirit is being discovered in new arenas. This present issue considers some of the current “Trends in Spirituality” in settings that include culture, geography, human biology, spiritual direction, and marriage.

While disengagement, disconnectedness, and displacement are hallmarks of life today, our authors suggest ways of cultivating life in the Spirit. In our first essay, theologian Richard Gaillardetz of the University of Toledo offers insights and practices that enable us to discover how an authentic spirituality can be lived in a culture whose technology, consumerism, and digitization of the Word can sometimes serve to disengage us from encountering the divine in daily life. Then, Mary Frohlich of Catholic Theological Union reflects on the importance of finding one’s place in life and connecting to a place in the world. Allowing a geographical place to reveal itself is one of the gifts handed down by the Native American tribal peoples, which, in turn, can be fostered through what the author calls *place analysis* and the “Place Retreat.”

From the enveloping realities of culture and place, we move to our inner world. Ilia Delio of Washington Theological Union allows her scientific and theological interests to converge in the new field of neurotheology; she offers a microcosmic look at the human brain as the implanted setting for connecting with transcendence. Moving to the interpersonal realm, Elizabeth Liebert of San Francisco Theological Seminary looks at the present status of the ministry of spiritual direction: its development over the last thirty years, some possible future directions for its literature, and present growing edges and issues needing attention.

This year our judges awarded *New Theology Review's* prize in theological reflection to Julie McCarty, a freelance writer, noting that she “treated an important pastoral topic in a creative, insightful way with practical suggestions.” From her eighteen years of experience, the author looks at marriage as the area where the Holy Spirit goes about its work—and play—as bonding agent, breath, and fire. At the suggestion of our judges, two other noteworthy essays will be published over the coming year in this journal: “The Snap of Grace: Asking the Easter Question of Faith,” by Terrance W. Klein, and “Reclaiming Unity in the Letter to the Ephesians,” by Betty L. Scheetz.

Our regular columns are directed to three important areas of ministry: Brid Long describes the vocation to lay pastoral leadership, its challenges, and the important role of theological schools in current ministerial formation. Jeanette Lucinio focuses on the need to develop for children a rite of Christian initiation sensitive to their developmental issues and conversion dynamics. William McConville reminds us of the ongoing relevance of the 1987 United States Bishops' pastoral, *Economic Justice for All*, in providing a call for conversion in the corporate world, transforming what has become the realm of “corporate sleaze” to an ecologically moral world of “corporate citizenship.”

Finally, we would like to take this occasion to thank the outgoing editor of *New Theology Review*, Kenneth Himes, who has served this journal so well for the past five years, the first three with Robert P. Waznak as co-editor. Ken has brought a vision to this journal matched only by the height, depth, and breadth of his knowledge. We will miss his voice, his insight, and his humor, but not, we trust, his counsel. We would also like to express our gratitude to our panel of judges who have brought wisdom, commitment, and a pastoral sensitivity over the past three years to the task of choosing the winners of the theological reflection essay contest: Robert Kinast, Evelyn Whitehead, and Thomas H. Groome.

Brid Long and I, James Wallace, are honored to take on the role of co-editors of *New Theology Review*. We pledge to you our best efforts to continue to serve you. Along with our book review editor, Daniel Grigassy, and a knowledgeable group of sub-editors, we wish to do all we can to provide a journal that is responsive to your ministerial interests and needs. We would like to invite you to contact us with your ideas for future themes that would serve you in your work. (Contact

Brid Long at long@wtu.edu and James A. Wallace at wallace@wtu.edu.) And please consider the announcement of the essay contest in our November issue to be a personal invitation to try your hand at crafting a theological reflection on an area of ministerial or personal experience. We welcome your participation.

Coming in May:

Women in Ministry

