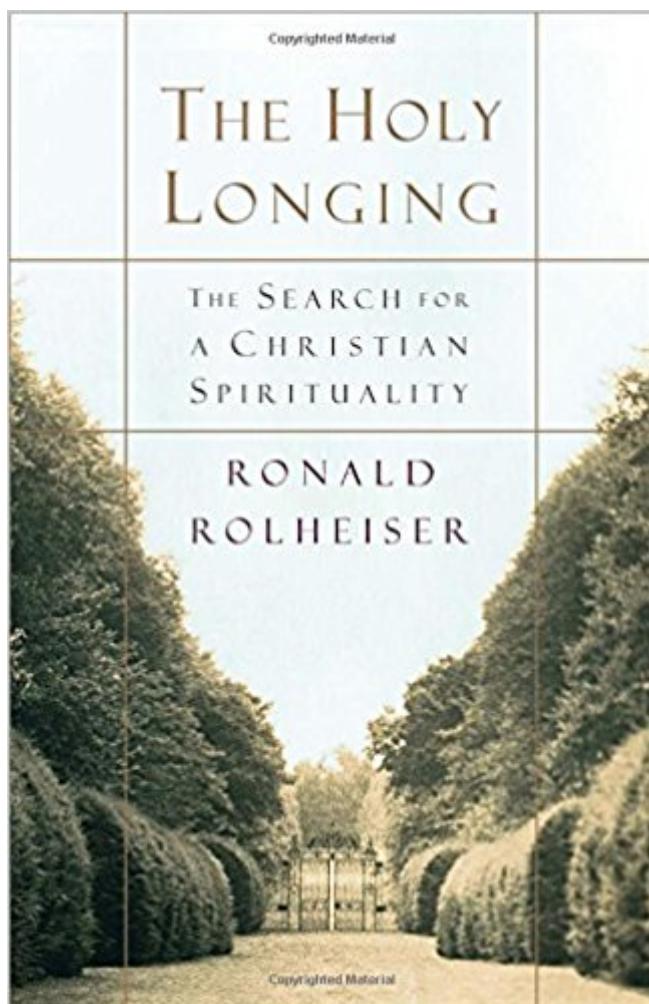


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The Holy Longing: The Search For A Christian Spirituality



Synopsis

Channeling the deep, mysterious desires of our hearts, Ronald Rolheiser leads readers from restlessness to peace, showing a contemporary path to authentic and healthy spiritual life. In *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser probes the question “What is spirituality?”, cutting through the misunderstanding and confusion that can often surround this subject with his trademark clarity. Using examples and stories relevant for today, and with great sensitivity to modern challenges to religious faith, he explains the essentials of spiritual life, including the importance of community worship, the imperatives surrounding social action, and the centrality of the Incarnation, to outline a Christian spirituality that reflects the yearning and search for meaning at the core of the human experience. Essential reading for anyone seeking to understand what Christian spirituality means and how to apply it to their own lives, *The Holy Longing* translates the universal struggle for love and integration of spirit into a language accessible to all, explaining God and the Church for a world that more often than not doubts the credibility of both.

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Customer Reviews

"Long before we do anything explicitly religious at all, we have to do something about the fire that burns within us," writes Ronald Rolheiser. "What we do with that fire, how we channel it, is our spirituality." From the opening chapter, where Rolheiser eloquently compares the burning spiritual fire of Mother Teresa, Janice Joplin, and Princess Diana, readers will be fully engaged in a unique and altogether fascinating discussion of Christian spirituality. As a regular columnist for the Catholic Herald, Rolheiser has clearly honed his writing skills. Like an eloquent marriage counselor, he deftly

tries to reconcile the rift between contemporary spirituality and Christianity. For example, he points to the four pillars that support a healthy marriage of Christianity and spirituality, which are "Private prayer and private morality. Social justice. Mellowness of heart and spirit. Community as a constitutive element of true worship." Building upon these pillars, Rolheiser delves into the more challenging marital tensions with chapters such as "Christ as the Basis for Christian Spirituality" and a "Spirituality of Sexuality." This is an excellent book for any Christian who longs to create a more holy and lasting spiritual union. --Gail Hudson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Spirituality is about what we do with our unrest... [it] is about what we do with that incurable desire, the madness that comes from the gods, within us." Rolheiser (*Restless Heart*) contends that the late 20th century is marked by a kind of spiritual restlessness, even though the spiritual landscape is littered with a variety of "spiritualities." He argues that there is richness in such spiritual diversity and plurality, but that many seekers lack direction in their spiritual search. Rolheiser develops a Christian spirituality that he believes offers some definite direction for seekers. At the heart of a healthy Christian spiritual life, he says, there must be four essentials: "private prayer and private morality; social justice; mellowness of heart and spirit; and community as a constitutive element of true worship." At the base of Christian spirituality, he notes, is the Incarnation of God in human flesh. If Christians can focus on the embodied character of their theology, then the four essentials of Christian spirituality become easier to embrace. In the latter half of the book, Rolheiser develops sketches of a spirituality of community (ecclesiology), a spirituality of sexuality and a spirituality of justice and peacemaking. We can sustain ourselves in the spiritual life, he notes, by being a mystic, sinning bravely, gathering ritually around the Word and breaking the bread, and worshipping and serving the right God. Rolheiser's program for Christian spirituality is reminiscent of the best work of Henri Nouwen and Daniel Berrigan. (July) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Though I found a few important things with which to disagree in this book, overall I found it a very compelling and enriching approach to Christian spirituality. Rolheiser's writing is very lucid and wise. He defines spirituality along the lines of things all people experience within themselves. It's "more about whether or not we can sleep at night, than about whether or not we go to church." It's what shapes our actions, what we do with our desire (eros), whether or not we can shape it in a creative, life-giving way; whether "the disciplines and habits we choose to live by ... lead to a greater

integration or disintegration within our bodies, minds and souls, and ... in the way we are related to God, others and the cosmic world." "The opposite of being spiritual is to have no energy, is to have lost all zest for living..." Rolheiser says that, "Our soul is not something we have, it is more something we are. It is the very life pulse within us, that which makes us alive ... It is also the adhesive that holds us together, the principle of integration and individuation within us." I couldn't help but notice the similarity between this and the way Dallas Willard describes the soul in his book *A Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. I'm always a little annoyed when Christian writers on spirituality seem to apologize for their Christian point of view as Rolheiser seems to do on p. 41 when he says that, "God speaks in many and diverse ways and no one person or religion has a monopoly on the truth." This statement is fine with me on the face of it. There are plenty of things one can learn from other religions. But I wonder how far people who talk like this take this reasoning in practice. Does he think he has good reasons for being a Christian and not a Buddhist or Muslim? Would he suggest that adherents of other religions take a similarly relativistic view of their own faith? While it's all fine and humble not to think of one's religion as having a complete monopoly on the truth, I wouldn't care much to listen to anyone who didn't have at least enough confidence in their religion to believe that it's the hub of truth, if not the whole wheel. It may be difficult to place a high value on both the pursuit of truth and a loving acceptance of others who don't accept our view of it, but that's the line I see Jesus walking in the Gospels. The way in following him is a narrow one. Whether or not Rolheiser believes this, his book is very valuable for Christians who do. His nonnegotiable essentials of Christian Spirituality describe a very balanced and mature spirituality with Christ as the center and the incarnation of Christ in the lives of believers as the vehicle of his ministry in the world today. Rolheiser helpfully applies Christian spirituality to several areas of life that are "key spiritualities within a spirituality. In these he illuminates how we can work out our spirituality in our relationship to the church, in the face of suffering and death, in doing justice and peacemaking, in our sexuality, and in caring for our own spiritual life. I found the chapters on suffering and death and sexuality to be especially helpful and insightful. There are some very good words in the chapter on justice and peacemaking, but I had a little bit of trouble with Rolheiser's faith in the transformation of systems to accomplish those aims. To me, all systems seem inherently flawed and limited. The transformation of systemic evil into good depends more on the health of the moral fiber of the community and the character of the individuals who make it up. It's easy to see examples systemic injustice. I don't think I've ever seen systemic justice. A system can't make us good. How can a system change the inherent problem that Rolheiser sees with abortion (p. 171) where "a whole culture ... has chosen to dissociate sex from marriage and

procreation ... wherein sex is an extension of dating, abortion will always happen."?In spite of minor reservations, I value Rolheiser's perspective on Christian spirituality very much. This is a book I will turn to again for refreshment and spiritual sustenance.

This is the best book I've yet to read about Christian Spirituality. The writer uses many practical examples to explain how that Holy Power is always present in our lives, and how to find it if we think it's not there.

Another wonderful book by this inspiring author. Thank you to Ronald Rolheiser for another excellent work.

Among the many beautiful things in this book, I appreciated Rolheiser's discussion of spirituality as the eros energy within us. Whether one is religious or not, there is a certain life force that gives meaning, purpose, and passion to life. This, according to Rolheiser, better defines spirituality than doctrines or religion. I also especially appreciated the section on the "Spirituality of the Paschal Mystery" as it helps us to leave behind the good things that have died (or need to die) and take up new things that are more appropriate to the present. It is a beautiful recipe for spiritual maturity. I found the sections on "Nonnegotiable Essentials" and "A Spirituality of Ecclesiology" to be a bit dry, so I've reserved the fifth star. But definitely worth the read. Lots of great one-liners and distinctions as well.

Still reading, but good info and thinking material. Well-written.

Good school book

Provides a totally different perspective on a lot of Catholic and Christian teaching. Interesting and easy to read.

Excellent presentation for anyone on the journey of a life time, toward God's heart for them and all faithful believers/seekers. Real life examples easily lay alongside more technical explanations of original Greek words chosen by our Biblical writers which both expose the writer's understanding and enlightens the reader to a new perhaps broader interpretation. Some new thoughts on the incarnational nature of discipleship were both challenging and exciting to me.

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