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[Quote for the Day](#)

June 14, 2009

My own experience in a variety of contexts suggests that the number one problem, the most common source of resistance to both evangelization and spiritual growth in Christian terms, is the angry, punishing father-god of patriarchal oppression. It is something of a mystery to me that this God concept, so foreign to the actual contents of the gospel and Jesus' picture of his Abba, should be assumed by so many to be what in fact Christianity offers, and the degree to which it remains embedded in Christian literature and art. Furthermore, I find this problematic image deeply infecting all "brands" of Christianity, from the most anti-ecclesial charismatic/evangelical to Catholic to liberal. I do not mean they all deliberately teach it, but rather that all are somehow infected by it, one way or another, indeed have embraced it, even in rejection of it. Many have abandoned or rejected Christianity because their affective and intellectual development has rendered this notion of God intolerable, and they do not know and indeed often cannot imagine that Christianity has something else to offer. Intellectual conversion will mean, as Shug says to Celie in *The Color Purple*, first, you gotta get that angry old white man out of your head. It will then mean finding truer images of God in the tradition itself. For most of us this will obviously also include some psychological sorting out of our own family/childhood issues.

— Robert Davis Hughes III, [Beloved Dust: Tides of the Spirit in the Christian Life](#)

🗨 [1 Comment](#) | 📍 [Christianity, spirituality](#) | Tagged: [Beloved Dust](#), [Bob Hughes](#), [images of God](#), [patriarchal images of God](#), [Robert Davis Hughes III](#) | 📄 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Upcoming Events: Mysticism Retreat and Class](#)

June 12, 2009

Friends, here are the two events I have coming up, that may be of interest to folks who read this blog. The first is a a retreat on Christian mysticism that will be held at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia; the second is a class on world mysticism through the Evening at Emory Continuing Education Program at Emory University in Atlanta. Space is limited at both these events, so if you're interested, please register soon. Hope to see you there...

Wisdom of the Christian Mystics

Retreat Weekend at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, Georgia

July 17-19, 2009

(Retreat leaders: Fr. Tom Francis, OCSO and Carl McColman)

From the Desert Fathers to Julian of Norwich to Thomas Merton, Christian history is filled with stories of men and women who experienced a profound sense of God's presence in their lives. Can the teachings of the mystics still speak to us today? The mystics themselves would say "yes" — and furthermore, that their message is not just for priests or monks or nuns, but is indeed meant for the entire people of God. With this in mind, during this weekend we will look at several ways in which the wisdom of the Christian mystics can provide insight and inspiration for our age. This will include the universal call to holiness — St. Paul's directive to "pray without ceasing," and the promise from the Psalms to "be still and know God."

Suggested donation \$120 – \$200 (sliding scale) includes room and board for two nights

For more information or to register, call 770-760-0959 or visit www.trappist.net/retreat/

[Introduction to World Mysticism](#) through Emory University's "Evening at Emory" Program.

Wednesday Evenings, July 22-August 12, 2009; 7:00-9:00 pm

Instructor: Carl McColman

Madonna is studying the Kabbalah. *The Shack* is a runaway bestseller. Centuries after he died, everyone's reading Rumi. Yoga, Buddhism and other eastern practices are more popular among Americans than ever. So what gives? At the heart of all these cultural trends is mysticism, a vague word that can be translated as "the spiritual principle at the heart of religion." Many people believe mysticism is the golden thread that unites all the world's religions. Others scoff at the idea. Come decide for yourself in this class as we explore major themes and writings from the world's great mystical traditions. Using Andrew Harvey's *The Essential Mystics* as our textbook, we'll examine the world's great wisdom traditions — Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as pagan and philosophical forms of mysticism — acknowledging both the common ground and the distinctive qualities of each mystical path. Class is taught from an academic/nonsectarian perspective.

Textbook: *The Essential Mystics : Selections from the World's Great Wisdom Traditions.*

Tuition: \$130

[Click here to register](#)

Carl McColman is the author of several books, including *366 Celt: A Year and a Day of Celtic Wisdom and Lore* and *Spirituality: A Postmodern, Interfaith Approach to Cultivating a Relationship with God.* He blogs at www.anamchara.com. Carl is working on a book about Christian mysticism to be published in 2010.

🗨 [1 Comment](#) | 📄 [Announcements](#), [Mysticism](#) | Tagged: [Mysticism](#), [Upcoming Events](#) | 🔒 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[C.S. Lewis and Deification](#)

June 11, 2009

I haven't read this yet, but it sure looks tasty... and I wanted to go ahead and post a link here, since I know some of my readers are interested in C. S. Lewis and some are interested in the doctrine of deification (in the Greek, *theosis*). So here's a chance to ponder how this Orthodox doctrine figures in the thought of the most popular of Anglican authors...

[Shine as the Sun: C. S. Lewis and the Doctrine of Deification](#)

Which is actually part two of a two part essay; here is part one: [The Orthodox Worldview and C. S. Lewis \(Part I\)](#)

This essay originally appeared in *Road to Emmaus: A Journal of Orthodox Faith and Culture*. So many journals make you pay for PDF copies of essay reprints; it's refreshing to see this one offer articles like this one free of charge (I'd encourage you to make a donation if you download the PDF — a link is provided).

🗨 [2 Comments](#) | 📄 [Christianity](#), [Writing](#), [spirituality](#) | Tagged: [C. S. Lewis](#), [deification](#), [Orthodoxy](#), [Road to Emmaus](#), [theosis](#) | 🔒 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Attention Book Lovers and Anglophiles...](#)

June 9, 2009

I just stumbled across a rather fun blog, particularly for those who love Christian books and/or anything English:

[UKCBD: The Christian Bookshops Blog](#) (UKCBD stands for "United Kingdom Christian Bookshops Directory")

🗨 [Leave a Comment »](#) | 📄 [Books](#), [Other people's blogs](#) | Tagged: [Books](#), [Booksellers](#), [England](#) | 🔒 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[New Endowment for Flannery O'Connor's Church](#)

June 3, 2009



Sacred Heart Church, Milledgeville, GA

The *Georgia Bulletin* — the weekly newspaper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta — has an interesting article this week about an endowment left to Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Milledgeville, GA, by Regina O'Connor, the mother of Flannery O'Connor, one of the most renowned Catholic (and native Georgian) authors of the twentieth century. The endowment will preserve the current sanctuary of the church, even if the parish at some point needs to build a new church building. Read the story here: [New Endowment Will Preserve Flannery's Church](#).

Also check out Sally Fitzgerald's eulogy for Regina O'Connor, which also appeared in this week's *Georgia Bulletin*: [A Bow to Miss Regina](#).

🗨 [2 Comments](#) | 🏷 [Catholicism](#), [Writing](#) | Tagged: [Flannery O'Connor](#), [Milledgeville](#), [Sacred Heart Church](#) | 📄 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Thomas Berry 1914-2009](#)

June 1, 2009

Father Thomas Berry, the author of [The Dream of the Earth](#) and “one the 20th-century's most probing thinkers on the human relationship with the natural world and its implications for religion,” has died. Read [National Catholic Reporter's obituary](#).

🗨 [Leave a Comment »](#) | 🏷 [Catholicism](#), [Christianity](#), [Current events](#), [nature](#) | Tagged: [environmentalist](#), [obituary](#), [priest](#), [The Dream of the Earth](#), [Thomas Berry](#) | 📄 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[The Reverend Mark P](#)

May 28, 2009

One of my best friends from college, who is now a UCC minister in Vermont, has begun a blog. He's posting his sermons, mostly, although he told me that at some point he might post audio files of his sermons, which I think would be way cool. Pay him a visit, and if you leave a comment, tell him Carl sent you...

[The Reverend Mark Pitton's Blog](#)

🗨 [1 Comment](#) | 🏷 [Christianity](#), [Emergent](#), [Other people's blogs](#) | Tagged: [Mark Pitton](#), [Other people's blogs](#), [sermons](#) | 📄 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Quotes for the Day](#)

May 23, 2009

The tragedy of modern man is that his creativity, his spirituality, and his contemplative independence are inexorably throttled by a superego that has sold itself without question or compromise to the devil of technology.

...

The contemplative seeks to liberate his soul from all external control, to purify and detach it from material, sensual, and even spiritual compulsions, and to surrender it to the truth and creative freedom of the Holy Spirit.

— Thomas Merton, [The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation](#)

🗨 [7 Comments](#) | 🏷 [Quotations](#) | Tagged: [Contemplation](#), [Quotations](#), [Quotes for the Day](#), [technology](#), [Thomas Merton](#) | 📄 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Patheos is Live!](#)

May 21, 2009



If you haven't already been there, go visit www.Patheos.com. I think the best way to describe this site is “Facebook meets the Library of Alexandria.” It's a Web 2.0 social networking site embedded within an evolving, peer-reviewed library of articles about the world's major wisdom traditions, covering beliefs, spiritual practices, ethics, history and organizational structure. Basically, all you need to know to get a basic understanding of major wisdom and religious traditions from the world over.

I contributed to the content for the Paganism section — the first major Pagan-oriented project I've worked on since 2004! It felt like old-home week. Even though I'm no longer a practicing Pagan, Patheos' commitment to fair and objective exploration of all the world's wisdom traditions gave me a structure in which I could write about nature-based spirituality in a congenial and balanced way. Of course, there are other contributors to Patheos' Pagan pages who are current practitioners. Meanwhile, although I did not contribute any of the peer-reviewed content on Catholicism or Christianity in general, I've begun a few discussions on the Catholicism page, and it would be lovely if some of my blog readers popped in to contribute a thought or two.



When you set up your Patheos profile, send a friend request my way. My Patheos profile name is (of course) [Anamchara](#). I've also created a group on Patheos for conversation on [Christian Mysticism](#) that needs members — how about you?

🗨 [1 Comment](#) | 📢 [Announcements](#), [interfaith dialogue](#) | 🔒 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Quote for the Day](#)

May 20, 2009

Contemplation in the age of Auschwitz and Dachau, Solovky and Karaganda is something darker and more fearsome than contemplation in the age of the Church Fathers. For that very reason, the urge to seek a path of spiritual light can be a subtle temptation to sin. It certainly is sin if it means a frank rejection of the burden of our age, an escape into unreality and spiritual illusion, so as not to share the misery of other men.

— Thomas Merton, [The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation](#)

🗨 [7 Comments](#) | 📢 [Quotations](#) | Tagged: [Contemplation](#), [Quote for the Day](#), [sin](#), [The Inner Experience](#), [Thomas Merton](#) | 🔒 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Thoughts on Abundant Living \(John 10:10\)](#)

May 18, 2009

A friend of mine who is a theology student at Emory asked me this weekend how I understood John 10:10: In which Jesus says that he came so that we may have life, and “have it abundantly.”

This is my reply to her...

Regarding your question, the Greek word for ‘abundantly’ is, as you know, *perissos*, related to *peri* from which we get words like “periphery” and “perimeter.” This seems to have a connection with place and location, and my Greek dictionary suggests that it has connotations related to “neighborhood” or “vicinity.” This makes me think of the Irish word *tuath*, which has a rich meaning related both to “community” but also to “land” — since a tribe or community is, in Indo-European cosmology, intimately related to the land on which they dwell. There is a symbiotic relationship between a people and their land, a consciousness which I fear we have lost in our society, where land is seen as a commodity to be exploited, owned, used, or bought and sold, rather than something teeming with life, in which we are bound in living trust (think “Garden of Eden” or “New Heaven and New Earth.”) All this is to say that I see Our Lord’s notion of “life abundant” has to do with this idea of a fully enriched life, lived with loving and joyous relationship with land, where we consciously and intimately nurture the land entrusted to us, to its (her?) maximum fertility, not only feeding us but also feeding all the wonderful living beings with whom we are privileged to share the land — and in our care for the land, we actually contribute back to the land’s ongoing fertility so that as we grow in our health and “wealth,” so too does the environment in which we live in a conscious and spiritual relationship.

I put the word “wealth” in quotation marks because I think wealth has become a dangerous word, mainly because we tend to think of wealth in terms not of living in harmony with our environment, but rather in terms of what we can extract from the land to our egoic advantage. Whether this means mining shiny metals to adorn ourselves, converting non-renewable resources into consumable fuels, or transforming other resources into objects that we will rather quickly discard into landfills (!), we have, I think, a horribly impoverished notion of what constitutes wealth in our society. See www.thestoryofstuff.com for more on this topic. So I think we won’t have any idea of what Jesus’ vision of *perissos* (abundance) is, until we perform radical surgery on our current ideas of wealth and prosperity, built as they are on competitive economics (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer) and on unsustainable exploitation of the environment.

Ironically, I believe the abundant life that Jesus promises may actually entail a simplifying of the life that many of us Americans have become accustomed to living. I think true abundance will mean a society based on sustainability, simplicity, and shared wealth — not in a Marxist, managed economy sense, but in a relational, familial/tribal, we-love-each-other-so-we-naturally-take-care-of-each-other sense. I don’t believe “abundant” life means everyone has exactly the same amount of “wealth” or “stuff” — I suspect there will

always be ambitious types and then others like me who are too busy having fun to bother with making money! 😊 But I think in Jesus's vision for abundant living, the difference between the haves and the have-nots will be far less dramatic than what we see today.

Now, lest I come across as too much of a materialist in my reading of John 10:10, I should also add that I understand "abundant Christian life" in terms of the joys of spiritual practice — from contemplation to the Divine Office to lectio divina — and so, when I talk about the "abundant living" of a network of right relationships (human to human, and human to environment) it's important to remember that the key to this abundance is Christ's presence in the midst of all our relations: the "human to God" relationship which holds all other relations together.

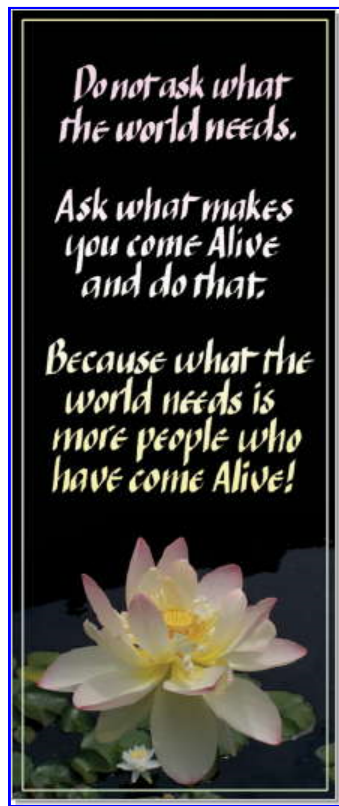
If you'd like a far more eloquent exploration of these ideas, look at Brian McLaren's book [Everything Must Change](#).

🗨️ [4 Comments](#) | 📖 [Bible, Christianity](#) | Tagged: [Abundance](#), [Bible](#), [environmentalism](#), [John 10:10](#), [justice](#) | 🔗 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Come Alive! \(Howard Thurman meets Michael Noyes & Fran McColman\)](#)

May 16, 2009



I'm delighted to announce that my good friend Michael Noyes has created a new work of calligraphy that features a photograph by my wife, Fran.

The piece includes a wonderful quotation by the African-American mystic and theologian Howard Thurman, who was a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr., among others:

Do not ask what the world needs.

Ask what makes you come alive and do that.

Because what the world needs is more people who have come alive!

At the bottom of the print is a photograph of a lotus that Fran took in the summer of 2004, when we visited the National Arboretum in Washington, DC. Fortunately, we had made a CD-ROM of all the photographs from that trip, so when our house was burglarized last year and our computers (with all of Fran's photographs on them) were stolen, the Arboretum photographs were some of the ones we thankfully still had.

And now one of those photos has been joined to Michael's graceful calligraphy and Howard Thurman's words of timeless wisdom.

If you'd like, you can purchase prints (framed or unframed) at Michael's website, by following this link:

www.michaelnoyes.com/product.php?id=196

While you're at it, browse around Michael's site. He's created a truly beautiful collection of inspirational and religious calligraphy, available both as prints and as greeting cards.

And when you make your purchase, tell Michael that Carl sent you. 😊

[3 Comments](#) | [Announcements](#), [Art](#), [Family](#), [Quotations](#), [photography](#) | [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Peace Through Music](#)

May 14, 2009

Take an 11 minute break and watch this video. It's got a gentle but inspirational message.

Here's a note from my friend CeCe Miles, whom I met through the Atlanta Chapter of the Ulster Project and who alerted me to this video:

Included in this 10 minute video is a 4 minute segment on the Omagh Community Youth Choir which was formed in 1998 by a young musician in Omagh named Daryl Simpson to unite Catholic and Protestant youth after the atrocity of the Omagh bomb which killed 29 people and 2 unborn babies and maimed 300 others on a beautiful summer Saturday in August. One of our 2004 Atlanta Ulster Project teens, Elaine Gallagher is featured in the video. It was released last week and had over 65,000 hits on the first day. By happenstance I was in Omagh on the day of the release was privileged to hear the choir sing at a featured community event that evening. The CD is available through Amazon.com and at Starbucks for those interested in hearing more. The choir performed last summer at the Milwaukee Irish Festival—the largest in the US I am told—and may come to the US again. By the way, Daryl Simpson is part of the trio who perform as the “Celtic Tenors” and tour regularly in various parts of the US. I hope you enjoy!

Incidentally, the 2004 Ulster Project Teens participated in the Brigid's Well Celtic Spirituality Group that I was leading at the time. So I feel a particular kinship to the young people of Omagh, and certainly admire their fortitude in refusing to let terrorism and religious bigotry have the final say in defining (and dividing) their community.

[2 Comments](#) | [Activism](#), [Art](#), [Ireland](#), [Music](#) | Tagged: [Music](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Omagh](#), [Peace Through Music](#), [Playing for a Change](#) | [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Show us yer haggis!](#)

May 11, 2009

This could be the hottest thing since the Macarena...

Thanks to Terry Buchanan of the Clan Buchanan Society of Atlanta for pointing this one out to me. Here's what Terry says:

This wee song is way too fun! It was released on 23rd March 2009 by Alva Academy & its associated primary schools. On 1st April 2009, just over a week later, it reached number one in the Scottish charts. The song was written by D. Clifford & S. Clyde. Enjoy the song and the video.

Hae the lyrics:

*“SCOTLAND’S got a dance for you, it’s funky and it’s new,
So don yer kilts and fill yer boots, we’re bringing it to you.
You can do it on yer own, in pairs or do it in a crowd,
But wherever you do it, you gotta do it proud.
Show us your haggis, raise your right arm to the sky,
Stand on one leg, flip it round and shout ‘och aye.’
Saltire for Scotland, and hoik it to the right,
And grab yer neebors shoulder, and nessie through the night.”*

[5 Comments](#) | [Scotland](#), [humor](#) | Tagged: [children](#), [dance](#), [fun](#), [haggis](#), [humor](#), [Scotland](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Posted by Carl McColman](#)

[Jesus & Mom](#)

May 10, 2009

Happy mother's day, to everyone who either is a mother or has one.

Last night I read something truly sad, in the *Atlanta Creative Loafing's* "Streettalk" column, where local folks get a chance to answer all sorts of ironic or cynical questions and have it printed in this weekly arts-and-entertainment paper. This week's twisted query was "How did your mother screw you up?" A young woman named Celia offered this heartbreaking response:

She made me watch The Exorcist when I was 5 and told me that was going to happen to me if I didn't pray. I was devastated. The Exorcist is no longer a scary movie — but every time I hear the soundtrack I do get a little frightened. She also told me that Jesus was watching me at all times, so when I was in a room by myself I was afraid to do something bad. I am now agnostic. And I'm afraid of Jesus Christ.

As Neo would say... "Whoa!" At least in the circles I travel, few people ever seem to talk about how crucially important mothers are to the initial spiritual formation of their children. But as Celia attests, what a mother says (and, I suspect, how she says it) can make a lifetime of difference.

Sigh. My heart goes out to all the Celias of the world, but I'm also impelled to give thanks for all those mothers who communicate by word and example that Christ is the incarnation of love, and that God is the fountain from which issues forth all love. So I think I'll amend my initial greeting in this post to say: here's an extra-special "Happy Mother's Day" wish to all the mothers who manage to rear your children without warping their ability to perceive the love of God.

[1 Comment](#) | [Family](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Posted by Carl McColman](#)

[Lay Cistercian Promises](#)

May 4, 2009

Yesterday I made my simple promises as a Lay Cistercian, along with six of my friends. Three others, who already were junior Lay Cistercians renewed their promises. The promises are for one year, and need to be repeated annually for at least three years before lifetime promises can be made.

It was a lovely ceremony. We met in the monastery chapter room and, standing before the Abbot and the spiritual director of the Lay Cistercians, read our promises aloud, then signed three copies: one for ourselves, one for the Lay Cistercian archives, and one for the Monastery archives.

Here's a picture of me signing my promises. The spiritual director, Fr. Anthony Delisi, and the abbot, Fr. Francis Michael, are sitting to the left.



After the ceremony we lingered in the cloister garden to chat with friends, including Fr. James Behrens. Here's a picture of me, Rhiannon, and Fr. James.



Sorry no pictures of Fran — she was behind the camera!

[8 Comments](#) | [Lay Cistercians, monasticism](#) | Tagged: [Fr. Anthony Delisi](#), [Fr. James Behrens](#), [Lay Cistercians](#), [Monastery of the Holy Spirit](#) | [Permalink](#)

Posted by Carl McColman

[Félix Caeli Porta](#)

May 4, 2009

Yes, the concert last night by the Atlanta Schola Cantorum was gorgeous. And among other things, it ramped up my interest in the early medieval hymn, *Ave Maris Stella*. I spent a little bit of time last night and this morning looking at various translations of it, trying to find one that would work as a devotional prayer (one of my Lay Cistercian promises is to cultivate a devotion to Mary, and it seems that praying the *Ave Maris Stella* would be a worthy means to that end). But I couldn't find one that I liked... so I did my own translation, reaching as far deep into the recesses of my mind as possible, to dredge up my two years of college Latin to try to put it to good use.

Here's what I came up with...

Hail, Star of the Sea, ever nurturing, Virgin Mother of God, felicitous gate of heaven.

By the "Ave" with which Gabriel hailed you, you have established us in peace, reversing the name of "Eva."

Loosen the chains of the guilty, send light to the blind, dispel our evil, plead for all good things.

Reveal yourself as Mother, that through you may your son, born for our sake, receive our prayers.

O singular Virgin, meek above all others, liberate us from our sin; make us meek and chaste.

Bestow a pure life, prepare a safe way, that, in seeing Jesus, we may rejoice forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

[2 Comments](#) | [Catholicism](#), [Devotion](#), [Prayer](#), [poetry](#) | Tagged: [Ave Maris Stella](#), [Devotion](#), [Prayer](#), [Star of the Sea](#) | [Permalink](#)

Posted by Carl McColman

[Simple Promises and the Star of the Sea](#)

April 30, 2009


God willing, this Sunday May 3, I make my first simple promises as a Lay-Cistercian of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. This comes at the culmination of two years in the Lay-Cistercian novitiate. These promises are basically for one year, and I will renew them again at least twice before making my lifetime promises.

While generally the big celebrating takes place with the life profession, I must confess to a measure of excitement even as I approach my simple promises. Becoming a novice two years ago was pretty easy: I basically just had to promise to show up once a month. Now the stakes are much higher: in front of the Abbot of the Monastery as well as the entire Lay-Cistercian Community, I'll be promising to conduct a life of continual conversion in the spirit of contemplative prayer, with the Rule of Benedict as my guide. Even when I make my lifetime promises, the promises themselves will essentially be the same. So this is it — this is when I basically say to God and my community, "I choose the Christian life as expressed through Cistercian spirituality." It feels like almost as big a deal as being received into the church, which happened just four years ago.

So... it's a day for celebration. And I just learned this morning that, in the prodigal, lavish grace that flows through the universe, a particularly appropriate way to celebrate will be available for me and my family, this weekend...

Atlanta Schola Cantorum
Directed by John Whitt

STAR OF THE SEA



Choral works by Palestrina, Victoria, Billings, Grieg, Busto, and Whitacre, featuring settings of *Ave Maris Stella*

Saturday, May 2, 8 p.m.
Church of the Epiphany
2089 Ponce De Leon Ave N.E., Atlanta

Sunday, May 3, 7:30 p.m.
St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church
1790 LaVista Road, Atlanta

Fifteen Dollars www.atlantaschola.org

When I was a small child, my first real concept of the Blessed Virgin Mary was as the “Star of the Sea,” for I grew up near Fort Monroe, VA, where both the Catholic Church and the Catholic Elementary School are named for Stella Maris. Even as a little boy who had no sense of the Catholic Faith or of devotion to the Blessed Mother, I remember the image of the Star of the Sea had caught my imagination. Upon entering the Catholic faith and becoming involved with Cistercian spirituality, I bumped into Our Lady, Star of the Sea again, this time learning that Bernard of Clairvaux had a particular devotion to Mary under this epithet. So even though I live about 250 miles from the ocean and haven’t been on a boat for probably seven years now, Mary Star of the Sea remains far and away my favorite epithet for the Blessed Mother. I think this has to do not only with how she keeps showing up in my life over and over again, but also my sense that contemplative spirituality is a profound exploration of the “inner ocean” (the “Topographic Oceans,” in the words of the rock band Yes). Mary, the Star of the Sea, is thus a guide for contemplatives as they traverse the inner waters.

Incidentally, for those of you interested in pagan and goddess spirituality: Isis of Egypt was also known as Stella Maris.

I’ve always loved sacred choral music, and am particularly fond of the many arrangements of the 8th-century hymn *Ave Maris Stella* that composers as varied as Liszt, Grieg, Palestrina, Byrd, and others have written. So... you can imagine my delight when I learned that Atlanta’s wonderful sacred music chorale, [Atlanta Schola Cantorum](http://atlantaschola.org), will be performing settings of *Ave Maris Stella* at their concert this weekend!

I’ll be at the St. Bart’s show on Sunday evening, celebrating my earliest concept of the Blessed Mother and giving thanks for promises made that very day.

If you’re in Atlanta, I hope to see you there.

🗨 [8 Comments](#) | 📢 [Announcements](#), [Devotion](#), [Music](#) | Tagged: [Atlanta Schola Cantorum](#), [Ave Maris Stella](#) | 🔗 [Permalink](#)

👤 Posted by Carl McColman

[Christian Mysticism on Twitter](#)

April 27, 2009

Okay, folks, tell all your friends... I’ve created a “Twitter Twibe” (yes, I know Noah Webster is rolling over in his grave) for those interested in Christian Mysticism. If you’re using Twitter, please join it...

<http://www.twibes.com/group/ChristianMysticism>

Thanks.

And you can follow me on Twitter as well: <http://twitter.com/earthmystic>

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Posted by Carl McColman

[Carmelite CDs](#)

April 22, 2009

Here's yet another way for you to spend your money: a collection of audio CDs about Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and other Carmelite luminaries: [Carmel Clarion Communications](#)

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Posted by Carl McColman

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• Welcome

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• Upcoming Class

[Introduction to World Mysticism](#) through Emory University's "Evening at Emory" Program.

Madonna is studying the Kabbalah. *The Shack* is a runaway bestseller. Centuries after he died, everyone's reading Rumi. Yoga, Buddhism and other eastern practices are more popular among Americans than ever. So what gives? At the heart of all these cultural trends is mysticism, a vague word that can be translated as "the spiritual principle at the heart of religion." Many people believe mysticism is the golden thread that unites all the world's religions. Others scoff at the idea. Come decide for yourself in this class as we explore major themes and writings from the world's great mystical traditions. Using Andrew Harvey's *The Essential Mystics* as our textbook, we'll examine the world's great wisdom traditions — Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as pagan and philosophical forms of mysticism — acknowledging both the common ground and the distinctive qualities of each mystical path. Class is taught from an academic/nonsectarian perspective.

Textbook: *The Essential Mystics : Selections from the World's Great Wisdom Traditions*.

Instructor: Carl McColman

July 22-August 12, 2009

7:00-9:00 pm

[Click here to register](#)

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• Twitter



If you'd like to follow me on Twitter, my user ID is [@earthmystic](#).

Whenever I post to this blog, an announcement is generated for my Twitter feed, so you can always keep up to date with what's going on here.

• Speaking of Mysticism

Carl McColman talks about mysticism: what it is, and why it matters, in this interview which originally aired on Atlanta's AM 1690 in September 2008. [Click here to listen.](#)

• Newsletter

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• What others say...

"[www.anamchara.com](#) is a beautiful site that lists books and web sites introducing all aspects of Christian mysticism."

— Abbot Christopher Jamison, host of "The Monastery" on the BBC

"One of the best spiritual blogs around"

— John Skinner, author of *Hear Our Silence* and translator of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*

"Thanks, Carl, for your fine and much needed work."

— Richard Rohr, author of *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*

"Recommended website"

— Steven Sadler, author of *Looking for God: A Seeker's Guide to Religious and Spiritual Groups of the World*

"Carl McColman is part Ken Wilber, part Richard Rohr, and part Indiana Jones' dad."

— Brittan Bullock, blogger, *Sensual Jesus*

"As a former professor of education, I tend to critique instructors rather severely. However, Carl McColman, in my opinion, ranks as one of the all-time great instructors. He has an unbelievable mastery of his subject matter & an uncanny ability to translate esoteric matter into understandable form. On top of that, he's very personable. This is my second Evening at Emory Class with Carl and I will sign up for any class that he teaches!"

— Student evaluation form

• Upcoming Events

Carl McColman will be co-leading the following retreat at the guesthouse of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, GA. For more information or to register, [click here](#).

July 17-19, 2009:

Wisdom of the Christian Mystics

(with Fr. Tom Francis, OCSO)

From the Desert Fathers to Julian of Norwich to Thomas Merton, Christian history is filled with stories of men and women who experienced a profound sense of God's presence in their lives. Can the teachings of the mystics still speak to us today? The mystics themselves would say "yes" – and furthermore, that their message is not just for priests or monks or nuns, but is indeed meant for the entire people of God. With this in mind, during this weekend we will look at several ways in which the wisdom of the Christian mystics can provide insight and inspiration for our age. This will include the universal call to holiness – St. Paul's directive to "pray without ceasing," and the promise from the Psalms to "be still and know God."

Looking Ahead:

October 30-31, 2010

Portland, Oregon: Several Events; Times and Locations to be Announced

• Free Julian Prayer Cards!



If you'd like a free Julian of Norwich Prayer Card, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Carl McColman
P.O. Box 1146
Clarkston, GA 30021

I'll send you three cards (one for you and two for friends). Sorry, I can only send these to addresses in the USA.

• Thanks...

... to Ian-S on Flickr for the use of his [beautiful photograph of the Julian stained glass in Norwich Cathedral](#), which graces the Julian Prayer Card and the header of this blog. Used by permission under a Creative Commons Licence.

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• Other Links

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• I'd love to hear from you

Email me at

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anamchara.com*

or send old-fashioned mail to:

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USA

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