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# SF 650 Christian Devotional Classics

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**SF650 Christian Devotional Classics**  
**3 Units**  
**Fall Term, 3 September - 13 December 2002**  
**Class meets Thursdays, 6:15 - 9 P. M.**  
**Donald E. Demaray, Professor**

**COURSE AIMS:** Competencies to be developed by students.

- 1) Beginning to love and appreciate the classic devotional books, their authors and their messages.
- 2) Creating an atmosphere for spiritual growth.
- 3) Using Christian devotional classics as rich resources for preaching and teaching.
- 4) Enriching our knowledge of Christian theology and practice: God, Christ, prayer, meditation, the possibilities of grace, etc.
- 5) Learning secrets of in-depth spirituality as a center from which ministers live and work as whole, healthy, developing persons.

**COURSE PROCEDURES:** Ways and means of developing competencies

- 1) **BOOKS AND AUTHORS:** Bibliographical and biographical study. The textbooks will assist in this; so will the Course Bibliography.
- 2) **SPIRITUAL GROWTH ATMOSPHERE:** We will seek to develop what Henri Nouwen calls the "Eucharistic community." Each session will begin with the Eucharist followed by opportunities for sharing praises and concerns in prayer, including healing.
- 3) **CLASSICS AS RESOURCES:** Students will have the opportunity to preach a sermon or teach a lesson suggested by a devotional classic.
- 4) **THEOLOGY:** Reading, class discussion, practicum opportunities will all enhance our knowledge of Christian theology, with particular application to spiritual development.
- 5) **HEALTH, WHOLENESS AND WELL-BEING:** Each of us will take a personal retreat that may well prove a defining moment in learning how in-depth spirituality provides for ongoing balance, and spiritual, emotional and physical health.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Coming to grips with our aims.

- 1) Required books:  
*The Spiritual Formation Bible: Growing in Intimacy with God Through Scripture.*

Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups*.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, edited by Donald E. Demaray

St. Francis of Assisi, *The Little Flowers*, edited by Donald E. Demaray,

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, edited by Donald E. Demaray.

All textbooks available in the Seminary Bookstore. Do not select substitutes,

- 2) TERM PAPER: Write a 6 page documented biographical paper on one of the classical writers.
- 3) PRACTICUM: Choose material from one of the classics as stimulus for preaching a sermon or teaching a lesson. Determine the Bible basis of your presentation, putting ultimate authority where it belongs.
- 4) DAILY DEVOTIONS: Choose a book of the Bible and go through the biblical text and the comments provided in the *Spiritual Formation Bible*. Make notes. Before going through the Bible book of your choice, read the essays on pp. x -Xxvi.
- 5) ATTENDANCE: Required. If you *must* absent yourself from a session, consult the professor.
- 6) CLASS ASSIGNMENTS: Please follow the schedule below.
- 7) PERSONAL RETREAT: Locate a quiet place - monastery, church, room - with no cell phone or other interruptions. Take notebook, Bible, and devotional book of your choice. Listen to the Inner Voice and record what you hear in preparation for sharing in our final class session. Make this a four hour retreat, hopefully four uninterrupted hours, but if work or family obligations make that impossible, take two two-hour periods.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:** Implementing aims and developing competencies.

Thursday 5 September: Orientation,

Thursday 12 September: Read the Introduction to *Devotional Classics*, then study "Preparing for the Spiritual Life." Write out your answers to the Reflection Questions on one of the writers.

Thursday 19 September: This week, work through "The Prayer-Filled Life" in the Foster and Smith book. Also read Bro. Lawrence's little book, *The Practice of the Presence* and make notes to help you share your "ah ha" moments.

Thursday 26 September: Now comes section three of *Devotional Classics*. Please read this section, then start to read *The Imitation of Christ*. (You

- will* want to take more time through the term to complete that book.) Makes notes to share in class.
- Thursday 3 October: "The Spirit-Empowered Life" will occupy you this week in preparation for the first class session in October. In this section you will study three Quakers: Thomas Kelly, George Fox and Isaac Penington. Try to enter the world of the Friends people; record what you discover. Do you see commonalities with the other writers in this week's study? Do some reading on the Society of Friends people if you need this exposure.
- Thursday 10 October: "The Compassionate Life" begins on p. 249 and closes on p. 298 of *Devotional Classics*. Compare John Wesley's *Christian Perfection* with the other writers. What do you discover?
- Thursday 17 October: "The Word-Centered Life" will both inspire and challenge you. Answer the Reflection Questions for one of the writers - write out your comments.
- Thursday 24 October: For last week's session we read a little from St. Francis of Assisi. Come to class this week having read *The Little Flowers* in the Demaray edition. This will provide background for watching Zeffirelli's famous film.

In the next phase of our course, you have the opportunity to share your most cherished findings in sermon or lesson with fellow students and professor. This will prove a very important part of our term together, and some will experience defining moments for a lifetime of ministry. Let's take special time to pray for one another during these practicum days.

Feel free to talk about your own preparation process either in class or with the professor privately.

And if you wish to try an innovative vehicle for communicating, please talk with the professor.

Thursday 31 October: Practicum

Thursday 7 November: Practicum.

Thursday 14 November: Practicum.

Thursday 21 November: Practicum.

25 - 29 November, READING WEEK.

Thursday 5 December: Practicum.

Thursday 11 December: Report your discoveries from the four hour personal retreat.

**COURSE GRADING:** Measuring our progress toward spiritual and academic maturity,

- 1) Weekly assignments evaluated for clarity, insight, promptness, language usage and over-all care in presentation. Getting your assignments in on time assists in maintaining a good grade average.
- 2) Faithful and prompt attendance at class sessions.
- 3) Practicum experiences. Professor and class will critique presentations, evaluating in terms of content and communication effectiveness.
- 4) Reading. Please keep track of pages read and give total to the professor at the close of the term. If you have listened to tapes, please give appropriate data (speaker or author, topic or title, time listening, etc.).
- 5) Contribution toward the spirit of *koinonia* in the class sessions. We aim to create a "family" where we can share openly and listen to each other with empathy.