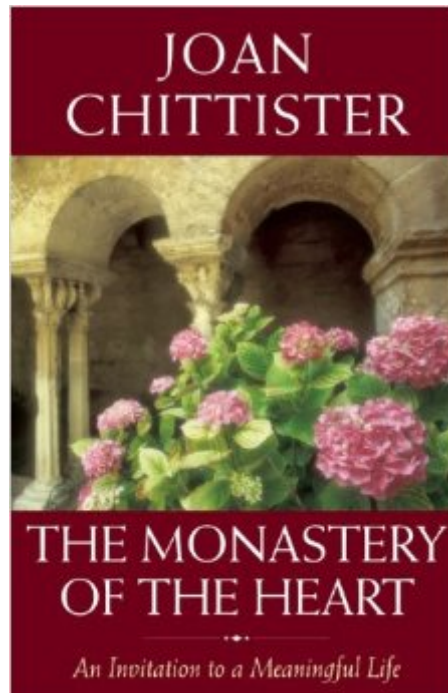


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The Monastery Of The Heart: An Invitation To A Meaningful Life



Synopsis

A guide based on the ancient Rule of Benedict that provides a practical model upon which to build a satisfying life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What I Can Tell You: I have never heard of Joan Chittister and this is one of the most wonderful things about being a book reviewer. Sometimes things cross my desk that would have never been on my radar. I am one of those people who go by the motto "everything happens for a reason" and I do believe there is a reason this book came my way. Being more spiritual than religious I was worried that I would come away thinking I was preached to, feeling that this book was way beyond what I believe or know. This is not true. Joan Chittister speaks of what's in our hearts, family, togetherness, reflection, soul searching, and community. Her way with words gets inside you and makes you want to listen, learn, read, think and pray. "The truth is that work has a spiritual function. It is done for the sake of the soul, not for punishment of the body or for the gratification of the ego. Good work is meant to build into us a respect for the order and beauty that the cultivation of the spiritual life demands." I love chapter 21 where she breaks down the steps of Humility (the ladder that reaches between us and God.)

"The Monastery of the Heart" by Sr. Joan Chittister is intended as a how-to manual for those who want to live by the Benedictine Rule while out in the world. "For Benedict of Nursia, the spiritual life

lay in simply living this life, our daily life, well. All of it. Every simple, single action of it." Sr. Joan invites those of us out in the world who seek to live a more spiritual existence to incorporate Benedictine spirituality in our daily lives. To do so, one must begin with the Word of God itself. "As monastics of the heart we must read the scriptures day in and day out, till they ring in our ears, and fill our hearts, and become the very breath we breathe." The Rule then asks for participants to be constant at prayer and to perform the work of God. It invites us to measure our words and embrace the gifts of silence. It calls us to love simplicity rather than the amassing of material goods, to value our work and offer it to God, to welcome the stranger, and to live humbly. "Monastery of the Heart" is an unusual text in that it is written in prose verse which gives it a lyrical quality. The passages are full of wisdom and will inspire thought and conversion of heart. The highlight of the book is the chapter on humility. "In Benedictine spirituality, there is a twelve-runged ladder that leads to God. This ladder that reaches between us and God is called 'the steps of humility.'" If one follows these twelve steps, one cannot help but grow closer to God. "Monastery of the Heart" offers a practical guide for those searching for "something more" in their spiritual lives. It is a blueprint for living as a monastic out in the world.

A friend is getting up a group for spiritual direction and suggested we use this book to get started. As I am reading it, I am reminded of the recent stir about nuns and the discussions about what is and is not essential for the religious life. If you take away the medieval dress and walls, what is left? And what may be left is a Monastery of the Heart as described in this book. The author strips away years of accrued traditions, adaptations, and interpretations to look at the core of the rule of St. Benedict and finds it still useful. Still a good guide for forming and maintaining community. I have found a lot to think about with this book. It's what I call a sipping book. Not one you read in big gulps, but keep around and pick up and read a paragraph or page or two then think about things for awhile.

Joan Chittister's writings are always inspiring, and these are no exception. I have read about three-fourths of THE MONASTERY OF THE HEART but have not yet read the other two books I ordered. Sr. Joan's explanations on the Rule of St Benedict are clear, concise, and enlightening. As in all of her writings which have been my privilege to read, there is no preaching nor attempts to convert the reader. She simply shares her considerable insight and spirituality in a down-to-earth manner.

This is an explanation for lay people of the Rule of St Benedict by a nun who is one of the foremost writers on the subject, and one of the founders of the website Monasteries of the Heart. It will appeal to anyone interested in trying to be intentional about living a monastic life while staying in the world. It is being used as the text for study on the MOH website.

This extended prose poem reimagines what it is to live the simple, yet radical values that have endured for centuries in Benedictine communities. You don't need to be Benedictine or Catholic to appreciate the inherently human need to live a life that matters, to develop emotionally and spiritually in ways that serve a greater purpose than our own personal good. The book, introduced in 2011, launched a movement to create Monasteries of the Heart. These are small faith communities -- on site and/or online. The movement and the groups are supported by a resource-intensive web site run by Chittister and the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pa. (monasteriesoftheheart.org). It's an engaging, refreshing and transformative way to build and support a way of life and a life worth living.

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