

Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying With Icons

By Henri J. M. Nouwen

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This is a book of meditations penned by famed Catholic writer Henri Nouwen, growing out of his contemplation of icons during sojourns at l'Arche, a community for people with mental handicaps in Trosly, France.

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Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying With Icons By Henri J. M. Nouwen Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #141699 in Books
- Published on: 2007-09-15
- Format: Deluxe Edition
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.08" h x .39" w x 5.74" l, .34 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 128 pages

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Editorial Review

Review
Henri J. M. Nouwen, who wrote more than 40 books, remains one of the most popular spiritual writers of our time. This paperback is a revised version of a volume released in 1987. We are assaulted by images in a society where consumerism comes at us through posters, billboards, television, movies and store windows. But icons are a different thing completely. Nouwen presents meditations on four icons: the icon of the Holy Trinity, the icon of the Virgin of Vladimir, the icon of the Savior of Zvenigorod, and the icon of the Descent of the Spirit: "By giving the icons long and prayerful attention talking about them, reading about them, but mostly just gazing at them in silence I have gradually come to know them by heart. I see them now whether they are physically present or not. I have memorized them as I have memorized the Our Father and the Hail Mary, and I pray with them wherever I go." Icons are a part of the sacred liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church and are used in worship services. Nouwen points out that they do not excite our outer senses but speak to our heart. Those who gaze at icons as a spiritual practice believe they draw closer to God in the process. Nouwen presents substantive spiritual analysis of the icon of the Holy Trinity, which he sees as a pathway into the Mystery of God's self-revelation. The icon of the Virgin of Vladimir is an invitation to enter the divine milieu with gratitude and joy. Nouwen sees in the eyes of the icon of the Savior of Zvenigorod a revelation about the mystery of the Incarnation. And, finally, in the icon of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, he feels a celebration of the power and meaning of community. Nouwen concludes: "Working on these meditations has been a great delight. Praying became writing and writing became praying. More energy was granted than consumed in the process. I fervently hope that you who read these meditations will experience some of this same delight, and thus deepen your desire to behold the beauty of the Lord expressed in these holy images." --Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, www.spiritualityandpractice.com

About the Author
Henri J. M. Nouwen is one of the most popular spiritual writers of our time. He wrote more than forty books, among them the bestselling Out of Solitude. He taught at the University of Notre Dame, as well as Yale and Harvard Universities. From 1986 until his death in 1996, he was part of the L Arche Daybreak community in Toronto, where he shared his life with people with mental disabilities.

Robert Lentz, one of America's most original artists, has been painting icons for more than 25 years. His work has been shown around the world, has appeared on the covers of many books and magazines, and is featured with the text of Joan Chittister in the Orbis book A Passion for Life: Fragments from the Face of God. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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