

Will you let yourself be drawn to create, by your life, a poem of love with him? Are you prepared to wait for him, the Risen Christ, even when your body and your spirit are like parched and dry ground?



Taizé

And he elicits in you an intuition, a burst of new energy...Then a desert flower springs up within you, a flower of light-heartedness.

Brother Roger of

A Prayer from Brother Roger of Taizé

Risen Christ, you take us with our hearts just as they are. Why would we wait for our hearts to be changed before going to you? You transfigure them.

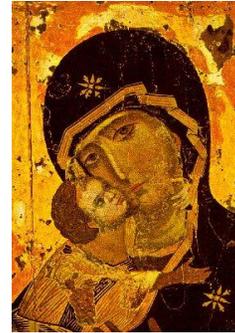
With our thorns, you light a fire. The open wound in us is the place where your love comes flowing through. And within the very hurts themselves, you bring to fruition a communion with you.

Your voice comes to inhabit our night, and the gateways of praise open up within us.



Crown of Thorns – Ludmila Pawlowska

REFLECTIONS ON ICONS



The Virgin of Vladimir – brought from Constantinople to Russia in early 12th century

Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Ave Maria Press, 2007 - From the Introduction

“Acting, speaking, and even reflective thinking may at times be too demanding, but we are forever seeing. When we dream, we see. When we stare in front of us, we see. When we close our eyes to rest, we see. We see trees, houses, roads and cars, seas and mountains, animals and people, places and faces, shapes and colors. We see clearly or vaguely, but always we find something to see.

“But what do we really choose to see? It makes a great difference whether we see a flower or a snake, a gentle smile or menacing teeth, a dancing couple or a hostile crowd. We do have a choice. Just as we are responsible for what we eat, so we are responsible for what we see. It is easy to become a victim of the vast array of visual stimuli surrounding us. The “powers and principalities” control many of our daily images. Posters, billboards, television, videocassettes, movies and store windows continuously assault our eyes and inscribe their images upon our memories.

“Still we do not have to be passive victims of a world that wants to entertain and distract us. We can make some decisions and choices. A spiritual life in the midst of our energy-draining society requires us to take conscious steps to safeguard that inner space where we can keep our eyes fixed on the beauty of the Lord.

“(For those of you who wish to meditate) it is important to gaze at the icons with complete attention and to pray with them. Gazing is probably the best word to touch the core of Eastern

spirituality. Whereas St. Benedict, who has set the tone of the spirituality of the West, calls us first of all to listen, the Byzantine fathers focus on gazing. This is especially evident in the liturgical life of the Eastern church.

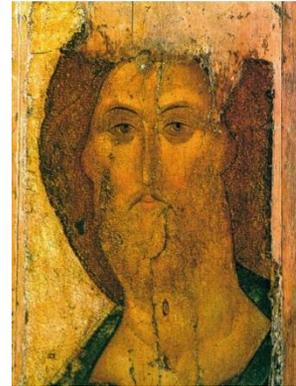
“Why icons?... The great treasures of Western art might indeed be more attractive, but icons are created for the sole purpose of offering access, through the gate of the visible, to the mystery of the invisible. Icons are painted to lead us into the inner room of prayer and bring us close to the heart of God.

“In contrast to the more familiar art of the West, icons are made according to age-old rules. Their forms and colors depend not merely upon the imagination and taste of the iconographer, but are handed down from generation to generation in obedience to venerable traditions. The iconographer’s first concern is not to make himself known but to proclaim God’s kingdom through his art. Icons are meant to have a place in the sacred liturgy and are thus painted in accordance with the demands of the liturgy. As does the liturgy itself, icons try to give us a glimpse of heaven.

“This explains why icons are not easy to “see.” They do not immediately speak to our senses. They do not excite, fascinate, stir our emotions, or stimulate our imagination. At first, they even seem somewhat rigid, lifeless, schematic, and dull. They do not reveal themselves to us at first sight. It is only gradually, after a patient, prayerful presence that they start speaking to us. And as they speak, they speak more to our inner than to our outer senses. They speak to the heart that searches for God.

“An icon is like a window looking out upon eternity. Behind its two-dimensional surface lies the garden of God, which is beyond dimension or size. Every time I entrust myself to these images, move beyond my curious questions about their origin, history, and artistic value, and let them speak to me in their own language, they draw me into closer communion with the God of love.

“May they become faithful guides on your journey and vital sources of lasting joy and peace.”
Henri Nouwen



The Savior of Zvengorod

Andrei Rubliov, 1394

The Sources of Taizé: No Greater Love,
Brother Roger of Taizé, Continuum, London,
2000 (Ateliers et Presses de Taizé)

“Christ’s love is a fire”

“Are you surrounded by things you cannot understand? When darkness grows deep, his love is a fire. You need only fix your gaze on that lamp-burning in the darkness, till day begins to dawn and the sun rises in your heart. (2 Peter 1:19)

“You know very well that you are not the one who creates this source of light; it comes from Christ.

“Dazzling visit of the love of God, the Holy Spirit flashes through each human life like lightning in the night. By this mysterious presence, the Risen Christ takes hold of you. He takes everything upon himself, even the trials so hard to bear.

“Only later, sometimes much later, will you understand that his overflowing life is never lacking. And you will say, “Was not my heart burning within me while he spoke to me?” (Luke 24:32)

“Even when you do not recognize him clearly, are you prepared to remain in the Risen Christ’s presence during those long periods of silence when nothing seems to be happening?

“There, life’s most important decisions take shape. There, the continual thoughts of “what’s the use?” melt away.

“When you understand little of what he expects from you, tell him so. In prayer that is humble, tell him everything, even what you cannot put into words.

“Intensely patient, don’t worry about not praying properly.
Don’t you see that every spiritual pretension would be like a little
death of the soul?”

(continued)