



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

13 October 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Mystic \ˈmi-stik\

One who experiences a special union with God. While techniques of meditation or contemplation enable us to encounter God through our own efforts, the **mystic** is united to God by God's own initiative.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-mystic>

CONTEXT

No one chooses to be a **mystic**. You may choose your profession, your interests, and your passions, but the **mystical** life is a calling, and we do not call ourselves. It is God's call.

—*Carl McColman*, *The Little Book of Christian Mysticism*

Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the **mystic** lives and looks. . . . The Absolute of the metaphysicians remains a diagram—impersonal and unattainable—the Absolute of the **mystics** is lovable, attainable, alive. —*Evelyn Underhill*, *Mysticism*

WHY IT MATTERS

We all have a unique summons to become one with God. Some **mystics** are seers or visionaries. Others are poets, sages, or storytellers. Becoming better acquainted with the stories of holy **mystics** might enable us to locate our own spiritual calling.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called ‘**mystical**’ because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments—the holy mysteries—and the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this **mystical** life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.”

RELATED WORDS

Contemplative | Ecstasy | Desert Monasticism

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What are visions?

Visions are a product of God's self-communication. Christianity is grounded in divine revelation so the leap to visions isn't as great as it seems. Nonetheless visions are extraordinary events. Tangible visions are rare. Juan Diego got the tilma cloak from Our Lady of Guadalupe. A globe of fire entered Philip Neri's chest, enlarging his heart and breaking his ribs. Francis of Assisi endured stigmata. **Mystics** agree the most reliable visions are intellectual or intuitive, less likely distorted by unreliable senses. **Mystics** also insist having visions isn't the goal. Most **mystics** have early visions before moving into greater communion with God. The vision merely provided a boost into something richer. The church leaves belief in specific visions open to question. If we paid more attention, though, all of us might see more than we expect.

—*Alice Camille*, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-visions>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

MEMORIAL OF TERESA OF JESUS (ÁVILA), DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH (OCTOBER 15)

Seek some mystic reform

Saint Teresa of Ávila, also known as Teresa of Jesus, one of the spiritual greats of the church, entered the cloister in the early 1500s and had a seemingly routine life on the surface. But as her **mystical** encounters with Jesus emerged, along with her desire for a simpler, less worldly way of being, she began to write about the spiritual life and advocated for reform of her religious order, against strong opposition. Declared a doctor of the church, Teresa's reforms and enduring spiritual insights still carry weight.

READINGS: Galatians 5:1-6; Luke 11:37-41 (468 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101524.cfm>). “*Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside?*”

FAITH IN ACTION

What reform, small or large, can you work toward today that can help bring about peace and spiritual growth for yourself and others?