

The Risen Christ, the Key to Spiritual Theology

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"Oh come on Francine! You need to get in touch with your *spirituality!*". So ran a snatch of conversation between two young women, overheard at a bus stop. I didn't catch the sequel, but it doubtless included advice to Francine (my name for the young woman being addressed) that she study at the "Teresianum", where it is indeed with her spirituality that the Pontifical Institute of Spiritual Theology would aspire to put her in touch. The question is, how? Or from what perspective?

There are many possible starting points for the study of spiritual theology. One might begin from human experience – of longing, or of mystery, or of relationships – and work up and out from there. (And this might indeed be the way forward for Francine.) Or one might begin from a particular philosophy, like Rahner with his transcendental thomism, and build up a picture supported strictly by that philosophical framework. Another approach might be historical, tracing the Christian experience of spirituality down the ages; or hagio-theological, building a system out of the teaching of a given author such as saint Augustine or saint Therese. Again, one could begin with the *Sitz-im-Leben* of a particular culture – Vietnamese, say, or Scandinavian; or a particular challenge – the liquidity of the digital age for instance. Each of these approaches is surely valid.

However, the proposal we make here is that the truly sufficient starting point for spiritual theology is the proclamation of faith in the risen Christ.

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ABSTRACT: The article affirms that spiritual theology works best when its source, centre and goal is the risen Christ. It examines the NT emphasis on Jesus' resurrection as an event, and sees his rising as final revelation of God and source of transformation for humanity. Christ's resurrection brings his earthly life into the now of God's eternity (saint Teresa of Avila found in this a key to her life of prayer). Jesus rises towards the Father, and the effect of his rising is to open to humanity that Trinitarian life. The article concludes by considering how this perspective might affect the mood of theology and direct our spirituality.

KEYWORDS: Jesus; resurrection; revelation; transformation; Teresa of Avila; Trinity; grace; hope.