

Father Anthony De Mello: One Of The Great Modern Day Spiritual Teachers

Father Anthony de Mello (1931-1987) was an Indian Jesuit spiritual director and retreat leader who gave workshops, conferences, and seminars all over the world. He pioneered post-denominational Christianity and proclaimed a lyrical mysticism rooted in story and imagination. Best of all, he presented concrete spiritual practices and exercises designed to silence the mind and give expression to the yearnings of the heart. Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Great men and women of great faith and conviction who are able to attract an international following emerge rarely. Sister Theresa is obviously one such person. Though not quite in the same league, but very close, is a Jesuit Priest who made a major impact on people of all faiths and beliefs in the 1980s. Born in Goa 1931, once a Portuguese colony on the Indian subcontinent, He died of a sudden heart attack in 1987 at Fordham, the great Jesuit University, in New York preparing for his annual summer lecture tour across the great cities of the U.S.A. Fortunately for us his writings, tapes and videos live on. Many are questioned for their true authenticity but there is a hard core of work which no one disputes. Reading his works are very inspirational and I always go to them when I need security, reassurance and comfort. He talks directly to you.

SOCIETY OF JESUS

Father Anthony de Mello J.S is one of the great spiritual teachers of the second half of the last century. He was a member of the Company of Jesus as it was first known; better known now as the Society of Jesus and its members are called Jesuits. It is one of the great Roman Catholic Orders and was founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1540. The Jesuits emphasise spiritual purity and intellectual acumen with a stress on logic. Its educational system is exemplary and it prides itself in having produced some of the brightest and best leaders the world has known.

The 20,000 Jesuits work in 112 nations and focus on parish and retreat ministry, in high schools and colleges. They may be found working as lawyers and doctors, psychologists and counselors, writers and journalists, theologians and philosophers, researchers and scientists. In short, Jesuits do all kinds of work. Their mission is everywhere and always the promotion of faith in Jesus Christ and the justice demanded by that faith. Jesuits seek to make Christ's Kingdom available to our times. They are men with a singular passion: to do the world a world of good.

FATHER DE MELLO

Jesuits have a long history of work in India. There are for example 25 Jesuit universities and some 200,000 students in all educational sectors at any given time. De Mello became the Director of the Sadhana Institute of Pastoral Counselling in Poona India. Many of his lectures were published in India initially and eventually they came to the attention of publishers in the West who recognized their uniqueness. During the 80s de Mello came to the U.S. and undertook a rigorous annual summer tour of U.S cities when thousands would flock to listen to him. In addition he held other workshops, prayer meetings conferences, often held at Fordham University.

One participant said? He was an entertainer, a storyteller and a challenger. He blows your mind. He is one of the most powerful speakers I have ever heard. He makes you see things in different ways. He was a genius of devising exercises for people to keep in touch with themselves and to pray out of that experience.

De Mello recognized his ability as a teacher and counseling and presenting his faith in a unique way, through stories and poetry. He drew on an eclectic fund borrowed from Hasidic, Zen and the Sufi Masters as well as Jesus and the mystics of the west. He tried to awaken his listeners to the presence of God in their midst.

Others said de Mello's greatest strength was his insistence that prayer is made with the heart not the head. Rather than more words about God, people want a taste of Him. With this in mind he stressed the need for people to be aware, to wake up to the world around them. He challenged us thus: How can you hear the song and not hear the singer? How can you see the wave and not see the ocean? How can you see the dance and not the dancer?

NOTIFICATION

This great man who has done so much good to bring his church and his ideas to the ordinary person has nonetheless not gone unnoticed by the authorities. Indeed, he has been brought under suspicion by the Vatican . The warning underlies certain passages from his writings as not in conformity with the teaching of the Catholic Church. It appears that it has put dogma before the spiritual growth and faith of its flock.

Eleven years after de Mello's death, a Notification was approved by Pope John II concerning the writings of Father Anthony de Mello. It was penned by none other than Cardinal Ratzinger, The Papal Policeman who has since become the new Pope! Basically, the Notification claims that de Mello challenges the nature of God and Jesus as espoused by the church. It concludes "the above-mentioned positions are incompatible with the Catholic faith and can cause grave harm"

An official response to this accusation is being prepared by the Institute for Missiology and for the study of Religion (IMR). The purpose of the response is to point out the real significance of Father de Mello's writings and teachings, as well as the faulty quotations brought out in the Note. The IMR concludes Father de Mello is certainly a danger to a particular type of Catholicism but not to those who believe in Jesus Christ and live by his Gospel in the Unity of the faith .

The Church has even tried to have his books banned. What publisher would give up so prized a possession. It has been unsuccessful at least in the U.S.

In the end this great man, loved by thousands, eschewed by his Roman Catholic authorities aimed simply to teach us How To Pray and How to Wake Up and Live. He left many best selling books still selling in the millions and in his short lifetime he was renowned for his workshops, his retreats and prayer courses. Despite the efforts of his Church, he is as alive today as when he lived. Perhaps when the Vatican loosens up, he may well be made a Saint!

Review the Internet if you have any doubt. Father Stroud (see below) is the key spokesperson today for Father de Mello. From his website his books and tapes can be obtained. So also are they available on <http://www.abebooks.com>, <http://www.barnesandnoble.com> ; <http://www.amazon.com>

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Select Books - <http://www.demello.org/textlist.doc>

- ? Sadhana: A Way to God
- ? The Song of the Bird
- ? Wellsprings
- ? The Heart of Enlighenment
- ? Awareness
- ? The Way to Love
- ? Contact with god
- ? The Prayer of the Frog

Vatican's Notification. www.ourladywarriors.org/dissent/demello.htm

Official de Mello site: <http://www.demello.org/>

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Check the Author's website which has nothing to do with spirituality: <http://www.ehomebiz.org/>

Short note about the author

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