

Books Written by Henri Nouwen in Chronological Order

HENRI NOUWEN LITERARY TRUST

1. *Intimacy* (1969), Harper Collins

Henri Nouwen's first book addresses the central question of Nouwen's life: "How can I find a creative and fulfilling intimacy in my relationship with God and my fellow human beings?" Nouwen explores the balance between intimacy and distance, the problems in trying to develop lasting and productive relationships on all levels, and the connections between intimacy and sexuality, prayer, faith, and the mental well-being of the minister.

2. *Bidden om het leven: Het Contemplatief engagement van Thomas Merton* (1970) *Thomas Merton: Contemplative Critic* (1972) *published as *Encounters with Merton: Spiritual Reflections* in 2004, Crossroad

This short meditation on the spirituality and life of Thomas Merton offers a selection of Merton's writing (some of which were unpublished at the time) which were included as jumping off points for meditation

3. *Creative Ministry* (1971), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic for ministers. The main concern of this book is the relationship between professionalism and spirituality in ministry. Separate chapters treat each of the five areas that Nouwen considers the primary responsibilities of the minister: teaching, preaching, counseling, organizing, and celebrating. He shows how these main functions are inextricably tied to the minister's spiritual life.

4. *Met Open Handen: Notities over het Gebed* (1971); *With Open Hands* (1972), Ave Maria

A Nouwen classic. *With Open Hands* gently encourages an open, trusting stance toward God and offers insight to the components of prayer: silence, acceptance, hope, compassion, and prophetic criticism. Provocative questions invite reflection, while simple and beautiful prayers provide comfort, and reassurance. With over half a million copies in seven languages, this spiritual classic has been reissued with moving photography and a foreword by Sue Monk Kidd.

5. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (1972), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic for ministers. This book addresses the question: what does it mean to be a minister in contemporary society? With characteristic precision drawn from his training in psychology, Nouwen provides an incisive diagnosis of the condition of modern North American society: hopelessness, loneliness, and rootlessness. He then suggests that rather than follow trends and increase professionalism, the minister is called to enter fully into the suffering and make his or her own wounds available as a source of healing.

6. *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (1974), Ave Maria

A Nouwen classic. This short book is based on three sermons. Nouwen reflects on Mk 1:32-39, Mk 6:32-44, and Jn 16: 16-22. He addresses the importance of finding a "lonely place" for solitude as

preparation for a life of action, caring through "participation in pain," and living in expectation with patience and joy. The book is enhanced by photographs by Ron van den Bosch, a friend, and a regular collaborator with Nouwen.

7. *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life* (1974), Penguin Random House

In *Aging*, Henri J.M. Nouwen and Walter J. Gaffney share moving and inspirational thoughts on what aging means (and *can* mean) to all of us, no matter our current age. Enhanced by some eighty-five photographs, this book shows how to make the later years a source of hope rather than a time of loneliness. And they remind us to incorporate the aged into the fabric of our own lives -- so they may help *us* repair the fragmented connections between generations.

8. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (1975), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic. This book addresses: "What does it mean to live a life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ?" Nouwen ponders the challenges of living an authentic Christian life including inner restlessness, mixed feelings towards others and deep-seated suspicions about the absence of God. He then offers the antidote - reaching out to self, others, and God and the movement from loneliness to solitude, from hostility to hospitality and from illusion to prayer.

9. *The Genesee Diary* (1976), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic. During his seven-month stay in a Trappist monastery Henri Nouwen had a unique opportunity to explore crucial issues of the spiritual life and discover "a quiet stream underneath the fluctuating affirmations and rejections of my little world." From the early weeks in the abbey -- dominated by conflicting desires and concerns -- to the final days of Advent, when he finds a new sense of calm expectation, Nouwen never loses his critical honesty. An inspiration and a challenge to those who are in search of themselves.

10. *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ* (1977), Harper One

Written especially for those in the ministry, Henri Nouwen explores the essential connection between ministry and spirituality, service, and prayer. He describes the minister as a living remembrance of Jesus Christ for his or her community. In three parts: The minister as a healing reminder, a sustaining reminder, and a guiding reminder.

11. *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer, and Contemplation* (1979), Penguin Random House

In this account of the time he spent in Rome, Nouwen offers reflections and spiritual insight characteristic of his best works. During the months in Rome, it wasn't the red cardinals or the Red Brigade who had the most impact on Nouwen, but the little things that took place between the great scenes. In some ways, Nouwen discovered, the real and true story was told by the clowns he often saw in the city streets.

12. *In Memoriam* (1980); *reissued with *A Letter of Consolation as A Sorrow Shared* (2010), Ave Maria

This is a very short book that recounts the illness and death of Nouwen's mother. It is a deeply personal book relaying the deep bond he has with his mother as well as a treatise on death as seen from the perspective of Jesus' suffering.

13. *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (1981), Harper Collins

Short book written primarily for Christians but also those who are more ambivalent yet "desire spiritual freedom." Nouwen uses Jesus' words "Do not worry" as his point of departure. He looks at the destructive effects of worrying in our daily lives and then describes how Jesus responds to these worries. The book concludes with specific disciplines to help decrease worry and allow the Spirit of God to "make all things new". Nouwen equips the reader to say "yes" to the presence of God deep within his or her life, following the spiritual hunger to its divine center.

14. *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (1981), Harper Collins

Nouwen draws from the writings of the desert mothers and fathers who lived in the Egyptian desert during the fourth and fifth centuries, believing they offer a "very important perspective on our life as ministers." It is a short book but is deeply impactful despite its simplicity and will encourage people to take the disciplines of solitude, silence, and prayer more seriously. It is an uplifting and easy read.

15. *A Cry for Mercy: Prayers from the Genesee* (1981), Penguin Random House

Nouwen traveled often to the Trappist monastery in the Genesee Valley of upstate New York, which inspired *The Genesee Diary*, a moving account of contemporary monastic life. When he returned five years later, the rhythms of contemplative life led him to concentrate his attention on meditation. He disciplined himself to write a prayer each day, an endeavor that became this book. A useful tool for personal reflection and meditation.

16. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (1982), Penguin Random House

This challenging book is an answer to the question: How do we live compassionately in our world? The subject is examined in three parts: God and God's compassion, discipleship and the practice of patience, the discipline of prayer and the response of action. Great attention is given to Jesus as an example of the compassionate life.

17. *A Letter of Consolation* (1982); * reissued with *In Memoriam as A Sorrow Shared* (2010), Harper Collins

Written over the course of twelve days as a letter from Nouwen to his father six months after the death of his mother. Three years later he decided to publish the letter believing that the "fruits" of his grief should be "tasted" by others. In the letter he explores the meaning of his mother's death for his life and that of his father, particularly as Christians. While a very personal book with many biographical details about the Nouwen family, the themes it considers will be consoling to anyone who has lost someone they love.

18. *Gracias!: A Latin American Journal* (1983), Harper Collins/Orbis

The published journal of Nouwen's six-month sojourn in Peru to explore a missionary vocation. The journal documents Nouwen's efforts to answer the question: "Does God call me to live and work in Latin America in the years to come?" It is an intensely personal account as well as a vital commentary on the how the church ought to be present in the world.

19. *Love in a Fearful Land: A Guatemala Story* (1985), Ave Maria/Orbis

An account of a ten-day visit Nouwen made to the parish of Santiago Atitlán in Guatemala at the invitation of Father John Vesey, a friend. Vesey was the priest sent to replace Father Stan Rother who was murdered on July 28, 1981. Nouwen is accompanied by Peter Weiskel, a friend and co-worker, who contributes photographs of the trip. The book is "about the life of a martyr and the man who took his place."

20. *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (1986), Penguin Random House

Written while Nouwen was living in the community of L'Arche in Trosly-Breuil, France, Nouwen considers the Gospel of John and explores the themes of communion with God (intimacy), fruitfulness (fecundity) and the fullness of joy (ecstasy). It offers an invitation to move from "the house of fear" to "the house of love." A good companion text for this book is *Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety* which is based on talks Nouwen gave in 1985 at Harvard before moving to L'Arche and explores many of the same themes but from a different angle.

21. *Brieven aan Marc: over Jezus en de Zin van Het Leven* (1987); *Letters to Marc about Jesus: Living a Spiritual Life in a Material World* (1988), Harper Collins/Darton, Longman & Todd

This book began as an invitation from a publisher for Nouwen to write a book about the Christian life for a Dutch audience. Nouwen responded by suggesting that he write letters on this topic to his nineteen-year-old nephew Marc. In the end, the focus shifted to Nouwen's ideas about Jesus and the meaning of our existence. He continued to use an epistolary format, but the text was written for publication with a far wider audience in mind. There are seven letters in total written from February to September 1986, while Nouwen lived at L'Arche Trosly-Breuil, France.

22. *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (1987), Ave Maria

In this short book Nouwen invites the reader to contemplate four Eastern Orthodox 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 Holy Spirit. According to Nouwen, each icon has a particular invitation: the first to dwell in the house of love, the second to feel a sense of belonging to God, the third to see the face of God and the fourth to liberate the world. Nouwen hopes that studying these four icons will help readers "strengthen the awareness of God's magnificent and loving presence in their lives."

**23. *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey (1988)*, Darton, Longman & Todd/Penguin
Random House**

This book is Nouwen's third published journal. The journal was kept from August 1985 to September 1986 and documents Nouwen's discernment process that led to leaving academia and joining L'Arche Daybreak, an intentional community for and with people with intellectual disabilities near Toronto, Canada. Nouwen felt drawn to record his day-to-day life as he sought answers to his question: How do I follow Jesus all the way?

24. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership (1989)*, Crossroad

Nouwen classic for Christian leaders. This is a short and deeply personal articulation of the spiritual challenges and temptations facing Christian leaders. Nouwen connects the practices of leadership with the spiritual disciplines of contemplative prayer, confession, and theological reflection. Nouwen uses the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert and the story of Peter's call to be a shepherd to propose three movements for the modern minister to take: from relevance to prayer, from popularity to ministry, and from leading to being led. This is a tiny text of a mere 81 pages, but many people re-read it every year.

25. *Heart Speaks to Heart: Three Gospel Meditations on Jesus (1989)*, Ave Maria

This very short book has its origins in a request for Nouwen to write a contemporary interpretation of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Nouwen decides instead to "let the heart of Jesus touch my own heart" and writes, in prayer, three meditations to the heart of Jesus. The result is an intimate glimpse into Nouwen's heart including his struggles with doubt, vulnerability, and faithfulness. Nouwen hoped that "all who will pray these prayers will also experience the healing and renewing love that flows from the heart of Jesus."

26. *Walk with Jesus: Stations of the Cross (1990)*, Orbis

This book, written in 1989 while Henri Nouwen was in the hospital recovering from an accident, is a response to paintings depicting the fifteen Stations of the Cross by artist and illustrator Sr. Helen David Brancato, IHM. Nouwen writes a short reflection for each painting of an image drawn from the experience of the world's poor. He ties the evocative imagery to Jesus' passion and resurrection and to his own journey with suffering, loneliness, and hope. He helps connect the reader with the truth of being a Christian: that intimacy with Jesus must be accompanied by solidarity with a wounded world.

27. *Beyond the Mirror: Reflections on the Life and Death (1990)*, Crossroad

This book was written shortly after Nouwen was in a life-threatening accident in 1989. It documents a near-death experience that gave him a "new knowledge of God" and a clarifying vision of his vocation and identity.

28. *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World (1992)*, Crossroad

A Nouwen classic. Nouwen began writing this book in 1990 in response to his friend Fred Bratman's suggestion that he write a book about spirituality for people in secularized society who

were wondering “what is life all about after all.” The result is a book written in the form of a letter to Fred and his friends about Nouwen’s signature insight that we are all the beloved children of God and that we can live our lives trusting in this truth of our identity. Bratman found the book too religious for his secular vision of the world, but this book has touched thousands of readers and continues to be one of Nouwen’s best-selling books.

29. *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (1992), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic. This is Nouwen’s best-selling book. Exhausted from a six-week lecture tour, Nouwen seeks rest in the L’Arche community in France. During his stay, a painting of Rembrandt catches his attention: *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Identifying with each of the three main figures in the painting, Nouwen crafts a fresh interpretation of a classic story, concluding: “Though I am both the younger son and the elder son, I am not to remain them, but called to become the father.” Ultimately, it expresses all Nouwen wanted to say about love.

30. *Jesus and Mary: Finding Our Sacred Center* (1993) * out of print; partially published in *Finding Our Sacred Center: A Journey to Inner Peace* (2011), Twenty-Third Publications

This short book contains two spiritual essays, a homily on Mary and the journal of Nouwen’s pilgrimage to Lourdes. This book is out of print. The essay on Nouwen’s trip to Lourdes was reprinted in *Finding Our Sacred Center: A Journey to Inner Peace* (Twenty-third Publications, 2011). This book is also out of print.

31. *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit* (1994), Crossroad

This book is a coherent vision of the spiritual life as Henri Nouwen understood it after 40 years of ministry and 60 years of life. The book is divided into 11 chapters: Living in the Present, Joy, Suffering, Conversion, Disciplined Living, The Spiritual Life, Prayer, Compassion, Family, Relationships, Who We Are.

32. *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (1994), Harper Collins

This book was written in 1993 shortly after the death of Maurice Gould, one of the core members of L’Arche Daybreak. The book is in two parts: Dying Well and Caring Well. The section on Dying Well is about befriending our death, preparing for our death, and growing in communion with all of humanity. The section on Caring Well is about accepting our own death so we can care for others in mutuality rather than fear.

33. *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (1994), Orbis

This book offers the reader a fuller understanding of the Eucharist through the story of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. Nouwen is answering the questions: How can all of my life be Eucharistic, and how can the daily celebration of the Eucharist make it that way? Nouwen focuses on five main aspects of the Eucharistic celebration: loss, presence, invitation, communion, and mission, with a particular attention to the spiritual movement from resentment to gratitude.

34. *The Path Series* (1995) *Published as *Finding My Way Home: Pathways to Life and the Spirit* (2001), Crossroad

The booklet is based on Nouwen's learnings from his care of Adam, one of the most handicapped people in the L'Arche Daybreak community. The Path of Power explores the themes of worldly power, powerlessness, and Divine power. The Path of Peace is about finding peace in our hearts as a first step of peacemaking in the wider world. *The Path of Waiting* is about waiting as a radical attitude toward life. Nouwen uses scriptural stories to explore the themes of waiting for God and the waiting of God.

35. *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom* (1996), Penguin Random House

A Nouwen classic. This book was published in 1996 just before Nouwen's sudden death but was written between December 1987 and June 1988. It consists of sixty-two "spiritual imperatives" that Nouwen wrote to himself during a time of deep depression. Nouwen called it "his secret journal" because the imperatives were written solely for himself. But his friends, particularly Wendy Greer encouraged him to share them with a wider readership.

36. *Can You Drink the Cup?* (1996), Ave Maria

This book begins with the scriptural passage from Matthew 20:20-23 in which Jesus asks Zebedee's sons James and John if they can drink the cup that he is going to drink. Nouwen states that this is the great spiritual challenge posed to each of us: Can we drink the cup that Jesus drank? Can we hold our life, live our life, and drink it as Jesus did?

37. *Sabbatical Journey: The Diary of His Final Year* (1997), Darton, Longman & Todd/Crossroad

This is the published journal of Henri Nouwen written during a sabbatical between 1995 and 1996. It was published posthumously as Nouwen died in September 1996 just as his sabbatical was ending. The foreword is written by Sister Sue Mosteller, Henri Nouwen's executrix. Mosteller edited the journal for publication after Nouwen's death.

38. *Adam: God's Beloved* (1997), Orbis

This book was written by Nouwen after the death of his handicapped friend Adam Arnett. "From the moment I saw Adam's body lying in his casket, I was struck by the mystery of this man's life and death...Adam's death touched me deeply because for me he was the one who more than any book or professor led me to the person of Jesus." Written in the final year of Nouwen's life and published posthumously, it is an expression of Nouwen's deep convictions as a Christian.

39. *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith* (1997), Harper Collins

This book consists of 365 meditations on the Christian spiritual life. The meditations were written by Nouwen in the last year of his life and are an expression of Nouwen's faith and his creed. It covers such topics as Jesus, Word and Sacrament, the Church, the resurrection, the communion of saints, heaven, hell, the second coming of Christ and the end times.

Book descriptions originally written by Gabrielle Earnshaw; edited by Resa Pearson, HHLT January 22, 2023