

“My Religious Development”

Notes of Beatriz Muse for Susie Hanks

These are books which have influenced me greatly:

The Missal
Imitation of Christ – Thomas a Kempis
Confessions – St. Augustine
Autobiography – St. Teresa of Avila
Seven Storey Mountain – Thomas Merton

Novels

The Power and the Glory – Graham Greene
Death Comes for the Archbishop – Willa Cather
The Bridge of San Luis Rey – Thornton Wilder
Diary of a Country Priest – Bernanos
Song of Bernadette – Franz Werfel
Woman of the Pharisees – Vipers Nest & other works of Francois Mauriac

Biographies

Thomas More
Augustine
Teresa of Avila (a charming one about her by Victoria Sackville West called the The Eagle and the Dove – Therese of Lisieux being the Dove
John Bosco
Father Damien (the leper)
Francis of Assisi
Catherine of Sienna
Vincent de Paul
John Henry, Cardinal Newman (autobiography) Apologia Pro Vita Sua
Edith Stein (Carmelite nun of Jewish descent killed by the Nazis)

History

Series of books by Daniel Rops covering the whole history of the Church. The ones on the early church are especially interesting. Am very interested in the Church of the Catacombs – The Acts of the Martyrs

Poetry

Francis Thompson – especially the “Hound of Heaven”
T.S. Eliot – “Journey of the Magi”
Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. – all his work

Siegfried Sassoon (World War I poet) – his later poems
Browning – Saul; Karshish; Rabbi Ben Ezra – to name only a few
Tennyson
Wordsworth
George Hubert
Milton – Sonnet on his Blindness; of course, Paradise Lost & Paradise Regained
Carmen Binios de Gasztold – Prayers from the Ark – a charming collection of poems,
prayers by animals giving us insights into ourselves and into the nature of God

Works of C.S. Lewis – Screwtape Letters, etc.

Works by Muggeridge – Particularly moving because in his younger days he deliberately undermined the faith of a whole generation of English university students. Whilst not committed to any particular Church he is completely converted to Christ and very attracted to Catholicism. He is a close friend of Mother Teresa. “Something Beautiful for God”, “Paul, Envoy Extraordinary”

All these books and poems have contributed to my religious development, such as it is. I was fortunate to grow up in Mexico and in England and to be exposed to the Catholic Faith as interpreted by both these cultures. Mexico taught me to grow up with a familiar, homey attitude towards God and His saints. England, with a more intellectual approach. Both taught me to see God in all creation and to live constantly in His presence. I like to have religious pictures and symbols around me as they remind me of God and His friends constantly – (as a photo of my Mother will bring her to my mind.) I have found “insights” in the work of great artists – great writers – people around me – even the animals and flowers in field and garden.

The very lovely old prayers of the Church have been a great inspiration. I grew up in a city where the Angelus bell divided up the day for us, and I found that ancient prayer very satisfying. The classic music of religion moves me very much. I am afraid the modern “songs” do not and I am jarred by the “flat” modern rendering of the Gospels and other biblical works. The Bible I read as a story enchanted by such works as the book of Ruth or Tobias.

I grew up in England, among non-Catholics and went to a distinctly non-Catholic University. However, my 5 years at a very good Convent boarding school had given me what I now see was a very Catholic base on which to build. Travels and reading have given me an idea of the universality of the Church – and also of its historic significance.