



Albert Haase, O.F.M.

(Ph.D., Fordham University; M.Div., Catholic Theological Union) is adjunct professor of spirituality at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. He is also the director of the School of Spirituality at Mayslake Ministries in Westmont, Illinois. He is the coauthor of *Enkindled: Holy Spirit, Holy Gifts* (with Bridget Haase, O.S.U.) and the author of *Instruments of Christ: Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Francis of Assisi*. He is also a former missionary to mainland China.

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Why did you decide to write *Coming Home to Your True Self*? And why did you, a Catholic priest, decide to publish with a Protestant publisher like InterVarsity Press?

Father Albert Haase: After returning from more than eleven years as a missionary in mainland China, I was asked to give a workshop on spiritual formation and the spiritual life to a group of people at Quincy University in Quincy, Illinois. That request gave birth to an eight-hour workshop called “Like the Air We Breathe: An Approach to the Spiritual Life.” I have since presented that workshop to literally hundreds of people.

In that workshop, I wanted to take the rich tradition of Christian spirituality and “repackage” it for contemporary Christians of the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, the great spiritual masters and mistresses of Christianity, as one would expect, were bound by the cultures and historical settings in which they lived. They used language and images that their contemporaries would understand perfectly—but which don’t always translate well for twenty-first-century Westerners. So the workshop honored the enduring teachings and perennial advice of the tradition but “translated” them into language and images that would be beneficial and meaningful for twenty-first-century Westerners, and Americans in particular.

In December 2006 two senior editors from InterVarsity Press approached me with an interesting offer. Because spiritual formation currently enjoys such a widespread interest among Protestants and since it transcends theological differences between Protestants and Catholics, they asked if I would be willing to change the workshop into a manuscript for publication. I jumped at the opportunity! Their offer reinforces what I find in my own Roman Catholic tradition: people are hungry for God. People want to take their baptismal commitment seriously and become again the people God calls us to be. Those who have walked the path of Christian spirituality give us some time-tested wisdom and practices that help that to happen.

It has been a marvelous experience working with everyone at InterVarsity Press. Though we have our theological differences, when it comes to spiritual formation and spiritual practices, we are “all in this together”—and much to my surprise, we are “all in the same boat.”

You say that this book is essentially an invitation to a homecoming. What is the “home” you are referring to?

Father Haase: “Home” is living in the present moment. As Paul preached, “In God, we live and move and have our very being.” Paul also wrote, “It is no longer I who live; Christ lives in me.” And John wrote, “Those who abide in love, abide in God and God abides in them.”

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



COMING HOME
TO YOUR TRUE SELF

Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions

Albert Haase, O.F.M.

*Coming Home to
Your True Self:
Leaving the
Emptiness of False
Attractions*

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And so to live in the present moment and to have my heart open to selfless acts of love is the true self. That's who God created us to be.

Unfortunately, most of us suffer from “amnesia of the present.” We are either stuck in the past, riddled with guilt, regret or sentimentality, or stuck in the future, consumed with worries and concerns. We have walked away from “home,” the present moment. And so, one of the challenges in spiritual formation is to come back to the true self. To come back home.

I use the parable of the prodigal son as an allegory for the journey of spiritual formation. When we get out of our pigpens and come back home to the present, we suddenly discover ourselves invited into a homecoming party. And that's when it dawns on us: we already have what we want in the spiritual life; we simply need to become aware of the richness and sacredness of the present moment.

What do you mean by “graced guilt”?

Father Haase: Guilt is truly a grace when we put it to good use. As Paul says, “Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.” In the book, I explain that “directionless guilt” is guilt that simply throws us into the slums of despair and disappointment. However, if we take an honest look at our sins and, instead of being blinded by guilt, get *beneath* the guilt and find out what's motivating us to commit the sin, then guilt becomes a trusted companion and helps to point us home, to being the people God calls us to be.

What is your hope for the readers of *Coming Home to Your True Self*?

Father Haase: I have a number of hopes for readers of *Coming Home to Your True Self*. First, I hope it gets people talking to their friends of other Christian denominations about spiritual formation and spiritual practice. I think in spiritual dialogues we will discover just how similar we are when it comes to our experience of and hunger for God.

Second, I would hope that people might be enticed to pick up the texts of the great cloud of witnesses who have trod the road home before us. The great giants of Christian spirituality are not as intimidating as we might think them to be. They were just plain old folk like you and me, who took seriously the challenge to become the people God called them to be.

Finally, I hope readers of *Coming Home to Your True Self* will find it to be a practical approach to spiritual formation. I purposely wrote the book with as little jargon and as few technical expressions as possible. They are virtually nonexistent. Hopefully, readers will get my approach and feel challenged—and excited—about taking seriously the offer of enjoying an incredible homecoming party that awaits us right here, right now.