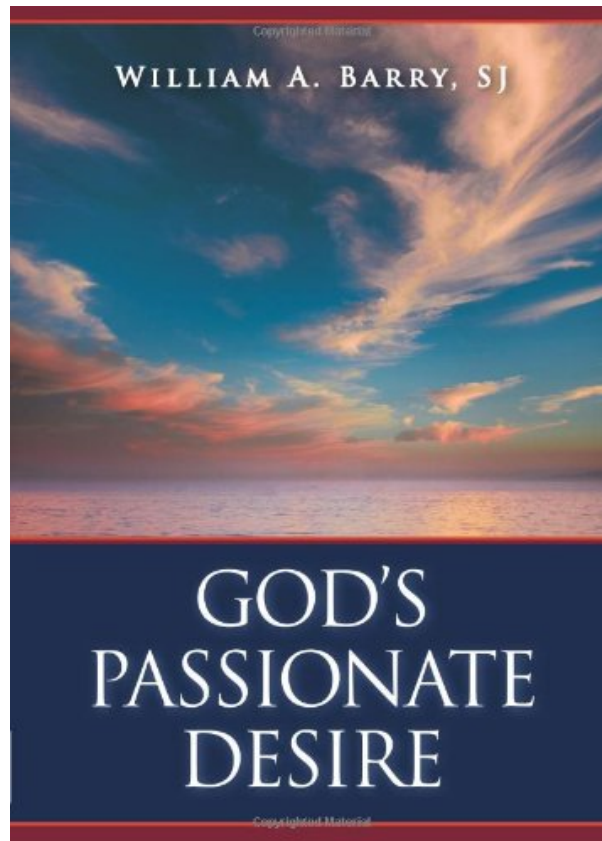
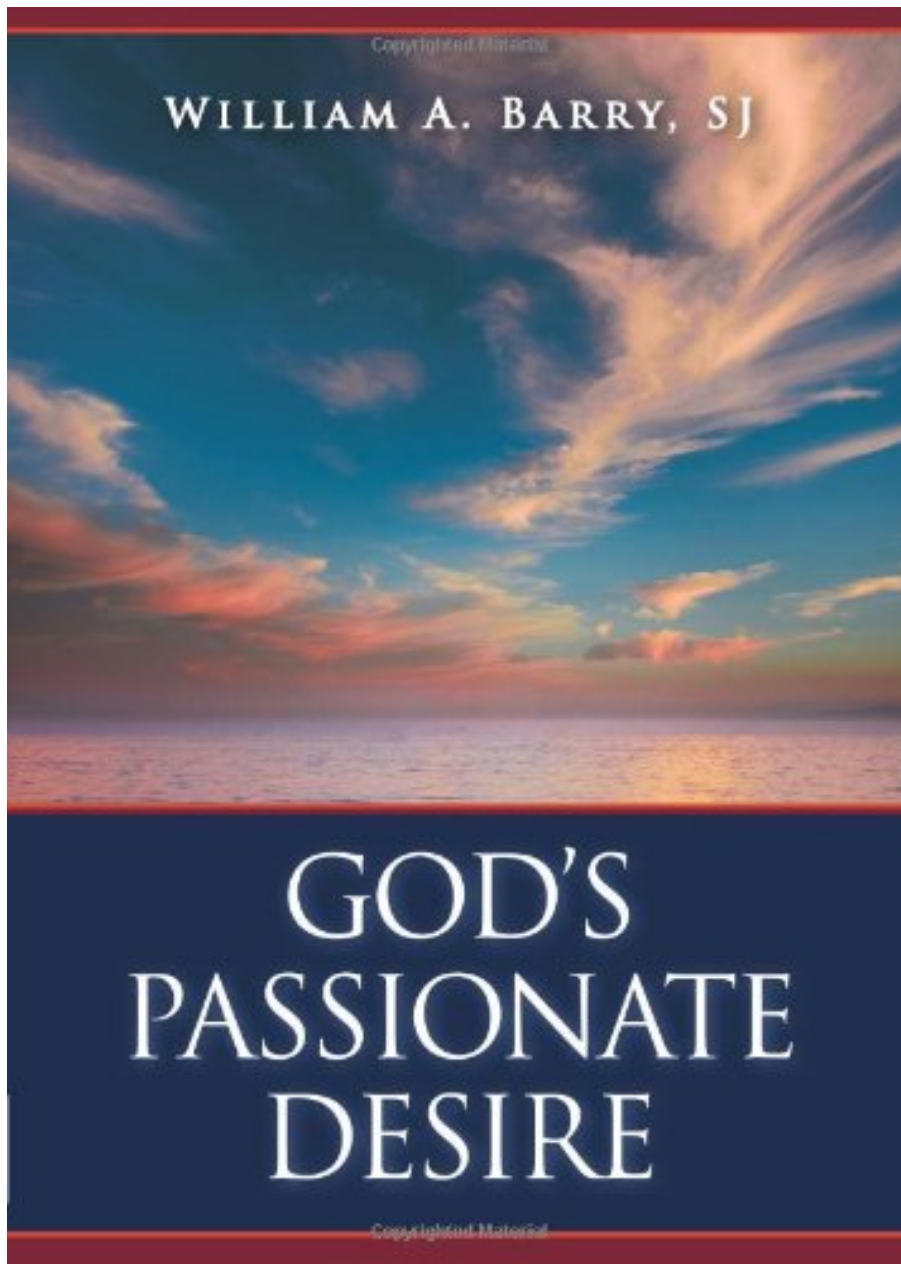


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Introduction

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- Sales Rank: #1266349 in Books
- Brand: Loyola Press
- Published on: 2007-02-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.00" h x .25" w x 5.00" l, .29 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 144 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Helpful Words From a Gifted Spiritual Writer

By Timothy Kearney

William Barry, SJ is a gifted spiritual writer in the Jesuit tradition. *GOD'S PASSIONATE DESIRE AND OUR RESPONSE* is one of his strongest works. This book, like Barry's other books, centers around the premise that people want to be in relationship with God, but God also wants to be in relationship with us. Doing the will of God for Barry is not simply doing what God asks of us, but our discovering God's will through discernment. We do not do God's will simply because we have to out of obedience, but rather because God's will is the deepest desire of our heart.

The book is divided into seventeen chapters, and each chapter reads like a mini retreat talk or homily. While the chapters can be read individually, one seems to build upon another so it is best to read the book sequentially. The book starts with our basic relationship with God, our attraction to God as well as our resistance. The book delves briefly into a theology of God (Does God need us, what is our role in God's plan, etc.). The purpose of the theology is to help the reader think about God in both familiar and different ways. Finally the book concludes with what we do with our prayer and discernment, namely how we do God's will in our world. Barry is able to blend the spiritual and contemplative side of our lives and how this spiritual and contemplative side can lead us into action in our world.

Perhaps the reason the reflections Fr. Barry offers in this book can be so helpful is due to his training as a Jesuit and his work as a spiritual director. The Jesuit tradition is evident in his writings, but his chapters also show both his own spiritual progress as well as the insights he has gained as a spiritual director helping others draw closer to God.

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God's Passionate Desire

By Jerome E. Mcelroy

This is an excellent book of meditations that moves one closer to actually experiencing God's love for him.

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Ok, but I wish Father Barry dug a little deeper

By Jess 0=)

With this book, Father Barry helped me to come to a deeper understanding of God. However, I feel that if this book was taken a step further it would have been a lot more worth the read.

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You must be very patient. First you will sit down at a little distance from me—like that—in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing . . . but you will sit a little closer to me, every day.

The next day when the prince comes, the fox tells him:

It would have been better to come back at the same hour. If you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you. . . . One must observe the proper rites.

The French of the last line is more concise: *Il faut des rites*; rites are necessary.

Earlier in the conversation, the fox says:

One only understands the things that one tames [befriends]. Men have no more time to understand anything.

They buy things all ready made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more.

In these days of instant friendship, such attention to rites may seem arcane and a bit romantic. Television and film seem to require little more for love between a man and a woman than a passionate look before they are in bed together. The fact that commitment in marriage or friendship seems more the exception than the norm may reveal the bankruptcy of the culture of instant relationships. Perhaps Saint-Exupéry is not so romantic after all. Perhaps rites are necessary for developing a strong friendship.

Joseph Flanagan, SJ, a professor of philosophy at Boston College, has noted that Americans have lost the rites of courting and dating. When those of us who are over fifty were growing up, we had a pretty good idea of how to act with the opposite sex. It was a somewhat daunting prospect to begin the process of developing a relationship, but we knew the rites, as it were. Now many young people are at sea because there are few guidelines, few accepted ways of acting that allow for a gradual development of intimacy. As a result, young students heading off to college are barraged with courses and talks about the use of alcohol and drugs, date rape, and racial and sexual stereotyping. But most of the input is information. What seems terribly lacking are generally accepted rites of passage and standards of moral behavior that can guide young people as they explore new relationships and learn the ways of intimacy and friendship. Getting close to and befriending another person takes time and requires rites. We need to reestablish these rites, because they are the scaffolding that enables two people to build the wall of a sound and lasting friendship.

What are these rites? First, having felt an attraction to you, I try to spend time with you, perhaps at first seemingly by accident, in an attempt to get to know you better. As it becomes apparent that the attraction is mutual, we will make time to be with each other, to do things together. Then we will gradually reveal things about ourselves to each other. Finally, when both of us are relatively sure of the depth of our friendship, we will formalize what has become a reality. We will begin to date, or we will affirm that we are best friends, or we will in some other way acknowledge that we are special to each other. In the process of building our wall, we may have some difficult times, times when we fail to communicate, when we quarrel, when one or the other of us feels unappreciated. We are, after all, human beings, with all the foibles and fears we are heir to. We may each be as skittish as the fox in *The Little Prince*. But once we have befriended each other and established ties, then “we may let the scaffolds fall / Confident that we have built our wall.”

The Scaffolding Necessary for a Friendship with God

Now let's see what might follow in our relationship with God. The analogy limps on the side of God but holds up quite well as far as we are concerned. We know from revelation that we exist because God desires us into being and keeps us in being. God, it would seem, is madly in love with us and is always attracted to us. The problem is that most of us do not really believe it. Many of us harbor an image of God as a taskmaster or even a tyrant because of psychological trauma or poorly assimilated teaching about God. As a result, the desire for God that is implanted deep in our hearts by creation is often muted, if not smothered, by fear of God. We need experiences of God as attractive. We have to give God a chance to prove to us that he really is our heart's love and desire.

As C. S. Lewis noted in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, every so often we are overcome by a feeling of enormous well-being and a desire for “we know not what.” This desire is what he calls joy, and he describes it as more satisfying than the fulfillment of any other desire, even though we recognize that it cannot be fully satisfied this side of heaven. We need to recall and savor these experiences of joy so that we will want to develop an intimate relationship of friendship and love with God. I have come to believe that these are experiences of our own creation. Moreover, I believe that they are the experiences that led St. Ignatius of Loyola to formulate his First Principle and Foundation at the beginning of *The Spiritual Exercises*. In this rather abstract statement, Ignatius shows that God creates each human being for union with the triune God, and that nothing but such union will ultimately satisfy us.

Here is an example of the welling up of such a desire in an ordinary experience, one that any teenager might have. In his memoir *Sacred Journey*, Frederick Buechner tells of an incident in Bermuda, where his mother had taken him and his brother after his father's suicide. Near the end of his stay, Buechner, then thirteen, was

sitting on a wall with a girl who was also thirteen, watching ferries come and go. He recalls:Our bare knees happened to ...

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