

WIL HERNANDEZ'S PASSION FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Wil's initial exposure to the whole arena of spiritual formation began when he was a master's student at a seminary in Texas. For the first two years of his Th.M. program, Wil met with a small group of guys weekly as part of a spiritual formation curriculum requirement. His interest in the field grew as a result of working closely with the then Director of Spiritual Formation as well as with a Field Education instructor who eventually became one of his closest friends in seminary. Through him, Wil became well trained in the area of theological reflection and was given the first opportunity to teach a course on the Spiritual Life via the Center for Biblical Studies of the seminary.

When Wil moved to California in 1999 to pursue his Ph.D., he chose the areas of Spirituality/Spiritual Formation as his academic concentration within the field of Practical Theology. Throughout his program, Wil enjoyed numerous opportunities to be a teaching assistant for nearly all of his mentor's classes in spiritual formation, sometimes guest lecturing for his classes on certain spirituality topics.

In 2001, Wil underwent his first spiritual direction training at the Institute in Retreat and Spiritual Direction hosted by the Spirituality Center under the Archdiocese of L.A. That same year, he started meeting regularly with a Benedictine monk who became his spiritual director for the next five years. The following year, Wil enrolled at the University of Notre Dame and studied spirituality under Philip Sheldrake for two consecutive summers. Wil also took one summer class at Loyola Marymount University under Doug Burton-Christie, a class which became the basis and inspiration for the first spirituality class (*The Christian Spiritual Journey*) he designed and taught at the Fuller Pasadena main campus during the spring of 2003.

From 2002-2004, Wil became part of Academy # 19 of the Academy for Spiritual Formation sponsored by the Upper Room Ministries. For two consecutive years, one week of every quarter, Wil joined some 30 others at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, San Francisco for the Academy experience which further exposed him to the broad spectrum of spiritual formation practices. In between this period of time, Wil also attended a series of locally-sponsored spiritual formation and spiritual direction conferences taught by Bob Dougherty, a Jesuit. Towards the end of 2002, Wil joined a weeklong School of Spiritual Direction training program held in Colorado Springs.

In the midst of all these involvement, Wil began working on his dissertation focusing on the spirituality of Henri Nouwen. In the summer of 2003, Wil attended a D.Min. course on Henri Nouwen taught by Dr. Michael Christensen at Drew University. This course helped nail down Wil's dissertation thrust. While in the thick of research and writing, Wil continued to engage in teaching spirituality courses at Fuller, including several of its regional campuses. After what seemed like an endless period of research and writing, Wil finally finished his Ph.D. dissertation work in December of 2004 and graduated at the end of spring 2005. In 2006, Wil published his first book under Paulist Press titled *Henri Nouwen: A Spirituality of Imperfection* followed by a companion sequel in 2008 titled *Henri Nouwen and Soul Care: A Ministry of Integration*. A third book is forthcoming by the end of 2011 rounding off a trilogy on Henri Nouwen's spiritual journey.

Right after completing his Ph.D. work, Wil enrolled in yet another spiritual direction program for two consecutive summers held at the Mission Renewal Center at Santa Barbara and hosted by the Monastery of the Risen Christ. After being in direction and supervision himself for a good number of years now and doing spiritual direction to others in both church and seminary settings, Wil now devotes an average of four hours a week doing private one-on-one spiritual direction in an office in the Pasadena area. In addition to doing adjunct teaching in the areas of spirituality/spiritual formation, Wil regularly conducts spiritual retreats for various churches and groups here in the U.S. and abroad.