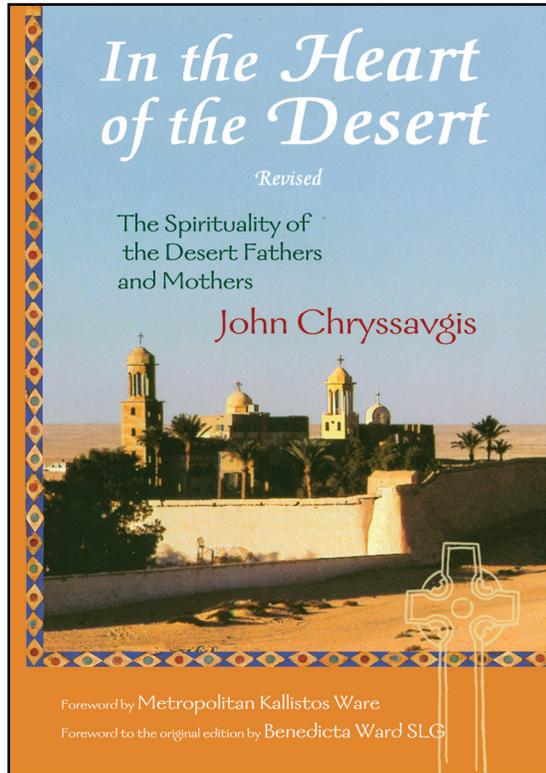


In The Heart of the Desert, Revised: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers

by John Chryssavgis

Foreword by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware;
Foreword to the Original Edition by Sister Benedicta Ward



The Desert Fathers and Mothers—those early Christian ascetics who withdrew from the world to seek God—have influenced the spiritual lives of many people, from Saint Augustine to Thomas Merton. These key figures of the early church chose lives of hardship and solitude, where they could turn their hearts toward an introspective path of God’s calling. Their words, sometimes inspiring and uplifting, sometimes agonizingly painful, sometimes humorous, always speak straight from the heart. They resonate through the centuries because they tell the story of the “deserted” soul in its pilgrimage from darkness to light, from ignorance to truth, from sin to sanctity. This revised edition of Father John Chryssavgis’ fresh and vital introduction to the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers brings their words to life and provides a key which unlocks their relevance for the reader of today.



“This book provides an accessible introduction to the sources themselves, with copious translations, a map, a time-line and bibliography. It also includes a translation into English of some material (*The Reflections* of Abba Zosimas) which has not been translated before. From his deep knowledge of the area, Chryssavgis has chosen to present them in a way which shows his pastoral concern by using the first person plural to involve the reader throughout.”

—Benedicta Ward, SLG, Oxford University, from the foreword

“This is an unusually fresh and penetrating introduction to the world of the Desert Mothers and Fathers.... This is more than an essay in the history of ideas; it is a compelling invitation to inhabit what Fr John calls a ‘profound myth,’ a set of stories and sayings that creates a landscape where the spirit can grow into what God longs for it.”

—Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

World Wisdom



In the Heart of the Desert, Revised (978-1-933316-56-7, Trim Size: 6" x 9") has a publication date of September 2008, is 224 pages, and has a retail price of \$19.95.

This revised edition features:

- ❖ A new Foreword by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware
- ❖ A Foreword by Sister Benedicta Ward
- ❖ A translation of the *Reflections* by Abba Zosimas, an early Desert Father
- ❖ A new Appendix of sayings by the Desert Fathers and Mothers that have been translated for the first time by Father John Chryssavgis
- ❖ 16 Color Photos and Illustrations and a Map of the ancient Near East
- ❖ A Chronology of the most important Desert Fathers and Mothers
- ❖ A full Bibliography
- ❖ A new extensive Index.



Excerpts from In the Heart of the Desert

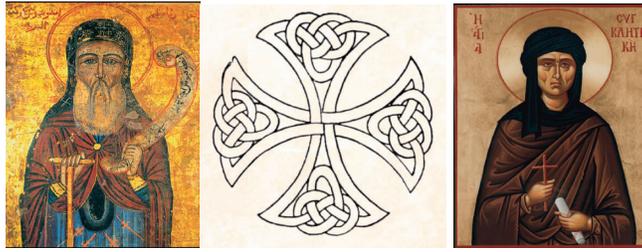
“In the desert you will find no one and no thing. In the desert, you can only face up to yourself and to every aspect of your self, to your temptations, and to your reality. You confront your own heart, and your heart’s deepest desires, without any scapegoat, without any hiding place. It is in the desert that Jacob battled; and it is in the desert that you do battle with the unruly forces of your nature within and without.” –page 33

“The point of departure in the desert was learning and not teaching; the priority was discipline and not the making of disciples.” –page 76

“Words are a part of our rational selves; to abandon words is to give way to our spiritual selves.” –page 47

“The Desert Fathers and Mothers proclaimed a different set of values, where change occurs through silence and not war; where inaction may be the most powerful source of action; and where productivity may be measured by obscurity, even invisibility.” –page 17

“This was the way of the desert ... moderation and balance.” –page 61



What others have said about this book and the author

“Early Christianity’s abbas and ammas—the hermits and premonastics of the Egyptian desert—have never really been out of fashion, but ours is clearly a time of penitence and reflection: the pace of translation and study of these and other contemplatives and ascetics seems only to increase. Chryssavgis has written a well-informed and sensitive study of the distinctive spirituality of abbas and ammas. ‘When we [too] have addressed our demons,’ he says, ‘will we not also know the presence of angels in our life?... Our heart will beat in unison with the heart of the world.’ This outstanding study also includes a complete translation of Abba Zosimas’s *Reflections*. For strong collections in religion in both public and academic libraries.”

—*Library Journal*

“‘If you have a heart you can be saved,’ says Abba Pambo. This is the very essence of the spirituality of the desert, and of Chryssavgis’ presentation of these men and women, wrapped in a depth of silence, compassion, and ascetic simplicity. It will inspire people of all religious traditions.”

—**Sir John Tavener**, composer and author

“The resolute honesty of an Ed Abbey, the prophetic freedom of a Wallace Stegner, the profound love of a Charles de Foucauld—these were the qualities of the Desert Christians who thrived in Egypt and Palestine in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. I’ve known for a long time that they are what I want to be when I grow up. This delightful book makes me more certain of that than ever. The sayings of Zosimas, here translated for the first time, are a wonderful addition to the English corpus of the Desert Christians. This is a spirituality for everyone who has ever gone through the desert (metaphorically at least), even if they’ve never lived in it like the early Christian monks. It reveals a practice that sings, a way of living that, as Abba Serapion said, ‘makes us truly alive.’”

—**Belden Lane**, Professor of Theological Studies, Saint Louis University, and author of *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*

“In a world characterized by superficiality and haste, there are still many who know that truth (and fulfillment) must lie at a deeper level, but who, nevertheless, do not know how to gain access thereto. The key to this profundity is still to be found in the ancient religions, but they, and their ‘theological’ language, have for long been falsely discredited. In this book, the ancient Christian teachings, both theoretical and practical, are made accessible in a clear and trenchant manner, and the venerable spiritual practices of Eastern Christianity movingly described. This book is a source of deep wisdom, and will be an eye-opener for previously uninformed readers.”

—**William Stoddart**, author of *Sufism: The Mystical Doctrines and Methods of Islam*, *Outline of Buddhism*, and *Outline of Hinduism*

World Wisdom



About the Author



Father John Chryssavgis is theological advisor to the Ecumenical Patriarch on environmental issues, and is former Dean at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on Orthodox spirituality, including *Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today* (*with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*). He currently lives in Brunswick, Maine.



About the Author of the Foreword

The Most Reverend **Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware)** of Diokleia is an auxiliary bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Great Britain. Born in Bath, Somerset, England in 1934, throughout his life he has been a leading author and translator of Orthodox texts. He studied Classics and Theology at Magdalene University, Oxford and after traveling through Greece and other Orthodox centers he was ordained to the priesthood in 1966. He held a lecturer position at Oxford in Eastern Orthodox Studies for 35 years until his retirement in 2001. Since his retirement, Kallistos has served as the chairman of the board of directors of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge and is currently the chairman of Friends of Orthodoxy in Iona. His best known works include *The Orthodox Church* and *The Orthodox Way*, and his translation of the *Philokalia* with G. E. Palmer and Philip Sherrard.

About the Author of the Foreword to the Original Edition

Benedicta Ward is a sister of the community of Sisters of the Love of God, based in Oxford, England. She is Reader in the History of Christian Spirituality at the University of Oxford and an honorary lecturer at Harris Manchester College. She has written a number of books on early monasticism and on the Middle Ages and is one of the world's most knowledgeable writers on the legacy of the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

