

God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

**Listen with the Ear of Your Heart:
Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God**

By Abbot Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O.

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Listen With The Ear Of Your Heart

Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God



Abbot Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O.
Contemplative Monk

ENDORSEMENTS

This book will challenge your presuppositions, correct your false thinking, and guide you into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This seasoned counselor and ministry leader, with the skill of a surgeon, probes, and cuts away at the malady of your heart, enabling you to experience God's healing grace.

Southern Baptist Pastor

I listened with my heart to the Abbot's straight forward way of exposing the basic truth about how to trust God. I felt a relief at learning the lies we believe about our Lord. The book points out the myths and roadblocks we all create to hinder the path to a life well lived. He has the reader go on a clear and honest pilgrimage to build a relationship with God, a relationship that makes a difference.

*Catholic, the Center Coordinator and Assistant
Program Director for St. Placid Priory's Spirituality Center*

While reading *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart* I found areas I need to trust God more. I loved the analogy of God giving us one mouth and two ears speak less and listen more. We need to remember to give Him the time of listening. This book is an excellent way of helping myself and others to do just that.

Moravian, Single Mother, Optician

This book is for every Christian who seeks an honest and intimate relationship with God. Drawn from decades of experience in education, ministry, and counseling, the Abbot gives readers the tools required to remove the obstacles to a spiritual union with God. This is a transformational work.

Cistercian monk/priest

God provides opportunities to deepen our relationships with Him throughout our lives. This book offers you just such an opportunity. The book is short and to the point, and there is a solid depth to the writing. The author speaks with a wisdom gained through much experience in helping others on their spiritual pilgrimage.

Anglican Bishop

Abbot Oscar Joseph takes you on an amazing journey of discovering the trust and intimacy that you can have in a loving and compassionate God. The Abbot exposes subtle lies that eventually erode your foundational trust in God. He then walks you through your pilgrimage to true intimacy.

*Assemblies of God, Mother of 3,
Volunteer Administrative Director*

I frequently ask myself, "Is what I am doing effective?" If you are seeking to have a more effective life, you will find Abbot Oscar Joseph's book to be most helpful.

Christian Counselor

When reading through the stories in this book I am reminded that each one of us is on a unique journey, not by ourselves, but with our Creator. It's not about living a perfect life but living it day by day with a God whose grace can redeem us from any mistake or sorrow, can bring us back to life and can restore us to beauty again.

*Independent Contemporary Church,
Single Mother, Teaching Assistant*

We are so grateful for the wisdom, knowledge, inspiration and guidance that the Abbot provides for this journey which leads by God's grace and forgiveness, to an ultimate destination of personal growth, peace and eternal life.

*Methodist, Husband, Professional Fitness Trainer,
Wife, Physician Assistant*

Listen with the Ear of Your Heart develops the pilgrim into a better listener consequently able to grow in trust toward God. So like Joseph and Mary, graced by God, we may be able to go beyond what we thought was hardly possible.

Methodist, Medical Professional

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64719-045-3

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-64719-046-0

Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-047-7

Mobi ISBN: 978-1-64719-048-4

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Joseph, O.C.C.O., Abbot Oscar

LISTEN WITH THE EAR OF YOUR HEART: Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy with God by Abbot Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020920756

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2020

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- CHAPTER 1-

PILGRIMAGE

Lord of heaven and earth, may these words be your words.

I am writing from what I know of God, His graciousness, His perpetual love and His incomprehensibility.

He has, over the years, been with me at my most troubled times and my most victorious times. During the troubled times I had abandoned Him. During the most victorious times I had abandoned myself.

Our Good Lord is always with you. You do not need to have more of God because He is already there. What you need is to recognize His presence right here right now.

That is why I am writing these words that I might illustrate His abiding love for you.

God has made you body, soul and spirit. You were made to be drawn to Him, your Creator. God pursues you regardless of your lack of interest in Him and despite your delusional efforts to run toward the satisfaction of what you believe are your true needs. Putting trust in things that rot will get you nowhere. Have you noticed that when you are in real trouble and seek comfort, power, direction and inspiration, you go to the unknown, to the mystical?

You know that you need a close relationship with your merciful Lord. It is only He who can answer your fundamental questions. Where did you come from? Who are you really? Where are you going in your life? How are you going to get there? And when this earthly life is over, what happens to you?

I have counseled hundreds of people with hundreds of problems, hurts, fears and anxieties. But all of them are essentially asking one question, "What is God's will for

me?” For them, as for you, that is the question, “What is God’s will for me?”

We, you, all of us suffer the universal fears of abandonment and annihilation. Or put in simpler terms, fear of rejection and fear of death. It is easy to understand the fear of rejection. You might even do things out of character to win the approval of others. You might assume the personality or characteristics that your family, culture, employers and churches dictate are the most acceptable. Perhaps you have falsely believed that by having the right job, position, material wealth and superior intellect, you would be loved and accepted.

So you put in an enormous amount of energy and time into acquiring these things that rot. One day, you may realize that a lifetime of misplaced effort was wasted. No matter what you achieved or parts you played, you could never be good enough. You never felt safe to live honestly. You have become more like the walking dead.

God is the real solution. When you know Him well, then you will begin to measure your personal worth not by how others judge you but by how God judges you. When God looks upon you, He sees who you really are. He also sees His Son and the Holy Spirit living within you. When God sees and judges you, He dances.

It can be difficult to imagine that God is pleased with you when you are burdened by the lies of your family, culture, employers and churches. Those lies are simply that, lies.

Your personal sins speak “yes but” deep in your soul. That is indeed another reason to know God. When you know Him, you will also know that He is eager to forgive even your really big sins that you don’t want to talk about. “How can that be?” you ask. Simply put, it can be because God said that all you need to do is ask. Carry

with you at least a seed of remorse, willingness to reform and lead a better, happier life with His help.

How can you dare embrace God in any way when you do not trust Him? That is the central issue. You do not trust God.

Often the first persons who taught you not to trust were your childhood principal care givers. You accepted their beliefs, hopes and fears. If your principal care givers were not trustworthy, or if they believed that you were not trustworthy, you entered into the swamp of lack of trust. Your childhood first god was your father. If he was not trustworthy but was mean, emotionally distant or even absent, then you start believing that God is not trustworthy, will be judgmental and will not be there for you when you need Him.

And so you grew up in a world that was not safe. You were often suspicious of yourself and others. Naturally, you would build emotional walls against being truly transparent. Those same walls that protected you also hindered you from transparently approaching God. Even if you grew up in the church, it was easy to hide behind the mask of acceptable behaviors and fancy church words. If you did it well, you might have a chance of being accepted. Consequently you have become untrustworthy.

Our culture also teaches you not to trust. Civil laws are basically an effort to give you at least some freedom and security. The law gives you a chance to get what you want if others have a chance to get what they want. Thus we are all equal under the law. Once again, you are trusting things that rot.

The insurance policy on your home is a vehicle that you spend a lot of your time and money to sustain, trusting that it will take care of you should something terrible happen. Many of the policies' clauses list exclusions. Often one of them is called Acts of God. God

is described as a threat that you cannot escape. Even the church teaches false pieties and pop psychology through teachings like: “God will never give you more troubles than you can handle.” “God is testing you.” “God has given you these troubling circumstances so you can get closer to Him.” All these statements are false. They describe God as a trickster who plays with His people. They hold you back from trusting God.

In summary, you want to know the important fundamental question. What is the will of God? You want to be safe, accepted and loved by God and others. I have given a brief look at what holds you back from obtaining your needs because fundamentally you trust things that rot.

An intimate relationship with God is your only solution. In that relationship, you will begin to see how lovingly He looks upon you, His creation. God has created you to be drawn to Him. You are able to understand that God is already with you. You can learn that you are already walking in, with and through Him. You can feel accepted and safe. You can lead an authentically inspired life.

Before you begin your pilgrimage, let me say that I do sincerely hope that what I am teaching inspires you. Everything that I teach is always supported by Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Universal Church.

Recently, we had one of our monks travel a total of six thousand miles to visit with us at the Holy Cross Monastery. That was indeed a pilgrimage. She was hoping to be inspired and taught more about her spiritual craft. She wanted to be more aware of God’s presence in her life. She wanted a life that was always walking in, with and through God. God did grace her on this pilgrimage. Her pilgrimage was through travel from one place to another.

There is another kind of pilgrimage. In my twenties, I was an egocentric pseudo-intellectual. Now some fifty years later, I am indeed a different person. When I completed my first doctoral requirements, I was filled with anxiety. I realized that I knew nothing. So of course, I went after my second doctorate. That one was in Scripture. When I completed those requirements, I was again full of anxiety because I once again knew that I knew nothing. When I attempted to get a third doctorate, Kathleen, my wife, said, “*Stop, get on with living God’s life.*” I then grew in the knowledge that I don’t have to know everything. What I also learned is that I could rely on God. After all, He knew everything. Putting my trust in my own intellect and other things that rot got me nowhere.

Years later, a fellow monk and I went white water kayaking.

We were promised instruction before we began but got none. Fortunately, I previously had gotten some instruction from YouTube.

So here we were, foolishly kayaking over white water rapids. The other monk was repeatedly saying the Jesus prayer. I was constantly yelling over the roar of the river, “Help me, God!” We wanted to stay alive and not tip over and lose our kayaks.

After a while, I felt like an expert. Then there they were, right in front of me, many giant rapids. I approached them with the wisdom of You Tube and got caught in the rocks. I knew that if I did not successfully get over these rocks, the nearby rapids would topple me over for sure. So once again, I accessed my vast YouTube knowledge. Nothing worked. I screamed loudly so God could hear me. I said, “God, please teach me something I don’t already know.” Clear as a bell over the roar of the river, God said, “Put your paddle in the water and don’t

move it.” That seemed strange, but I did it anyways. Immediately, I felt the enormous power of the river against the paddle. The next time I was aware of myself, I was not only successfully over those rocks but also safely beyond the other rapids that had previously threatened me.

That is a great true story. In my desperation, I had to get over myself and listen. That is going to be the first step in your pilgrimage. Get over yourself and just listen.

My wife and I took years of investigation to find the perfect property for the Holy Cross Monastery which was also going to be our home. We had a wishful criterion of trees in a developed neighborhood and a lake. All this had to be close to the center of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. We were asking for a lot.

We looked prayed and looked some more. One day we were exploring, and behold, there it was a tree-filled lot on a lake in a developed neighborhood. Naturally, we ventured forth and found the “For Sale” sign buried under the leaves. We called the owner, got the price and put in a bid. We were in a bidding war with another family.

Previously, God told Kathleen that we would have the property in eighteen months. So here we were on the eighteenth month in a bidding war. Kathleen had previously told God that she wished for the property. God in return said that she had not yet directly asked for it. At which moment she said, “Please, God, give us the property.” That afternoon, we won the bidding war and were granted the property. Kathleen later asked God why He had given it to us. God replied, “Because she had trusted Him.” And that is a true story.

The first step is to get over yourself. The second step is to grow in trusting our Lord. How are you going to trust when it is not in your sinful nature to do so?

The pilgrimage toward trust is going to be much like ours in preparing to build God's monastery. First, we prayed. Then we consulted Holy Scripture, our reliable guide, for building instructions.

Simply stated, Scripture is reliable truth on faith and morals. It describes the salvation pilgrimage of God's people and His communicating relationship with them.

Your pilgrimage toward trusting in the Lord is a lifelong journey. Your efforts in trusting God are about your pilgrimage toward spiritual and emotional maturity.

Following Scripture and the teachings of the Church Universal, you can clear the trees and get rid of the rocks and other debris. You can pull out the tangled roots deep below the earth. Then you would be ready to lay a foundation and pour the concrete. Having built according to the architect's plan, you can begin to till the soil.

The monastery's contractor said that a project of this size will have some mistakes, something will go wrong. But not to worry, everything can be fixed. That was great advice and gave us a lot of comfort. I actually did look for things that might go wrong with my daily and sometimes hourly inspections. It is that same attention that you have to give toward your pilgrimage. Constantly keep alert, and when troubles occur, confess them. When something went wrong I was quick to point it out. The contractor was great. Never did he defend himself or his laborers. He accepted the fault and immediately not only corrected the fault but also made the solution even better than the original plan.

God will not only forgive your sins but He will also guide you back on to a better course than you could have imagined. Remember, "Where there is sin grace abounds more."

This will be your exciting journey. It will be much like building your inner self. With God's grace, you will get

over yourself so that you can clear trees, remove the rocks and debris. You will pull out those tangled roots hidden deep below. Then you will be ready to lay a foundation and pour the concrete. Having begun according to the architect's plan, you can begin to till the soil. This pilgrimage can be challenging. God will help you. Remember, all that you do is already in, with and through Him.

Chapter 1
Pilgrimage
REFLECTIONS

A major theme of this book is establishing a trusting relationship with God. A difficulty in establishing such a relationship is your lack of trust in Him. Your lack of trust is a product of others erroneous beliefs and your own misconceptions based on their and your inability to trust. I will include a reflection on trust. These reflections and others will help you to better understand yourself thus preparing you to enter a deeper more intimate relationship with your Creator.

What do I know about me? Where did I come from? What is my developmental background? Were my parents emotionally available? As a child, did I feel accepted?

Reflections on this chapter:

- Reread the chapter carefully.
- List what you believe are the main points. Which points trouble you the most?
- Why are they troubling?
- How have you addressed these troubling problems in the past?
- What can you do today to resolve these troubling problems?
- You may have had other thoughts not included in this chapter that you should address. What are they?
- How will you resolve them today?
- Write your own personal prayer to God regarding the above information.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Right Reverend Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O. holds a Master's of Science in Education, doctoral degrees in Sacred Theology (Scripture) and Christian Counseling, as well as several honorary doctorates.

He has been a TV and radio personality, former pastor of a local conservative Anglican Church, college educator, retreat master and seminar leader.

Ordained a priest in 1993, Abbot Oscar Joseph is currently a Bishop in the Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod and serves as the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. The Cistercian Order is a contemplative worldwide religious Order and one of the oldest of its type. Abbot Oscar Joseph has been called a leader in the Benedictine movement in the United States.

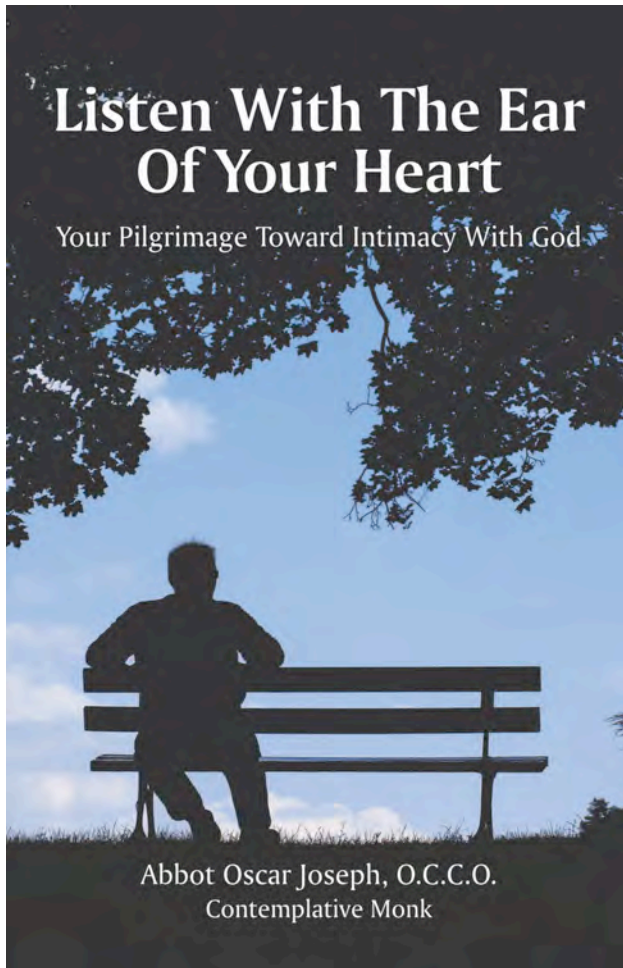
Abbot Oscar Joseph has been a Christian Counselor and Spiritual Director to hundreds over the past thirty-five years. He has authored a number of books, including

Memoirs of a Christian Healer, The Joy of Spiritual Freedom, (with his wife, Kathleen Rivest PhD, DD), along with numerous articles on spiritual direction, liturgy, emotional fitness and leisure. He has also conducted healing services throughout the East Coast of the United States. Abbot Oscar Joseph was the founder and principal counselor at the St. Matthew's Institute from 1987 to 2019.

Abbot Oscar Joseph has an extensive background as an educator. He taught psychology, sociology, Old and New Testament, English and ethics at several local community colleges. He is the Founder/President of St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary, which provides a scholarly and classically Anglo-Catholic educational experience.

Retired from his counseling practice in 2019, Abbot Oscar Joseph is currently focused on his duties as leader of the Cistercian Order, providing spiritual direction, conducting seminars and healing services.

If you are interested in having Abbot Oscar Joseph OCCO conduct seminars, healing services or wish information on the Cistercian Order, he may be contacted at Abbot@bellsouth.net. More information can be found at Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross (CistercianMonks.org) and St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary (StephenHarding.College).



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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64719-045-3

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-64719-046-0

Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-047-7

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Joseph, O.C.C.O., Abbot Oscar

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2020920756

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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- CHAPTER 1-

PILGRIMAGE

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How can you dare embrace God in any way when you do not trust Him? That is the central issue. You do not trust God.

Often the first persons who taught you not to trust were your childhood principal care givers. You accepted their beliefs, hopes and fears. If your principal care givers were not trustworthy, or if they believed that you were not trustworthy, you entered into the swamp of lack of trust. Your childhood first god was your father. If he was not trustworthy but was mean, emotionally distant or even absent, then you start believing that God is not trustworthy, will be judgmental and will not be there for you when you need Him.

And so you grew up in a world that was not safe. You were often suspicious of yourself and others. Naturally, you would build emotional walls against being truly transparent. Those same walls that protected you also hindered you from transparently approaching God. Even if you grew up in the church, it was easy to hide behind the mask of acceptable behaviors and fancy church words. If you did it well, you might have a chance of being accepted. Consequently you have become untrustworthy.

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Before you begin your pilgrimage, let me say that I do sincerely hope that what I am teaching inspires you. Everything that I teach is always supported by Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Universal Church.

Recently, we had one of our monks travel a total of six thousand miles to visit with us at the Holy Cross Monastery. That was indeed a pilgrimage. She was hoping to be inspired and taught more about her spiritual craft. She wanted to be more aware of God’s presence in her life. She wanted a life that was always walking in, with and through God. God did grace her on this pilgrimage. Her pilgrimage was through travel from one place to another.

There is another kind of pilgrimage. In my twenties, I was an egocentric pseudo-intellectual. Now some fifty years later, I am indeed a different person. When I completed my first doctoral requirements, I was filled with anxiety. I realized that I knew nothing. So of course, I went after my second doctorate. That one was in Scripture. When I completed those requirements, I was again full of anxiety because I once again knew that I knew nothing. When I attempted to get a third doctorate, Kathleen, my wife, said, “*Stop, get on with living God’s life.*” I then grew in the knowledge that I don’t have to know everything. What I also learned is that I could rely on God. After all, He knew everything. Putting my trust in my own intellect and other things that rot got me nowhere.

Years later, a fellow monk and I went white water kayaking.

We were promised instruction before we began but got none. Fortunately, I previously had gotten some instruction from YouTube.

So here we were, foolishly kayaking over white water rapids. The other monk was repeatedly saying the Jesus prayer. I was constantly yelling over the roar of the river, “Help me, God!” We wanted to stay alive and not tip over and lose our kayaks.

After a while, I felt like an expert. Then there they were, right in front of me, many giant rapids. I approached them with the wisdom of You Tube and got caught in the rocks. I knew that if I did not successfully get over these rocks, the nearby rapids would topple me over for sure. So once again, I accessed my vast YouTube knowledge. Nothing worked. I screamed loudly so God could hear me. I said, “God, please teach me something I don’t already know.” Clear as a bell over the roar of the river, God said, “Put your paddle in the water and don’t

move it.” That seemed strange, but I did it anyways. Immediately, I felt the enormous power of the river against the paddle. The next time I was aware of myself, I was not only successfully over those rocks but also safely beyond the other rapids that had previously threatened me.

That is a great true story. In my desperation, I had to get over myself and listen. That is going to be the first step in your pilgrimage. Get over yourself and just listen.

My wife and I took years of investigation to find the perfect property for the Holy Cross Monastery which was also going to be our home. We had a wishful criterion of trees in a developed neighborhood and a lake. All this had to be close to the center of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. We were asking for a lot.

We looked prayed and looked some more. One day we were exploring, and behold, there it was a tree-filled lot on a lake in a developed neighborhood. Naturally, we ventured forth and found the “For Sale” sign buried under the leaves. We called the owner, got the price and put in a bid. We were in a bidding war with another family.

Previously, God told Kathleen that we would have the property in eighteen months. So here we were on the eighteenth month in a bidding war. Kathleen had previously told God that she wished for the property. God in return said that she had not yet directly asked for it. At which moment she said, “Please, God, give us the property.” That afternoon, we won the bidding war and were granted the property. Kathleen later asked God why He had given it to us. God replied, “Because she had trusted Him.” And that is a true story.

The first step is to get over yourself. The second step is to grow in trusting our Lord. How are you going to trust when it is not in your sinful nature to do so?

The pilgrimage toward trust is going to be much like ours in preparing to build God's monastery. First, we prayed. Then we consulted Holy Scripture, our reliable guide, for building instructions.

Simply stated, Scripture is reliable truth on faith and morals. It describes the salvation pilgrimage of God's people and His communicating relationship with them.

Your pilgrimage toward trusting in the Lord is a lifelong journey. Your efforts in trusting God are about your pilgrimage toward spiritual and emotional maturity.

Following Scripture and the teachings of the Church Universal, you can clear the trees and get rid of the rocks and other debris. You can pull out the tangled roots deep below the earth. Then you would be ready to lay a foundation and pour the concrete. Having built according to the architect's plan, you can begin to till the soil.

The monastery's contractor said that a project of this size will have some mistakes, something will go wrong. But not to worry, everything can be fixed. That was great advice and gave us a lot of comfort. I actually did look for things that might go wrong with my daily and sometimes hourly inspections. It is that same attention that you have to give toward your pilgrimage. Constantly keep alert, and when troubles occur, confess them. When something went wrong I was quick to point it out. The contractor was great. Never did he defend himself or his laborers. He accepted the fault and immediately not only corrected the fault but also made the solution even better than the original plan.

God will not only forgive your sins but He will also guide you back on to a better course than you could have imagined. Remember, "Where there is sin grace abounds more."

This will be your exciting journey. It will be much like building your inner self. With God's grace, you will get

over yourself so that you can clear trees, remove the rocks and debris. You will pull out those tangled roots hidden deep below. Then you will be ready to lay a foundation and pour the concrete. Having begun according to the architect's plan, you can begin to till the soil. This pilgrimage can be challenging. God will help you. Remember, all that you do is already in, with and through Him.

Chapter 1
Pilgrimage
REFLECTIONS

A major theme of this book is establishing a trusting relationship with God. A difficulty in establishing such a relationship is your lack of trust in Him. Your lack of trust is a product of others erroneous beliefs and your own misconceptions based on their and your inability to trust. I will include a reflection on trust. These reflections and others will help you to better understand yourself thus preparing you to enter a deeper more intimate relationship with your Creator.

What do I know about me? Where did I come from? What is my developmental background? Were my parents emotionally available? As a child, did I feel accepted?

Reflections on this chapter:

- Reread the chapter carefully.
- List what you believe are the main points. Which points trouble you the most?
- Why are they troubling?
- How have you addressed these troubling problems in the past?
- What can you do today to resolve these troubling problems?
- You may have had other thoughts not included in this chapter that you should address. What are they?
- How will you resolve them today?
- Write your own personal prayer to God regarding the above information.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Right Reverend Oscar Joseph, O.C.C.O. holds a Master's of Science in Education, doctoral degrees in Sacred Theology (Scripture) and Christian Counseling, as well as several honorary doctorates.

He has been a TV and radio personality, former pastor of a local conservative Anglican Church, college educator, retreat master and seminar leader.

Ordained a priest in 1993, Abbot Oscar Joseph is currently a Bishop in the Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod and serves as the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. The Cistercian Order is a contemplative worldwide religious Order and one of the oldest of its type. Abbot Oscar Joseph has been called a leader in the Benedictine movement in the United States.

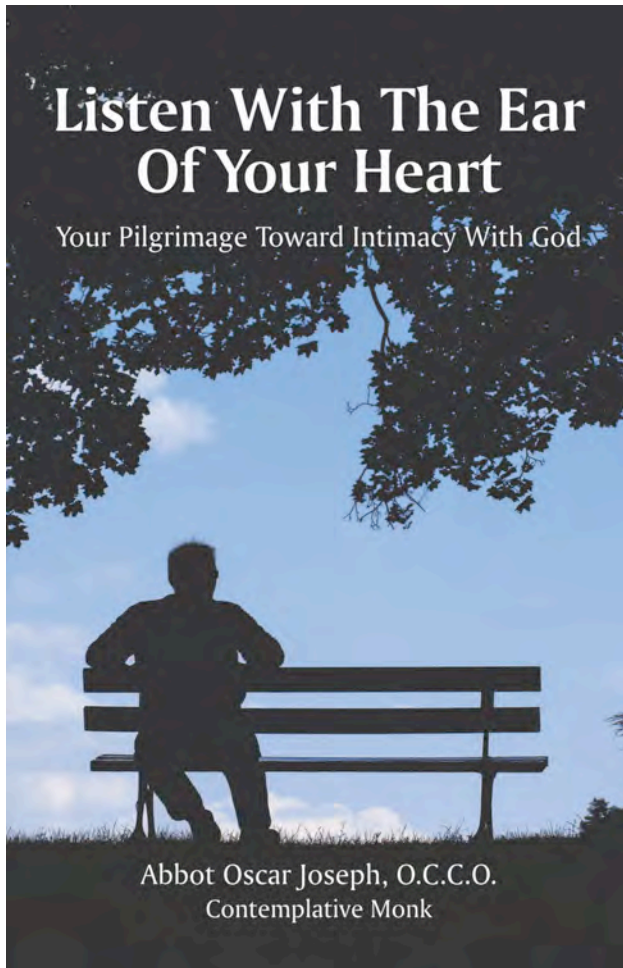
Abbot Oscar Joseph has been a Christian Counselor and Spiritual Director to hundreds over the past thirty-five years. He has authored a number of books, including

Memoirs of a Christian Healer, The Joy of Spiritual Freedom, (with his wife, Kathleen Rivest PhD, DD), along with numerous articles on spiritual direction, liturgy, emotional fitness and leisure. He has also conducted healing services throughout the East Coast of the United States. Abbot Oscar Joseph was the founder and principal counselor at the St. Matthew's Institute from 1987 to 2019.

Abbot Oscar Joseph has an extensive background as an educator. He taught psychology, sociology, Old and New Testament, English and ethics at several local community colleges. He is the Founder/President of St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary, which provides a scholarly and classically Anglo-Catholic educational experience.

Retired from his counseling practice in 2019, Abbot Oscar Joseph is currently focused on his duties as leader of the Cistercian Order, providing spiritual direction, conducting seminars and healing services.

If you are interested in having Abbot Oscar Joseph OCCO conduct seminars, healing services or wish information on the Cistercian Order, he may be contacted at Abbot@bellsouth.net. More information can be found at Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross (CistercianMonks.org) and St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary (StephenHarding.College).



God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

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Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God**

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