

**Review**  
**From the October AD 1994**  
**Our Lady of the Rosary**  
***Parish Bulletin***

Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R.,  
*A Still, Small, Voice: A Practical Guide On Reported Revelations,*  
San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993,  
175 pages paperbound, \$9.95.

The more suspicious among our readers will be relieved to know that while Fr. Groeschel is a *Novus Ordo* priest, C.F.R. is not the Committee on Foreign Relations.

*A Still, Small, Voice* is a thoroughly readable volume on the Church's method of dealing with reports of extraordinary mystical phenomena; with people who claim to hear spiritual voices, see spiritual visions, and so forth. (We will use the term "vision" to refer to all such phenomena in the general sense.) At least in part, it answers the need for guidance as to how Catholics should regard the enormous number of visions claimed throughout the world since Vatican II.

Groeschel, trained as a psychologist, combines traditional understanding of claimed mystical phenomena with modern insight into why people sometimes think they are witnessing apparitions, and how their friends and neighbors and fellow devotees are likely to react. He does not, of course, discount the possibility that people do sometimes experience genuine apparitions; sometimes of heavenly origin, and other times diabolical. In general, he gives the standard advice: don't ask God for visions, ignore them if you have them, and if they persist follow the directions of your confessor. He presents four rules for those who are considering the reports of those claiming to have had visions:

Rule 1: Keep all claims of revelations in perspective.

Rule 2: No private revelation comes directly from God and therefore none can be assumed to be inerrantly true. [All such revelations are subject to the personality of the seer.]

Rule 3: A private revelation by definition is personal and therefore must be carefully applied by those for whom it was meant and only within the limits of ordinary human prudence and never in an unreasonable way or against the teaching of the Church. It can never be considered an infallible guide in any situation.

Rule 4: A person who is the recipient of an authentic revelation, even a canonized saint, may indeed make errors in understanding that revelation or in reporting experiences which are not authentic revelations.

For the most part, Groeschel is faithful to his own regulations and does not comment on any of the visions said to be taking place in the modern world. He slips just a little in dealing with Medjugorje, mildly criticizing the Bishop of Mostar and his advisors for being "all so sure of their respective positions." His reference to "the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as

requested by the visionaries of Fatima" suggests an ignorance of the facts surrounding the apparitions at Fatima and the post-apparition claims of the surviving seer.

Perhaps the most serious omission is the lack of reference to the Pentecostalism so often found in the New Order church. Certainly this "charismatic" appeal to the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost fits into the category of "asking God for visions," and ought to be treated with at least as much suspicion as any other purported vision. As a *Novus Ordo* priest he may not feel secure in dealing with what has become an institutionalized aberration.

Likewise, and likely for the same reason, there is no mention of the decrees of Urban VIII and Clement IX prohibiting the unauthorized publication of private revelations. While Pope John Paul's New *Code of Canon Law* may have deprived these decrees of the force of law, they still oblige in prudence.

While *A Still, Small, Voice* has a few limitations, it will make good reading for anyone with an interest in extraordinary mystical phenomena. Understanding this aspect of the spiritual life will deepen the value of true apparitions, and help to reject those that are false or diabolical.

## *Apropos*

Quotations from the Scriptures,  
appropriate to the Church in our time.

**M**any will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and they will lead many astray. They will deliver you up to tribulation, and will put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will fall away, and will betray one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold. But whoever perseveres to the end, he shall be saved.... Mt. 24.



*Dei via est integra*

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Authentic Catholic Mass, Doctrine, and Moral Teaching -- Don't do without them --

Don't accept one without the others!