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Spirituality Online: Taizé Website (www.taize.fr)



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Summary: Taizé hymns and prayers are increasingly popular in the Episcopal Church. The website of this ecumenical monastic community is a great source of prayers, songs, and meditations in some 30 languages. This review outlines resources available on the website and shares tips on navigation through them.

This time of the year when emotions are boiling up on the domestic political and international arenas I find that I need a little bit of silence and meditation. This is not something that you would normally find online, especially now that Internet advertisement is more aggressive than ever, but I found it on the Taizé website (www.taize.fr). Most likely you have heard about that ecumenical monastic community in France. Founded some 60 years ago as a place of simple yet spiritual life, it became a center of pilgrimage, spiritual refreshment and a unique Christian ecumenical awareness. This small community effects global impact by spreading the gospel and sharing the peace of Christ in an exceptional way among the pilgrims and now, through its website, in the global community.

The website is available in 29 (!) languages, among which are English, Spanish, German, French, etc. Although I enjoyed reading it in Russian, I noticed that the English, French and German versions are more complete than others. Visually, the website represents Taizé community itself, a warm and friendly place; it is a wonderful resource on Christian spirituality that can be handy for personal enrichment or for a Christian formation program. Here you have warm reddish hues, which, to me, signify the warmth of love and the fire of prayer.

As you may know, about a year ago this quiet community experienced a great tragedy. Br. Roger, the founder of the community was assassinated in the middle of church service in the Chapel of Reconciliation on August 16, 2005. A special page, sort of a virtual sanctuary in his memory reflects the responses from the global community, meditations on the life of Br. Roger, and the process of healing and reconciliation. Be sure to click on >Brother Roger in the left. I found that the symbol > in the left bar on this site designates that there are more

materials on the topic available if you click on this non-standard navigation sign – so, be sure to click on > sign! And if you do, not only it turns into V, but you get a list of a dozen of articles on the topic.

For me, one of the most breathtaking was the Prayer and Song section of the website. It covers the essence of the theology and life in Taizé: serving God and proclaiming Christ through quiet yet beautiful prayer. Here you will find prayers, and some very practical advice on how to organize your prayer space, how to lead in a prayer, you will learn about the role of icons in worship. And it is in this section that I found silence:

At times prayer becomes silent. Peaceful communion with God can do without words. "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." Like the satisfied child who has stopped crying and is in its mother's arms, so can "my soul be with me" in the presence of God. Prayer then needs no words, maybe not even thoughts.

In the same section there are samples of spiritual songs and Christian hymns and even bell ringing. Some of the tunes may be familiar to you as Taizé music and prayers are very popular in the Episcopal churches. Most of the sound tracks are one to three minute long and offered in two formats, .mp3 and .ram. I could not get it to work for .mp3, however, .ram links worked fine, although you will need an updated version of RealPlayer to listen to those beautiful songs. All of the songs are also available on CDs that can be purchased at the Taize online store (or elsewhere; I found them on www.half.com for much cheaper!).

In the Prayer and Song section, again, the trick is to click on the > Learning the Songs. And if you do, you will find a great online tutorial for Taizé tunes, which are arranged alphabetically by title. There are very few English hymns, but a lot of Alleluias, Magnificats, etc, many of which are simple and easy to learn. What is great about this tutorial is the fact that you get a musical score, and then you can listen to each party (base to soprano) separately or together.

Of course, there is much more to Taizé than those simple but beautiful tunes. This is a place of spiritual encounter with oneself, with God, and with brothers and sisters from all over the world. Moreover, Taizé is not contained to France, and you can find a Taizé prayer group on every continent, perhaps even in your town. Finally, it is a great destination for pilgrimage, especially for younger people, a great educational experience. On the website you will not only find nourishment for your spiritual life, but also very practical advice on how to organize a trip to Taizé.

The Taizé website (www.taize.fr) is a wonderful oasis of prayer, silence and spiritual warmth in the middle of the roaring world, including the wildly commercialized realm of the Internet. The website is definitely worth checking out, in one of the 29 languages.

Related Resources

- **Spirituality Resources** on our website: http://www.teforall.org/resources_7_spir.html
- **Taizé website:** www.taize.fr
- **Sacred Space.** Daily prayers and meditations in several languages: www.sacredspace.ie
- **Br. Roger and Taizé:** http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique8.html (Taizé website).
- **Prayer and Song:** http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique12.html (Taizé website).
- **To the Sources of Faith:** http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique43.html (Taizé website).
- **Meetings in Taizé:** http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique9.html (Taizé website).

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