



Becoming a Being of Light ~ A Christian Mystic's Path

Rev. Lela Iduna is the director of the Center of Light in Ann Arbor. She is also a physician.

By Rev. Lela Iduna
Photos by Rachael Waring

People often look at me and ask, "How did you get into Christian Mysticism?" I can understand that question. As someone born a Muslim in Pakistan, raised in the Middle East, and working in the United States as an emergency room physician, what have I got to

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do with Christian Mysticism? I first muse inwardly at God's mercy and grace that drew me to this path and then share my story.

About six years ago, I was at the lowest point in my life. My life felt empty. On the outside, everything was perfect: a beautiful house on the Long Island Sound, an awesome job and lavish vacations. To an outsider, I had the perfect dream life. But inside, I was one big, dark, empty hole. I was sad, lonely and depressed. I knew that my boyfriend and my family did not know me or see me. They saw my physical body and my money.

Something in my life was dreadfully wrong and I knew that I needed God. I knew that some special people could hear God and see God, and God talked to them. I was mad at God that I did not have that special privilege. I also felt shame and guilt, and that I was unworthy of that privilege.

Nevertheless, one day I wrote a letter to God saying that I was done looking for love on my own, that I gave all control over to God and I asked that God bring back love into my life, and that I didn't care what it looked like. Did you know that God reads mail? Very soon after that, I was given a book by one of the resident doctors whom I was training, who is

a priest with the Centers of Light, a Christian mystical order. The book was called Giving Birth to God, written by Mother Clare Watts.

I read that book and was blown away. Mother Clare told the story of her life's journey of coming into relationship with God, and it really spoke to my heart and my soul. I knew that I so badly wanted what she had – a relationship with God.

I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that I would meet Mother Clare, be taught by her, or be trained and initiated by her into a relationship with God, but clearly God had that all worked out. I initially started working with the local priest at the nearby Center of Light in New Haven, Connecticut, learning to meditate and pray, learning about light and soul. I was given exercises that helped my concentration and devotion. I was given counseling to help work through the pain, anger, and sorrow in my life.

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I started to learn to connect to Jesus and Mary and, through their love, forgive people who had hurt me and, more importantly, to forgive myself and accept love. For the first time in my life, I felt like someone really cared about me, knew me and loved me for who I was – and not because I was a rich doctor.

Mother Clare invited me to move to Boston so I could get intensive live-in training at the novice house, a modern-day novitiate program. I promptly accepted that offer. The training was free and I paid my room and board. A year later, I was ordained a minister-deacon and then a priest and was asked to move to Lansing, Michigan to start a center and train others.

Through the work I have been doing, my life has changed completely. I still have everything on the outside (still working as a physician), but now I feel peace and love inside of me. I do not live in constant fear and worry and anxiety.

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I went through the great initiations of baptism and illumination and was brought into self-realization by my teachers, Mother Clare Watts and Father Peter Bowes. I now can actually see God, literally, and have a real, personal and intimate relationship with God, much sweeter and deeper than anything I could ever before imagine. I am filled with gratitude that God heard my prayer and accepted me back, as torn and tarnished as I was.

I now live at the Center of Light in Ann Arbor, which opened in June. I teach classes and guide others into their relationship with God, in the same way that I was taught by my teachers. It is possible. I did it. This is exactly what mysticism is: knowing through one's experience.

I would not have been able to say six years ago that I wanted to be a mystic, let alone a Christian mystic. I was not that sophisticated. I did know that I really wanted to know God and know real love. My prayer is for each one of us on this planet to come into this real relationship with God, to find complete inner peace, and to know what it is to love and be loved. Blessings to all.

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(For more information, visit annarbor.centersofflight.org or email revlela@centersofflight.org)