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The Spirituality Committee of the  
Catholic Bar Association presents  
a Book Review of

## THE REED OF GOD

By Caryll Houselander

Reviewed by Ellen Dorn of the  
St. Thomas More Society of Dallas, TX

A spiritual classic in the mystical tradition of Julian of Norwich, *The Reed of God* is a tender meditation on the humanity of Mary. Written in 1944 by the London writer, poet and artist Caryll Houselander when she was surrounded by the devastation of The Blitz at a time when the end of the war was not yet in view, the book explores Mary's human side, and ponders her willingness to surrender herself in order to make God's love known. She writes,

At this moment – while I am writing these words – all the countries in the world are giving all their time and energy to killing...In the face of all this I sit here in a bombed city and say that because a girl surrendered

herself to God two thousand years ago, human nature can be constantly new; life always young; and everyone bring not death into the world but the miraculous life of the Spirit: everyone a bearer of Christ into the world.

This book had been sitting on my shelf for many years, a gift from a dear friend. I chose this meditation as my Lenten reading, but I confess that reading it was a laborious effort. Houselander is an artist; I am a lawyer. Her thoughts meander but I am a linear thinker. Her spirit imagines; mine investigates. In order to fully understand her train of thought, I finally *outlined* the book (memories of law school exams!) and only then did I find – and meditate upon - the thematic thread that she weaves throughout the book: We are merely empty vessels for God's shaping, and we are called to trust that whatever God does in our lives is the act of an infinitely loving Father. Like our mother Mary, we can expect our life to be one of seeking to find the way that Christ manifests himself in our lives, and in the lives of those around us. We cannot expect to completely *find* He whom we seek until we are united with Him in heaven, but we can know that Mary, who shows us *how* to seek, is our companion on the way.

Published by Christian Classics (a division of Ave Maria Press), *Reed of God* is easily available online.