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In the year of a papal conclave, it is not surprising that there has been a good deal of public discussion on the future of the Catholic Church.
Much of this discussion has been entirely predictable, and probably of the quality that once led the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner to despair that ‘Catholic theology today by and large does not rate a higher mark than Grade C’. One might surmise that the contemporary Irish author Donal Dorr would say the same about current writing on Catholic spirituality.

Like many readers of The Way, Dorr is someone who loves the Church, but is frustrated by its apparently increasing inability to nurture an authentic spirituality. The first section of his book explores what is meant by spirituality in general and by Christian spirituality in particular, bringing out how a proper relationship with God is integrated with aspects of our lives which might appear merely worldly. One such aspect, often regarded as separate from spirituality, is sexuality, which is the subject of the second section of Time for a Change. The third section of the book contains two chapters concerned with globalisation, and considers questions such as how our spirituality can help us towards overcoming its negative impact. The final section of the book has four chapters, each tackling different ways in which the Church can work towards promoting an authentic, contemporary spirituality.

Perhaps inevitably with a book of such scope, the text is somewhat uneven in quality. However, in the areas where he writes with most confidence, Dorr is a creative and intelligent author whose insights are refreshing. What he says needs to be heard if Christian spirituality is to have widespread relevance in the twenty-first century. One can only wonder what the impact might have been if such a book had been compulsory reading at the recent conclave.

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