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Quote: Sophie Lespinasse-Milan, *Danced spiritual life of Teresa of Avila and current witnesses*, Testimony of Marie Annet for the pilgrim-dancers, online seminar n°12, Dance and Spirituality/Christianity, International Council of Dance, 22/11/2025.

"Danced Spiritual Life of Teresa of Avila and Current Witnesses" Testimony of Marie Annet, consecrated laywoman, for the pilgrim-dancers

Who are you? (00'10")

I am Marie Annet, a consecrated laywoman, child psychiatrist, and director of a school pastoral center here in Belgium.

Dance has always been a part of my life, ever since I was six years old. I explored numerous workshops and professional training programs that connected the body and mind, but I was always somewhat dissatisfied, until I discovered, rather late in life, this wonderful pedagogy of the dancing pilgrims, which unified these three great currents of my life: body, soul, and spirit.

What is this pedagogy? (00'55")

This whole adventure began fifty years ago at the Cenacle of Tigery, near Paris.

Our founder is Michaëlle Domain, a woman who still lives in the Vendée region of France and who has written numerous books.

And for all those who have experienced this pedagogy, it is truly a masterful work and a revelation of the Holy Spirit, so great is its coherence and wisdom. She defines twelve paths, the first six of which speak of the building of the body according to the purpose for which it was created. Then come the six paths of spiritual maturity that are woven into this body for the glory of God.

Why "Pilgrims" and "Dancers"? (01'50")

The pilgrim is the one who, with each step, relinquishes something, relinquishes their own will, to be entrusted to someone else. It is truly a path of stripping away.

Then, dance enters the picture because it is truly the jubilation of being. We don't dance because everything is fine, but because God is within us. May the intellect descend into the heart, and may that heart open itself to the understanding of Scripture.

In fact, we are not seeking the aesthetics of movement, but beauty, the gesture imbued with that profound source within us, emanating from the image of God within us. Dance here is not sought as mere entertainment, but as a transformative process that allows us to experience freedom in the breath of the Holy Spirit, and a genuine, profound joy.

Who is this pedagogy intended for? (02'55")



People of all ages, in fact. Children learn through movement. Children operate on the language of intuitive thought, so they will be extremely receptive to this pedagogy. But it also benefits people with intellectual or physical disabilities, and sometimes even the very elderly.

I remember Father Jean Radermakers, a biblical scholar and theologian of international renown, who had spent his entire life searching for this connection between the body, dance, and liturgy. It was when he was ninety years old that he discovered us, joining us for our artistic gatherings, and it was truly an explosion of joy for him and, as he put it, "the cherry on top of his entire ministry."

The Dancing Pilgrims in the churches (03'50'')

When we are in church, we always ask the congregation to join us with their hearts; this is very important. We don't want them to remain detached, but to unite with us, so that we may be one body in Christ. It's a shared prayer.

I also remember a funeral service where we had a large taffeta veil that we raised over the coffin, and the people in the congregation—many of them non-believing artists—were deeply moved, saying, "But we received the message of the empty tomb, the shroud, the resurrection!" Even the men of the funeral service, quite burly men, were completely overwhelmed, I would say, and came up to me saying, "Madam, what happened? We were shaken to our very core."

[Texte] (04'50'')

Born into an atheist theatrical family, Michaëlle Domain encountered the living Christ in 1958 and received the gift of prayer dance at Easter 1975. She began performing as a soloist in monasteries. It was then that she attracted the interest of those in charge of spiritual centers, who asked her to lead training sessions. From 1976 onward, for over 30 years, she facilitated numerous sessions and retreats. In this way, the pedagogy of the paths gradually took shape, developing over time into a comprehensive educational approach. In 1983, she founded the Ecumenical Cultural Association of Dancing Pilgrims and published extensively.

Credits (...)

The Dancing Pilgrims, founded in 1976, lead workshops, vigils, sessions, and retreats in mainland France, Martinique, and Belgium. They will celebrate their 50th anniversary with a Franco-Belgian event from October 22 to 25, 2026.

www.lespelerinsdanseurs.eu

Marie Annet is the coordinator for the Dancing Pilgrims in Belgium.

Work by Sophie Lespinasse-Milan.



Opening: The Foatelli Method (France, 1941) (05'20'')

Josette and Renée Foatelli.

Christian Religious Dance Method illustrated with numerous drawings and photographs.
Desclée de Brouwer.

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The School of Christian Religious Dance, directed by Josette and Renée Foatelli, is currently located at Abbaye-aux-Bois, 11 rue de la Chaise, Paris 6th arrondissement.

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[Photographs]

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Excerpts from the opening remarks of the Dominican priest Jourdain Webert, Chaplain of the Catholic Union of Theater

You asked for my opinion on your Method of Christian Religious Dance. Your art doesn't even need to claim the right for Christians to be honestly entertained. That's precisely because you aren't trying to entertain.

My impression, and what is more important in my eyes, the impression of good judges, seeing you extend in your movements the profound meaning of the *O Fili*, the *Libera*, the *In Paradisum*, is that you develop a religious thought through visible signs.

Anyone who has not seen you dance with that reverence, that sobriety, that temperance which never falters, cannot fairly judge the high value of your art. This dance is a language. The challenge is to express what is beautiful, pure, what elevates the soul, makes it better, suggests the invisible world to it, draws it into the realm of true spirituality. Who would deny that language can lead to truth, beauty, and goodness?

This is your ideal, and any fair-minded spectator will agree that you succeed in it.

But your ambition is greater: you would like to draw other souls to this same ideal. I warn them that, in order to gain the consent of all those concerned with elevating minds and revealing the divine to them by all legitimate means, they must not only practice softening their movements, but also work to order their thoughts, feelings, and actions, to achieve what a philosopher calls: the melody of the inner life.

It only remains to wish you and your disciples success in realizing this "melodia spiritualis."

For the Method of Christian Religious Dance by Josette and Renée Foatelli.

Paris, March 12, 1941

Final image (19'50'')

"Danced Spiritual Life of Avila & Current Witnesses"
Presented for the first time on November 22, 2025,
during seminar no. 12 of the Dance and Christianity group.



International Dance Council, official partner of UNESCO
Dance and Spirituality Program, Dance and Christianity Group
Seminar n°12 of November 22nd, 2025
"Danced Spiritual Life of Teresa of Avila and Current Witnesses"
Testimony of Marie Annet for the pilgrim-dancers
By Sophie Lespinasse-Milan (06'500')



Dance and Spirituality Program
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