

BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THE SPEAKERS

- H.Em. Cardinal [José Tolentino de Mendonça](#), was appointed prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education in September 2022. He is a theologian, university professor, acclaimed author and the writer of the book "Nos passos de Ety Hillesum". He has published numerous volumes and articles in the theological and exegetical fields, as well as various poetic works, also drawing on literary and philosophical language.
- [Judith Koelemeijer](#), MA studied Cultural Studies in Amsterdam, followed by a post-doctoral course in Journalism. Her biography of Ety Hillesum was published in 2022 and was unanimously praised by the Dutch press. Both NRC and Trouw gave the book five stars. Judith Koelemeijer conducted years of research for her biography, at home and abroad, and managed to unearth a wealth of new material about the short and intense life of Ety Hillesum.
- Dr. [Ria van den Brandt](#), philosopher, is researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. One of her areas of expertise is research into the legacy of Ety Hillesum. Among her publications are Ety Hillesum: amicizia - ammirazione - mystica (2010), Ety Hillesum: An Introduction to Her Thought (2014) and Veel mooie woorden: Ety Hillesum en haar boekje Levenskunst (2017).
- Prof. [Joseph Sievers](#), Born and raised in Germany, Joseph Sievers holds a Ph.D. in Ancient History from Columbia University (1981) and a Lic. Theol. from the Pontifical Gregorian University (1997). From 1991 until his retirement in 2023 he taught Jewish history and literature of the Hellenistic period at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, where he was a Full Professor. He has published several books and numerous articles, primarily in the areas of Second Temple History (especially Flavius Josephus) and Christian-Jewish relations.



ETTY HILLESUM

SOME INSIGHTS INTO HER LIFE AND THOUGHTS

29-11-23
14:00-17:15

Pontifical Gregorian University,
Aula C008 Piazza della Pilotta, 4,
Roma

ETTY HILLESUM

(1914-1943) was a remarkable Dutch Jewish writer and diarist who perished 80 years ago in Auschwitz this November. Her diaries, filled with introspection and reflections on the human condition and the personal relation with God, provide an inspiring and heartening account of faith and spirituality.

Her remarkable spirituality and personal journey of self-discovery provide valuable insights into how an individual can find meaning and connection to a higher power amidst extreme suffering. Hillesum's spirituality was not bound by the confines of organized religion. Instead, it was a deeply personal and evolving quest for inner peace and understanding. She saw her life as a spiritual journey and believed that her purpose was to seek meaning in the midst of chaos. This belief was deeply rooted in her writings, particularly her diaries and letters, which she meticulously maintained.

Central to Hillesum's spirituality was her connection to a universal and all-encompassing higher power, which she often referred to as God. She believed in the importance of cultivating a personal relationship with this divine presence. Through her writings, she expressed a profound sense of gratitude for life, even in the dire circumstances of the Holocaust. Her spiritual outlook was characterized by a deep sense of compassion, love, and empathy for others, even in the face of unimaginable cruelty and suffering. What makes Etty Hillesum's spirituality particularly inspiring is her ability to maintain her spiritual resilience in the most trying of circumstances. She sought to transcend hatred and bitterness, instead choosing to embrace love, forgiveness, and kindness. Her spirituality was a testament to the indomitable human spirit and the enduring power of faith in the face of adversity.

Etty Hillesum's legacy continues to resonate with people around the world, serving as a powerful reminder of the capacity of the human spirit to find meaning, hope, and connection to a higher power even in the most harrowing of times. Her writings remain a source of inspiration and a testament to the enduring strength of spirituality.

Working language English, with simultaneous translation to
and from Italian available



AGENDA

- 14:00** | Guests arrival and registration. Complimentary tea and coffee will be served. The symposium will be moderated by [Hendro Munsterman](#), journalist and theologian.
- 14:30** | Welcome addresses by Father [Mark A. Lewis, SJ](#), rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and [Annemieke Ruigrok](#), ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Holy See.
- 14:40** | [Judith Koelemeijer, MA](#): Etty Hillesum:- her Jewish roots and the Jewish fate.
- 15:10** | [Prof. Joseph Sievers](#): Helping God – aspects of Etty Hillesum's spiritual journey.
- 15:40** | Refreshments.
- 16:00** | [H.Em. Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça](#): Imparare a vedere i gigli del campo 'Learning to see the lilies of the field'.
- 16:30** | [Dr Ria van den Brandt](#): The Spiritual Legacy of Etty Hillesum.
- 17:00** | A Q & A session.
- 17:15** | The event concludes.



Embassy of the Kingdom of
The Netherlands to the Holy See

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