

range of themes in Merton's writing - monk, hagiographer, poet, protester, spiritual master, singer of psalms, and precursor of interreligious dialogue. Each day begins with a focus point, a succinct quotation from Merton, then a short essay exploring the day's theme and concludes with a few questions for reflection.

After a promising introduction I found the early chapters of this book dry and uninspiring, especially considering the spiritual gems available to the author. This was particularly so in the sections exploring the daily themes. These were generally too cerebral and lacking in inspiration or reflection. They also were preachy and, at times narrow. I was reminded more of the old fashioned preached parish retreat rather than the meditative *lectio divina* to which Merton's writing naturally lends itself.

Originally written in French some of the original spirit may well have been lost in translation. Some of the later chapters were a little more inspiring, though the language remained stilted, and the book as a whole lacked the enthusiasm, the spirit, evident in *The Sound of Listening*.

The Abbey of Gethsemani: Place of Peace and Paradox: 150 Years in the Life of America's Oldest Trappist Monastery. by Dianne Aprile. pp. 246, Louisville, Kentucky: Trout Lily Press, 1998. ISBN: 0964280213. \$39.95.

Dianne Aprile's book was born from a couple of visits to Gethsemani to write a magazine article for a newspaper in Louisville. From this visit her attraction to the monastic life and her interest in the history of the Abbey of Gethsemani developed. Her enthusiasm for Gethsemani is evident throughout this whole book and has resulted in a beautifully produced and illustrated book which I would not hesitate to recommend to anyone keen to know more about the Trappist order in America, specifically at Gethsemani, and the life and history of the monastery where Thomas Merton chose to spend twenty-seven years of his life. The final chapters are also most interesting as they bring the history right up to date and describe how the abbey and community have changed in the years since his death.

The first two chapters trace the development of monasticism from St. Antony and the Desert Fathers, through Benedict to the development of the Cistercian Order, its subsequent reforms, and then its spread to the new world after the upheavals in France at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries leading up to the foundation of Gethsemani in 1848. Subsequent chapters of the book trace the growth and development of Gethsemani by focusing on the central roles played by its abbots from 1848 until 1998. The characters of each of the abbots comes across vividly as they

make their distinctive hallmarks on Gethsemani and the individuality of their abbacies provides an excellent focus for each of these chapters.

The text is well written and succinct but it is the superb illustrations that really make this book. Aprile must have mined the Gethsemani archives and in doing so she has discovered real gems which are beautifully reproduced to a very high quality. In her introduction she describes the book as a "personal history", the collective biography of a community over time, and this is an approach well suited to telling the story of a monastery and its monks.

The Orchards of Perseverance: Conversations with Trappist Monks About God, Their Lives, and the World. by David D. Perata. pp. 201, Ruthven, Iowa: St. Therese's Press, 2000. ISBN: 0967213509. \$17.95.

The Orchards of Perseverance, in contrast to *The Abbey of Gethsemani: Place of Peace and Paradox*, is a very intimate book about Trappist life in the United States. This book consists of a series of interviews, printed in essay form, between the author and ten members of the community of the abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, California, a daughter house of Gethsemani founded in 1955.

In very personal terms the monks interviewed tell their story of how they came to join the monastery, the joys and trials they have faced along the way and why they have stayed, or not as the case may be. The monks interviewed range from the abbot, novice master and other older members of the community down to a postulant, David Rosenberg, who later decided that the monastic life was not for him. The author interviews David Rosenberg a second time a few years after he left the monastery and his reflections back are an interesting insight into the effect of the monastic life on him from a perspective usually omitted from books of this kind.

This book is well illustrated with photographs of the interviewees at various stages of their monastic lives, along with photographs of the monastery itself. The accounts are presented with humour which is also evident in some of the photographs which occasionally border on the cranky. But, like any album of family photographs that is often the way.

After a brief history of the Cistercian Order and New Clairvaux, along with a brief introduction to some of the aspects of Trappist life, the interviews with the monks begin with a photograph of the sign on the entrance to the monastic enclosure "Monastic enclosure - community members only". This is an image which very simply sums up the accounts that follow as readers are invited into both the personal and community life of the monks.

Paul Pearson