

## Desert Magnificat of La Soledad\*

By Annice Callahan, RSCJ

a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night  
water from the rock, manna is your name

the desert sun burns relentlessly at noon  
the cactus flower blooms in its light

sand traces mark the mountain path  
footprints mirror the heart's journey

the sunset's afterglow palettes the sky  
fire wears many colors

snakes and coyotes lurk in the brush  
shimmers of wind stir the wildflowers

the desert moon is a compass in the dark night  
the owl in the palm tree watches for its prey

rose in the east heralds the dawn  
the dew: we can obey our thirst

a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night  
water from the rock, manna is your name

\*In 1940, Thomas Merton went to Cuba to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Cobre. On the way there he found in Camagüey a church dedicated to La Soledad, Our Lady of Solitude: "a little dressed-up image up in a shadowy niche: you could hardly see her. La Soledad! One of my big devotions, and you never find her, never hear anything about her in this country, except that one of the old California missions was dedicated to her" (*The Seven Storey Mountain* 281).

**Sr. Annice Callahan, RSCJ** teaches theology and spirituality at the University of San Diego and is the author of *Karl Rahner's Spirituality of the Pierced Heart*, *Spiritual Guides for Today* and *Evelyn Underhill: Spirituality for Daily Living*. Her poems have appeared in *Burning Light*, *Review for Religious*, *RSCJ: A Journal of Reflection*, and *Wind in the Night Sky*.



**Sr. Annice Callahan**