

various traditions, we all gain from listening to one another's music and sharing the fruits of one another's table" (p. 59). This viewpoint is much needed in the present day; it is one Thomas Merton would have endorsed.

Robert H. King

ROHR, Richard and Friends, *Contemplation in Action* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 157. ISBN 0-8245-2388-1 (paperback). \$14.95.

Ash Wednesday, about noon. An unseasonably cold morning surrenders finally to a pale sun and for a moment, the gray skies and earth and faces reflect the light. We stood together, residents and visitors, we North Americans, the "aliens," poised to step into the season of reflection leading to the light of the Resurrection. What expectation of transformation might Rosy, holding my right hand, have for the immense sorrow in her life? Her teenage son died six months ago in a flash flood in the neighboring colonia. Or Concha, on my left, who buried an infant daughter, only girl among sons? Both women work and live with their families on a reclaimed garbage dump outside the city of Juarez, Mexico. Both women, two among many, embraced us as sisters and brothers, offering a place at their table and a hand to walk, briefly, the path of their daily lives.

Contemplation in Action, a recent work authored by Franciscan Father Richard Rohr and friends, cites Micah 6:8 on the book's cover. The authors, Daniel Berrigan, Sr., Christine Schenk, Aaron Froehlich, Edwina Gately and Walter Wink, Paula D'Arcy and Thomas Keating among others, explore what it means to "act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God" in the course of their lives and work. Rohr speaks of the "second gaze" of compassion and a "third way" of seeing in the first two chapters. Others entitled "Eyes That See," "My Integration," "Thoughts on Psalm 23," "The Duty of Confrontation," "Who, Me Tired?" and "A Clandestine Christian" are eight of twenty-three richly diverse essays attesting to the collective range of personal experience and prophetic wisdom found in these pages.

Rohr's Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, supports a new reformation, from the inside, encouraging actions of justice rooted in prayer in the spirit of the gospels, with a new appreciation for, and cooperation with, other

denominations, religions and cultures (taken from the Center's mission statement). The Center's logo is a cross inscribed within an oval, but the cross ends in an arrow point on the left horizontally, and at the bottom vertically, powerfully and simply illustrating that truth comes from the bottom and from the margins. Rohr's personal charism is to model the balance of action and contemplation in his own life, in the life of the Center and at Stillpoint guesthouse. For nine days in February 2007, I lived a life of simplicity and prayer at that Center, with the central time spent in Juarez: a body, soul and spirit experience in the necessity of that balance. I found that I was not only out of my comfort zone physically, but also intellectually. My primary recourse of reasoning through unfamiliar circumstances was just not possible.

Edwina Gately says in the book, "I used to think that following Jesus was all rather noble and exciting and that if one really got on with it and flung oneself into the arena of Justice and Mission, one might well emerge shrouded in light and ecstasy"

(p. 59). Most of us, if honest, probably agree. Following three days of preparation— simple communal living, prayer, guest speakers on conscientious consumption, sustainable living, fair trade and globalization, even diet—we drove to the border between two countries, two worlds. We stopped at the fence separating "us" from "them" and I stood with my camera, feet rooted, and recorded the faces of children who ran to inspect us through thick chain links, against a background of homes made of scrap that came ever so close to the boundary. By only moving my arms and changing the direction of my gaze, my camera captured all of El Paso, Texas; the teeming downtown area close to the Rio Grande, and the large, beautifully landscaped homes in the hills looking directly at the crowded streets, factories encompassing entire blocks, and barren earth across the river. Many of the men and women we were to meet work long hours in these factories, "maquilladoras" yet live on top of the poorly disguised refuse of all. Their homes, in view of the El Paso hills, are scattered along makeshift roads, constructed of concrete block and plywood, mattress springs and pieces of corrugated metal. In places, underground methane fires leak toxic smoke in spirals surrounding the homes, and dead dogs in varying stages of decay are usually smelled before being seen. The bone-dry earth has no color, no life left in it; human traffic and southwestern breezes continually reveal layer upon layer of debris.

Rohr says that, "the human mind will always try to name, categorize, fix, control and insure all its experiences" (p. 80). Further in the book, M. Basil Pennington reminds us that, "This is the construct of the false self. It is made up of what I have, what I do and what others think of me" (p. 88). There was for me, formed in a culture idolizing productivity and possession, no way to categorize, much less fix or control this reality. Yet believing that justice demands some response, I knew that the presence of each member of this small group was meant to be a catalyst in some way, compelled to confrontation, not solution.

Thomas Keating's essay confirms that, "The duty of confrontation is a hard one... (it) never works if it comes out of a feeling of anger" (114, 115). How are we to confront injustice of this scale with equanimity? As we learned in the days prior to our time in Juarez, the contributing factors are multiple and convoluted, the players multinational. Frederica Carney asks herself if she is ready for "a different journey, one that goes into the desert of humility and contrition, of Love and Forgiveness, into a new language beyond 'my' roles, beyond my need to fix situations and relationships.

We are born with a bottomless sense of inadequacy. Augustine named it original sin" (p. 137). In Justine Buisson's words,

For all of us, the first step is to become conscious of the evil of our time, to look it in the eye and call it by its real name. Will we be uncomfortable, misunderstood, decried? Certainly, but didn't Jesus call us blessed in advance for standing up for what is right and naming what is wrong? In the morass of evil around us, we need to keep faith with the great mystery trying to understand itself—through us. This, I think, is what it means to be human and to show others that they are called to be human, too, as children of God (p. 102).

"Love alone can change people. This is the great confrontation that no one can resist," emphasizes Keating (p. 116).

In the chapter, "A Passage through India," Rohr recounts time spent in Calcutta with Mother Teresa's sisters, confirming that, "God calls us, uses us, transforms us, often in spite of ourselves. I have come to call it the Great Mercy" (p. 121). On the streets of the world's most densely populated city, in the face of extreme poverty, he found an unexpected ease and openness in the people. And in the sisters:

...that amazing and rare combination of utter groundedness and constant risk-taking that characterizes the true Gospel...these women wasted no time in fixing, controlling, or even needing to understand what is wrong with others. Instead, they put all their time and energy into letting God change them. From that transformed place, they serve and carry the pain of the world, which they are convinced is the pain of God. (p. 124)

With God's grace, we may come to understand what the sisters, the mystics and contemplatives know to be the only way to live in our world, learning in the silence that, "Our lives are usable for God. We need not be effective, but only transparent and vulnerable. God takes it all from there...we are all partial images slowly coming into focus, to the degree we allow and filter the Light and Love of God" (p. 134). In terms perhaps more accessible to the paradox of our daily struggle for justice, mercy and love, "...action is the ongoing good and the needed school, but the concluding lesson is always a contemplative seeing and being" (p. 130).

Aaron Froehlich's essay, "Eyes That See," was written following a trip from Albuquerque to Israel and the West Bank. The conclusion of his essay expresses the foundational premise of this book, and serves as a fitting summary to my experience of contemplation in action in Juarez:

Since then, my struggle to understand and communicate my experience has continued...It's not my place to search for the "solution" or to lead anyone else there either; my call is to be faithful to God's ongoing incarnation in my life, and to walk forward with a growing commitment to see with new eyes and live with greater integrity (p. 58).

Catherine Crosby

RAKOCZY, Susan, *Great Mystics & Social Justice, Walking on the Two Feet of Love* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), pp. 217. ISBN 0-8091-4307-0 (paperback). \$18.95.

How can we meaningfully live out our Christian vocation in a world plagued by war, economic hegemony, ecological destruction and other structural evils? For Sister Susan Rakoczy, the answer lies in the example of the great Christian mystics whose lives of deep prayer lead to outward lives of love toward others and