

The Kellys tell what to expect in the way of programs, as well. Some places provide guided retreats, sitting and walking meditation, work parties, communal ceremonies. Others, like the Trappist monasteries, leave you to your own devices. More than a few centers offer special retreats focused on alcoholism, single parenthood, separation and divorce, Enneagram workshops, and marriage encounters. The typical entry continues with information about the physical setting and style of accommodation, costs, and customs of the house. Regardless of philosophy or purpose, the same important message is expressed at each place: "We welcome people of all faiths."

The Kellys are generally objective in their reports, but occasionally they reflect strong positive experiences as in this summary of Kripalu Center: "The supportive atmosphere of love and acceptance allows guests and students to observe themselves honestly, to start to cleanse their lives through attention to detail, and to handle reality in a compassionate way." But this only adds to the charm of this delightful book. Each state section ends with a list of other retreat houses that the authors have not visited. Tucked away at the back of the book is a thoughtful feature: a glossary of terms such as canonical hours, *zazen*, and the Rule of St. Benedict.

A large number of these properties were originally developed as seminaries for the training of religious. With the decline of vocations in recent years, they've been turned into retreat centers. Although one is saddened at the passing of a 2,000 year old way of life, the "sanctuary" phenomenon also points up a great interest in a lay apostolate and the growing spiritual hunger in the American people. Those readers who would rather spend a vacation in a monastery than at the beach (count me among them) will cheer the Kellys' work — and welcome the news that they are researching similar guides for other regions of the country.

THE TOBIN TAPES

Review of

PRAYER & COMMITMENT IN THOMAS MERTON
and *PROPHECY & COMMITMENT IN THOMAS MERTON*

By Mary Luke Tobin, S.L.

Kansas City: Credence Cassettes. 1991

Two cassette tapes / \$8.95 each

Reviewed by **Bonnie B. Thurston**

Credence Cassettes' release of two tapes by Mary Luke Tobin on Thomas Merton is not only a wonderful addition to the Merton literature, but an important repository of the wit and wisdom of an important American churchwoman. Sister Luke is well known to Merton students

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as a long time friend of Merton, an official observer at Vatican II, and an influential leader in the American church. As the tapes demonstrate, she is also a woman of warm heart and keen intellect.

Although the tapes do not provide this specific information, these two talks, "Prayer and Commitment in Thomas Merton" and "Prophecy and Commitment in Thomas Merton," are essentially the ones given on November 3, 1990, at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York - the program called "A Day on Thomas Merton with Sister Mary Luke Tobin." They reflect a welcome informality in the genre of Merton speeches and are "multi-media" in that Sister Luke leads us in song as well as in thought! Both talks reflect her own wide reading, with references to persons as disparate as the Dalai Lama and Abraham Heschel, as well as Merton's own published work and talks which Luke heard him give. The material from this latter source may be of most interest to Merton scholars.

In "Prophecy" Luke speaks of Merton's ability to hold in tension two parallel contradictions. She uses as her foundational metaphor Daniel Berrigan's comparison of Merton to a tightrope walker as one who achieves balance by moving forward. The talk suggests issues to which Merton might speak in our own day and reminds us of his warning of the danger of "living by our weapons." It is a thought provoking tape.

To my mind, "Prayer" is the stronger of the two talks, but this may reflect my own preference for its chronological organization over the more "episodic" quality of the other, and my preference for its subject matter. Sister Luke traces Merton's thoughts on prayer and his descriptions of his own prayer life and concentrates, rightly I think, on the last eight years of his life. Here we are given not only one of the most cogent presentations of Merton's practical theology of prayer, but the speaker's own spiritual depth and commitment. It is an enriching tape.

As with most of the Merton tapes in the Crendence series, these would have been improved by some judicious editing and careful cutting. We cannot hear the remarks of the audience. The discursive material of the talks is interrupted by personal reflections which some hearers may rank in the category of "digression."

Still, these tapes make a noteworthy contribution to Merton studies. They represent a perceptive analysis of two of Merton's most important subjects — public action and private prayer — by someone who knew him long enough to trace his development and by an intellect sharp enough in its own right to grasp Merton's expansive mental landscape.

It is to be hoped that Sister Luke will give many more Merton lectures. And it will be important to tape them all. Few are more engaging and lucid in their interpretation of Merton and his thought than she.



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