

SANCTUARIES

Review of

*SANCTUARIES: A GUIDE TO LODGINGS
IN MONASTERIES, ABBEYS, & RETREATS / THE NORTHEAST*

By Jack & Marcia Kelly

New York: Bell Tower/ Harmony Books, 1991

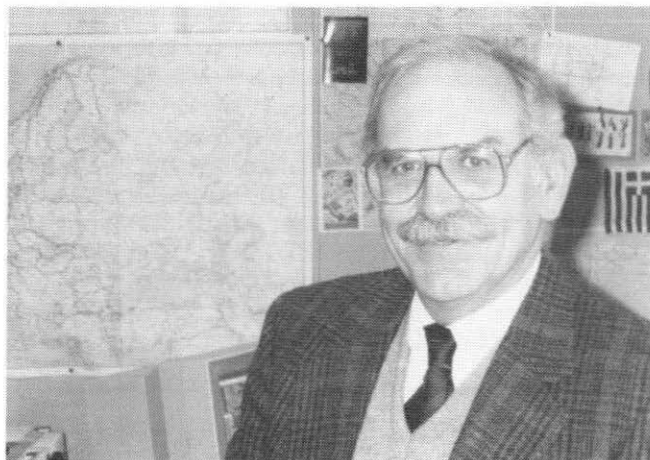
xiv, 241 pages / \$13.00 paperback

Reviewed by **Arthur W. Biddle**

Want to get away from it all for a few days? How about an island off the New Hampshire coast that features a silent candlelight procession to chapel each evening? Or a private hermitage at a Sufi community in the Berkshire mountains? Or perhaps a retreat in northwestern Massachusetts where reading, writing, talking, and phone calls are banned?¹ *Sanctuaries* tells you where to find these oases of quiet and what you'll discover when you get there.

Authors Jack and Marcia Kelly visited nearly one hundred houses of retreat throughout the northeastern United State to research this most unusual guidebook. Each state section begins with a helpful map locating the sites. Every sanctuary gets a two page treatment, headed by an attractive line drawing of the main building done by Jennifer Harper. Then the Kellys characterize its philosophy and purpose. The range is striking: a cloister of Benedictine nuns, two Sufi communities, half a dozen Buddhist centers (choose from Zen, Tibetan, or Mahayana), and some hard to classify, such as the essentially non-religious, family-oriented Chaleight where they construct an Indian sweat lodge every summer. Readers of *The Merton Seasonal* will be pleased to find two Cistercian monasteries included: St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts, and the Abbey of the Genesee, Piffard, New York, daughter house of the Abbey of Gethsemani. They'll also be interested to learn that Marcia Marcus Kelly is a niece of Robert Lax, Merton's Columbia classmate and life long friend, and the daughter of Gladys Lax Marcus, often mentioned by Merton during the Olean-St. Bonaventure years.

□ **Arthur W. "Bill" Biddle** is Professor of English at the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont. A member of *The International Thomas Merton Society*, he presided over the workshop "Teaching Thomas Merton" at the recent Second General Meeting and he delivered a paper, "Merton's Mythic Voyage: Archetypes of the Whale and the Castle in 'The Fire Watch'" in the session "Merton & His Writings." His current project is a complete edition of the correspondence of Thomas Merton and Robert Lax.



ARTHUR W. BIDDLE

Photo by Sidney Poger

1. Star Island, Isle of Shoals, New Hampshire; Abode of the Message, New Lebanon, New York; Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts.

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

□ **Bonnie B. Thurston** is chair of the Religious Studies Department at Wheeling Jesuit College in Wheeling, West Virginia. She was elected the third president of *The International Thomas Merton Society* and will serve in that capacity from 1991 to 1993. At the recent Second General Meeting, she delivered a paper, "Knowledge vs. Wisdom: Thomas Merton on Education," in the session "Merton and Education." She has written several articles and reviews on Merton.