



The Third Desert: The Story of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue

Fabrice Blee

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Over the course of its history the Christian monastic tradition has developed a "desert spirituality" of solitude, silence, and self-knowledge that fosters openness to the divine presence and its transformative power. Today the divine presence is manifesting itself anew in the "desert of otherness," that sacred space in which we encounter the other as one whose difference, even of religion and spirituality, can enrich us, rather than as one who must be drawn to and converted to our own "truth." The encounter of Christians with other believers will increasingly become a place of hardship and testing that leads to union with the divine. This "third monastic desert" is, in reality, the nucleus of the Kingdom that is coming into being, where communication becomes communion. Such has been the experience of monastic men and women - Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians - who have engaged in dialogue. Having discovered an unanticipated bond between dialogue and silence, openness to the other and interiority, Christian monks invite the whole Church to join them on this journey into the desert of otherness.

Fabrice Blee was born in Epernay, France. He is a full professor on the faculty of theology of Saint Paul University, Ottawa, where he teaches in the areas of interreligious dialogue and Christian spirituality. He is also the director of a series on Spiritualities in Dialogue (MediasPaul); a member of the editorial board of Dilatato Corde, the online journal of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue; and an advisor to the board of directors of the North American commission of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.

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