



Life of Saint Charbel

The Call of the Desert

By Bishop Francis M. Zayek, S.T.D., J.C.D., Diocese of St. Maron, U.S.A, June 1977

Introduction

Charbel Makhloof, the Lebanese hermit monk, will be canonized on October 9, 1977. As a beacon of light shining through a storm, this humble man's life openly proclaims to our world that Christ is true King and that His Kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36).

The many miracles performed through Charbel manifest to us how pleased God is with the witness-of silence and prayer in the life of His servant. Among miracles is the incorrupt state of his body, which bled and perspired for sixty-five years after his death. These marvels manifest how the words of St. Paul are still true for our time, "It was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen--those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything." (I Cor. 1:27-28).

God performed these marvels of signs of life and healing to show us where true wisdom lies, the wisdom of the One who is the beginning and the end of the world, the Ancient of Days, the Provider who said, "Let your hearts be on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well." (Mt. 6:33) He is the One who was yesterday, is today and will be tomorrow.

I have tried in the following pages to give the reader an idea about the hermitic way of life throughout the centuries and how these men and women have a special place in Christ's Mystical Body, the Church, and in the human society upon which they call the graces of God. These "athletes of the spiritual life" witness to the thirst for God found in every human soul.

I hope this booklet will in some way prepare all of us for the forthcoming canonization of St. Charbel. A deeper understanding of the hermitic life will enable us to see it as a traditional, yet living witness to Christ in the Church.

My goals are modest. I do not expect a great number of people to migrate to the wilderness in search of God. I do hope that these pages will inspire some to spend some quiet moments alone with God, reflecting upon their relationship with Him. "Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for awhile."(Mk. 6:31).

1. The Alienation of Modern Man

When God created man, he gave him dominion over all of creation. Man was to work in the world and to civilize it. More than simply putting the world under the control of man, God intended for man to co-operate in the process of creation. Man was to use his mind and his technology in order to bring about a more perfect world.

As we look around the world today, do we see a world that is under the dominion of man or do we see that man has now become engulfed in his own progress? No longer does man control the

world. Rather, it is the world with all of its pressures of commercialism and technology that are in control of man.

This inverted relationship of man and the world manifests itself in many ways. Because our lives are so involved with technology and "things", we begin to treat other people as "things", something that can be used and disposed of. No longer are we able to form deep and lasting relationships. Consequently, we see the breakdown of marriages and family life. Old people and even the unborn are discarded because they are not wanted or no longer "useful". Our daily work no longer seems fulfilling to us. We have almost forgotten what it means to adore God and to concern ourselves with spiritual realities.

Thomas Merton, the noted Trappist monk, asserts that there is nothing wrong with technology in itself, but he also feels that it is a myth to think that technology, by itself, will solve man's problems. He declares that "technology was made for man and not man for technology". It is his opinion that "the ultimate end of all techniques, when they are used in a Christian context, is charity and union with God". (1)

It is necessary for man to again renew his relationship with himself, with nature and with God. Weary of this world, its activity and its noise, we must live lives that contain and are enriched by moments of silence and solitude. We must remember that Martha's sister, Mary, chose the better part when she sat quietly at the Lord's feet and listened to Him. (Lk. 10:42)

2. The Call to Silence and Solitude

The "call of the desert" is a call to silence and solitude. The "desert" for most of us is not the wilderness of the Sahara, but the call to be quiet and to reflect upon our own salvation: a time to be alone with God. "We all have the desert in our everyday lives. The sand and the sun and heat and lack of water and loneliness may take different forms, but we all experience them: problems, deprivations, physical inconveniences, discomforts and loneliness." (F. Le Clerc)

This call is made particularly to those who live in the midst of incessant chatter and noise. If God is to speak, man must be silent. An ancient Egyptian prayer says, "O Thoth, thou sweet well for a man thirsting in the desert. It is sealed up to him who has discovered his mouth, but it is open to the silent. When the silent comes, he finds the well." (2) In the Old Testament, Israel first met Yahweh in the desert, and the story of the desert wandering remained the type of the encounter of man with God. The Church in her wisdom has always encouraged the faithful to take time for silence and solitude, to have a "desert experience". Father Clifford Stevens writes, "There is much talk these days about a 'desert experience', a kind of religious retreat where we truly go into the 'desert', into a silence and aloneness broken only by the most necessary of outside activities... Each one of us needs our personal 'desert experience' and the Church has provided it". (3) Take, for example, retreat houses, days of recollection and various periods of meditation that are all a part of the Church's life.

Although this call to a "desert experience" is meant for every Christian, there are today those who want to seclude themselves for their entire life, dedicating themselves to work and prayer in almost absolute silence. These men and women stand in absolute opposition to the materialistic world in which we live. "Again, as in other turbulent ages, hermits are seeking God in the radical simplicity of the wilderness. They are not doing this in large numbers. The desert charism, a call to contemplative witness in solitude, was never for many. But they are doing it, whether in actual forests or in the spiritual desert of a 'poustinia'* where privacy and silence are assured." (4) In "A Desert Song of Renewal", Mariel McGlashan points out that in the western states three hermitages have taken root in recent years. (5)

In "Hermits Among Us--Segregated from All, United to All", Ph. Boitle writes, "The hermits, contrary to what some may think, do not belong to a 'species' on the way to extinction, but quite to the contrary. For thirty years now, we have been witnessing a kind of rebirth in this type of religious life in the countries of the West: the United States, Canada, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France. Thirty years ago, we were able to claim about fifteen hermits as 'serious'. Today, even though we lack exact statistics, we estimate their number to be over two hundred. This figure has a tendency to stabilize." (6)

There is no doubt that the Canonization of Charbel, the "Wonder Worker of Our Century" will awaken a new interest in the kind of life he lived: a life of solitude, internal prayer, contemplation and meditation. The life of this great hermit is a voice crying in the desert for a return to the true fountain of life. "My people have committed a double crime, they have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, only to dig cisterns for themselves, leaky cisterns that hold no water." (Jer. 2:13).

3. What Is a Hermit?

The word "Hermit" or "Anchorite" is a general term indicating a person who lives by himself for religious purposes, far from human habitation. Included in this general category are the "Recluse" (one living in a cell adjacent to the community), the "Stylite" (one living on top of a pillar), and the "Shepherd" (one who does not have a permanent place to stay, but travels as a nomad in the desert or mountains).

When the word "Hermit" or "Anchorite" is heard, many think of a strange person, a kind of extinct spiritual being in the history of the Church. Actually, at the beginning of the fourth century, the hermitic life was one of the standard ways, especially in the East. With the Peace brought by Constantine, the period of the great persecutions were over and the martyrdom of blood was, therefore, impossible. Those willing to give their lives to God began to look to the wilderness and for various ways to mortify their senses. With them, the first school of spirituality began. (7)

The Peace of Constantine also meant that the Church was to face a mortal danger that was to continue to confront her for eighteen centuries: namely, to compromise with the world. While the Christians of Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome were returning to the everyday lives of Roman citizens, certain ascetics, frightened of such a compromise or accord with the world, fled to the wilderness of the deserts. They sought to live a life of "a man who does not exist", buried in their caverns and grottoes.

These men and women tried to imitate the lives of St. John the Baptist and Elijah, the Prophet of Fire. They followed Jesus into the desert. They wept for their sins and their egos disappeared like salt dissolving in fresh water. Upon these hermits and their successors the Mystical Church of the East has built its spirituality. (8)

The lives of these hermits and their teachings had an important influence on the development of the Church's ascetical and mystical doctrine. They also played an important role in the foundation of the monastic life and the defense of the Christian dogma and truths. There is no doubt that this kind of life was and still is a very special vocation, but on the part of the hermit it represents an admirable response and correspondence to the grace of God.

The precept of the Lord, "Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me" (Mk. 10: 21), has always haunted souls as it did St. Anthony of Egypt. It is on account of that precept that an ascetical life style was established. (9)

However, money in itself is not an obstacle to perfection! Leaving the world with all of its attractions and vanities and secluding one's self in the wilderness does not protect one from temptations. The memory of the past haunts the hermit "because our enemy, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat" (I Pt. 5:8). The struggle of the hermit in his conflict with the devil is succinctly described by Saint Anthony, "The devils are not visible bodies, but we become their bodies when we accept from them the suggestions of darkness. Having harbored such suggestions or thoughts, we receive in us the demons themselves and make them bodily apparent and manifest". (10) It is in this light that we can appreciate the Fathers' description of the demons going around the desert among the tombs and disappearing. (11) All of this shows that the essential aspect in the life of the hermit is not the exterior solitude, but the interior one which segregates him from attachments to the world; the exterior solitude or wilderness is a means to arrive at the interior one. The true goal, however, in crossing any desert is to reach the "Promised Land".

Speaking of solitude, Merton states that, "The habitual argument of those who protest against exterior solitude is that it is dangerous besides being totally unnecessary. Unnecessary because all that really matters is interior solitude; or so they say. And this can be obtained without physical isolation. There is, in this statement, a truth more terrible than can be imagined by those who so glibly make it, as a justification for their lives without solitude, silence and prayer". (12)

Through the centuries, the hermits have continued to enrich the Church by their lives of prayer, work in the fields, meditation, silence and penance. "They are the witnesses of another kingdom. They withdraw into the healing silence of the wilderness or of poverty, or of obscurity, to heal in themselves the wounds of the entire world. (13) Carlo Carretto writes, "Man on the way to the roots of his being towards his end, his Creator, after having been purified by the suffering dryness of human pleasure and selfishness, finds himself at the doorway of eternity. His own strength can do nothing, meditation itself becomes impossible and words, once so effortless, can only repeat some mono syllables of love and lament". (14)

The hermit attests to the primacy of the spiritual life in the message of Christ and in the Church, and continues to recall to us the presence and greatness of the Invisible One with whom they continually try to live and conform.

"The genuine hermit is driven by a passion which seeks its outlet in a steep, straight way to God. The calling is sublime but the path is not simple... He who enters the hermitage must live a different life from men of his time. The hermit is valuable to the world precisely insofar as he is not part of it. His life should be a prophetic witness and the effectiveness of that witness depends not on what he might say, but on what he is". (15)

The hermits serve and enrich the Mystical Body of Christ as well as the world, which they left, by their prayers, penance, and silence in order that the message of Christ be better heard. They renounce the world, sin and themselves in simplicity and humility, to meditate on the Mysteries of God immanent to their being and whose transcendency they try to attain by this means. In the dark night of the spirit they live in the hope and light of that vision which will never end.

The spiritual life of the hermit has always involved to a great extent 1) a profound liturgical life; 2) meditation upon Holy Scriptures (the Word of God - The Tablets); 3) adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (The Manna); 4) devotion to the Mother of God (Ark of Covenant).

Their life of physical solitude is a life of love without consolation, a life, however, that is fruitful because it is pressed down and running over with the will of God, all that has this will in it is full of significance, even when it appears to make no sense at all. (16) However, the hermit remains in the world as a prophet to whom no one listens, as a voice crying in the desert, as a sign of

contradiction. The world does not want him because he has nothing in himself that belongs to the world. But this is his mission to be rejected by the world, which in that act rejects the dreaded solitude of God Himself. Yet this solitary God has called men to another fellowship with Himself, through the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, through the solitude of Gethsemane and Calvary and the Mystery of Easter, and the solitude of the Ascension, all of which precede the great communion of Pentecost. (17)

We know very little about the Anchorites because they went to the desert to stay and in the desert the true ones buried themselves while the ones who stumbled were rejected by it. These men walked the burning land and followed the column of cloud, which hid them from sight and led them to the land of milk and honey. However, of that land there is not even a word. All that mattered for them was the crossing itself, the exile, traveling as strangers to the earth. The cavern of the hermit is a true "martyring". It is there they went "to struggle with all the deaths": the death of the body, the death of man, the death even of their own mind, just to live with God in silence. The angel at the door of the tomb does not tire of repeating to those who pass by, "The one for whom you are looking, Anthony, Peter, Macarius, Arsenius-is not here." (18)

Only strong, experienced and deeply contemplative souls. are able to face this kind of life and persist in it. In fact they will have to face many temptations and fight many fights in order to discipline their bodies and souls, to liberate themselves and to direct all of their activity to the Invisible God.

If their mission towards man is penance and prayer, however, out of love for God, many of them have consecrated themselves for a certain period of time to diverse apostolates. They have founded religious orders, became apostles of the word, taken care of spiritual and physical sickness, participated actively in synods and councils, became counselors of kings and emperors, defended the Catholic faith by their preaching and writings, founded schools of spirituality or asceticism, became bishops or patriarchs. In trying to convince Eusebius, the hermit, to become superior of his community, Ammon wrote, "If you love God intensely, accept this, that others may love him with you." (19)

4. The Growth and Development of the Hermitic Life

The hermitic way of life finds its origins in the desert of Egypt with the famous "Fathers of the Desert". Among them are Paul, Anthony, Macarius, John, Niammon, Paphnutius (whose influence moved the Council of Nicea, 325, to leave the question of continence to the discretion of those clergy who married before ordination), Pambo, Pachomius (the founder of the Cenobites), and Onophrius.

Palladius of Helenopolis, a friend of St. John Chrysostom, wrote in his *Historia Lausiaca* (420), "The disciples of St. Anthony (who died in 356) were numerous" The author mentions that there were two thousand hermits near Alexandria, five thousand in the desert of Nitria, six hundred in the Desert of the Cells and five hundred in the Desert of Scete. "These holy men, lost in the desert, without name or history, may be however, the most beautiful ones." Yet even here certain person

alities stand out: Amon, father of the hermits of Nitria; Macarius, one of the hermits near Alexandria; Evagrus at the Cells and Macarius, the Egyptian at Scete. These great figures brilliantly manifest the richness and fecundity of the life of St. Anthony of the Desert.

From Egypt, the hermitic life spread to Sinai in 307 (St Hilarion), to Palestine (St. Nilus), to Mesopotamia and Persia (Aphrahat the Wise, St. Abon, St. James of Nisibis and Julian Salva).

From Mesopotamia, the hermit way of life spread to Syria and Lebanon. Among the members of

this last school, we find St. Maron the Great and his disciples: namely, Abraham of Cyrus (apostle of Lebanon), Haushab and James (both from Cyrus), L'mnaeus, John, Moses, Antiochus, Antonius, Damianus, Zabena (who stood erect for extended periods of time without rest as a form of penance), Polychronius, Moses, the great St. Simeon the Stylite who inaugurated a new lifestyle by living on the top of a column, Baradat, Taleelaus, and the holy women, Marana, Kyra and Domnina.

St. Theodoret, the bishop of Cyrus and the local ordinary of these hermits, wrote that these holy men and women were the roses in the garden of his diocese; that they were like stars radiating to the ends of the world; that they are wounded, inflamed and inebriated with the desire for the Divine Beauty; that they were true "athletes of the spirit"; heroes of prayer and penance whose eyes, already accustomed to the miracles of grace and virtue, were wide open to the marvels of the Christian faith. A description of the lives of the above-mentioned disciples of St. Maron is to be found in a book by Father Peter Daou, History of the Maronites (Volume I, pp. 84-132).

In describing the hermits called "Stationaries" or "Stylites", J. Besse says, "The Eastern monks employed all their wits to find new ways of penance. It was not sufficient for them to live in the open air, summer and winter without shelter, but some obliged themselves to always remain standing. This is why they were called 'Stationaries'. This kind of penance was to be found more in

Syria than Egypt; and among the well-known are James and Abraham, both of Cyrus and the disciples of St. Maron. This penance seemed insufficient for some of them who spent their lives on the top of a column... this mode of life was inaugurated in Syria by a monk named Simeon... many followed his example." (20)

We find among these Anchorites from the East, known as the "Fathers of the Desert", men of great holiness. Their spiritual teachings (transmitted orally or by writing to their disciples) or the example of their lives are one of the purest sources of ascetism. The Moslem invasion made their kind of life much more difficult and since then their number has diminished. However, the Eastern Churches still enumerate some of them, especially in Syria and Lebanon. (21)

Despite the fact that the Maronites were forced to leave Syria because of the Moslem invasion, the hermitic life continued to grow and flourish. At the end of the last century, this development culminated with the life of the great hermit and Anchorite, Charbel Makhloof, the great mystic and wonder worker of our time.

It is from the East that the eremitic life was introduced and spread through Europe by St. Athanase (who visited France and Rome) and through the example of St. Jerome and others who went from Europe to the East. The greatest exponent of this life in the West and who eventually became a founder of a religious order was Saint Benedict. Among the later famous hermits of Europe are St. Nicholas of Flue from Switzerland who died in 1487 and Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916), the hermit of the Sahara who was killed by the Tuaregs at Tamanrasset, Algeria. Foucauld's writings inspired the foundation of the Little Brothers of Jesus in 1933.

Because of the abuse (22) and in order for the Church to be able to control their lives, only the recluses, those with cells adjacent to the monastery, were able to survive. At different times, the hermits reappeared again and were reunited under the Rule of the Carthusians and the Camaldolese. The Carmelites began as hermits and were later formed as an order. However, since 1948, there has been a revival in the Carmelite hermitic life in some countries. At least one branch of the Augustinians were hermits and they still keep the name today. Among the Franciscans, the Celestines were hermits.

The Council of Chalcedon (451), the Novellae of Justinian, and the Council in Trullo (692) tried

to bring some control to this kind of life and avoid certain abuses. (23) They designated that a hermit had to first be a monk. After many years of Cenobitic life and with the permission of his superiors, he was able to retire to a cell, but always dependent upon his superiors and his order. Rabboula, in his rules and prescriptions also asked for this. (24)

In the West, the Cenobitic life always tended to obscure the eremitic life to a much greater extent than in the East. However, during the times of spiritual revival within the Church, a comparatively large number of souls smitten with the desire for perfection have gone to the wilderness seeking solitude. (25) They cry out with St. Bonaventure ("O Beata Solitudo! O Sola Beatitudo! O Blessed Solitude! O Only Blessing!")

5. A Great Esteem for Hermits

The Catholic Church and especially our Maronite Rite-which was founded by a hermit--has always held the hermits in great esteem.

In our Maronite calendar, there is not a month without one, two, three or more commemorations of a hermit.

On January 5, immediately before Epiphany, the calendar mentions St. Paul of the Desert, the first hermit to be mentioned in the history of the Church, although there were surely others who preceded him. On January 13, we celebrate the feast of St. James of Nisibis, hermit and bishop, professor and protector of St. Ephrem and the one who inspired St. Maron by his way of life.

January 17 brings us the Feast of St. Anthony of Egypt, called the "Father of the Monks", and to whom the Maronites have a great devotion. Religious orders have put themselves under his protection and in the United States many Maronite churches have been dedicated to him. On January 19, we celebrate the feast of St. Macarius of Alexandria and Macarius the Egyptian; on the 20th St. Euthymius; on the 28th. St. Ephrem, who wrote about the hermits and their lives.

The month of February brings us the Feast of St. Maron on the 9th. St. Alexander on the 12th.; St. Martin on the 13th. and St. James the Hermit on the 20th.

The first of March, one day before the feast of St. John Maron, we celebrate the feast of St. Domnina, virgin, hermit and disciple of St. Maron. On the tenth of March, we celebrate the feast of St. Auxonitus.

April 20 - St. Nathanael; 22 - St. Theodosius

May 12 - St. Epiphanius; 18 - St. Bessarion; 24 - St. Simeon the Stylite, the younger June 3 - St. Othol; 4 - St. Erasmus; 12 - St. Anaphorius; 18 - St. Abon

July 3 - St. Jerome; 5 - St. Macarius; 6 - St. Sissoes; 7-St. Thomas; 17-St. Marina, a disciple of St. Maron

August 7 - St. Doumit

September I - St. Simeon the Stylite, the Great

October 22 - St. Limnaeus, a disciple of St. Maron

November 15 - St. Eugenius

December 11 - St. Daniel the Stylite

Of course, one can see from all the commemorations made of hermits in the Maronite calendar that the Maronites have a predilection for the monastic life. It also shows that in the first centuries of the Church, the men and women whose lives shone with holiness were eminent among the martyrs and the hermits, martyrs of penance and in their daily love for God. Our forefathers wanted to point out to us that the lives of these saints were a shining example of penance and holiness so necessary for our own salvation and intimate union with Christ.

6. The Hermitic Life in the Maronite Church

In our Maronite Rite, the spirit of St. Maron and his disciples was transmitted to the future generations. We know that in the eighth century, more than 300 hermitic cells were to be found around the Monastery of St. Maron alone (Syria). For centuries, this kind of life didn't diminish among the Maronites because of a continual thirst for God, a thirst for silence and solitude in men and women. The Maronites were brought into this same spirit and direction when they moved to the inaccessible valleys and mountains of Lebanon. If we visit the Valley of Quadisha (the Holy) today, we still will find more than two hundred hermit cells excavated in the rock and came standing around the monastery which was for centuries the Patriarchal Residence of Qannoubin (Coenobium). Many of our bishops and patriarchs--especially in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries--came from the ranks of the hermits. Among the great ones are the three El-Ruzzi patriarchs, Michael, Sergius and Joseph (1564-1608). It was a hermit who introduced the printing press to Lebanon.

Our first Nomocanon (Kitab El Houda, pp. 211-212), written in the beginning of the 11th century, prescribes that only a priest-hermit is able to offer the Divine Liturgy by himself; others must have the assistance of a deacon.

Among the famous hermits of Lebanon, we may mention James Hadathi, Yunan el Matriti, Gabriel of Ehden, Malka El-Bakoofawi, James Assas and others. His Excellency, Bishop Dib writes, "The asceticism of the hermits was harsh and unrelenting. They challenged each other with a sort of holy rivalry as to who would master his body the most." We shall sketch one of their lives.

In the year 1542, the pious hermit Younan el Matriti died in a holy manner, fortified with the blessing of Patriarch Moussa and of Koriakos, the Bishop of Ehden. He lived in the hermitage of St. Michael for 50 years. With perfect purity of heart, he celebrated Mass each morning. Four years before his death, he ate only once every two days and during Lent on Saturday and Sunday only. His fast extended from Pentecost to Christmas, from Epiphany to Easter. He drank only on Saturday and made prostration until he was covered with sweat. (During Holy Week, he made 24,000 prostrations and was surpassed only by the more vigorous student, Hanna el-Lehfeidi, who made 26,000.) (26)

Even the people in Europe were hearing about the lives of these holy Anchorites and hermits whose dwelling places were among the wild beasts. Many from Europe to join them. Among them were the Frenchman, Francis Galaup de Chesteinl and the Italian, Father Francis of Piedmont, Capuchin. (27)

Among the last famous hermits, whose name we have already mentioned, is Charbel Makhloof. For his biography see *A New Star of the East*, by this author, and *Light from the East*, by Msgr. Joseph Eid.

According to the testimony of a high prelate of Rome, the life of St. Charbel reproduces the lives of the Fathers of the Desert and St. Maron and his disciples. In fact, since the fourth century, the hermitic life has been an uninterrupted chain in our Maronite Rite. The roots of spirituality were deeply planted in the hearts of our people so that they were able to continue the glorious pages in the history of asceticism and spirituality in the Church. The hermitic life was the fruit of this spirit of humility and penance, which imbues our liturgy so richly. The Spirit of God guided those who tried to live fully in this spirit into the wilderness.

Even in our technical oriented era, we must continue to keep God as our goal and to love penance and prayer. We can be hermits even though we are involved in our personal occupations--if we are united to God.

Thomas Merton emphasizes the necessity of silence, "For language to have meaning there must be intervals of silence somewhere, to divide word from word and utterance from utterance. He who retires into silence does not necessarily hate language. Perhaps it is love and respect for language, which imposes silence upon him. For the mercy of God is not heard in words, unless it is heard both before and after the words are spoken, in silence." (28)

"All apostles are aware of the importance of using the gift of speech to communicate and spread the Gospel. They should also be aware that they will not realize the deepest actualization of the gift of speech unless they collect themselves in periods of silence." (29)

The presence of these great men and women of the contemplative life is the result of an intense Christian life among the people of God; they are the barometers of the spirituality of a Rite and of the Church. In this century of materialism, we absolutely need these beacons of God to guide and enlighten our society, which drowns us in worldly pleasures and occupations--we need them to uplift all of humanity.

Blessed is the Lord, who through the harshness of the Desert leads His people to the Promised Land.

NOTES

- (1) John J. Higgins, Thomas Merton on Prayer, p. 65-66.
- (2) New Catholic Encyclopedia under the title "Silence in Worship".
- (3) Fr. Clifford Stevens, The Visitor. "Was Lent Easier in the Old Days?", March 13, 1977.
- (4) Mariel McGlashan, The Visitor, "A Desert Song of Renewal", March 6, 1977.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ph. Boitle, Informations Catholique Internationale, "Hernuts Among Us--Segregated from All, United to All", October 15, 1974.
- (7) Dictionnaire des Connaissances Religieuses under the titles "Ascetique" and "Mystique".
- (8) Cristina Campo and Piero Dragu, Detti e Fatti dei Padri del Deserto, p.15.
- (9) Dictionnaire Theologie Catholique, "Communism", column 584 - 585.
- (10) Campo and Draghi, op. cit., p. 20.
- (11) Campo and Draglu, op. cit., p. 20.
- (12) Thomas Merton, The Solitary Life, p. 42.
- (13) Ibid., p. 36.
- (14) Carlo Carretto, Letters from the Desert, p. 58.
- (15) The Visitor, March 6, 1977, p. 8.
- (16) Thomas Merton, The Solitary Life, p. 40.
- (17) Ibid., p. 41.
- (18) Campo and Draghi, op. cit., p. 18.
- (19) Theodoret, T. 82, colt 1342.
- (20) Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique under the title "Anachorete" .
- (21) Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique under the title "Anachorete", colt 1135
- (22) Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique under the title "Ermites".
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) George Mahfoud, L'organisation monastique, pp. 49-55, 12
- (25) New Catholic Encyclopedia under the title "Hermits".
- (26) The Most Reverend Piae Dib, History of the Maronites, (translated by Revaand Msgr. Seely Beggiani), pp. 215-216.
- (27) Bishop Dib, Aljameh al Mouf--ssl, or History of the Maronites, pp. 328 ff and 388 ff.
Fr. George Makfoud, L'organisation monastique darts Eglise Maronite, pp. 120-128.
- (28) Thomas Merton, The Solitary Life, p. 36.
- (29) New Catholic Encyclopedia under the title "Practice of Silence".

