



Cloister Talks: Learning from My Friends the Monks

Jon M Sweeney

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Come along as author Jon M. Sweeney sits in the warm October sun talking with Father Luke or enjoys a December afternoon in the monastery with Father Ambrose. In Cloister Talks, Sweeney offers a rare glimpse into his decades-long friendships with monks and shares the wisdom and insight for everyday living he has gained along the way. The contemplative monasticism Sweeney practiced with these monks has been the greatest source of guidance in his journey of faith, and here he shares it with poignant honesty. Sweeney's conversations with monks engage various universal areas of life, including life, death, love, work, play, and spirituality. Readers will emerge with a deeper understanding of this ancient way of Christianity, a much needed antidote to the hurry of contemporary life. EXCERPT Ambrose has such an interesting mind. When he talks it's as if he's painting the circles on a target, beginning at the outer ones. "If I had to give you one piece of advice it would be this: Don't look for sudden enlightenment. People call them ah-ha moments; don't worry about those. I know that you may feel your time is wasted here if you haven't had enough ah-has, but I assure you it won't be." "So what should I be doing?" I asked him, feeling confused. "When you finally quiet down enough you'll begin to hear the divine voice. "Don't walk around looking for moments of enlightened insight," Ambrose continued. "For one thing, we're not that smart!" He laughed. "Instead, you should walk around praying. Sit in the church before dawn, praying. Or just shut your mouth for a few days. Listen to the talks given by the retreat master, if you like. Just sit. Try your best to stop thinking." It sounded too easy to me. I told him that. "What I'm suggesting is much harder than you might think. You'll see."

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