

## ***THE EIGHTH STOREY OF THE MOUNTAIN***

There is something rather special about the life that is lived in a monastic setting. There is something that cannot be easily explained about it, and a clear answer is not easily given to anybody who wants to know why normal men and women seek to live in "gloomy" monasteries or convents. Incidentally, there is nothing "gloomy" in a true monastery or a true convent; either place is constantly bursting with life and energy and activity. Only they can understand what a monastery or a convent is who shall have sacrificed a large part of themselves for their monastery or convent, who have fought to save it, and who have struggled to make it a beautiful and holy place of prayer. After this is done, and only then, will the love of the monastery or the convent fill the heart of the monk or the nun. This cannot be described.

Contemplative Benedictine monasteries and convents do not really accomplish much in the material order. The greatest work of monasteries and convents is spiritual. In a world in which men have forgotten the value of prayer, it is the prayer of monks and nuns who pray for the world and for all those in the world who have forgotten how to pray that truly matters. Somewhat difficult to comprehend, but if there is some small degree of happiness and spiritual joy and faith to temper the anger, rage, hate, and despair of our time, it has been obtained by prayer. And if people have been able to discover any meaning at all out of the chaos and confusion of our world, they owe it to the grace of God, which was obtained for them by somebody's prayer.

The crumbled religious condition of the Church which was founded by Jesus Christ, is, indeed, a serious prayerful concern of every monk and nun. But the monk and the nun realize that correction will never be brought about by all the on-going arguments and debates about the present-day religious bewilderment. The monastic properly has recourse to prayer. Because of the monastic vocation, the religious knows that it is prayer, not argument, that will reach the ear of God. Besides, polemic is not the work of monks or nuns. Prayer is! Therefore the monastic takes the religious (as well as the world's) problems out of the bungling hands of man and prudently and humbly places them all in the hand of God, where they rightly belong. Wrangling, debating, and proving are simply not proper for monks or nuns, and give dis-edification to all onlookers. The truly religious person simply remains apart from contention and discord and turns his (or her) attention only to prayer! In so doing the monk or nun is not thereby a coward. Sadly, there are those who cannot or simply will not be convinced of this all important point.

Benedictine monasteries and convents are not places where business