

When the world - even the Catholic world - looks at the nun's dress today, the apparel proper for a woman who has walked out of the world, they wonder. The modesty of the nun offends the shameless immodesty of woman today; therefore it is hated and ridiculed. So the wonderment about monastic life becomes ever more magnified. When worldly minded people look at a monastery and find well-educated men working in the fields and professional men of the world repairing lawnmowers, they become disoriented. They look about and they see fully grown, educated men, all jolly and full of fun, stopping to laugh at the frolics of a chipmunk, pausing to enjoy the antics of birds and kittens and chickens, bending over to pluck some tiny wildflower simply to enjoy its beauty, and they shake their heads in exasperation, not understanding. To the man of the market place, all full of business acumen, computer obsessions, money marketing expertise, and other such "matters of consequence," the monk stands out as someone quite strange and out of place. If asked about the life he lives, the monk will probably give an answer not easy for a man who works in the market place to understand. Indeed, it will make his blood run cold.

One thing becomes quickly evident, however. The men who live in monasteries and the women who live in convents have not joined such places in order to escape from the realities of life, but rather to find the realities of life. They are certainly not people disappointed in love. They are certainly not deviates. How can a man or woman given entirely to companionship with God be deviant? True monastics have come to the realization that the life as seen and lived in the world of today is entirely dedicated to the pursuit of shadows. The monastic wants more out of life than the empty shadows of "fun and pleasure" and creature comfort! Of what use are the commodities of the world, after all is said and done? Men and women become monastics because they have come to the full understanding of the importance of a world where peace, joy, blessedness, and holiness can overrule a world of fun and pleasure and the abuse of the ordinary laws of God - a world of unfulfilled effort.

Men and women who live in rather close and highly regulated conditions know quite well that even in a restricted way of life such as is in a monastery or convent, they enjoy a freedom that is unknown to those whose lives are dominated and restricted by business, money, and worldly sin. The clean and free and unselfish love of the monks and nuns does not live on what such ones get out of life, but what such ones give to life. Theirs is a kind of love that pours itself out to others, a love that grows and becomes ever more intense. It is a life where sacrifice becomes strangely mighty by throwing itself away. The giving of such men and women is important because it fills whatever blank places exist in