



# **The Orchards of Perseverance: Conversations With Trappist Monks About God, Their Lives and the World**

*David D. Perata*

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The Orchards of Perseverance presents a refreshing profile of ten monks of the Trappist Order who live in a small community at the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux in Northern California. This oral history follows the life of each monk over the course of many years, from their "call to God" to their first entry into the community and the subsequent adjustment to the monastic life. The monks speak candidly in this book about the psychological trauma associated with leaving society and attempting to discover their true "self." Their frank observations about God, how they view life outside the monastic gate and the effect of world events, and how they think the world views them, are interwoven with humor and insight that offers hope and inspiration in a confusing world.

With 450 acres of prune and walnut orchards as their livelihood, blue denim is just as prevalent as monastic robes while these men follow a daily schedule of prayer and work from sunup to sundown. A wide cross-section of the community is represented, from the novice master whose job it is to interview and nurture every man who asks to enter, to the abbot who talks about the difficulties of his title.

Author David D. Perata first went to the monastery in the latter sixties while in grammar school, working out in the orchards with his best friend Joe and having a ball hunting rabbits and driving jeeps and tractors with the monks. Over the course of some thirty years, he has returned to the monastery most every year or so, enjoying its peaceful atmosphere away from the hustle and bustle of society. When the abbot of New Clairvaux recently gave him an opportunity to photograph their life and interview the monks, the result is this rare, intimate look into the monastic enclosure that topples these men off their spiritual pedestals and reveals them as human beings like the rest of us. Far from the mysterious stereotypes we all have had of monasteries and monks, the spiritual struggle and perseverance of these men underscores the simple fact that they are ordinary people who have simply chosen an extraordinary lifestyle.

Illustrated with over eighty-five archival and contemporary photos, The Orchards of Perseverance entertains while arousing a wealth of thought-provoking questions and ideas that readers can incorporate into their daily life.

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