

Exploring New Monastic Communities

The (Re)invention of Tradition

Stefania Palmisano, University of Turin, Italy

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'Exploring with subtlety the nebula of the new Catholic monastic communities, Stefania Palmisano offers a very penetrating insight into the innovative richness of present attempts to reinvent monasticism as an integral Christian style of life, made compatible with the contemporary culture of the individual.'

Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France

'Richly descriptive and theoretically astute, this study shines light on a fascinating set of religious experiments. Far from disappearing into the mists of history, monastic communities are being reinvented, and Palmisano rightly challenges us to pay attention.'

Nancy T. Ammerman, Boston University, USA



Examining the recent radical re-invention of monastic tradition in the everyday life of New Monastic Communities, *Exploring New Monastic Communities* considers how, growing up in the wake of Vatican II, new Catholic communities are renewing monastic life by emphasizing the most innovative and disruptive theological aspects which they identify in the Council. Despite freely adopting and adapting their Rule of Life, the new communities do not belong to pre-existing orders or congregations: they are gender-mixed with monks and nuns living under the same roof; they accept lay members whether single, married or as families; they reject enclosure; they often limit collective prayer time in order to increase time for labour, evangelization and voluntary social work; and are actively involved in oecumenical and interreligious dialogue, harbouring thinly-veiled sympathy with oriental religions, from which they sometimes adopt beliefs and practices.

Offering unique sociological insights into New Monastic Communities, and shedding light on questions surrounding New Religious Movements more generally, the book asks what 'monastic' means today and whether these communities can still be described as 'monastic'.

Contents: Introduction: Italian new monasticism; Packing our bags: a conceptual model for studying NMCs; Journeying among new Piedmontese monastic communities; Success in the monastery: origins and consequences; Between 'pretenders' and 'heirs': the (re)invention of tradition in new monasticism; Ambiguous legitimacy: the episcopal test for NMCs; Key insights and future challenges; Appendix; Bibliography; Index.

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