



Charter, Customs, and Constitutions of the Cistercians: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 7 (Monastic Wisdom Series)

Thomas Merton

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As master of novices for ten years (1955–1965) at the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky, Thomas Merton was responsible for the spiritual formation of young men preparing for monastic profession. In this volume, three related sets of Merton’s conferences on ancient and contemporary documents governing the lives of the monks are published for the first time:

- on the Carta Caritatis, or Charter of Charity, the foundational document of the Order of Cîteaux
- on the Consuetudines, the twelfth-century collection of customs and regulations of the Order
- on the twentieth-century Constitutions of the Order, the basic rules by which Merton and his students actually lived at the time

These conferences form an essential part of the overall picture of Cistercian monastic life that Merton provided as part of his project of “initiation into the monastic tradition” that is evident in the broad variety of courses that he put together and taught over the period of his mastership.

As Abbot John Eudes Bamberger, ocsa, himself a former student of Merton, notes in his preface to this volume, “The texts presented in this present book eventually gave rise to the Cistercian way of spiritual living that continues to contribute to the Church’s witness in this new millennium. This publication is a witness to the process of transformation that ensures the continuity of the Catholic monastic tradition that witnesses to the God who, as Saint Augustine observed is ‘ever old and ever new.’”

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