

(6: Some Problematic Tales) to showing what wide differences in interpretation can come from different starting points. He does not, however, solve this dilemma. Indeed his own interpretative presuppositions stick up like rocks in the path, and again and again this reader found himself saying 'No! No! No!' to them.

GILES HIBBERT OP

**SMALL COMMUNITIES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE: MAKING THEM WORK** by Catherine Widdicombe, *Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 2001. Pp. 256. £15.00 pbk.*

This book has grown out of the author's experience of living in the Grail Community and of her work with leaders and members of many different kinds of religious communities. It is basically a self-help manual, giving practical and clear advice to be used by religious living in small communities, rather than a book to be read or as a blue print for action. She warns of the danger of adhering to the rubrics rather than being true to the essential process being used, and she encourages modification to suit particular situations and communities. It will be especially useful for existing or potential members of small communities who have little or no access to facilitators, and for those who are asked to give advice and help to small communities trying to function better. The author says that the task of the book is 'to stimulate a group of religious to reflect, discuss and come to a common mind on the sort of community they aim to be. What will fit them as a group, be consistent with their purposes and mission and ministry, and be appropriate to their local situation and context? Elsewhere she says that 'the members of a community need to articulate its shared purpose in relation to community life and mission, even though they may pursue various ministries'.

Catherine Widdicombe has gathered together various techniques and methods which she has found useful in helping religious work through the issues and challenges confronting them so as to make small communities more effective instruments of mission. This is a user-friendly reference book, divided into seven sections each with an extended list of contents on different aspects of living in or moving to a small community. It has a very full index, many cross-references, structures for facilitation, checklists, exercises, steps and stages, and lots of ideas and suggestions. The excellent bibliography provides further reference for background reading. As the author herself admits in the text, and the book itself is a witness to this, living in a small community is not easy. She explores some of the problems and challenges that have to be faced. The kind of simple but effective methods and techniques proposed in the book could genuinely help communities face the challenges and overcome some of the problems. It is devoid of the jargon that one has come to expect from self-help manuals of this kind and this makes it all the more accessible and convincing. She also acknowledges the wisdom and experience of long-standing members in the building of community for mission, while

recognising the valid questions and challenges posed by newer entrants to religious life. The book becomes somewhat unconvincing, however, when the author, presumably unintentionally, implies from time to time that small communities are better than larger ones. Nowhere is this clearer than on p.26 where a table shows the movement from pre-Vatican II large communities to post-Vatican II small ones. Apart from the crudeness of such a comparison, small communities are not an invention of Vatican II, on each row of the table the terminology used is favourable towards the small community and rather disparaging towards the large one. The author did not need to do this; her book is about 'small' communities. It is an unfortunate blot on an otherwise excellent book. Can the size of a community be its real problem? Is it really the case that a fixed horarium for prayer and meals is a hindrance to ministry and mission, if it is drawn up by the active participation of all the members and with the various ministries of the community taken into account? In my experience as a long-standing member of the Dominican Order, guidelines concerning the Divine Office, meals together and regular community meetings are part of a mosaic which *together* prescribe a way of life which is both apostolic and God-centred, enriching both our community lives and our ministries. One can find the presence or absence of coresponsibility, collegiality, subsidiarity and collaboration in either small or large communities. Having lived in both kinds myself, I can certainly attest to that. They each have their own strengths and limitations. There ought to be room for both. The Church needs both. Furthermore, as the author herself admits, some people function better in large communities while others do so in small. So, while this book could help small communities, it could also be of value in helping those in large ones, thus giving it a wider application than the title would suggest.

BERTRANDA MULRYAN OP

**SACRAMENTAL ORDERS** by Susan K. Wood (*Lex Orandi Series*) The Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 2000. Pp. xvii + 197, \$19.95 pbk.

The familiar adage *lex orandi lex credendi* has a more complex history than is commonly supposed. For Cyprian the 'law of prayer' had been simply the Our Father, and Prosper followed him in using the phrase without reference to the liturgy. In the nineteenth century, Guéranger used it in his campaign of liturgical homogenisation, which led to its incorporation in a series of encyclicals until Pius XII found himself able to convert its terms, writing in *Mediator Dei* 'let the law of belief determine the law of prayer'. In fact, liturgy and theology seldom relate so simply.

The *Lex Orandi* series to which this volume belongs aims to develop sacramental theology from the Church's current rites, a welcome corrective to the western scholastic tendency to isolate sacramental form and matter from the total liturgical event. But the plural in Wood's title at once indicates the problem this method raises: there is a single sacrament of Order, but three rites of ordination, episcopal, presbyteral and diaconal: how can a