

Border of Death, Valley of Life: An Immigrant Journey of the Heart. By Daniel G. Groody. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2002. xv + 188 pages. \$24.95.

Border of Death began with an interest in the Hispanic culture and ministries that Groody participated in while active as a priest. In turn, he was led to examine the experience of immigration from Mexico, especially among the undocumented. The problems of pastoral ministry to these migrants appeared overpowering until a Coachella, California retreat program for migrants came to Groody's attention.

The book begins with an examination of the dynamics and experience of Mexican migration gathered in field interviews with all parties. What follows is an explication of the *Encuentro Misionero* retreat, developed on the base of the *Cursillo* by Joseph Pawlicki, C.S.C. in the Coachella Valley. After detailing this process Groody provides a heuristic exploration of the theological theme of conversion implicit in the process. While this segment appropriately references Lonergan and Gelpi for theoretical developments, Groody also notes how culturally and experientially grounded this retreat is to the needs of migrants. In the end, he is concerned to detail how it has responded to the spiritual needs of the migrant where the traditional parish structure and the church has failed. The desired outcome is a transformed Christian who is an active minister of the Gospel as well as a socially engaged member of her/his community. While short (136 pages with a useful fifteen-page appendix on the Guadalupe story) the book presents vividly a picture of exploitation and a spirituality of healing/empowering.

The book, because of both its vividness and brevity, is an appropriate choice for use as a supplementary text in undergraduate courses like those that many of *Horizons'* readers teach. In that vein, it is appropriate to note that one vision of religion, grounded in a specific conversion experience, is presented in the text exclusively. If *Border* is used as an undergraduate textbook, the person facilitating discussion ought to note this for both pedagogical and spiritual reasons. In the course of this work, Groody dealt well with issues of inculturation but gave other "modes of being religious" little room for consideration. As Charles Taylor noted in his recent work *Varieties of Religious Experience Today* (Harvard University Press, 2002), there is at present a strong tendency to privilege the "specific conversion" type of religion to the detriment of other ways of being religious. This move presents difficulties because the Catholic faith is less individualistic, more sacramental and ritually oriented than others. In the recent C.S.S.R. Bulletin (33/2 April 2004), Martin Jaffe similarly presents a picture of his integration into Judaism through participation in the rhythms of Jewish ritual and life, demonstrating that the issue is larger than in Catholic life.

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