



Nuns Without Cloister: Sisters of St. Joseph in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Marguerite Vacher

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Nuns Without Cloister explores one of the first and most innovative among the non-cloistered women's congregations established after the Council of Trent. Under the aegis of a Jesuit missionary, the first Sisters of St. Joseph envisioned a direct role for religious women in the secular society of mid-seventeenth century France and quietly broke the ecclesiastical and cultural barriers that opposed it. This book opens perspectives on the sisters' success through a politics of discretion and the introduction of creative variety in their lives in country parishes or in the urban orphanages, hospitals, and reformatories for fallen women of the ancien régime. Vacher's methodology, comparing the congregation's theoretical, prescriptive documents with evidence about the actual life of these communities in southern France, leads to the question of whether and to what degree succeeding generations grasped the original inspiration.

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