This is a remarkable book. The author was a Benedictine nun at Stanbrook Abbey, and she wrote it while she was dying of cancer, in answer to a request. It is all about the journey of faith, but it is not an autobiography. Only in the Prologue does she refer to her own situation at the time.

Chapter 5 bears the title 'Monastic Journeying', and Sister Maria invites her readers to skip this chapter if they should find it "remote and uninteresting". But for me it is the best chapter of all. Here we have an inspiring insight into the Benedictine life, with its emphasis on liturgy and sacred reading, backed up by silence to facilitate listening to God.

Sister Maria acknowledges her debt to Saint Augustine, who clearly has influenced her. She writes extensively about his conversion, and how his own experience led him repeatedly to call on people to repent of their sins.

There is a great deal in the book about the use of psalms in Christian worship, and of the difficulties of interpretation, and here again we find Augustine's teaching that the "I" in the psalms is to be understood as Christ, who takes upon himself every human passion and frailty.

We are reminded that Benedictines are often associated with the logo 'Peace', and the Sister points out that "peace is God's gift, Christ's Easter gift - free, but never cheap". Prayer is seen to be "a long haul", but we must remain faithful, as God is faithful.

In this book, there is a great deal of practical advice about living the spiritual life, which can hardly fail to enrich the lives of its readers.

*Martin SSF*