



# Mountain Sisters: From Convent to Community in Appalachia

*Helen M. Lewis, Monica Apple*

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**Mountain Sisters: From Convent to Community in Appalachia** Helen M. Lewis, Monica Apple  
Monica Appleby and Helen Lewis reveal the largely untold story of women who stood up to the Church and joined Appalachians in their struggle for social justice. Their poignant story of how faith, compassion, and persistence overcame obstacles to progress in Appalachia is a fascinating example of how a collaborative and creative learning community fosters strong voices. *Mountain Sisters* is a prophetic first-person account of the history of American Catholicism, the war on poverty, and the influence of the turbulent 1960s on the cultural and religious communities of Appalachia.

Founded in 1941, The Glenmary Sisters embraced a calling to serve rural Appalachian communities where few Catholics resided. The sisters, many of them seeking alternatives to the choices available to most women during this time, zealously pursued their duties but soon became frustrated with the rules and restrictions of the Church. Outmoded doctrine?even styles of dress?made it difficult for them to interact with the very people they hoped to help. In 1967, after many unsuccessful attempts to persuade the Church to ease its requirements, some seventy Sisters left the security of convent life. Over forty of these women formed a secular service group, FOCIS (Federation of Communities in Service). *Mountain Sisters* is their story.

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