

Hermit-priest's book evokes tranquility of nature

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Just out this month is Father Charles Brandt's first book, an anthology of quotations from some well-known and lesser known authors in the area of nature.

Brandt was commissioned to select and bring together the collection by publishers HarperCollins.

He was working round the theme of the need for humans to live in concert with the rest of nature of which we are a part.

Brandt had been approached to write his own book on the subject,

providing his own point of view and perspective from his experience.

The hermit-priest, who lives on the banks of the Oyster River and makes a living as a professional book and

paper conservator, chose instead to deliver a selection of

some of the most evocative quotations from highly-regarded writers in the field.

Just the size of a slightly thicker than usual children's book, the volume fits nicely into the anarak

pocket for taking on hikes and out on a boat, for dipping into to emphasize Brandt's overall message.

The message is outlined in Brandt's introduction to

"He believes that we can live harmoniously within the ever-unfolding stories of the earth and the universe,"

Meditations from the Wilderness.

"He believes," says the dustcover of the small hardback, "that we can live harmoniously within the ever-unfolding stories of the earth and the universe - if we embrace

our interdependence on all other beings, if we accept that communion with the natural world brings us closer to ourselves."

The book, which has seven chapters on different aspects of the central theme, is illustrated with black-and-white photographs from nature, including some by Brandt,

who is a keen amateur photographer.

Quotations are taken from the works of such authors as H.D. Thoreau, Thomas Merton, Brian Swimme, and Thomas Berry.

A former student of ornithology at Cornell University and of wildlife conservation at the University of Missouri, Brandt spent eight years as a Trappist monk of the Cistercian order, prior to being ordained as a hermit-priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1966, the first priest to be ordained as a hermit in two centuries.

Despite being involved in many environmental issues, he spends much of his life in meditation, study, prayer and solitary contemplation at his wooded home overlooking the Oyster, named The Hermitage.