

GOD IS IN THE QUESTIONS

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
VETERAN AFFAIRS
PRESENTATION THREE

THOMAS MERTON

MONK ,MYSTIC ,AND MISSIONARY

THOMAS MERTON: A VISION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Thomas Merton is one of the greatest spiritual writers of all times. His vision for spirituality, social justice and the role of the Church in the world today provides a creative and energizing road map for us. This presentation will be an invitation to grow in your spiritual journey by experiencing the life and writings of this spiritual giant.

A Tradition on the Move: Within and Without

Exterior Form **Interior Consciousness**

**Religious
Personalities**

Cosmological

Unitive Seeing - Community as the Inter-Christic Field

Teilhard de Chardin,
Thomas Berry

Activist

Transformation in Christ through service

Mary Ward, Louise de Merillac, Vincent de Paul

Intellectual

Transformation in Christ through Affective/Discursive Reasoning/Discernment

Ignatius of Loyola

Mendicant

Transformation through Imitation of Kenotic Self-Emptying of Christ

Francis/Clare,
Dominic/Catherine

Community

Community Life as the Vehicle for Transformation in Christ

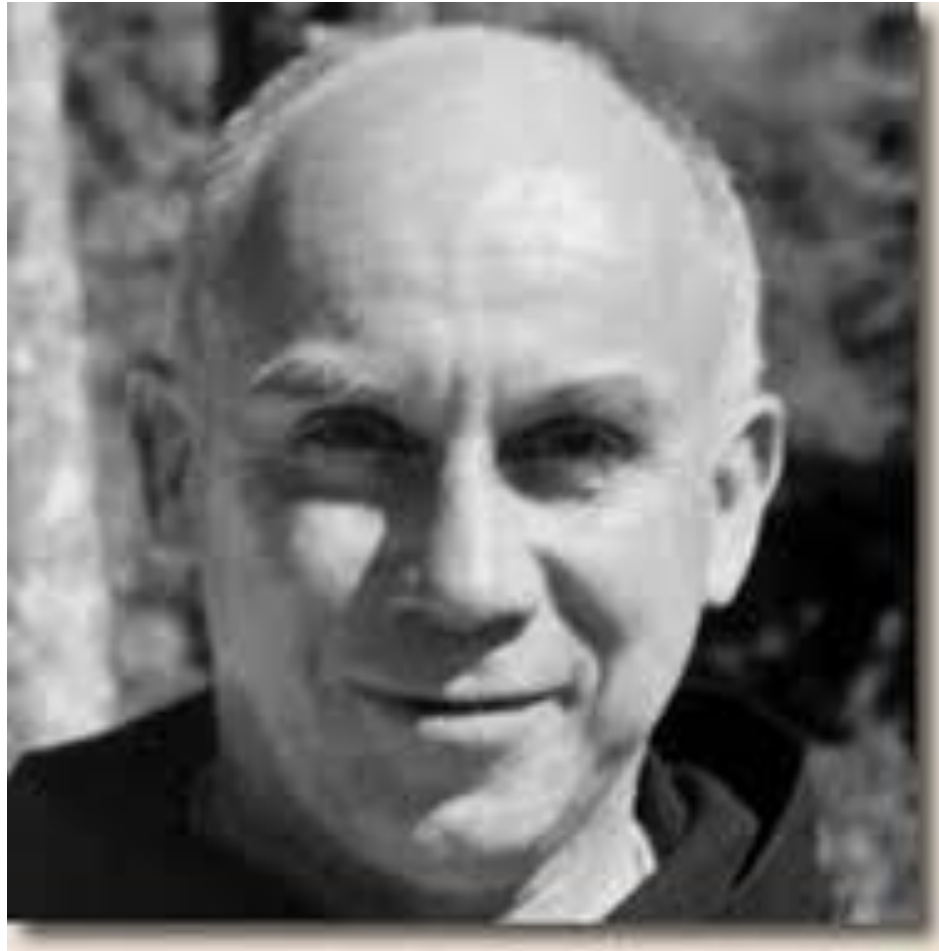
Benedict, Scholastica

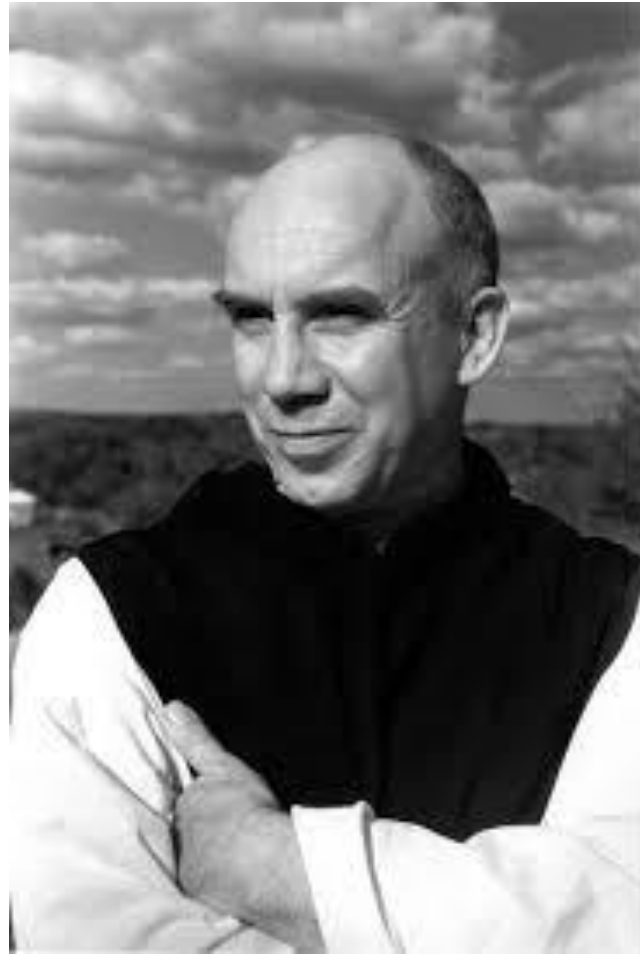
Desert

Transformation in Christ through the Solitary Quest

Desert Mothers & Fathers









Thomas J. Merton



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

- 1915: January 31-born at Prades, France, son of Owen Merton and Ruth Jenkins
- 1921: Ruth dies; 1931: Owen dies
- 1932: Clare College, Cambridge; visited Itay; entered Cambridge in the fall, 1933
- 1935: Enters Columbia University
- 1938: Baptized at Corpus Christi Church
- 1940-41: Taught English at St. Bonaventure University
- 1941: December 10-entered Gethsemane

Three Periods:

Monastic Period: 1941-1948

Church Period: 1948-1960

Global Period: 1960-1968

1968-December 10: Died in Bangkok

THEMES

- A PASSION FOR SOLITUDE
- ROOTED IN CONTEMPLATION
- EXPRESSED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE
- BECOMING YOUR TRUE SELF

THEME ONE

A PASSION FOR SOLITUDE



THOUGHTS
in Solitude

Thomas Merton

To deliver oneself up,
to hand oneself over,
entrust oneself completely to the silence
of a wide landscape of woods and hills,
or sea and desert; to sit still while
the sun comes up over the land
and fills its silences with light.

...few are willing to belong completely
to such silence, to let it soak into their bones,
to breathe nothing but silence, to feed
on silence, and to turn the very substance of their life
into a living and vigilant silence.

~ Thomas Merton
from Thoughts in Solitude

THE WISDOM
of the DESERT

Thomas Merton






*Echoing
Silence*

THOMAS MERTON
on the Vocation of Writing

Edited by
Robert Inchausti

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A person is silhouetted against a sunset sky, sitting on a rocky ledge. The sky transitions from a bright orange near the horizon to a darker, cloudy blue at the top. The person is looking out over a vast, hazy landscape.

Solitude is not something you must hope for in the future. Rather, it is a deepening of the present, and unless you look for it in the present you will never find it.

Thomas Merton







**IT IS IN DEEP SOLITUDE
THAT I FIND THE
GENTLENESS WITH WHICH
I CAN TRULY LOVE MY
BROTHERS. THE MORE
SOLITARY I AM THE MORE
AFFECTION I HAVE FOR
THEM.... SOLITUDE AND
SILENCE TEACH ME TO
LOVE MY BROTHERS FOR
WHAT THEY ARE, NOT FOR
WHAT THEY SAY.**

- THOMAS MERTON

To make the right choices in life,
you have to get in touch with your soul.
To do this, you need to experience solitude,
which most people are afraid of,
because in the silence
you hear the truth and know the solutions

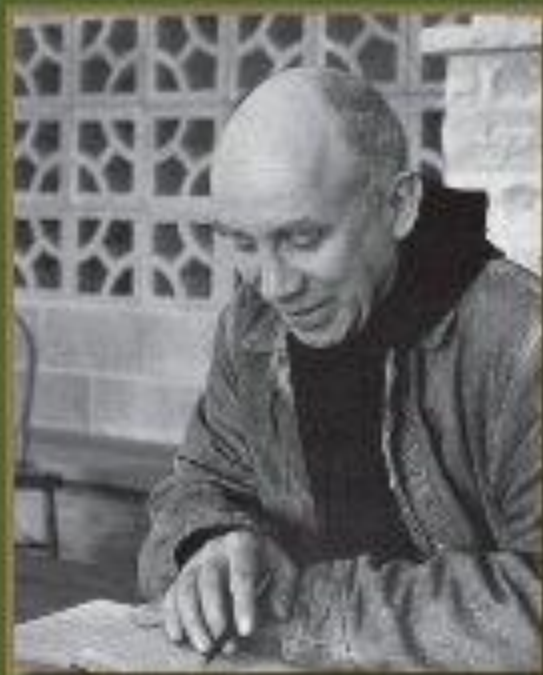
DEEPAK CHOPRA



THEME TWO

ROOTED IN CONTEMPLATION

LEARN ANYTIME... ANYWHERE
www.wisc.edu

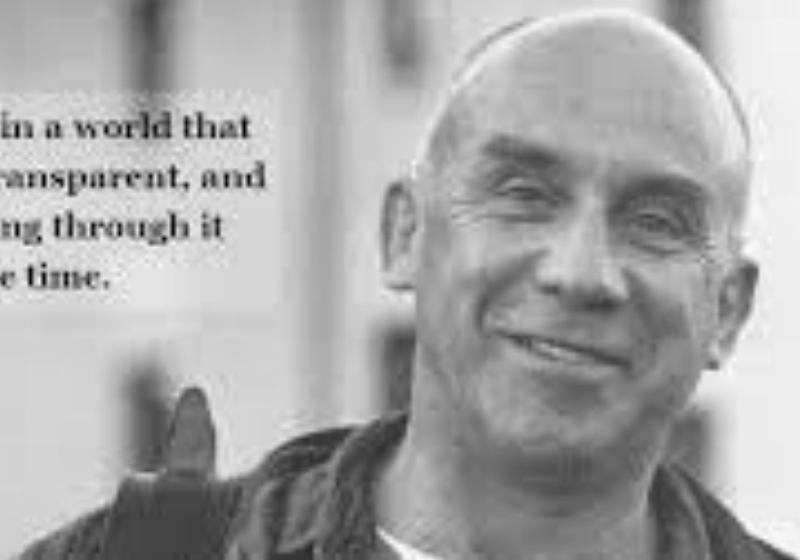


Thomas Merton on Contemplation

Introduction by Fr. Anthony Ciorra, Ph.D.

6 Lectures on 4 CDs

We are living in a world that
is absolutely transparent, and
God is shining through it
all the time.



“

*Meditation is one of the
ways in which the
spiritual man keeps
himself awake.*

- Thomas Merton -

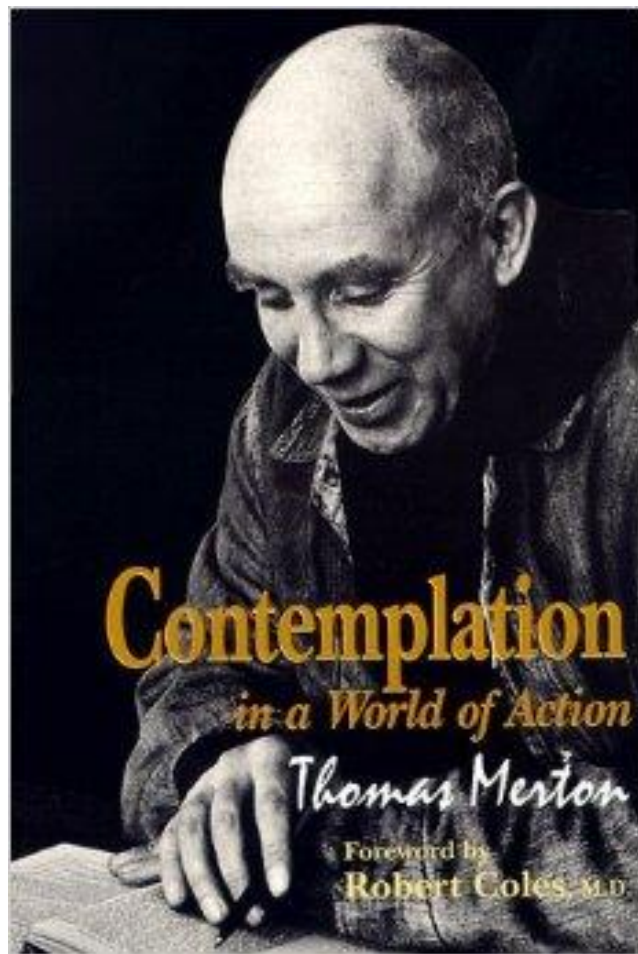
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OkDay.com

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is a spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being.

~ Thomas Merton ~

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Contemplation

in a World of Action

Thomas Merton

Foreword by
Robert Coles, M.D.

THOMAS MERTON



Contemplative Prayer



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NEW SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION



THOMAS MURFIN

CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATION

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"Peace demands the most heroic labor and the most difficult sacrifice. It demands greater heroism than war. It demands greater fidelity to the truth and a much more perfect purity of conscience."

~ Thomas Merton



Thomas Merton

*Late Roman Catholic monk,
mystic*

*Believed there are many paths to
God*

*Eastern style meditation,
Divinity dwelt in all things and all
people*

"I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity ... I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can."

"It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, ... If only they [people] could all see themselves as they really are ... I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other ... At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions... This little point ...is the pure glory of God in us. It is in everybody."





THEME THREE

LEADING TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

ON THE CORNER OF FOURTH AND WALNUT

The Spiritual Writer of the 1950's becomes the social critic of the 1960's

MERTON: A SYMBOL FOR TODAY'S CHRISTIAN

- Since Vatican II we have been seeking to be open to other religious traditions without sacrificing our own identity
- We are seeking to be involved and responsible for the social order without losing our sense of detachment
- Trying to remember that real solutions come not from better programs but from transformed hearts
- Merton is a symbol of a life which embraced paradox, living with tension and constantly re-interpreting.

“ I have never for a moment thought of changing the definitive decisions undertaken in the course of my life...To be a Christian, to be a monk, to be a priest has become final and irrevocable.”

Merton indicated that the assumptions behind the decision had changed in many ways. Since his initial break with “the world”, he explained, he had learned “to look back into that world with greater compassion seeing those in it not as alien to myself, not as peculiar and deluded strangers but as identified with myself.”

THEME FOUR

BECOMING YOUR TRUE SELF

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BECOMING WHO YOU ARE



INSIGHTS ON
THE THREE SELF-YEAR
**THOMAS
MERTON**
AND OTHER SAINTS



JAMES MARTIN, SJ
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**For me to be a saint means to
be myself. Therefore the
problem of sanctity and
salvation is in fact the
problem of finding out who I
am and of discovering
my true self.**



What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? This is the most important of all voyages of discovery, and without it, all the rest are not only useless, but disastrous.

(Thomas Merton)

izquotes.com

THE EXTERIOR SELF

- Superficial self
- Empirical self
- Outward self
- Shadow self
- Smoke self
- Contingent self
- Imaginary self
- Private self
- Illusory self
- False self
- Petty self

THE TRUE SELF

- Inner Self
- Hidden self
- Creative, mysterious inner self
- Inmost self
- Real self
- Deepest, Most Hidden Self

Faithful to Your True Self

I want to ask these questions: Does how I am living my life fit my God-given nature? Does it fit my true self (to use Thomas Merton's terminology in his *Seeds of Contemplation*⁸)? Am I being faithful to my God-given talents, my unique story, my weaknesses?

Maturity in life is when someone is living joyfully within their God-given limits. I find most of us resent limits—in ourselves and in others. We expect far too much from ourselves and each other and often live frustrated and angry lives. Much of burnout is a result of giving what we do not possess. Henri Nouwen summarizes our challenge well...[5]



My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.