

This book could be read as a retreat, dipped into briefly and fruitfully in the spare moments that can be so hard to find in a busy life or could even be used for *lectio divina*, providing much for the reader to ponder on. Haase concludes each chapter with some "Points for Reflection", and although these are aimed at the individual reader they could provide a small group with ample material to stimulate the personal sharing of its participants, their discussion and their prayer.

in the current explosion of books in the field of spirituality I found this book one of the most refreshing and stimulating that I have come across recently and would recommend it to anyone looking for a fresh and invigorating approach to prayer and to life.

Paul M Pearson

Meditations with Merton. Nicki Verploegen Vandergrift. Ligouri Publications \$4.95 (Available here through Redemptorist Publications, Alton, Hampshire)

Praying With Thomas Merton. Wayne Simsic. St.Mary's Press (Available at £6.50 through Columba Books, Dublin).

These books add to an increasing body of literature about Merton's life and spirituality, a body which strikes to the paradoxical heart of the man Thomas Merton. The paradox is that a life directed to solitude and rooted in silence should produce such a volume of words. Words which come not only from Merton himself but from his friends and others touched by his life and writings.

These two books share a common aim: to help the reader to taste something of Merton's spirituality, to pray with him. It is a very worthy aim since Merton seems to have a power to speak to contemporary Christians who are hungry for nourishment. Both books are written by retreat directors and are clearly grounded in a long period of personal reflection and experience of guiding others on their spiritual journeys.

However, the two writers approach the challenge very differently. Vandergrift takes short passages from Merton's writings (particular Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander and New Seeds of Contemplation) as her starting point. It becomes apparent why she chose these works as her main source. New Seeds is a fecund store of wisdom and reflection on the spiritual life whilst Conjectures represents arguably the thought of Merton at its ripest.

The quotations act as a seed for Vandergrift's own meditations which range quite freely and are always heartfelt. They are followed by a short passage of scripture and a prayer. The reflections are divided into themes which could be used for liturgies.

Simsic takes a different approach which is at once more flexible yet structured. He introduces his themes such as freedom, silence, prayer of the heart and then gives a suggested opening prayer. He then proceeds to relate an incident from Merton's life followed by some of Merton's own words. Like Vandergrift he embellishes the quotation with his own reflection and then produces a choice of meditations for the reader to prayer. The meditations reflect a variety of traditions: mantra prayer, lectio divina, imaginative prayer, examen of consciousness, journal writing and action. This is followed by a scripture passage and a suggestion for a closing prayer.

Simsic takes his Merton passages from a wide variety of his works and his themes span and follow the developments in Merton's spirituality. He brings out Merton's wisdom and experience as a contemplative. He does look at some of Merton's social concerns but these are covered in better detail and with more interpretation by Vandergrift.

Two such thoughtful and heartfelt books on Merton are to be welcomed. For an introduction to Merton's spirituality I would particularly recommend Simsic's book since it unites reading with prayer, thus guiding us back to the silence which was Merton's inspiration and 'ground of being'.

Lawrence Petch

Robert G Waldron, Thomas Merton In Search Of His Soul: A Jungian Perspective. (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1994), pp.157, softback, £5.95, ISBN: 0-87793-524-6.

In this book we find Merton on the couch of Jungian enthusiast RG Waldron. The author's intentions are clear, '... to illustrate how the course of Merton's life is not merely similar to Jung's paradigm of individuation, but identical to it.' (p.9) It must also be clear that Waldron admits Thomas Merton In Search Of His Soul is not a systematic biography, but rather a commentary utilising Jung's analytical psychology to '... examine essential stages in Merton's life which propelled him in his inner journey to wholeness.' (p.9) The book is divided into two sections that correspond to Jung's theory of individuation. Jung held that a person must integrate their Shadow (the negative aspects of