

Book Reviews

Finding Your Centre, A Journey with Thomas Merton by Jim Forest, Hunt & Thorpe (Everyday Spirituality Series) £2.99

"We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and God is shining through it all the time. This is not just a fable or a nice story. It is true. If we abandon ourselves to God and forget ourselves, we see it sometimes, and we see it maybe frequently. God manifests Himself everywhere, in everything - in people and in things and in nature and in events ..."

(Thomas Merton, quoted by Jim Forest from an unpublished tape recording at Gethsemani.)

Jim Forest needs no introduction to readers of the Journal, especially those who had the good fortune to hear him speak at the Winchester conference last December. In Finding Your Centre, he takes us on a brief journey through Thomas Merton's life, visiting events and places which were to have a special meaning for the monk's spiritual growth and development. Around this he develops a simple and practical guide for today's pilgrim.

Each chapter covers a particular episode or period of Merton's life and finishes with a related set of spiritual exercises designed to give us ideas for action, meditation, prayer or contemplation. We follow Merton from Rome to the Hermitage at Gethsemani, as he seeks space in which to explore interior silence and achieve realisation of the true self. Holy places, icons, different modes of prayer, exploring the Liturgy, voluntary work for those in need - all and more are offered to help us achieve some sense of the reality of God.

Colourful and witty, the cover of this delightful little book offers a clear hint of what lies inside ... spiritual wisdom and insight offered with that particular blend of warmth and humanity that is so characteristic of Jim Forest's writing. Highly recommended for bedside table, handbag or jacket pocket.

Ian Thomson