

six witnesses to the effect this change had on Merton's poetry with excerpts from poems such as "Original Child Bomb," "Hagia Sophia" and Merton's anti-poems *Cables to the Ace* and *The Geography of Lograire*.

Pennington's final chapter points to Merton's expansive Christianity, especially as seen in his writings on other faiths and his mature thinking about the life of the monk and of the Christian in the modern world. The volume concludes with a chronology, publication list and one final, brief chapter, entitled "*apothegmata*." *Apothegmata* was the name given to the pithy sayings of the desert mothers and fathers, similar to koans in the Zen tradition, and in this section Basil Pennington gives us a series of *apothegmata* from Thomas Merton. It serves as a wonderful and highly effective conclusion to this book.

Initially I picked up this volume wondering how it could be different from the anthologies that preceded it. Almost immediately the freshness of Pennington's approach brought Merton's work to life. His unique understanding of Merton is evident in his inclusion in this volume of two sections of poetry, an area of Merton's work overlooked in other anthologies, and in his monastic outlook summed up so well in his conclusion of the book by the collection of *apothegmata*.

Paul M Pearson

A Year with Thomas Merton: Daily Meditations from his Journals,

selected and edited by Jonathan Montaldo (SPCK, 2005), pp. 416, ISBN 0281057389. £12.99

November 24

Lovely, cold, lonely afternoon, winter afternoon. Rich winter silence and loneliness and fullness into which I entered nearly twenty years ago! These afternoons contain all the inexplicable meaning of my vocation.

So begins one of the compelling passages Montaldo includes in his classic selection of Merton journal texts assembled in this volume within an imaginary year.

Drawn from Merton's personal journals spanning 27 years, these daily readings follow the rhythm of the changing seasons and present Merton's intimate reflections on many aspects of his monastic experience and vocation. It is absorbing to compare the passionate writing of the young monk and the distilled wisdom of the mature hermit and to observe the deepening of his interior life over time.

There are many beautiful descriptions of the natural world and the landscapes around Gethsemani, and the volume contains nine of Merton's black and white photographs which deepen the sense of place, and six of his pen and ink drawings. Also included are some of Merton's reflections on other concerns close to his heart – theology, war and peace, contacts with other writers, and the vagaries of the world – but this is essentially a profoundly contemplative collection that engenders a stilling of the mind and self.

In his introduction Montaldo says,

And even though mystically living out connections to all peoples, worlds and

times, Merton still considered his essential vocation to have been that of a solitary. He judged that all his speech and writing about God had been impertinent except for the writing in which he praised God out of his silences...

With great discernment Montaldo has mined Merton's journals for such writing. Nearly half of the meditations are from the later 'hermitage years' and this emphasis is, I think, what gives the selection such depth and lucidity.

I initially approached this book with a degree of resistance. I am not usually attracted to the 'Thought for the Day' format. This volume, however, contains vintage Merton, and the quality of the selection transcends the limitations of the genre.

I probably wouldn't use it on a daily basis but, bookmarked for quick and easy access to some of Merton's finest writings on silence, solitude and the presence of God, this is certainly a book to have by you.

Heather Lyons

Seek the Silences with Thomas Merton: Reflections on Identity, Community and Transformative Action, Charles R Ringma, (London: SPCK, 2003), pp. xxv + 229, ISBN 0281056048. £9.99

Merton's writing is most vibrant where he is seeking words to capture and communicate the adventure of living a committed and intentional life: The living was the thing, distilled through the particularity of a poetic, unifying love of language and fired by