

Seeking a Closer Walk with God – Iris White

How does one begin an article on the effect Thomas Merton has on one's spiritual journey and interior life?

When I first came across the writings of Thomas Merton, which was *Seeds of Contemplation*, I couldn't believe that a monk who spent so much of his life in silence and solitude, could resonate so closely with me, in my own journey of faith – and my seeking a closer walk with God. At that time I was a deacon in a conservative, reformed, evangelical church, and such spirituality and any form of mysticism was frowned upon. Inevitably there was such a narrow theological view.

For some years I read everything I could find of his writings. The compilation of extracts from his works, *Daily Meditations*, is still my morning reading year after year.

It was some time before I discovered biographies and his letters, as in *The Road to Joy*. It was a revelation. I hadn't imagined the extent of his great expanse of knowledge of the state of our world, other cultures, religions and especially politics.

His zest and insight in all things spiritual and secular, his appreciation of the daily routine, and pleasure of life itself, yet not hiding the dark times filled me with such gratitude for finding such a person to companion with! But his insight into the interior life never ceases to inspire and urge me on in my own quest to swim more deeply in the vast ocean of the Love of God. A few paragraphs cannot express fully my gratitude and delight in finding Thomas Merton. My friends often ask me about 'my monk' – and I look forward to the day when I will be queuing up with thousands of others to greet him in heavenly places and to thank him for his love and friendship, for he has taken me to heavenly places indeed.

Iris White graduated in 2010 from the Open University with a BSc in Politics and Social Science. She was elected to serve on the Borough council of Broxtowe, becoming Mayor in 2013/14. She preaches regularly in her church, St. Helens, Stapleford. Her husband Malvern has Parkinson's disease. They have two daughters and three granddaughters, two of whom are at university. All are Christians. She is an Oblate connected to the Convent of the Holy Cross in Leicestershire.