

Editorial

'When I pray for peace, I am not just praying that the Russians will give up without a struggle and let us have our own way. I am praying that both we and the Russians may somehow be restored to sanity and learn how to work out our problems, as best we can, together, instead of preparing for global suicide.' Thus wrote Merton in *New Seeds of Contemplation* in the chapter, 'The Root of War is Fear'. For him, at that time, the threat was that of nuclear war. But earlier, in December 1940, as the Second World War was unfolding around him, in a world 'full of the terrible howling of engines of destruction', he saw that the only way to preserve his sanity in a world where the din of guns drowned out ones voice was to enter the silent world of the Trappists.

But as he turned to the world, as the engines of destruction became ever more powerful, his writings on war became more and more outspoken, seeing that the Christian had a responsibility to speak out against its evils, seeing that 'there is one winner, only one winner in war. The winner is war itself. Not truth, not justice, not morality.' These words are from his essay, 'Target equals city' (1962), never published in his lifetime, and the principal reason why he was banned from writing any more on war and peace. In the essay he goes on to show how the total obliteration of cities is justified in modern warfare because everyone is to be considered a combatant, a policy currently being enacted in Ukraine against the city of Mariupol.

In his essay, 'Blessed are the peacemakers', Merton wrote that 'all Christians have as their first duty to be peacemakers, to make peace in their own hearts, and to surrender themselves entirely to the Spirit of peace.' Jim Forest certainly heeded this call. As someone who had worked alongside Merton in the peace movement in the 1960s, he tirelessly carried forth Merton's legacy for over half a century until his death in January this year. He was a great supporter of our society, and so it is only fitting that in this issue we have four personal testimonies to his life, work and witness by Danny Sullivan, Fiona Gardner, Paul Pearson and Mary Pearson. In our previous issue we carried a transcript of the talk Jim Forest gave to our society based on Merton's essay, 'The Cell'. Included now is the first part of that talk by James Cronin in which he had used the

essay used as a text to inspire students in Cork prison to reflect on their situation, and presents a remarkable piece of observation by one of the inmates serving a life sentence, who sees his cell as 'a place of reflection and inner awakening'.

In her essay on Merton and Hopkins, 'Ripples in spiritual space', Jill Robson reflects on how the structures and lived devotion of the religious life liberated their muses, and explores possible reasons why Merton's choice of Hopkins' works as the subject for his Masters thesis was turned down by the English Department of Columbia University. In his article on monastic leisure Dermott Tredget shows us how Merton and Leclercq in their different ways 'open up the importance of "the monk within" and of making time for sacred leisure in our life.' Also included are book reviews by Anthony Purvis, Tom Finnegan and Elizabeth Holmes.

Three further items are related to the theme of Easter: Matthew Robb Brown's poem, 'Risen'; James Laurence's reflection, 'Every burning morning', revealing how 'the power of Easter' and Merton's words help to light his way as he copes with long covid; and Anthony Purvis' article in which he gives us an extended reflection on Merton's homily, 'He is risen', reminding us, in the words of Merton, that: 'We must never let our religious ideas, customs, rituals and conventions become more real to us than the Risen Christ.'

Finally Fr Gerard Garrigan's short prose piece, 'Josef', relates an encounter he had with a homeless Ukrainian man he met in New York in the 1970s. His parents had been killed by the Communists, and Josef himself had been imprisoned by the Nazis. And still the suffering of the Ukrainians goes on.

If these events are dragging us back to Good Friday, let us rather dwell with the promise of Easter, when we are all united, to recognise that 'We are already one.' As Merton wrote to Milosz: 'Life is on our side. The silence and the Cross of which we know are forces that can never be defeated. ... The Resurrection is the only light.'

As they celebrate Easter, all Orthodox will sing the hymn,

*Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem!
The glory of the Lord has shone upon you!
Exult and be glad O Zion!
Be radiant O Pure Theotokos,
in the Resurrection of your Son!*

Stephen Dunhill

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