

## Thomas Merton, priest, monk, and spiritual writer, 1915-1968

### *Observed 10 December*

Thomas Merton is one of the most widely read spiritual writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was raised in France and England and finally completed his education at Columbia. His own spiritual journey led him eventually to the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky where to his scholarly life he added the disciplines of a Trappist monk. His vast catalog of books, essays, and lectures have had deep and abiding influence. He has provided inspiration to many about one's inner spiritual journey, about life in society, and about the wisdom to be found by Christians in Eastern religious traditions. Probably his best known work is his autobiographical *Seven Story Mountain*.

Here are two favorite quotes from his writings:

"By reading the scriptures I am so renewed that all nature seems renewed around me and with me. The sky seems to be a pure, a cooler blue, the trees a deeper green. The whole world is charged with the glory of God and I feel fire and music under my feet."

"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another."

This often quoted prayer has sustained many who have struggled as Merton did, to follow their inner path to God:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. ( from "Thoughts in Solitude")

*Lessons*        Isaiah 57:14-19; Psalm 62; Colossians 2:2-10; John 12:27-36

*Collect*        Gracious God, you called your monk Thomas Merton to proclaim your justice out of silence, and moved him in his contemplative writings to perceive and value Christ at work in the faiths of others: Keep us, like him, steadfast in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*