



Thomas Merton Today

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Thomas Merton (1915-1968), the famous Trappist monk and best-selling author, has now been dead for almost as long as he had lived. When he died unexpectedly on Dec. 10, 1968, at the age of 53 while in Asia on a speaking tour about the renewal of monastic life, He left behind a legacy, which included a model for modern Christian living that encouraged everyone — religious and lay alike — to pursue a life of prayer, holiness and social justice.

But what is Merton's relevant in our world today, fifty years later? I believe that Merton provides us with at least three compelling reasons for continuing to learn about him and read his work.

First, there is the obvious area of continued relevance. Merton was one of the first Roman Catholic religious leaders before the Second Vatican Council to emphasize the importance of *prayer and contemplation for all people* and not just the religious "professionals" (i.e., nuns and priests). Each of us, whatever our state, has what Merton called our "true self," who we are in our fullness as known only to God. This means that to discover our truest identity requires seeking and discovering God in prayer. These insights are timeless.

Second, there is the less-obvious area of the urgent timeliness of his later writings. Most readers of Merton's work are familiar with his overtly spiritual writings, but far fewer are familiar with his social criticism and writings on justice. Merton's prophetic reflections on structural racism in the United States and the relationship between fear and violence speak to us today as they did five decades ago.

Take for example his 1965 essay titled: "The Time of the End is the Time of No Room." Here Merton describes the scene of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem that eerily resonates with what is happening at the southern border of the United States today.

'Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet He must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.'

This essay, which makes for a powerful Advent and Christmas reflection, challenges Christians to link the too-often-domesticated Gospel with the *signs of our time*. When we look around our world, nation and local communities today, it is disturbing to recognize the systemic injustices that steadfastly persist all these decades later. It is clear that few listened to Merton then, but perhaps, just maybe, some might listen now.

Third, there is what I believe is the most significant reason why people should care about Merton today: his unabashed humanity. Like his friend and contemporary, Dorothy Day, Merton is one of the few Christian exemplars we have who are not encumbered by hagiography and selective memory. A truly modern person, Merton's story is one with many turns, surprises, challenges and moments of grace. He had a life before the monastery and he had a life in the monastery: both periods lasted about 27 years. Both halves of his life reveal a complex man whose sanctity and sinfulness, pride and humility, ambition and regret are on wide display, thanks to his prolific writing practices and his willingness not to sugar-coat his joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties.

Even though most young adults today probably have not heard of Merton, his way of serving the church and world as a monk, priest and writer has tremendous potential to speak to the hunger for a more authentic, honest and transparent church, as repeatedly expressed by representative young adults in the pre-synodal meeting document in March of this year. Demographers and sociologists tell us that Millennials and members of the emergent "Generation Z" are incredulous when it comes to words without action, arguments from authority alone, and prioritization of *bella figura* over honestly admitting mistakes, errors and wrongdoing. They want leaders and mentors who can ask for forgiveness when needed and offer forgiveness when asked.

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Young people — and not-so-young people alike — want "real" Christian models, women and men who inspire us not by their perfection in life and faith, but by their committed struggle in life to keep the faith. Day's experience of ongoing conversion and struggles for peace and justice on behalf of the poor, and Mother Teresa's long trial of experiencing God's absence while nevertheless persisting in caring for society's "untouchables" — these are Christians that speak to women and men today. It is their humanity on display that makes them both holy and relevant.

Merton is another such model.

Source: National Catholic Reporter 10 Dec 2018, (abridged)

Thoughts from Thomas Merton

“To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything He has given us - and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.”

“Instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed - but hate these things in yourself, not in another.”

“Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.”

In Memoriam

Masses this Weekend

6pm: Patrick and Brigid Donoghue (Anniversary)

11am: Pat French (Anniversary)

5pm: Christopher Crean

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm
Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only
-Rosary daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

Church Collections

W/e 9th December 2018

1st Collection: €1,413

Share Collection: St Vincent De Paul

Weekday collections: €435

THANK YOU



Christmas Programme 2018

Confession

After 10.00am Mass Saturday 22nd September
And after 10.00am Mass Monday 24th December

Monday 24th December 2018 Mass at 10.00am only

Christmas Eve 2018

Vigil Mass commences 6.00pm preceded by Carols
First Mass commences 9.00pm preceded by Carols
Croatian Christmas Mass 11.00pm

CHRISTMAS DAY 2018

Morning Masses 9.30, 11.00am
Croatian Mass 12.30pm

THERE IS NO EVENING MASS

ST STEPHEN'S DAY 2018

Wednesday 26th December
Morning Mass at 10.00am

There will only be one weekday mass from Wednesday
26th December until
Saturday 29th December

Saturday 29th December:

Mass at 10.00am.
Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

Holy Family Sunday 30th December

Masses 9.30am, 11am, 5pm
Croatian Mass, 6.30pm

Tuesday 1st January 2019

Mary, the Holy Mother of God, Mass at 10am only

Normal weekday Masses resume on Wednesday 2nd
January 2019, 10.00am and 12.40pm

Feast of the Epiphany 6th January 2019

Saturday 5th January—Vigil Mass 6pm
Sunday 6th January—Masses at 9.30am, 11am and
5pm
Croatian Mass at 6.30pm

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