

**Dialoguing with God in Silence:
Thomas Merton's Teaching on Contemplative Prayer in a Pandemic**

"Not your usual blather, rather in silence love your neighbor.

Not your promises, but work to do the good you can.

Not beating yourself up, but making reparations.

Not your masks, but unveiling your heart to others as it is.

These are the psalms worthy of God's ears.

Spare yourself the incense of your cheaply-sourced "intentions."

Jonathan Montaldo, September 2020

Praying in silence and solitude are foundation stones of Merton's spiritual legacy for our times. He wrote from Asia that the "real journey in life is interior". A last-edited book before his death was *Contemplative Prayer*. In his last talk in Bangkok he said that we might one day have to "live without structures" and independent of the tired, impersonal rituals upon which we sleep-walk through our spiritual lives. A world pandemic is dissolving our personal and social habits of relating to life. How are we "church" in a zoom room? How do we pray when our noise and easy answers are failing us?

We will reflect upon texts of Merton's on contemplative prayer, on our need for deep silence, and for our learning "right action" by sitting in solitude. Our lesson plan for this retreat includes voices of contemplative poets, Mary Oliver, Ellen Bass, and Naomi Shihab Nye. You will receive a digital program for private spiritual reading upon registering.

Hours of the retreat will be from 7:00 to 8:30 PM on Friday, September 11; from 11:00 to 1:00 and 3:00 to 5:00 PM on Saturday, 9/12; and from 2:30 to 4:00 PM on Sunday, 9/13. All times are EST.

Suggested Donation is \$70.00.