

Contemplative Prayer Thomas Merton

Contemplative Prayer Thomas Merton Contemplative Prayer A Journey into the Heart of Thomas Merton Contemplative Prayer Thomas Merton Centering Prayer Mysticism Silence Meditation Spirituality Christian Spirituality Mindfulness Interiority Transcendence This blog post explores the transformative power of contemplative prayer as articulated by the renowned Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton We delve into Mertons understanding of this practice analyzing its key elements benefits and ethical considerations Examining contemporary trends in contemplative prayer we explore how this practice continues to resonate with a diverse audience seeking spiritual growth and inner peace Thomas Merton a 20thcentury Trappist monk poet and writer dedicated his life to exploring the depths of faith and spirituality His writings particularly his reflections on contemplative prayer have profoundly impacted countless individuals across religious and cultural boundaries This blog post delves into the essence of contemplative prayer as envisioned by Merton exploring its core principles benefits and contemporary relevance We will also address the ethical considerations that arise when engaging in this transformative practice Contemplative Prayer A Journey of Silence and Presence For Merton contemplative prayer was not a formulaic ritual but a profound journey into the heart of silence and presence He saw it as a radical shift in consciousness a deliberate turning inward to encounter the divine within This encounter transcended the realm of intellectual concepts and theological doctrines embracing a deep communion with the divine presence that permeates all creation Mertons understanding of contemplative prayer is rooted in the ancient Christian tradition of lectio divina a form of scriptural meditation that involves slow attentive reading reflection and prayer However he went beyond this traditional practice emphasizing the importance of cultivating an abiding silence within the soul a space where the mind can rest from its incessant chatter and the heart can truly listen

Key Elements of Contemplative Prayer

2 Silence

The foundation of contemplative prayer is cultivating inner silence a state of quietude that allows for a deeper connection with the divine This silence is not merely the absence of external noise but a stillness of the mind and heart freeing them from distractions and allowing for deeper introspection

Presence

Contemplative prayer emphasizes the importance of being fully present in the moment setting aside concerns and anxieties to embrace the present reality It involves letting go of the past and future focusing on the simple act of breathing and sensing the divine presence within

Nonattachment

Merton stressed the need to detach from worldly desires and attachments This detachment does not imply a rejection of the world but rather a conscious effort to transcend the egos grip and embrace a deeper sense of humility and surrender to the divine will

Benefits of Contemplative Prayer

Deepening Spiritual Connection

Contemplative prayer fosters a profound connection with the divine deepening faith and fostering a sense of awe and wonder It allows individuals to encounter the divine presence in a personal and intimate way transcending the limitations of language and intellect

Inner Peace and Serenity

The practice of contemplative prayer can bring a profound sense of inner peace and serenity calming the mind and reducing stress By cultivating stillness and presence

individuals can access a reservoir of inner peace that transcends the vicissitudes of external circumstances

Enhanced Self-Awareness

By turning inward and cultivating silence contemplative prayer facilitates self-awareness. It allows individuals to observe their thoughts, emotions, and motivations with greater clarity, fostering self-understanding and promoting personal growth.

Compassion and Empathy

By cultivating a sense of unity with all beings, contemplative prayer cultivates compassion and empathy. It breaks down barriers between individuals and promotes a sense of interconnectedness, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the human condition.

Contemporary Trends in Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer has experienced a resurgence in recent years, resonating with individuals seeking spiritual growth and inner peace across religious and cultural boundaries. This contemporary trend is influenced by several factors:

The Rise of Mindfulness

Mindfulness, a secular practice rooted in Buddhist traditions, has gained mainstream popularity, emphasizing the importance of being present in the moment³ and cultivating nonjudgmental awareness. This trend has intersected with contemplative prayer, creating a broader awareness of the benefits of stillness and presence.

The Search for Meaning and Purpose

In a world often characterized by uncertainty and rapid change, many individuals seek a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. Contemplative prayer offers a path to connect with something larger than themselves, providing a sense of grounding and spiritual direction.

The Desire for Inner Peace

Stress and anxiety are prevalent in contemporary society. Contemplative prayer offers a powerful tool for reducing stress and promoting inner peace, providing a refuge from the constant demands of daily life.

The Growing Appeal of Mysticism

There is a growing interest in mysticism, a spiritual path that emphasizes direct experience of the divine. Contemplative prayer aligns with this trend, offering a practice for transcending the limitations of the rational mind and connecting with the divine in a profound and transformative way.

Ethical Considerations

While contemplative prayer offers numerous benefits, it is essential to engage in this practice with ethical awareness and discernment.

Authenticity and Humility

It is crucial to approach contemplative prayer with authenticity and humility, recognizing that it is a journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth. Avoiding pretense and striving for spiritual perfection can lead to a more authentic and fruitful experience.

Avoiding Dogmatism and Exclusivity

Contemplative prayer should not be used to promote dogmatism or exclusivity. While it is rooted in Christian tradition, its core principles of silence, presence, and nonattachment can be embraced by individuals from various religious and spiritual backgrounds.

Respect for Diversity

It is important to acknowledge and respect the diversity of spiritual paths and practices. Contemplative prayer should not be presented as the only path to spiritual enlightenment but rather as one possible avenue among many.

Protecting Personal Boundaries

Contemplative prayer involves deep introspection and emotional vulnerability. It is essential to protect personal boundaries and seek guidance from experienced practitioners or spiritual mentors when necessary.

Conclusion

Contemplative prayer, as articulated by Thomas Merton, is a powerful tool for spiritual growth, inner peace, and self-discovery. By embracing the core principles of silence, presence, and nonattachment, individuals can embark on a journey of transformation and⁴ encounter the divine presence within. This practice, rooted in ancient Christian tradition, continues to resonate with a diverse audience seeking spiritual depth and inner peace in the contemporary world. However, it is essential to approach contemplative prayer with ethical awareness, respecting diversity, protecting personal boundaries, and striving for authenticity and humility.

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merton shows us how to draw out the richness of worship from the psalter and to use it to achieve the peace that comes from submission to god s will and from perfect confidence in him catholic review service

first published london darton longman and todd 2007

the merton prayer is not a magical incantation it is a gut wrenchingly honest reaching out to god and a looking inward to view our true and false selves thomas merton s well known prayer might change your life as it has the author s in this unique exercise in authenticity are fourteen reflections on the prayer that each unpack a single phrase or line of the 158 words that compose the merton prayer cover

a 365 daily devotional from one of the most influential and spiritual writers of modern times the perfect companion for daily gratitude prayer and reflection from the author of the seven storey mountain comes engaging journal entries guaranteed to inspire motivate and facilitate self reflection and spiritual guidance thomas merton s words touch the soul and spark the mind and can be read all at once or in parts year after year packed with merton s delightful pen and ink drawings and elegant black and white photographs this is the perfect gift for any spiritual seeker and gratitude manifester in your life if you struggle to stay in and enjoy the present moment or simply need some extra encouragement to slow down this guide is for you oftentimes the joy and hope we seek is very much alive in our lives we just need a little help uncovering it allow merton s affirmations to aide provoke and comfort your daily and spiritual journey one essay and day at a time

thomas merton's most intimate work a stunning devotional beaming with prayers poems and never before seen drawings the perfect companion for daily prayer and reflection this spiritual guide and gift combines merton's artistic and contemplative sides showing readers a different side of this beloved writer and theologian grippingly filled with warmth and comfort dialogues with silence is a rich a selection of prayers from throughout merton's life from his journals letters poetry books accompanied by all 100 of merton's rarely seen delightful zen like pen and ink drawings this elegant collection is designed to be savored slowly leaving readers with a profound sense of hope and enlightenment vulnerable inspiring and unlike any other devotional published this assortment of spiritual astonishment is the perfect companion to daily prayer meditation and reflection in all its glorious forms

a book for those who know and love merton and those ready to discover his gift for speaking to the human spirit since his death in bangkok thailand on december 10 1968 thomas merton's influence in both christian and non christian spiritual traditions has grown unabated meditations with merton is a collage of reflections with merton as your guide centered on selected passages from merton's writings verploegen has written 30 brief meditations on themes such as personal integrity sanctity identity integration god labor solidarity and service words of god god's will and love related scripture passages and an original prayer complete each meditation

examines the meaning and purpose of spiritual direction also provides insights into how to meditate

interdisciplinary and ecumenical in scope poetry and prayer offers theoretical discussion on the profound connection between poetic inspiration and prayer as well as reflection on the work of individual writers and the traditions within which they stand an international range of established and new scholars in literary studies and theology offer unique contributions to the neglected study of poetry in relation to prayer part i addresses the relationship of prayer and poetry parts ii and iii consider these and related ideas from the point of view of their implementation in a range of different authors and traditions offering case studies from for example the bible dante shakespeare and herbert as well as twentieth century poets such as thomas merton denise levertov w h auden and r s thomas

prayer christian and muslim perspectives is a rich collection of essays scriptural texts and personal reflections featuring leading scholars analyzing the meaning and function of prayer within their traditions drawn from the 2011 building bridges seminar in doha qatar the essays in this volume explore the devotional practices of each tradition and how these practices are taught and learned relevant texts are included with commentary as are personal reflections on prayer by each of the seminar participants the volume also contains a christian reflection on islamic prayer and a muslim reflection on christian prayer an extensive account of the informal conversations at the seminar conveys a vivid sense of the lively penetrating but respectful dialogue that took place

this guide to monastic prayer written in 1968 and thus turning out to be thomas merton's final testament to us is now available in a new edition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his death while he wrote it for other monastics all seekers drawn to explore the full dimensions of prayer will be enriched by his words especially as they take on added meaning in today's dizzying world the climate in which monastic prayer flourishes is that of the desert where human comfort is absent where the secure routines of the earthly city offer no support and where prayer must be sustained by god in the purity of faith

through the dark night of the soul to the depiction of the erotically charged union of the soul and god the poetry and prose works of the spanish friar john of the cross 1542-1591 offer a striking account of the transformation of the individual in the course of the christian life john of the cross's desire transformation and selfhood argues that these writings are animated by john's own creative and subtly conceptualized notion of erotic desire john's understanding of desire has the potential to enrich recent theological discussion of the subject but it has been curiously neglected in past scholarship to correct this lacuna this study undertakes a detailed historical analysis in three parts firstly it attends to the patristic medieval and sixteenth century spanish influences on john's writings showing how john reworks a long tradition of biblical christian and platonic reflection on the concept secondly it traces the importance of desire through john's writings demonstrating how he develops the theme through his poetry his anthropology of the soul and his account of the spiritual ascent thirdly it explores the reception of his writings in the twentieth century demonstrating how particular modern philosophical and theological commitments have prevented scholars from recognising the rich and distinctive shape of john's theological vision john's account of the transformation of the self with its hopeful vision of the graced transformation of the soul's desires has significance beyond the constrained modern categories of systematic theology christian spirituality pastoral theology and mysticism it is a vision that is worthy of recovery today

poet social justice advocate and theologian thomas merton 1915-1968 is arguably the most influential american catholic author of the twentieth century in his short lifetime he penned over seventy books and maintained a brisk correspondence with colleagues around the globe however many merton scholars and fans remain unaware of the significant body of letters that were exchanged between the trappist monk and victor and carolyn hammer unable to leave his home at the abbey of gethsemani except on special occasions merton developed a unique friendship with this couple from nearby lexington kentucky carolyn who supplied merton with many of the books he required for his writing and teaching was a founder of the king library press at the university of kentucky victor was an accomplished painter sculptor printer and architect the friendship and collaborations between merton and the hammers reveal their shared interest in the convergence of art literature and spirituality in this volume editors f douglas scutchfield and paul evans holbrook jr have collected the trio's complete correspondence for the first time their letters arranged chronologically vividly demonstrate a blossoming intellectual camaraderie and provide a unique opportunity to understand merton's evolving philosophies at times humorous often profound the letters in this volume shed light on a rare friendship and offer new insights into the creative intellect of thomas merton

what if prayer could be simple rather than strenuous anxious results driven christians can never pray enough serve enough or study enough but what if god is calling us not to frenzied activity but to a simple spiritual encounter what if we must merely receive what god has already given us in flee be silent pray writer and contemplative retreat leader ed cyzewski guides readers out of the anxiety factory of contemporary christianity and toward a god whose love astounds those quiet long enough to receive it with helpful guidance into solitude contemplative prayer and practices such as lectio divina and the examen cyzewski guides readers toward the christ whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light ready to shed the fear of the false self and the exhaustion of a duty driven faith flee be silent pray

this volume in the popular for today series deals with one of the most central and important aspects of christian living the practice of prayer martha moore keish provides fresh help for understanding and revitalizing prayer life challenges readers to engage all the senses while in prayer and invites them to use prayer as the chief exercise of faith both groups and individuals can use this deeply theological yet engaging book and its discussion questions to increase their understanding of prayer and to enrich their prayer practice the for today series was designed to provide reliable and accessible resources for the study and real life application of important biblical texts theological documents and christian practices the emphasis of the series is not only on the realization and appreciation of what these subjects have meant in the past but also on their value in the present for today thought provoking questions are included at the end of each chapter making the books ideal for personal study and group use

for twenty seven years renowned and beloved monk thomas merton 1915 1968 belonged to our lady of gethsemani a trappist monastery established in 1848 amid the hills and valleys near bardstown kentucky in thomas merton s gethsemani dramatic black and white photographs by harry l hinkle and artful text by merton scholar monica weis converge in a unique experience for lovers of merton hinkle was allowed unprecedented access to many areas inside the monastery and on its grounds that are generally restricted his photographs invite the reader to experience the various knobs lakes woods and hermitages merton sought out for times of solitude and contemplation and for reading and writing these unique images each accompanied by a passage from merton s writings evoke personal reflection and a deeper understanding of how and why merton came to recognize himself as a part of his kentucky landscape woven throughout the book weis s text explores merton s fascination with nature not only at gethsemani but during his early childhood throughout his spiritual conversion to roman catholicism and while a member of the trappist community she examines how merton s lifelong interaction with nature subtly revealed and informed his profound spiritual experiences and his writing about contemplation thomas merton s gethsemani replicates merton s path on his solitary hikes in the woods and conveys the wonder of the landscapes that inspired him

paying homage to prayer traditions from around the world and throughout history this celebration of prayer covers everything from pentacoastalist revivals to the sacred pipe to the catholic rosary

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