



Learning to Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom (The Journals of Thomas Merton Vol. 6)

By Thomas Merton

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Having embraced a life of solitude in his own hermitage, Thomas Merton finds his faith tested beyond his imagination when a visit to the hospital leads to a clandestine affair of the heart. Jolted out of his comfortable routine, Merton is forced to reassess his need for love and his commitment to celibacy and the monastic vocation. This astonishing volume traces Merton's struggle to reconcile his unexpected love with his sacred vows while continuing to grapple with the burning social issues of the day – including racial conflicts, the war in Vietnam, and the Arab-Israeli conflict – visiting and corresponding with high-profile friends like Thich Nhat Hanh and Joan Baez, and further developing his writing career. Revealing Merton to be 'very human' in his chronicles of the ecstasy and torment of being in love, Learning to Love comes full circle as Merton recommits himself completely and more deeply to his vocation even as he recognizes 'my need for love, my loneliness, my inner division, the struggle in which solitude is at once a problem and a 'solution'. And perhaps not a perfect solution either' (11 May, 1967).

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Editorial Review

Review

"It is said that when Emily Dickinson sent her first submission of poems to the essayist Thomas Wentworth Higginson, she included a question for Higginson: "Do these verses breathe?" Higginson's response was presumably affirmative. I imagine a similar question posed by Merton: "Does my journal breathe?" To which I heartily respond, "Yes." -- *Anna J. Brown America*

"What one finds in Merton's writings...is this discharge of the authentic self....What shines through in his writings and he never seemed to stop writing... is the luminous humanity of a devotion to the journey." -- *Toronto Globe and Mail*

"Delightful . . . brilliant social, political and personal commentaries." -- *New York Times Book Review*

"It has often been said that the world-renowned Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton was a man of paradox. . . . Now, [this] volume of Merton's journals adds greater detail to another, and perhaps his most surprising, paradox: that this monk and Roman Catholic priest had what he called an 'affair' with a student nurse in Louisville over six months in 1966." -- *Lexington Herald Leader*

"When all the journals are published, it is likely that they will take a place with the famous journals of Henry David Thoreau, G. M. Hopkins, Edmund Wilson, and perhaps be seen as an American version of St. Augustine's *Confessions*." -- *Catholic News Service*

About the Author

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) is widely regarded as one of the most influential spiritual writers of modern times. He was a Trappist monk, writer, and peace and civil rights activist. His bestselling books include *The Seven-Storey Mountain*, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and *Mystics and Zen Masters*.

Users Review

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