

## Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Wednesday March 15<sup>th</sup>

Living kindly in an unkind world

**Psalm 129** (The Psalms, A New Translation, arranged by Joseph Gelineau)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,

Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,

I count on his word.

My soul is longing for the Lord more than the watchman for daybreak.

Because with the Lord there is mercy

and fullness of redemption,

Israel indeed he will redeem

from all iniquity

### Merton's Voice from *The Monastic Journey*

We prescribe for one another remedies that will bring us peace of mind, and we are still devoured by anxiety. We evolve plans for disarmament and for the peace of nations, and our plans only change the manner and method of aggression. The rich have everything they want except happiness, and the poor are sacrificed to the unhappiness of the rich. Dictatorships use their secret police to crush millions ... under an intolerable burden of lies, injustice, and tyranny, and those who live in democracies have forgotten how to make good use of their liberty. For liberty is a thing of the spirit, and we are no longer able to live for anything but our bodies. How can we find peace, true peace, if we forget that we are not machines for making money and spending money, but spiritual things, sons and daughters of the Most High God?

Yet there *is* peace in the world. Where is it to be found? In the hearts of men and women who are wise because they are humble – humble enough to be at peace in the midst of anguish, to accept conflict and insecurity and overcome it with love, because they realise who they are, and therefore possess the freedom that is their true heritage. These are the children of God. We all know them. We do not have to go to monasteries to find them. They are everywhere.

They may not spend their time talking about peace, or about God, or about Christ our Lord, but they know peace and they know God and they have found Christ in the midst of battle. They have surrendered their minds and their wills to the call of Christ, and in him they have found reality ...

The peace which Christ brings is not a formula for individual escape, not for egotistical self-fulfilment. There can be no peace in the mind of the [person] who seeks peace for [themselves] alone. To find true peace, peace in Christ, we must desire others to have peace as well as ourselves, and we must be willing to sacrifice something of our own peace and happiness in order that others may have peace, and that others may be happy ...

... Peace does not mean the suppression of all difference, but their coexistence and fruitful collaboration. Peace does not consist in one [person], one party, one nation, crushing and dominating everyone else. Peace exists where [individuals] who have the power to be enemies, are instead, friends by reason of the sacrifices they have made in order to meet one another on a higher level, where the differences between them are no longer a source of conflict (pp40 -41).

### Reflect and Dialogue

What words or sentences in these readings most resonate with your life's experiences?

What role does 'humility' play in your life?

Who have been peacemakers in your life? For whom are you a peacemaker?

How do you seek peace in your life? And in the lives of others?