

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Wednesday March 22nd **Choosing with Christ to Love the World**

Psalm 23 (*The Psalms, A New Translation, arranged by Joseph Gelineau*)

The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose,
near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil shall I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;

With these you give me comfort.

Merton's Voice from *Loretto and Gethsemani*

There is nothing more positive, more creative than the faith by which the Creator of all dwells and acts in our hearts. And yet, as we know from our own past history, the ideal of 'keeping the faith' can sometimes dwindle into something very negative, resentful, and obtuse: a mere 'no' to everything that we do not agree with. We can no longer afford to barricade ourselves in our Catholic environment and regard it as a little smug fortress of security in a world of pagans. Now most of all we are obliged by our faith and by our love of truth to commit ourselves humbly and completely not only to the message of Christ but also to all that is valid in human culture and civilisation: for this too is His by right. Not only is it something we must salvage for Him, but more, it is not unconnected with our own salvation. If the Lord of all took flesh and sanctified nature, restoring it to the Father by His resurrection, we have our work to do in extending the power of the resurrection to the whole world of our time by our prayer, our thought, our work and our whole life. Nothing so effectively prevents this as the division, the discontinuity of spiritual lives that place God and prayer in one compartment, work and apostolate in another, as if prayer and work were somehow opposed. The Cross is the sign of contradiction, but also and above all a sign of reconciliation. It reminds us of the contradictions within ourselves, and within our society, only in order to resolve them all in unity in love of the Saviour.

Unity is a sign of strength and spiritual health. This unity in Christ is the true secret of our Christian and religious vocations, whether our lives be active or contemplative.

... True unity is the work of love. It is the free union of beings that spontaneously seek to be one in the truth, preserving and elevating their separate selves by self-transcendence. True unity admits the presence of obstacles, and of divisions, in order to overcome both by humility and sacrifice.

Here, in facing contradiction, we can hope for grace from God that will produce a unity and a peace 'which the world cannot give' (p1).

Reflect and Dialogue

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

How are you extending the power of Christ's resurrection to the world?

On the basis of how you actually live your life, how broad and extended is your conception of the world?

How would you answer Mother Teresa's questions: 'Do you know your neighbours? Do you know the poor of your neighbourhood