

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Wednesday March 8th

The Gift of Tears

Psalm 120 *(The Psalms, A New Translation, arranged by Joseph Gelineau)*

I lift up my eyes to the mountains:
from where shall my help come?
My help shall come from the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

The Lord is your guard and your shade;
at your right hand he stands.
By day the sun shall not smite you
nor the moon in the night.

Merton's Voice from *A Search for Solitude*

March 3rd 1953. Another thing: I have discovered the Penitential Psalms*. You do not discover them until you know how much you need them. You do not know your need until you experience it. You do not experience your poverty when you tell yourself about it but when God tells you that you are poor. When God tells you of a sickness, it is because He means at the same time, to provide a remedy. It is the Devil who tells us that we are ill and taunts us for it, reminds us of our helplessness by making us even more helpless.

In the Penitential Psalms Christ recognises my poverty in His poverty. Merely to see myself in the psalm is a beginning of being healed. For I see myself through His grace. His grace is working; therefore, I am on my way to being healed. O the need for that healing! I walk from region to region of my soul, and I discover that I am a bombed city.

While I meditated on Psalm 6, I caught sight of an unexpected patch of green meadow along the creek of our neighbour's land. The green grass under the leafless trees, the pools of water after the storm, lifted my heart to God. He is so easy to come by when even grass and water bear witness to His mercy! 'I will water my couch with tears.'

I have written about the frogs singing. Now they sing again. It is another spring. Although I am ruined, I am far better off than I have ever been in my life. My ruin is my fortune. (pp 38-39)

**The Penitential Psalms are, Psalm 6, Psalm 32, Psalm 38, Psalm 51, Psalm 102, Psalm 130, Psalm 143.*

Reflect and Dialogue

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

What moments in your life were moments of conversion, when you wanted to love God more deeply?

When in your life have you truly felt 'compunction' (guilt or moral scruple) knowing you were failing someone or a call to responsibility?

At what time in your life could you, too, have said with Merton that 'my ruin is my fortune'?