

# 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 Merton's 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 20th-century 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. Merton's 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**

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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 ego's 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 find a deeper sense of peace and contentment.

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 moment (3) and cultivating non-judgmental awareness.
- Stress and Anxiety:** 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 are crucial. 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 and 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

in this classic text thomas merton offers valuable guidance for prayer he brings together a wealth of meditative and mystical influences from john of the cross to eastern desert monasticism to create a spiritual path for today most important he shows how the peace contacted through meditation should not be sought in order to evade the problems of contemporary life but can instead be directed back out into the world to affect positive change contemplative prayer is one of the most well known works of spirituality of the last one hundred years and it is a must read for all seeking to live a life of purpose in today's world in a moving and profound introduction thich nhat hanh offers his personal recollections of merton and compares the contemplative traditions of east and west

first published london darton longman and trow 2007

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

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 flowers 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

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

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

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

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

explores the contemplative nature of thomas merton s poetry offering tips on how to read poetry in a holy way back cover

a unique meditation on the life writings of thomas merton by one of the most popular catholic writers today in reading this book one can meet for a brief moment the living spirit of merton it is a refreshing encounter john eudes bamberger

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 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

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discover the timeless wisdom of thomas merton one of the most influential contemplative voices of the twentieth century in a book of hours this beautifully curated collection draws from merton's most lyrical and prayerful writings offering a rich resource for daily prayer and contemplation that embraces the ancient monastic tradition of praying the hours editor kathleen deignan has carefully selected and arranged passages from merton's vast works into a rhythm of prayers for dawn day dusk and dark for each day of the week enriched with psalms prayers readings and reflections this book creates a sanctuary for quiet contemplation and divine connection amid the busyness of daily life a book of hours draws from thomas merton's rich writings and blends elements of christian liturgy to guide both personal and communal prayer it includes verses hymns and antiphons to invite prayer and reflection throughout the day psalms canticles and litanies for deep spiritual dialogue praise and insight readings and responsories for lectio divina with merton's writings offering spiritual guidance exhortations and meditations to inspire and challenge us the ancient examen practice helping us reflect on our thoughts habits and true self let a book of hours guide you into moments of peace and spiritual renewal inviting you to pause reflect and rediscover the sacred in every moment

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