

Thomas Merton Reading List

1. No Man is an Island

Here, Thomas Merton provides further meditations on the spiritual life in sixteen thoughtful essays, beginning with his classic treatise "Love Can Be Kept Only by Being Given Away." This sequel to Seeds of Contemplation provides fresh insight into Merton's favorite topics of silence and solitude, while also underscoring the importance of community and the deep connectedness to others that is the inevitable basis of the spiritual life—whether one lives in solitude or in the midst of a crowd.

2. Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander

In this series of notes, opinions, experiences, and reflections, Thomas Merton examines some of the most urgent questions of our age. With his characteristic forcefulness and candor, he brings the reader face-to-face with such provocative and controversial issues as the "death of God," politics, modern life and values, and racial strife—issues that are as relevant today as they were fifty years ago. Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander is Merton at his best—detached but not unpassionate, humorous yet sensitive, at all times alive and searching, with a gift for language which has made him one of the most widely read and influential spiritual writers of our time.

3. Contemplative Prayer

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.

4. Seeds of Contemplation

New Seeds of Contemplation is one of Thomas Merton's most widely read and best-loved books for Christians and non-Christians alike. For Merton, Every moment and every event of every human's life on earth plants something in the soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of people.

5. He is Risen

With simplicity, eloquence and power Thomas Merton explores the mystery of the Risen Christ. Previously unpublished, this piece captures both the author's energy and his vision of an authentic Christianity. It is pointless to view the Resurrection as a doctrine to prove or a problem to solve; it is the life and action of Christ alive in us. We are a pilgrim people. Our journey into the mystery of creation is in pursuit of real freedom. We are guided by the Law of Love and moved by the Spirit of God to serve our fellow man in response to the Risen Christ alive in us.