

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

Practicing Lent

A Series of Weekly and Daily Reflections for Lent 2015

Thursday ♫ March 26, 2015

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Cloud of Witnesses: Making the Love of Christ Manifest in the 20th Century

Thomas Merton: The Contemplative Ground of Love

Reflection.

In a culture of so much “doing” and analyzing we need the witness of Thomas Merton, who learned through a long and arduous journey that in prayerful contemplation we find the hidden ground of love. A Trappist monk, and a spiritual writer, he valued the practices of silence and solitude, for they opened the door to the deep resonance of God’s presence in the center of his life. After years of living with questions of his identity, he could say with freedom and joy, “the secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God.”

In his later years Thomas Merton moved to a hermitage with even more time for silence and solitude. The fruits of that time surprised him, in that he began to see the world in a new way of freedom and joy. Each moment, each tree, each rainfall became part of God’s presence in the world. Even in the dark, our minds are awake with the sacredness of life. As Merton invited people into deeper contemplation, he began to see that the real journey in life was a deepening and growing surrender to all that is, in God’s love. When we have the assurance of that grounding of love, we learn to love one another as Christ loves us.

Spiritual Practice.

The seeds of contemplative love are nourished by silence and solitude. Find a place today where you can experience silence and solitude. It may be in your backyard, in a vacant room, or waiting in a parking lot. Let go of all your worries, all your plans, all the pressure of what comes next. Rest in the loving presence of God. See God’s presence in the waving branches of the trees, listen to the sound of birds, or dogs, or traffic. See the sky above you or the light from the ceiling. Let this moment remind you that you have what you are seeking. It may not be in your time, but all time is in God’s hands.

Rest in the contemplative awareness that you and all people are “hidden in the love and mercy of God.”

Prayer.

O God of heaven and earth, You have made us one with You and with one another. Your divine love flows into every part of our lives. May we live with the blessed assurance that our identity is in Christ. Keep us returning to the places of silence and solitude where we know more deeply your calling to go forth and be witnesses of your love. *Amen.*