

## Thomas Merton on Love, Peace, Hope, and Joy

b. January 31, 1915 — d. December 10, 1968

### CALL TO PRAYER

**Leader:** We celebrate the wisdom of Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk whose writings continue to guide so many spiritual lives and who challenges us to become involved in the work for social justice as an authentic reflection of our spirituality. Merton declared that, as his love for God deepened, this love led to a deeper love for God's children and his Creation. This fierce love was expressed in his writings about justice, peace, and hope. Let us reflect on his words.

**Reader 1:** "God, we are one with you through love. . . Fill us with love, and let us be bound together with love... Oh God, You have taught us that if we are open to one another, You dwell in us."<sup>1</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers, and thus seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Reader 2:** "Where there is a deep, simple, all-embracing love of humanity, of the created world of living inanimate things, then there will be respect for life, for freedom, for truth, for justice, and there will be humble love for God."<sup>2</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Reader 3:** "As long as you see your fellow human beings essentially to be feared, mistrusted, hated, and destroyed, there cannot be peace on earth."<sup>3</sup>

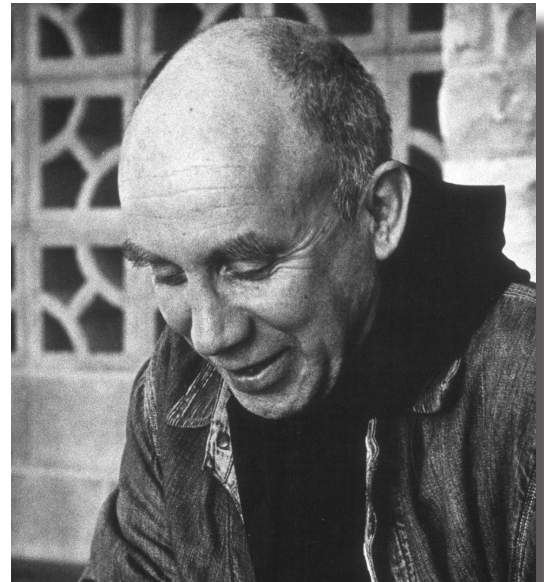
**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Reader 4:** "If one reads the prophets with ears and eyes open, you cannot help recognizing the obligation to shout very loud about God's will, God's truth and justice..."<sup>4</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Reader 5:** "The real job is to lay the groundwork for a deep change of heart on the part of the whole nation so that one day we can really go through the *metanoia* (the spiritual change) we need for a peaceful world."<sup>5</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.



# PRAYER SERVICE

**Reader 6:** “The nonviolent resistance of the Christian who belongs to one of the powerful nations and who is in some ways a privileged member of world society will have to be clearly not for himself but for others—that is, for the poor and underprivileged.”<sup>6</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Reader 7:** “The quality of nonviolence is decided largely by the purity of the Christian hope behind it... Despair is not permitted... The meekness and humility that Christ extolled in the Sermon on the Mount and that are the basis of true Christian nonviolence are inseparable from a Christian hope that is completely open to the presence of God in the world and therefore to the presence of our brother and sister who must always be seen in the perspectives of the Kingdom.”<sup>7</sup>

**All:** Fill us with love for you, Creator God, and lead us to love our sisters and brothers and to seek justice and peace for your human family and your Creation.

**Leader:** Let us pause for a moment of silence and reflect on all of these words of Thomas Merton, calling us to love and to hope.

*(Pause for a moment of silence.)*

**Leader:** We also celebrate the joy Thomas Merton found in God’s Creation, which reveals the wisdom of the Creator to us.

**Reader 8:** “There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*. There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a font of action and joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being.”<sup>8</sup>

**All:** May we find joy in all of Creation and may we protect all that God has created.

**Reader 9:** “Living with wisdom means life as communion, life as thanksgiving, life as praise, life as festival, life as glory.”<sup>9</sup>

**Leader:** Let us prayer together for the love, the hope, and the joy Thomas Merton call us to. May he rest in peace and may his words continue to guide and inspire us.





## CLOSING PRAYER

**All:** Creator God,  
We give thanks for all you have blessed us with.  
May we show our gratitude  
Through praise for your Wisdom and Goodness,  
Through love of our neighbors,  
Through hope for justice and peace,  
Through joy in your Creation,  
Through the care of all created beings,  
Care of the natural world,  
And through a sense of communion,  
All united in and with You. Amen.

— Jane Deren, Ph.D.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, New York, New Directions, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters*, Volume I, ed. William Shannon, New York; Farrar, 5 Straus, and Giroux, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Merton, “Blessed Are the Meek,” in *Thomas Merton: Essential Writings*, ed. Christine Bochen, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Merton, “Hagia Sophia,” in *A Thomas Merton Reader*, ed. Thomas McDonnell, New York, Doubleday, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

