

Thomas Merton & Dorothy Day:

Pilgrims and Prophets of Peace

This play brings to life two of the most important and inspiring spiritual teachers of the last century. We learn of their deepest struggles and intuitions about the meaning of death, about prayer, mystical experience, war and peace—and the way of universal compassion and non-violent love which flows from a life of union with God.

May the witness of their lives touch, open, and expand our own hearts. As Mother Teresa once said: *"May God so break open our hearts that the whole world falls in."*

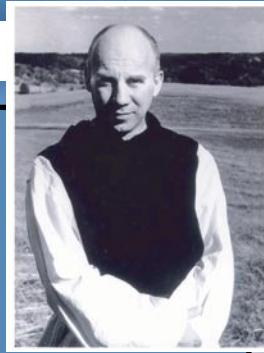
**"MY PRAYER FROM DAY TO DAY IS THAT
GOD WILL SO ENLARGE MY HEART THAT
I WILL SEE YOU ALL, AND LIVE WITH
YOU ALL, IN GOD'S LOVE."**

Dorothy Day

**"WHAT IF THE DOOR TO PARADISE IS
WIDE OPEN --AND WE
WALK RIGHT PAST IT?"**
Thomas Merton

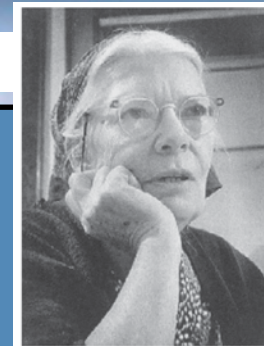
THOMAS MERTON

Was born in France in 1915 and died of accidental electrocution while at a gathering of monks in Bangkok, Thailand in 1968. He was a Trappist monk and one of the most important and influential Christian writers of the 20th century. He was the acclaimed author of more than 70 books on spirituality, prayer, poetry, social justice, and inter-religious dialogue. His first book was his best-selling Seven Story Mountain in 1948 which chronicled his years of searching and final conversion to Catholicism and entering a Trappist monastery in 1941.



DOROTHY DAY

Was born in 1897 and died in 1980. When she died she was called the most important person in the history of American Catholicism. She was also called an American Gandhi and a modern St. Francis. She was the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement known for setting up "houses of hospitality?" for the poor as well as a life of active service of the causes of social justice, peace, non-violence, and the loving service of the "the least, the last and the unlikely" ones of our world. After many years of personal struggle and searching she became a Catholic and wrote her autobiography the Long Loneliness. Fr. Dan Berrigan S.J. said that in a time of spiritual and moral blindness, "she lived as though the truth were true."



Background

Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day never physically met each other, although they very much knew of each other and read each other's writings. However, in the last 10 years of Merton's life, he and Dorothy Day frequently exchanged letters with each other in which they shared their deepest concerns. In some ways, they lived parallel lives ultimately pointed in the same direction: toward the inner and outer peacemaking that comes from radically seeking God's Presence and Love in all things.

Style of Presentation

The play is presented in the form of Reader's Theater: actors are dressed in black and sit on simple stools with copies of the text. There are no special props or costumes. This is a form of theater in which there is no full memorization: scripts are openly used during the performance. In many ways it is similar to oral storytelling in which the ears and the imaginations of the audience are central to helping to bring the performance to life. So, relax and surrender yourself into the oral world which the performers create for us. And hand yourself over to letting the spirits of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton come to life for us today.



The Setting

The setting of the play is in a liminal twilight zone between life and death, heaven and earth, this life and the next. It is the space between death and eternal life. The place where the communion of saints and human life mysteriously intersect each other. From this space the characters remember the entire panorama of their life's journey. They take stock of their lives by a final truthful gaze on all that has happened on their way home to God. This play is a reflective memory poem about their lives. For them, it's the end of life's "long loneliness" at last. It's the moment of the dawning of the Great Love of God. The characters are right at the brink of that eternal threshold where we can cry out to God with the Psalmist: "Let your Face fill me with delight, your Face—the vision of which is where all roads lead." ...Where all roads lead. At last their roads have led them to the place where contemplation and "the duty of delight" come into their final effortless fulfillment. We eavesdrop on the intimate conversation they are having with themselves—and by extension with us. We join with them as they remember their journey into the embrace of the Love of God.



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**Let me seek the gift of silence,
of poverty, and solitude, where
everything I touch is turned into
prayer: where the sky is my prayer,
the birds are my prayer, and
the wind in the trees is my
prayer for God is all in all.
-Thomas Merton.**

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