

strated through her interest and devotion to Merton literature the changes and development of Merton's evolving thought and philosophy.

Marquita E. Breit

DEAR, John, SJ, *The Sound of Listening: A Retreat Journal from Thomas Merton's Hermitage* (New York: Continuum), pp. 125. (Paperback). \$13.95.

Among the names of people thoroughly committed to non-violent resistance and activism for significant change resounding around the United States, if not around the world, is that of John Dear, SJ. His own personal witness gives adequate testimony to his commitment, but others familiar with that name must wonder from where such efforts of his all come.

In *The Sound of Listening* readers can get a glimpse into that part of John Dear that may remain hidden under his activism. This book has as his subtitle: *A Retreat Journal from Thomas Merton's Hermitage*, and unveils John Dear's inner spiritual journey in a quite personal way. His journal is the fruit of spending hours in Thomas Merton's own retreat house, a place Dear finds haunted with the aura of many activists before him, including this reviewer.

Through the years the monks of Gethsemani have been gracious hosts for me and for countless retreatants, and many have visited Merton's grave for a variety of reasons. I remember well one of my own personal epiphanies at that grave site on a spring day in 1982, and Dear's daily visits to Merton's grave seem to have been equally as inspirational to him.

While many visitors to that grave site would be embarrassed to publicize such personally influential moments from a private journal, Dear seems unabashed in doing so. Perhaps he is modeling for other religious activists the depths from which his own activism stems, namely, a spiritual journey that needs to be probed occasionally and regularly lest the roots of religious activism dry up, and religious activism goes dry or sour, or burns out.

It may well be that for some readers his paeans and outbursts of strong feelings of a deep and personal relationship with God and with Jesus are 'other-age' pietistic. Quoting Merton's last conference to novices in 1965, Merton spoke of being 'kissed by God', which makes John Dear discover that 'God bends down from the heavens and kisses me, embraces my soul, holds me in his hand, and then, in Christ, looks on me and smiles' (p. 68).

But then not everyone dares to make his or her own spiritual journal so public. What *The Sound of Listening* can do is to bring the activist reader to go to one's own well and drink from those waters strength needed for the struggle against injustices everywhere.

The Sound of Listening offers readers such a different side of John Dear, one that most people see as a youthful, energetic and non-violent leader, so often arrested for his actions on behalf of social justice. As an activist he runs the great risk of being drained and burned out, but as he admits in his journal (p. 112) '[T]his week, I have regained a peaceful spirit and spent glorious hours in this hermitage.'

It is gratifying to know that John Dear is refreshed and renewed. Perhaps his journal will continue to inspire the rest of us in the ways of active justice work, and help us find our own ways to be refreshed and renewed.

James E. Flynn