

GOZIER, André, OSB, *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Thomas Merton* (trans. from the French by Victoria Hebert and Denis Sabourin Ligouri; Missouri: Ligouri Publications, 1999), pp. 97. ISBN 0-7648-0491 (paperback). \$7.95.

A companion is a welcome gift on all sojourns into uncharted territory. As any of us embark on a journey of the spirit, an internal delving into and deepening of our relationship with God, a spiritual director or companion is certainly most welcome. It is on this premise that *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Thomas Merton* is based.

We are warmly welcomed into the process: fifteen days or prayer periods worth of reflection that use a facet of Thomas Merton's life—'a convert', 'a monk', 'a poet', 'a precursor of interreligious dialogue'—as guidance for our own spiritual path. In order to shape our process of personal discovery and unfolding, we are encouraged to use all or any of the segments of each day's reflection.

The goal of the book is not to lead us to a more profound relationship with Merton, but to use his spiritual wisdom to pull us into a special place of prayer. It offers, in a sense, a conversation with Merton's life experience in order to connect with our life experience—helping us to recognize in those moments God's presence—then to invite us more intimately into relationship with God. 'Day 3: A Chosen One', for example, begins with a brief 'focus point' about the call each of us receives from God, followed by an applicable quote from Merton's writings. Vocation, Gozier notes, is a central theme in Merton's life. The author then broadens the conversation explaining that when we discover our own vocation we discover a deeper level of our inner self:

A vocation is like a seed germinating. All that is lived, both good and bad, finds itself recuperated and purified because a vocation is a dynamism that affects a synthesis in our inner self. We could define it as the existential impossibility to give another meaning to our life (p. 18).

The day ends with questions for personal application. Have you made a similar life choice? Is it clear, incomplete, untested?

This slim book offers a fine point of departure and companionship, filtered through the life of Thomas Merton, for a person interested in enriching their journey with God. Reflecting on Merton's life struggles and choices newly illumined some of the steps I have taken and gave some food for thought about my own spiritual adventure. As a minister of parish-based formation as well as the mother of three small children, however, I found myself tripping over Gozier's style of writing. He assumes a certain depth of academic experience that seems more suited to a theology lecture than it does a text for a neophyte or tentatively embarking spiritual journeyer. In addition, more inclusive language—avoiding 'mankind' and employing 'she' as often as 'he'—would have been more conducive to fruitful reflection for me.

Nevertheless *Fifteen Days* serves as a useful mirror to help any serious reader reflect on the stages of her or his journey to a more profound relationship with God.

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