

# FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH MERTON

by **Glenn Anthony Young**

Our first encounter took place across my kitchen table  
 As I sat awestruck over photographs of you,  
 Your face revealed to me in page after page  
 Of black and white paper images.

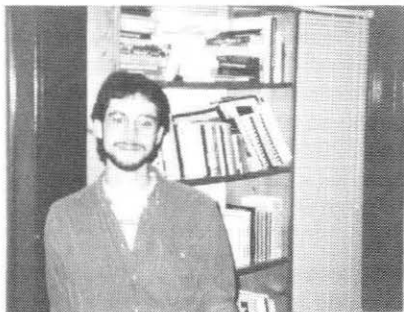
My tears that fell and lump in throat were joyful  
 At this, my escape from the long felt anticipation  
 Of gazing into your eyes, and mournful  
 In my knowledge that we are no longer  
 Blessed by your physical presence, its having  
 Ascended from a far Eastern shore one year  
 Before my presence was first felt, as tiny movements  
 Within the womb of a young, expectant mother.

My fingers timidly stroked your face, present  
 To me in black and white line and particle  
 Caressing your figure as best they could,  
 Certain that I could somehow touch the holiness  
 Which to this day pervades your presence.

The hidden wholeness you forever sought is found  
 By me in your joyful eyes and mischievous grin,  
 Features of a contemplative gaze I desire  
 To take upon myself like the black and white robes  
 Of this gentle monk.

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□ **Glenn Anthony Young** attends the University of Missouri-Kansas City where he is studying English and philosophy. He writes: "I was first introduced to Thomas Merton by a friend and have found him to be an important guide and inspiration along my own path of development and growth. This poem tells of my first 'encounter' with Merton via the photographs of him in John Howard Griffin's book, *A Hidden Wholeness*."



GLENN ANTHONY YOUNG