

# ELDERHOSTEL 1995: A WEEK WITH THOMAS MERTON

by **Pierre D. Van Groll**

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We come from many compass points  
 south from Florida  
 north from Minnesota  
 east from Connecticut  
 west from California  
 to flesh out the direction of your Geography of  
 Lograire  
 Even nearly three decades after your death  
 you can still draw a crowd, Tom!

We are mostly retired:  
 old teachers, a lawyer, an engineer or two  
 all persons with varied histories  
 who mill about the foothills of your seven-storied  
 mountain  
 hoping for some direction  
 or perhaps some fragile epiphany  
 We bring our senior selves  
 (still searching after all these years)  
 to meet your challenge  
 to vacate the false self and be filled with the  
 true.

You have hooked us with your zen talk  
 and with your mystic metaphors  
 and we marvel at what you have inspired  
 bronze sculptures  
 quilted tapestries  
 and cool jazz.

We stood by the cross  
 staked in your grave site  
 and our cameras clicked  
 with carefully focused lenses  
 to capture the inscription  
 "Fr. Louis Merton  
 Died Dec. 10, 1968"  
 But we prayed, too.  
 We prayed that our alienation  
 would come to a happy ending  
 not through a faulty searing fan  
 but through cool anointing with the holy oil  
 of the sick.

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