Martin, Malcolm and Merton:
The Work for Racial Justice and the Responsibility
of Catholic Spirituality

By **Daniel P. Horan, OFM**

On April 4, 2018, we marked a half-century since the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was taken by assassination. He was 39 years old – just a few years older than I am now. He has been dead longer than he had lived; and over the course of those five decades, the name, memory, speeches, sermons, writings and legacy of Dr. King have gone through numerous shifts and changes. A national holiday has been established, a memorial in Washington has been erected, and the classroom textbooks used to teach the next generation of Americans about his life and legacy have been written. Like the canonical saints in the Christian community, the civil-rights saints of this nation are often dismissed by elevation, celebrated in general but ignored in their particularity, remembered for the tragedy of their martyrdom but forgotten for the reason they were murdered in the first place.

It has been said with good reason that the real legacy of Martin Luther King, the power of his convictions and the admonitions he was not afraid to level against his brothers and sisters, has been, to use an uncomfortably apt term, "whitewashed" by our collective American imaginary. For many, he is the safe and comfortable patron saint of the American Civil Rights era, who espoused nonviolent resistance and preached peace. While celebrated as a minister with a powerful voice and a strong presence, his legacy is generally recalled without risk of personal indictment or embarrassment, challenge or exhortation. He is typically thought of as a kind man who would not rock the *white boat* while forging across the river of injustice in a manner befitting Washington crossing the Delaware. And while there is truth in these memories, there is nevertheless selectivity at play.

Our institutional selective memory has painted the United States Civil Rights Era of the 1960s as a tale of two black leaders: one good, the other bad; one peaceful, the other violent; one celebrated, the other feared; one Martin Luther King and the other Malcolm X. Such a binary way of viewing our collective history reduces King to a caricature and erases the memory of Malcolm. The purpose of the present discussion is not to restore the full character and dangerous memory of each man – to do so would take more time and space than I have, and you can read their work and study their lives yourself. Instead, I offer a more narrow restorative focus: to go back to the 1960s accompanied by Thomas Merton,

---

Daniel P. Horan, OFM is a Franciscan Friar and Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Spirituality at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He is the author of numerous articles and several books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: A New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of His Life, Thought, and Writing* (2014) and *All God's Creatures: A Theology of Creation* (2018). He previously served three terms as a member of the ITMS Board of Directors and is currently editing the correspondence between Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton Stone for publication. To learn more, visit: DanHoran.com.

Daniel P. Horan

Trappist monk, Catholic priest and author, in order to revisit the insights, wisdom and challenge of Martin and Malcolm. For Merton, their admonitions were not caricatured nor exaggerated, but received in a manner distinctive among white Catholic clergy of his time (and, I would dare say, along with my colleague and friend Fr. Bryan Massingale, that Merton's voice is sadly still distinctive in our time too).

In this article, I first want to take a look at Merton and Martin Luther King, Jr.; next, I want to look at Merton and Malcolm X; finally, I want to consider the insights that arose for Merton from his engagement with the life, writings and legacies of King and Malcolm in order to highlight the responsibility we have as Catholics to incorporate the work for racial justice into our Christian spirituality and practice, especially for those who occupy social locations of privilege in a society that remains deeply scarred by the realities of structural racism.

Merton and Martin Luther King, Jr.

In his influential book, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History*, the Princeton historian of American Religion Albert Raboteau opens his final chapter, entitled "A Hidden Wholeness: Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King, Jr.," with a summary of a powerful event that, tragically, was never able to happen. He writes:

> At the time of his assassination, plans were underway for Martin Luther King, Jr., to make a retreat with Thomas Merton at Our Lady of Gethsemani Abbey. We shall never know what might have resulted from a dialogue between this Roman Catholic monk and this black Baptist preacher whose lives still fascinate and inspire us twenty-five [now fifty] years after their deaths. But the act of recalling their common struggle against the evils of racism, materialism, and militarism may enable us to recover what they would have brought to such an encounter and to imagine the joint "word" they might have left those who strive to live out their legacy.[1]

Raboteau is not the first to wonder what might have transpired from the in-person meeting of these two great religious and social-justice leaders. However, his reflections, arising from decades of studying the history of African-American religious experience in the United States, offer a distinctive and stark reading of their shared experience, shared vision and kindred spirits. For Raboteau, Merton and King were able to reach a level of prophetic witness in their writings and lives as a result of their common, albeit distinctive, locations on the margins of American society. He writes: "Our Lady of Gethsemani Abbey and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Catholic monasticism and black Protestantism – two very different locations and two very different traditions that nevertheless held one significant trait in common, their marginality. Monks were marginal by profession; they had rejected the 'world.' Blacks were marginalized by discrimination; they were rejected by the dominant white society" (Raboteau 168-69). Though admittedly very different experiences, this sense of marginalization – one elected, the other forced – led both Merton and King to recognize the religious and moral valence of the issue of civil rights and social justice.

Thomas Merton had no illusion about the radical call that King proposed in Christian prophetic form. Whereas distance and selective memory has inexorably shaped our collective

imagination about who King was and what he stood for, Merton recognized the opportunity and threat King's message and witness posed to the dominant white society in the United States. The opportunity was once described by Merton in terms of a *kairos* moment – a providential time shaped by the Spirit. Merton wrote in his essay "Religion and Race in the United States"[2] that:

> In the Negro Christian non-violent movement, under Martin Luther King, the *kairos*, the "providential time," met with a courageous and enlightened response. The non-violent-Negro civil rights drive has been one of the most positive and successful expressions of Christian social action that has been seen anywhere in the twentieth century. It is certainly the greatest example of Christian faith in action in the social history of the United States. It has come almost entirely from the Negroes, with a few white Christians and liberals in support. (*FV* 130-31)

Merton goes on to praise the nonviolent Christian activism of King and his followers as being heroic. And yet, Merton quickly notes the sad reality of why such powerful witness on the part of African Americans does not immediately effect change, even in the American North. The reason is that whites – including, and especially, white Christians – are not willing to relinquish the unearned power and privilege that comes from the flip side of intuitional racism, and the Christian churches are "part of the establishment" that keeps "the Negro deluded and passive, preventing him from fighting for his rights" (*FV* 131); and while there is an opportunity and sign of hope present in this *kairos* moment of nonviolence, there is also a perceived threat.

Merton was able to recognize in King's message of justice and peace the radical demand of the Gospel that calls for *metanoia*, conversion – but not on the part of black women and men. The conversion here is for whites, Christian whites in particular, to acknowledge their unearned privileges, the invisible social advantages, to be willing to relinquish them, and to change so that others might have civil equality. Merton's most powerful and sustained reflection on this call comes in the form of his lengthy essay, "Letters to a White Liberal,"[3] written in response to King's famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In this essay, Merton develops the concurrent reality of King's message – perceived simultaneously as opportunity and threat – noting that African Americans are "not simply judging the white man and rejecting him. On the contrary, they are seeking by Christian love and sacrifice to redeem him, to enlighten him, so as not only to save his soul from perdition, but also to awaken his mind and his conscience, and stir him to initiate the reform and renewal which may still be capable of saving our society" (*SD* 45).

Interpreting King's writings and witness for a white Christian audience – the so-called "white liberal" here, which is to say those whites that fancy themselves allies in the civil rights struggle – Merton then diagnoses the real problem and hurdle in the movement for civil rights and racial justice. In a manner resonating with the prophetic writings of James Baldwin and W. E. B. DuBois before him, Merton declares to his fellow white Christians that *we white Christians* are the problem. And the nonviolent efforts of King and others in this providential time are a way for God's Spirit to speak to the hearts of whites while there is still time. Merton explains:

> The purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions is then to awaken the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and of his sin, so that he will be able to see that the Negro problem is really a *White*

> problem: that the cancer of injustice and hate which is eating white society and is only partly manifested in racial segregation with all its consequences, *is rooted in the heart of the white man himself.* Only if the white man sees this will he be able to gradually understand the real nature of the problem and take steps to save himself and his society from complete ruin. (*SD* 45-46)

Merton saw the way that white American society would view King as a threat, because beyond the call for legislation or superficial concessions, what was at the heart of the Gospel message preached by King and recognized by Merton was the deeply personal and profound challenge for white Christians to examine their consciences and, in evangelical style, to change their lives.

Merton recognized the resistance to this call, even among those who had convinced themselves and others that they welcomed broader inclusion of African Americans into predominantly white American society. Merton observed that in the "lip-service" paid to women and men of color, African Americans had "come to realize that the white man is less interested in the rights of the Negro than in the white man's own spiritual and material comfort" (*SD* 21). Merton articulated this even more plainly elsewhere in his essay when he noted that the time of efficacy for King's nonviolent message was running out and violence would ensue unless whites recognized that they needed to surrender privilege, power and the status quo to make space for true equity and racial justice. Merton wrote:

> The problem is this: if the Negro, as he actually is (not the "ideal" and theoretical Negro, or even the educated and cultured Negro of the small minority), enters wholly into white society, then *that society is going to be radically changed.* This of course is what the white South very well knows, and it is what the white Liberal has failed to understand. Not only will there be a radical change which, whatever form it may take, will amount to at least a peaceful revolution, but also there will be enormous difficulties and sacrifices demanded of everyone, especially the whites. Obviously property values will be affected. The tempo of life and its tone will be altered. The face of business and professional life may change. The approach to the coming crucial labor and economic problems will be even more anguished than we have feared. The psychological adjustment alone will be terribly demanding. . . . We must dare to pay the dolorous price of change, *to grow into a new society.* Nothing else will suffice! (*SD* 8-9)

Developing this point further, theologian M. Shawn Copeland notes that:

> In concert with King's position, Merton reminded whites that blacks were not "simply asking to be 'accepted into' the white man's society and eventually 'absorbed by it.'" Such attitudes, Merton stated, merely revealed just how tightly whites clung to the notion of white superiority. With commanding irony, Merton argued, "It is simply taken for granted that, since the white man is superior, *the Negro wants to become a white man.* And we, liberals and Christians that we are, advance generously, with open arms, to embrace our little black brother and welcome him into white society." Do not expect blacks to be grateful for such attitudes, Merton warned: not only are blacks not

grateful, they are not impressed by such falsity. Indeed, with these attitudes and
actions, whites do "the gravest harm to Christian truth."[4]

Like King, Merton – perhaps somewhat distinctively among white Catholic clergy in his time – recognized the problematic nature of otherwise ostensible benevolence as covert or even unwitting signals of white supremacy. Elsewhere, Merton reiterates this point in reflecting on the way Native Americans have been and continue to be treated by the dominant white society of the United States.[5]

Merton recognized that it was not enough for a white Christian to simply be supportive in some kind of general way toward those oppressed by the structures and effects of the culture of racism imbedded in American society. Without working to surrender the concurrent privileges that are accrued by dominant groups in a structurally racist society, no real change can take place. The way that he came to develop a capacity to recognize this truth and its implications arose from his openness to listening and hearing his African-American sisters and brothers on their own terms. Merton concludes his "Letters to a White Liberal" with an instruction for what this might look like, invoking a familiar motif from the Gospels in the process. He writes: "This is the 'message' which the Negro is trying to give white America. I have spelled it out for myself, subject to correction, in order to see whether a white man is even capable of grasping the words, let alone believing them. For the rest, you have Moses and the Prophets: Martin Luther King, James Baldwin and the others. Read them, and see for yourself what they are saying" (*SD* 70).

Before taking a look at Malcolm X, another one of the modern prophets that Merton read and learned from, I think it is fitting to give the last word on Merton and King to Professor Copeland who, in a recent article about the prophetic witness of both men who died in 1968, summarizes their kindred spirits and legacies well:

> The lives of Merton and King converge in the exercise of the prophetic during the modern struggle *for* civil rights and *against* racism, *for* the common good *against* poverty, and *for* peace *against* militarism. Merton read our human condition as a body of broken bones; King sought to reset those bones through a praxis of redemptive love. Merton and King refused to adjust themselves to the evils of the time – discrimination, segregation, religious bigotry, militarism and violence. They were messengers, witnesses and watchmen – this Baptist minister and Catholic monk – mediating God's word, testifying to the purifying power of love, reading the signs of the time and declaring what they saw and denouncing social injustice as sin. This Catholic monk and Baptist minister understood that the deepest *telos* or authentic end of social justice and social transformation was *neither* desegregation *nor* integration, but the achievement of beloved community, as a foretaste of the eschatological realization of the mystical body of Christ. And that foretaste could be reached only through *agape*, through active and intentional Christian love. (Copeland 170)

Merton and Malcolm X

Whereas it seems that Merton was more open to the complexities and radical call of Martin Luther King, Jr. than many of his contemporaries – and certainly more than our contemporaries

who might know only a "toned down" version of a safe and unthreatening King – Merton had a more difficult time approaching the writings and receiving the message of Malcolm X. While Merton was certainly aware of Malcolm, his journals and letters reveal a certain ambiguity about the civil rights activist. For instance, on February 24, 1965, Merton has a one-line mention of his assassination at the end of the day's entry: "Malcolm X, the Negro racist, has been murdered (I am sorry because now there is bitter fighting between two Muslim factions)."[6] At first glance, the descriptor "Negro racist" strikes the reader as hostile, or at the very least without nuance. And yet, three days later Merton writes a letter to William Robert Miller, a Protestant editor, in which Merton mentions the assassination again but with strikingly more nuance and within the context of broader social concerns.

> I used to think that only Communism was as systematically dedicated to a false construction but I think in some ways we have got them beat because we are so much less systematic and there is a kind of virtuosity that gets in there, the concert of phoniness that arises from Madison Avenue . . . . The Goldwater campaign, the Vietnam thing, the continuation of nothing in the race crisis, and now the heartbreaking madness in the aftermath of Malcolm X's murder. (I thought he was rather a good guy and capable of making some sense.) This is a very blind country, and you are right about what is said about love and what is not done.[7]

These brief allusions to Malcolm X provide us with little to work with but illustrate a general sensibility witnessed in Merton's writings on racism in the United States from 1963 until 1967. Then things changed.

The cautious optimism Merton expressed for Martin Luther King's nonviolent Christian movement shifted in the wake of the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which did little to alleviate effects of the deeply rooted reality of structural racism in the United States. This shift in Merton's outlook and assessment is characterized in, among other places, his essay "From Non-Violence to Black Power" (*FV* 121-29), which opens with the stark line: "The non-violent struggle for integration was won on the law books – and was lost in fact" (*FV* 121). Whereas Merton previously described Malcolm X as "the Negro racist" prior to reading the activist's own writings, now Merton boldly declares that "The Black Power movement is not just racism in reverse" (*FV* 124). The superficial appearance of racism – namely, an anti-white sentiment – is an effect of genuine needs people of color have in their quest for racial justice.

Merton's turn to Malcolm X coincided with his ongoing conversion to the plight of men and women of color in the United States and the concurrent advantageous reality of white privilege and supremacy. In a short review essay titled, "The Meaning of Malcolm X" (*FV* 182-88), Merton engages the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* in a notably nuanced and erudite way. At the outset of the essay, he admits: "The picture most of us had of him was inadequate, though not altogether untrue. We saw him as a militant, rigid, somewhat fanatical agitator, absolutely committed to a naive racist mystique and to a religious organization which was made to sound like a Negro SS" (*FV* 182). Acknowledging the caricature of Malcolm X portrayed by the white media and earlier accepted by Merton himself, Merton goes on to interpret what he believes to be the partial truth of the stereotype as a consequence of Malcolm's involvement with the Nation of Islam. Merton explains:

"Malcolm X was undoubtedly more gifted, more intelligent, more flexible than he appeared to be when he was deliberately effacing himself behind the ideas and programs of 'The Honorable Mr. Elijah Muhammad'" (*FV* 182-83). Having studied *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* – which on April 28, 1967 Merton described in his journal as "an impressive book"[8] – Merton believed that Malcolm's initial involvement with the Nation of Islam actually prevented him from finding and expressing his prophetic voice in the most robust way possible. Merton also attributes Malcolm's role as Elijah Muhammad's close disciple as informing the activist's early caustic and absolutist views about whites. Hearing first-hand from Malcolm's accounting of his life and experiences, Merton came to recognize the complexity of Malcolm's positions and the difficult truths about which he spoke, raising the rhetorical question about whether there was indeed veracity in even the more absolutist views Malcolm had earlier expressed. Merton summarizes his take on Malcolm's shifting perspectives on race relations and the quest for racial justice in America:

> Malcolm X later recognized that his own earlier refusals were too absolute, that some kind of dialogue between the races had to be possible, some kind of collaboration had to be admitted. Yet he felt that the ordinary white liberal professions of sincerity were not good enough, and he insisted on a tactic of refusal which declared, both implicitly and explicitly, that however honest the white man might feel himself to be subjectively, the Negro could not objectively accept his protestations of concern at their face value. They were bound to prove deceptive because the white man could not change his essentially distorted view of the relationship between the races. Even when the white man indulged in a veritable cult of the Negro, he betrayed his basic conviction that the Negro was somehow more of an animal, a distinct and exotic species of human being. (*FV* 184)

In addition to an increased openness to the critical insights Malcolm X presented to Merton in a general societal and ecclesial way, they seemed to also shape his personal outlook at a time when he was discerning a desire for increased solitude that included consideration of moving to, as he described it, a "Third World" country. On May 11, 1967, Merton notes in his journal that he finished writing his essay on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and that there were "Implications of the racial and neo-colonial situation – for my own life" (*LL* 233). Earlier in his journals he mentioned concurrently reading the postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon's influential book *The Wretched of the Earth* alongside Malcolm X's autobiography (see *LL* 226-27) – it seems that at this point in 1967, Merton was more and more open to views he earlier viewed as radical or hostile, and that these views were having an impact on his own life. He credits Malcolm X and Fanon's work as shaping his outlook on the implications of a white, North American, professed religious potentially moving to a systemically impoverished land that Merton himself has romanticized for his own benefit.

What is striking to me about Merton's reading of Malcolm X is the way that, despite initial hesitance, he was open to a voice too often dismissed by others. In a context in which he is interrogating why Malcolm X is so infrequently engaged by theologians and Christian thinkers, theologian Bryan Massingale explains that "Malcolm X conjures up images that can be disturbing, imprisoned as he is by the dominant culture's narrative as a hate-filled demagogue,

whose fiery rhetoric is out of place in the calm and dispassionate venue of academic [or ecclesial] discourse."[9] Massingale argues that despite the stereotypes that have led to widespread dismissal of Malcolm X, he and his work should be considered a "classic" in the sense articulated by theologian David Tracy, which is understood to be "any text that always has the power to transform the horizon of the interpreter and thereby disclose new meanings and experiential possibilities."[10] Massingale explains the power contained in Malcolm's story, noting that "His narrative of conversion and constant openness to truth, whatever its personal cost, is a witness of integrity that speaks across cultural and racial divides. . . . Malcolm's thought is a 'classic' in that it describes 'America.' Not only 'Black' America, but an essential part of the entirety of the American experience without which we possess truncated and inaccurate understandings of who we are and why we are as we are" (Massingale 66).

I believe that what we see in Merton's engagement with Malcolm X's thought and legacy is a tacit affirmation of what Massingale means in describing the activist as a "classic." In a way anticipating Massingale's own articulation of the reasons for this classical status, Merton concluded his essay on Malcolm X by stating: "His autobiography reveals a person whose struggles are understandable, whose errors we can condone. He was a fighter whose sincerity and courage we cannot help admiring, and who might have become a genuine revolutionary leader – with portentous effect in American society [had he not been murdered]!" (*FV* 188).

Merton on the Responsibility of Catholic Spirituality[11]

In a sense, Merton's entire written corpus can rightly be described as a reflection on lifelong conversion. Both his autobiographical texts as well as the more didactic efforts identify numerous opportunities for *metanoia* – a turning away from sin, individualism or the "false self" and toward reconciliation, communion and the "true self." And this is the case in his writings on the violence of American racism, wherein he almost always draws a connection between what *Gaudium et Spes* would call the "signs of the times" and the Christian response these signs elicit. I am suggesting we can read Merton's Christian response as a nascent "spirituality" rooted in what he describes as a "theology of love" that is a theology both of revolution and of resistance (see *FV* 9).

Merton laments the "Christian failure in American racial justice" in his own time, noting that an increased awareness of what is happening in society brings out "the stark reality that our society itself is radically violent and that violence is built into its very structure" (*FV* 144). What is the response of the Christian, especially the white Christian, supposed to be? I suggest Merton offers (at least) three points to be considered in forming a spirituality that takes seriously the quest for racial justice. This is particularly important for white Christians in the American context that can relate to and learn from Merton's critical reflection.

First, he explains that the "job of the white Christian is then partly a job of diagnosis and criticism, a prophetic task of finding and identifying the injustice which is the cause of *all* the violence, both white and black" (*FV* 129). The exhortation is to *resist* simply resting in unexamined complicity and instead seek to uncover the injustice already at work in the system. Merton explains that this leaves Christians with a real choice: either to "find security and order by falling back on antique and basically feudal conceptions, or go forward into the unknown

future, identifying [themselves] with the forces that will inevitably create a new society" (*FV* 138-39). This is the revolutionary dimension that challenges Christians to move outside the cocoon of personal piety to embrace a spirituality of praxis and engagement.

Second, Merton encourages his fellow white Christians to *actually listen* to their black sisters and brothers. Again, the central conviction of his "Letters to a White Liberal" is that the seemingly benevolent "liberals" or Northern whites are in fact deploying control and influence that Critical Race Theorist Derrick Bell, Jr. would describe as interest convergence.[12] For Merton, a spirituality of resistance calls white Christians in particular to step aside and recognize the prophetic voice of women and men of color. Their message, he believes, can be put in simple terms: "I would say that the message is this: white society has sinned in many ways. It has betrayed Christ by its injustices to races it considered 'inferior' and to countries which it colonized" (*SD* 66). Merton adds: "What is demanded of us is not necessarily that we believe that the Negro has mysterious and magic answers in the realms of politics and social control, *but that his spiritual insight into our common crisis is something we must take seriously*" (*SD* 69). The spirituality of resistance Merton imagines is not one in which the prophetic voice arises from the "white savior" within American society, but one of humility and honest reflection that invites white Christians to embrace silence and openness.

The last point is – to put it in my own words – white Christians should "get out of the way." Articulated in first-person narrative, Merton concludes his essay "From Non-Violence to Black Power" with these lines: "I for one remain *for* the Negro. I trust him, I recognize the overwhelming justice of his complaint, I confess I have no right whatever to get in his way, and that as a Christian I owe him support, not in his ranks but in my own, among the whites who refuse to trust him or hear him, and who want to destroy him" (*FV* 129). To move toward actual racial justice, white Christians need to follow rather than lead, listen rather than instruct, and support women and men of color on their own terms.

For Thomas Merton, racial justice can only be imagined when those who benefit from maintaining the status quo of inequality recognize structural racism and its complement of white privilege. Otherwise, progress is only ever advanced in circumscribed ways governed by the happenstance of interest convergence. As Christians, we are called by virtue of our baptism to work for peace and justice, which according to Merton means that white women and men in the American context have to move toward surrendering the unearned privilege and power granted by structural racism. Drawing on the insights of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, Merton highlights that for white Christians this begins with incorporating into their spiritual practices a commitment to identifying injustice, listening to the women and men of color, and "getting out of the way" so that the agenda and mission of social change can be set by the hitherto oppressed and not by the oppressor.[13]

1. Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) 166; subsequent references will be cited as "Raboteau" parenthetically in the text.
2. Thomas Merton, "Religion and Race in the United States," in Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) 130-44; subsequent references will be cited as "*FV*" parenthetically in the text.

3. Thomas Merton, "Letters to a White Liberal," in Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964) 3-71; subsequent references will be cited as "*SD*" parenthetically in the text.

4. M. Shawn Copeland, "The Watchmen and the Witnesses: Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Exercise of the Prophetic," *The Merton Annual* 30 (2017) 168 (quoting *SD* 67-68); subsequent references will be cited as "Copeland" parenthetically in the text.

5. See Thomas Merton, *Ishi Means Man: Essays on Native Americans* (Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 1976; rpt. New York: Paulist Press, 2015).

6. Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage. Journals, vol. 5: 1963-1965*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997) 211.

7. Thomas Merton, *Witness to Freedom: Letters in Times of Crisis*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994) 250.

8. Thomas Merton, *Learning to Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom. Journals, vol. 6: 1966-1967*, ed. Christine M. Bochen (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997) 226; subsequent references will be cited as "*LL*" parenthetically in the text.

9. Bryan N. Massingale, "*Vox Victimarum Vox Dei*: Malcolm X as Neglected 'Classic' for Catholic Theological Reflection," *CTSA Proceedings* 65 (2010) 65; subsequent references will be cited as "Massingale" parenthetically in the text.

10. David Tracy, *On Naming the Present* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994) 15.

11. This last section is based on material previously published in Daniel P. Horan, "A Spirituality of Resistance: Thomas Merton on the Violence of Structural Racism in America," in *American Catholicism in the 21ˢᵗ Century: Crossroads, Crisis, or Renewal?* eds. Benjamin T. Peters and Nicholas Rademacher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018) esp. 196-99.

12. See Derrick A. Bell, Jr., "*Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93.518 (1980) 518-33.

13. An earlier version of this article was first presented as the Jennifer Koon Peacemaking Lecture at Saint John Fisher College, Rochester, NY on April 29, 2018.