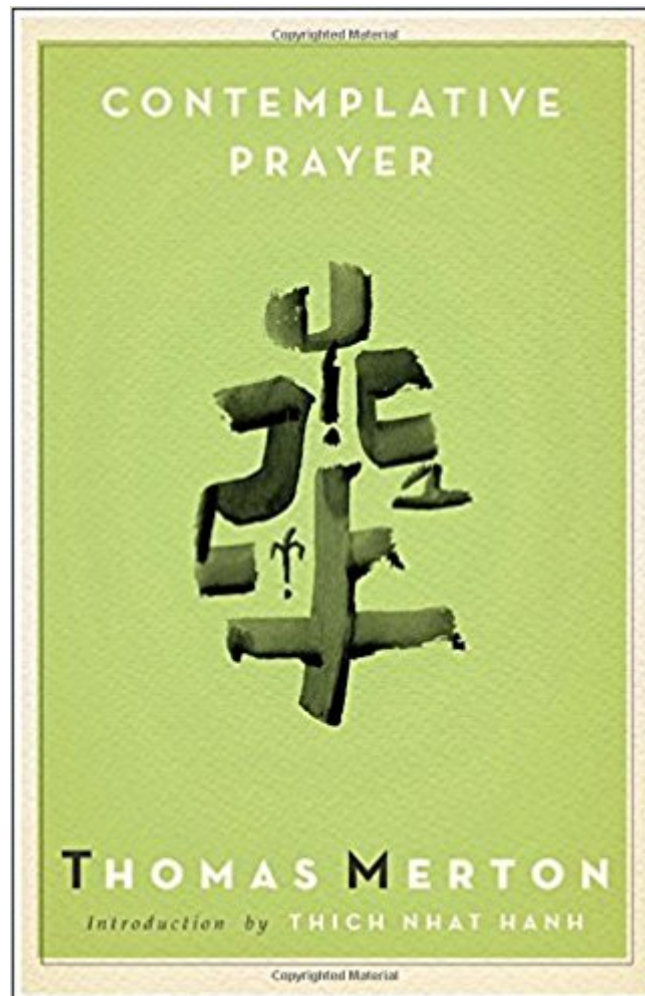




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# Contemplative Prayer (Image Classics)



## Synopsis

In this classic text, Thomas Merton offers valuable guidance for prayer. He brings together a wealth of meditative and mystical influences—œfrom John of the Cross to Eastern desert monasticism—œto create a spiritual path for today. Most important, he shows how the peace contacted through meditation should not be sought in order to evade the problems of contemporary life, but can instead be directed back out into the world to affect positive change. Contemplative Prayer is one of the most well-known works of spirituality of the last one hundred years, and it is a must-read for all seeking to live a life of purpose in today's world. In a moving and profound introduction, Thich Nhat Hanh offers his personal recollections of Merton and compares the contemplative traditions of East and West.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This little gem of a book, newly issued with a foreword from the great Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (who knew Merton in the 1960s) beautifully distills Merton's own reading and long experience with contemplation. Written close to the end of Merton's life, this book is not so much a "how to" guide as it is a kind of contemplation of contemplation. Immersed in the "negative theology" of St. John of the Cross and others--and influenced by his deep reading in Zen--Merton here stresses that in meditation "we should not look for a 'method' or 'system,' but cultivate an 'attitude,' an 'outlook': faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, supplication, trust, joy." God is found

in the desert of surrender: this means giving up any expectation for a particular message and "waiting on the Word of God in silence," knowing that any answer will be "his silence itself suddenly, inexplicably revealing itself to him as a word of great power, full of the voice of God." --Doug Thorpe

“[Readers] will find Contemplative Prayer valuable. Merton shows that all living theology needs to be rooted in exercises where men somehow happily establish contact with God.”  
--New York Times Book Review

In fact I could only really enjoy it when I found my long lost paperback version. For this kind of reading, that requires going back and trinking over what you have just read, maybe adding some notes on the margins... I still prefer paper. Since it was conceived as a short manual for monks, in the first place, Editors seem to have thought necessary to add a quite long prologue \_in comparison to the book itself.

A small book with a lot to say. It has been astonishing for me to find someone who has so much to say about a topic I’ve just discovered. It does seem a bit biased but it seems to me he had a particular audience in mind when he wrote this essay. I feel all of Christendom would benefit from a study of this work. I am a recent convert and was delighted to find Thomas Merton and Thomas Keating. They have helped me understand the nature of the calling I received at my moment of conversion. Like Paul on the road to Damascus I was not looking for or expecting a calling from Christ. Since it happened I have been attending many churches but not found a true home. However, I have found a place I like. Merton and Keating have shown me I do have a place and a part to play and have helped me to comprehend the message I received. I thank them.

Thomas Merton’s thoughtful work on Contemplative Prayer is worthy of careful contemplation by Christians of all traditions. The chapters are brief as is the book but it contains many powerful ideas. Merton is careful to not separate contemplation from either corporate worship or service. He will have none of the false dichotomy of "spiritual" life and "earthly" life. He also avoids pointing to contemplation as a gimmick or a method for true spirituality. The highlight of the book for me came on page 112. There Merton writes, "Prayer does not blind us to the world, but it transforms our vision of the world, and makes us see it, all men and all the history of mankind, in the light of God." I come from a different Christian tradition than Thomas Merton, but I value his insights as I seek to

walk the sometimes fearful, sometimes exhilarating, sometimes inscrutable path of prayer.

this was a little over my head, but i enjoyed the parts i did understand. i probably would benefit from a primer on the subject. although for a philosopher, that is what this book serves to be. i like merton's style of writing, and he stays true to form in this effort.

Merton treats contemplation in a thorough way highlighting the practice of contemplation. This is not a book about how to do contemplation but the theology of contemplation and what we need to reflect on. A companion book would be "The cloud of the unknowing". It is well worth the time involved in reading and reflecting on the book.

It explains what contemplative prayer is and perhaps more importantly what it is not. It is very clear and I found it more helpful than most books I have read on the subject. I would recommend it to anyone seeking to deepen their prayer life.

I'll just copy this that is written on the last page: "Without contemplation and interior prayer the Church cannot fulfill her mission to transform and save mankind."

This is the kind of book that deserves to be read, read, and then read again. This slim tome is deceptively profound in its author's laying bare the depth and height of the contemplative life. Each sentence has meaning that one ought not ignore.

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