

Book Reviews

A Seven Day Journey with Thomas Merton by Esther de Waal. Eagle Publications (Harper Collins). £5.99. ISBN: 0863 47 1773.

This valuable new edition with a foreward by Jim Forest has been written to enable the reader to enter a retreat within his own home.

The reader hears the voice of Thomas Merton as Esther de Waal confidently leads us to his wisdom. We are drawn towards the search for our still centre 'giving ourselves in prayer a chance to realise that we have what we seek'.

Though the journey has been designed as a week's retreat, each one the the chapters can be taken by itself as an individual inspiration. Carefully chosen psalms mirror what can happen to the Soul.

You are encouraged to look at the simple yet beautiful photographs taken by Thomas Merton to see the extraordinary beyond the ordinary. Esther de Waal gives sensitive guidance on approaching the retreat in a practical way. Merton's compassionate tone underlines the whole book.

As the reader may be coming in a raw state from the harsh realities of the world, it is important that Esther de Waal touches on Merton's vulnerability and gives insight into her own difficulties. As Merton puts it 'To-day time is a commodity, and for each one of us time is mortgaged we are threatened by a chain reaction: overwork - overstimulation - overcompensation - overkill'. The riches of this book can break that chain as we find God's own good time.

Lindsay Nevin

Rediscovering Holiness. The Search for the Sacred Today by Melvyn Matthews. SPCK 1996. £7.99. ISBN: 0-281-04914-9.

This stimulating book began life as a series of lectures which Melvyn Matthews delivered in Wells Cathedral during Lent 1994. A form of the chapter on monastic holiness was first published in Merton Journal as 'The Monastic Way' in May 1994.

Matthews explores monastic holiness, biblical holiness, mystical holiness and social and evangelical holiness. He is a perceptive social and spiritual critic of