

abandonment and contemplation. It may be that suddenly, as with the collapse of the communist world, the poetic, imaginative and prophetic voices of people like Merton will enter in and prevail, and if so this excellent book will be seen as one more breach in the seemingly triumphant iron curtain of modern technology.

Peter Ellis is interested in contemporary spirituality.

**Thomas Merton
and Thérèse Lentfoehr:
The Story of a Friendship**

Robert Nugent, SDS

St. Paul's

New York, 2012

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(pbk) 194 pages

\$14.95

In the opening chapter of this book the author states that whilst he hopes that it might be of some interest to Merton scholars 'it is directed primarily to the many Merton aficionados who might enjoy seeing one more side of the multi-layered personality of the monk'. Whilst not a scholarly work in the strictest sense it is an important account of a previously unexplored aspect of Merton's life and work and of a friendship that was of some significance. It also importantly gives some insights into the life and achievements of a woman who was an accomplished musician, lecturer

and author long before Merton became well known.

The story of the twenty year friendship between Thomas Merton and Thérèse Lentfoehr, a Sister of the Society of the Divine Saviour began seriously in 1948 though they had already had some brief exchanges earlier. Following the publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain* Thérèse wrote expressing her admiration for the work. Merton replied, not with the standard card he was using but in a personal letter. He then subsequently sent her an uncorrected manuscript copy of his autobiography. This set the tone for what was to become a relationship and friendship maintained until Merton's death, almost exclusively by correspondence. His decision to make a gift of his manuscript is a key event in the story of this friendship. Why he did so remains unclear. For Thérèse it began what can only be described as a lifelong obsession with Merton and his writing and with collecting every letter, note, manuscript and photograph she could obtain. Her collection was to become the first major archive of his writings and remains a valuable resource now. Interestingly, Merton only began to keep her letters in 1963 and this book gives some insight into Merton's developing understanding that his manuscripts and writing should be preserved. Eventually Thérèse was correcting, typing and photocopying work for Merton and in a sense she became his extern secretary.

The friendship between Thérèse and Merton encompasses the years following the tumultuous changes after Vatican II and it is interesting to read how these changes impacted on the lives of two independently-minded people. The story of these changes is well illustrated in the photographs in the book. In the early pictures Thérèse is in full formal nun's habit, then in the modern version adopted by her order, the famous photograph of her in a poncho with Merton, and finally the poignant image of her in old age in lay dress at Merton's grave. Thérèse often wrote to Merton with her concerns about her relationship with her Order and it is hard not to see in his replies and advice that he also was working through some of his own well-documented struggles.

Despite the odd editorial inconsistency which can jar the reader, any 'aficionado' of Merton will find much to delight and inform in this affectionate story of a friendship.

Karl Goswell is a member of the committee of the Thomas Merton Society.

the road to joy

The Thomas Merton Society
Conference 2014

details on inside back cover

Francis of Assisi and the Future of Faith: Exploring Franciscan Spirituality and Theology in the Modern World

Daniel P Horan O.F.M.
Tau Publishing
Phoenix, 2012
ISBN 9781619560413
(pbk) 247 pages
\$14.95

Dating God: Live and Love in the Way of St Francis

Daniel P. Horan O.F.M.
St Anthony Messenger Press
Cleveland Ohio, 2012
ISBN 9781616361365
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\$14.99

I don't suppose there are many people who know that the Franciscan community has a desk at the United Nations in Geneva. The organisation is known as Franciscan International and represents the interests of Franciscan religious communities throughout the world. Some years ago I was on a bus ride with the Director of Franciscans International. In a brief conversation he described the impact of Francis of Assisi as a man who, 'touched all the bases' and set an agenda for many others to follow. Today, something in the region of three-fifths of all Roman Catholic religious, i.e. monks and nuns, live a rule of life rooted in the Franciscan tradition. This enduring relevance of Franciscan spirituality is at the heart of Dan Horan's book,