

Summary

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was an American Trappist, writer, mystic, and scholar of Zen Buddhism. He lived in various European countries for the first twenty years of his life. He was fluent in French, English, German and Italian. Merton's linguistic abilities influenced his interest in literature. Raised atheistically by his parents - painters, he received a natural gift of sensitivity and awareness of beauty and truth. These qualities became part of Thomas' horizontal meditation that led him to know Christ. At twenty-three he was baptized into the Catholic Church, and three years later he entered the Trappist order of Gethsemani (Kentucky). Merton was fascinated by the literature of the Church Fathers, whose texts he translated and commented on. As a young monk, he wrote the autobiography "The Seven Storey Mountain", which became an international bestseller. Moreover, he wrote several dozen books, journals and volumes of poetry. He established extensive correspondence with people dealing with faith, spirituality and mysticism. Looking for deeper meditation, he became interested in Zen Buddhism towards the end of his life. Merton's influence on the changes concerning reflection on Christian meditation and religious life are reflected in the documents of the Magisterium of the Church. Ludwik's texts are readily popularized and quoted. Its influence is visible in the lives of many contemporary clergymen. Meditation had an undoubted influence on the life and work of Merton. It was dependent on the context of his life. There are three ways to help understand our author: *lectio humana*, *divina* and *mundi*. These are the types of meditation that make up the arrangement of this work.

The first chapter focuses on Merton's pre-baptism meditation. It was a horizontal meditation based on sensitivity and awareness. The beauty of the world, architecture, art and literature were the subjects of Thomas' meditation. They were his *prae loci-theologici* of knowing God. The originality of Merton's pre-Christian meditation consists in seeking the truth about the world and man. It was a *lectio humana* similar to mindfulness and other non-religious meditations.

The second chapter is devoted to Merton's *lectio divina*. It was the time of baptism and joining the Trappist order. It was then that he wrote the most about meditation. The subject of Fr Ludwik's thoughts were the works of existentialists, the Holy Bible, the texts

of the Fathers of the Church and the Religious Rule. The Kentucky monk influenced the development of meditation by his texts on the living tradition, inner loneliness, freedom and intelligent asceticism of the meditator. Merton postulated placing actual experiences (*aggiornamento*) in the subject of meditation. It was important for a Trappist to find his true "ego." The authenticity of Fr. Ludwik's search is also confirmed by the scandal related to the relationship with a woman. Ending the relationship with Margie proved the authenticity of Merton's meditation and his choice of religious identity.

The third chapter focuses on meditation in Zen Buddhism. Merton's *lectio mundi* was to go beyond the Christian tradition. Zen seemed to the monk of Kentucky as a proposition to overcome the duality of the subject and object of meditation. What mattered for Merton was to discover a method of achieving unity between himself and God and people. Ludwik's study of Zen and his friendships with Zen masters resulted in new thoughts on Christian meditation. Avoiding syncretism, Merton pointed to the indisputable dogmatic differences between Christian meditation and zazen. He considered the life-giving meditation, as the new way of conveying the tradition of enlightenment and the understanding of freedom by Far Eastern monks to be original in zen and worth in-depth study. The search for inspiration in Zen Buddhism was dramatically interrupted by Merton's death in Bangkok.

Thomas Merton's meditation influenced his life and work. He was shaped by the art of meditation and became a well-known master of the spiritual life. The Trappist contributed much to the reflection on Christian meditation. He postulated the role of the subject – the "ego" of meditation. He placed the *aggiornamento* of man in the subject of meditation. He pointed to intelligent asceticism and living tradition that help to discover Christ and be faithful to Him.