

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

Thomas Merton — priest, monk and writer

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

Tom was born in France in 1915. But he grew up in New York. His parents were both artists. Tom's mother taught him to read and to love books. She took him with her to church on Sunday. She was a Quaker. Tom's father did not go to church.

Tom's mother died before he was 10. His father took Tom with him to France. It was exciting at first. But it was hard too.

They lived in a French village built around the church. All streets led to the church. Almost everyone was Catholic. Tom felt like an outsider. He spent much time reading books of all kinds. He began to want to be a writer.

Tom traveled with his father all over Europe. For a while Tom studied in England. He read about the great leader in India, Mahatma Gandhi. Tom was very impressed with Gandhi's love for the poor and his love for peace. Tom was

surprised to read that Gandhi, a Hindu, admired Jesus and studied the Gospels.

Later, Tom lived with his aunt in England. When Tom was 16, his father died. Tom felt so alone.

He went to Italy. He loved the paintings and statues all over Rome. He began to read the Bible to learn about the people and stories shown in the art.

Then he decided to go back to the United States. He studied at Columbia University in New York. Tom was sad to see the many poor people in the streets of New York. He wanted to help them.

So he studied hard. He wanted to be a newspaper reporter. He felt he could help others by what he wrote. But he also felt something important was missing from his life, though he didn't know what.

Tom loved his grandfather very much. When his grandfather died, Tom felt a great need for God. God was missing from his life.

After that Tom prayed more. He read religious books.



Once he dropped into a Catholic parish for Sunday Mass. Soon he decided to become a Catholic and was baptized when he was 23.

Tom began to think about being a priest. He visited the Trappist monastery in Kentucky, where he felt a great peace and joy. He decided to become a monk.

As a monk he wrote books that people still read today. He helped thousands of people find God. He wrote about the poor and about peace. He wrote against war. Father Merton became very famous

for his writings.

He was concerned about everything happening in the world outside the monastery. But he felt that he belonged where he was, where he could spend his life praying and writing.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

Hidden Words

Find the words hidden in the puzzle below. They may be vertical, horizontal or diagonal. All the words are in this week's children's story.

D	H	L	Q	U	B	G	T	K	G
Y	F	R	A	N	C	E	R	T	P
C	O	L	U	M	B	I	A	W	A
M	X	C	F	E	E	H	P	L	U
R	E	Q	R	M	T	K	P	P	C
U	Y	I	Q	O	E	X	I	F	L
D	M	R	Z	N	B	R	S	N	R
I	N	O	A	K	D	E	T	S	G
E	N	S	S	V	J	W	Z	O	J
G	A	N	D	H	I	F	O	V	N

TRAPPIST MONK MERTON COLUMBIA ROME GANDHI FRANCE

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you think it is important for people to trust each other as much as they can? Why? What makes it hard to trust? What makes it easier?

Children's Reading Corner

"Hope for the Flowers," by Trina Paulus, tells how two caterpillars find each other in a large pile of caterpillars where all are struggling to get to the top. The two caterpillars then leave the pile. One leaves forever, the other only for a time. Eventually both caterpillars become butterflies who can fly upward whenever they wish, without the awful business of stepping on or crawling over other caterpillars. This book can help children and adults talk together about what it means for people to depend on each other. They might talk also about trust and how people learn to trust others who do not "step on them" — people who respect and value others. (Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, N.J. 07446. Paperback, \$4.95.)



Healing

Bringing Holy Communion to an 85-year-old shut-in in the poverty-ridden backwoods of southern Missouri is one way Sister Mary Claudia Wissman, D.C., serves God.

Because she is a registered nurse, Sister Mary brings medical assistance to a deprived people who rarely see either a doctor or a hospital. She serves with two other sisters who are religious education and social services experts.

Supported by a grant from the Catholic Church Extension Society, they work as a team to heal the spirit and bodies of people who will never realize the American dream. Their

work is demanding, frustrating, rewarding—and vital. But their team is too small to succeed alone. It needs you.

Join us and become a member of the Extension Society team. Although you won't be present personally in the home missions, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we can bring the word of Christ to those who might never hear it.

Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together we can achieve God's goal here in our own beloved country.



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