



Thomas Merton's Gethsemani: Landscapes of Paradise

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For twenty-seven years, renowned and beloved monk Thomas Merton (1915-1968) belonged to Our Lady of Gethsemani, a Trappist monastery established in 1848 amid the hills and valleys near Bardstown, Kentucky. In *Thomas Merton's Gethsemani*, dramatic black-and-white photographs by Harry L. Hinkle and artful text by Merton scholar Monica Weis converge in a unique experience for lovers of Merton.

Hinkle was allowed unprecedented access to many areas inside the monastery and on its grounds that are generally restricted. His photographs invite the reader to experience the various knobs, lakes, woods, and hermitages Merton sought out for times of solitude and contemplation and for reading and writing. These unique images, each accompanied by a passage from Merton's writings, evoke personal reflection and a deeper understanding of how and why Merton came to recognize himself as a part of his Kentucky landscape.

Woven throughout the book, Weis's text explores Merton's fascination with nature not only at Gethsemani, but during his early childhood, throughout his spiritual conversion to Roman Catholicism, and while a member of the Trappist community. She examines how Merton's lifelong interaction with nature subtly revealed and informed his profound spiritual experiences and his writing about contemplation. *Thomas Merton's Gethsemani* replicates Merton's path on his solitary hikes in the woods and conveys the wonder of the landscapes that inspired him.

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