

The book is clearly written and is faithful to the original message of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who died in 1556. It is a running commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises* divided into fifteen chapters: five chapters for the first week of the *Exercises*; five chapters for the second week; five chapters for the third and fourth week of the *Exercises*.

At the beginning, F. explains that the act of the Presence of God has been greatly misunderstood. The retreatant considers how God is beholding the person. The two most important exercises of the retreat are the act of the Presence of God and the Examination of Conscience (50). F. strives to use inclusive language: “Man here is everyone, both men and women” (10). Thus, in the Second Week, there is a meditation on the three classes of Persons rather than the three classes of Men (102).

F. helps the director by raising the question, “What are the signs that one is ready for the Second Week?” (63). Likewise, “What are the signs that one is ready and asking for the Third Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*?” (158). There are very few typos or mistakes. One is found on p. 168: “Peter’s healing of the soldier’s ear,” which contradicts what was stated on p. 150: “St. Peter cut off the ear of Malchus and Christ had healed it.” At the end, a six-page bibliography concerning the *Spiritual Exercises* is presented, followed by a long list of biblical references corresponding to the four weeks of the *Exercises*. This reviewer found reading F.’s book to be an enriching experience in the area of Ignatian spirituality.

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Signs of Hope: Thomas Merton’s Letters on Peace, Race, and Ecology. By Gordon Oyer. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021. Pp. xix + 275. \$30.

Across ten exhaustively researched and deftly narrated chapters, Gordon Oyer illuminates Merton’s witness to peacebuilding, racial justice, and ecological sensitivity through his correspondence with Dorothy Day, Daniel Berrigan, Vincent Harding, Rachel Carson, and others. For O., the center that grounds Merton in his response to the social crises of the 1960s was his commitment to the *person*, Merton’s “root metaphor” (6) for our shared humanity and the theological basis for defending the image of God in others. With roots in the Greek Fathers, Scotus, and contemporaries like Maritain and Mounier, a personalist thread that found expression at Vatican II, Merton deployed this metaphor to challenge his readers, and himself, “to see *the person* . . . and I must see the person in Christ, in the Spirit” (40).

While Merton self-identified with “the Christian non-violent left” (34), O. underscores the tensions and sometimes open rifts that Merton navigated in his solidarity with key figures in the peace movement. Just as friends “were ramping up their anti-war activism” (23) in the mid-1960s, Merton was seeking greater solitude, yearning to write less, and worried that the rhetoric and tactics of resistance movements were

becoming ever-more desperate, undisciplined, and untethered to the dignity of the activists themselves and the communities they sought to defend.

Hope “is a greater scandal than we think,” Merton wrote to Day in 1960. To invoke hope sixty years later, O. cautions, in a world infected with a “virus of mendacity,” bears many risks (15). “We may laud material or technological measures of increased wealth, life span, comfort. But seen in geological time, we resemble miners celebrating overtime pay while ignoring the canaries that litter the mine shaft floor. Our sense of loss and grief, whether for our biosphere or our democratic aspirations, grows” (14).

With this study, following his award-winning *The Spiritual Roots of Protest*, detailing a 1964 peace conference at the Abbey of Gethsemani, O. has emerged as a leading interpreter of Merton’s thought and a prophetic Christian thinker in his own right. His narrative voice sings, and, where apt, stings. I cannot recommend *Signs of Hope* more highly.

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