

An Editorial Note concerning the Tape 'The Irish Tradition of Mysticism' and 'About Contemplative Life Today'

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This transcript of some preliminary casual remarks made in the classroom by Thomas Merton preceding his lecture about 'Irish Mysticism' characterizes his wide concerns and his contemporary vision. In the midst of the Civil Rights struggles which were heating up nationwide in 1968, Father Louis provides an anecdote for his students. He recalls the recent visit of some young men from the ghettos of Cleveland, Ohio, who sought out the Abbey of Gethsemani to learn about the nature of the contemplative life.

Merton's succinct remarks demonstrate his interest and compassion as well as his wisdom. The enthusiasm and joy of his teaching is clear and shows, once again, why Thomas Merton is such a compelling figure to so many. What he rather informally relates for his listeners on this summer day seems almost matter-of-fact; yet his remarks demonstrate clearly how he saw his task as monk and teacher. He is a guide making the appropriate connections between solitude and life, between contemplation and the appreciation of others engaged in the same task.

We are grateful to The Merton Legacy Trust for permission to use these few minutes of tape (released as Credence Cassette #AA2268) as our 'obscurely published' or 'unpublished' piece. It is especially appropriate within this volume which includes many essays examining the place of prayer for the lay contemplative.