

Four Poems

by Chris McDonnell

— WORDS AT THE MARGIN —

Blue demined
Poet

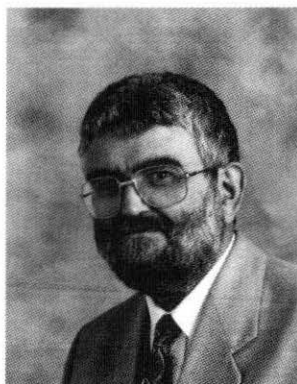
White clothed
Monk

Priest man
Writer

whose words once woven
from the debris
of our experience
speak still beyond the shores
of
an adopted land.

Poet priest man
at
the margin of our existence

It is not much fun
to live the spiritual life
with the spiritual equipment
of an artist.
Entering the Silence



CHRIS McDONNELL

Chris McDonnell is Headteacher of a Primary School in Staffordshire, England. He has published six collections of his poetry and has also appeared in the pages of *The Merton Seasonal*, *Burning Light*, and *The Merton Journal*. He is an active member of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

— THIS WILDERNESS OF DREAMS —

surrounded of	by trees a late October dawning
where lies	early morning silence undisturbed about the house.
Seated alone by	in a shaker chair an open fire
words go out of	of morning psalms beyond the cinder blocks this solitary room
as day split dry wood	breaks burns with orange flame to grey naked ash
here in	in a Kentucky Autumn another day begins this wilderness of dreams

There is a great need for discipline
in meditation.
Reading helps,
the early morning hours are good,
though, in the morning meditation,
I am easily distracted by the fire.
Vow of Conversation

— THE SPECTRAL DANCE —

Facing the icon wall
 gray blocks of stone
 coloured
 by the infusion of the spectral dance
 hand painted images
 of significance.

there
 in the silence of the early dawn
 words quietly spoken
 told again
 the cross.

on Sun burst
 the tabernacle box

and This broken bread
 chastened cup
 of the Risen Christ

Prayer time
 alone

In the hermitage, one must pray
 or go to seed.
 The pretence of prayer will not suffice.
 Just sitting will not suffice.
 It has to be real. Yet, what can one do?
 Solitude puts you with your back to the wall
 or your face to it, and this is good.
 So you pray to learn how to pray.
Vow of Conversation

— PIECES OF A BROKEN JAR —

Returning to the fields and woods
 of a familiar place
 after time spent at the sea's edge

 full circle
 turned in the May time
 of early Summer
 with Winter gone

 was the occasion
 then to begin gathering
 pieces of the broken jar
 in preparation for the final crossing

 listening to
 the music of this great Asian ocean

 breaking waves
 whose seen on that distant Western shore
 You'd the dry heat of desert
 beyond

 Bear Harbour
 and Needle Rock

Moving towards the time
 of departure

I am the utter poverty of God.
 I am his emptiness, littleness,
 nothingness, lostness.
 When this is understood,
 my life is His freedom,
 The self emptying of God in me
 is the fullness of grace.
Wood, Shore, Desert