

Two Unpublished Poems

By **Thomas Merton**

Typescripts of these previously unpublished poems by Thomas Merton were found in the New Directions files at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. The reference to friars in the first suggests that it dates from Merton's time at St. Bonaventure College. The second, with its rare use of rhyme, may also be premonastic, or from the earliest period of Merton's monastic life at Gethsemani; the title, meaning "Drop down, dew," is taken from the Latin Vulgate translation of Isaiah 45:8, a verse used frequently at Mass and in the Divine Office during Advent. These poems are published with the permission of the Merton Legacy Trust.

Song for Some Nuns and Friars

The morning it froze,
One of the clerics flapped his arms like a brown bird.

The night of the eclipse,
In their chapel over the kitchen,
The nuns sang.

The day before the forest fire
Was heard the Gregorian treble of some oriole.

But the day of the General Judgement
The Brother in the Post Office
Sorted out the mail;
 Peter of Alcantara,
 Clare of Assisi,
 John of the Cross.

Rorate Coeli

Now in our wilderness are wells
And, where were barren rocks, are trees:
And vineyards blossom on the hills.
Streams sing, where desolation was.

For, falling on the world by night,
The dew of heaven shines and sings;
And Jesus, in that holy quiet,
Wakens our wilderness with springs.

Some hunters walk among the trees,
Beside the bridges, fishers smile,
And pilgrims, in a shady place,
Take their repose beside a well.

Land that was barren smiles with wheat,
Fields once fallow fill with fruit.
Happy the one that God made great!
Happy the house where He lies hid.

The modest house where Jesus slept,
That Holy Womb, was Mary's faith.
Hope was the well where pilgrims dipped,
And watered our wilderness of wrath:

And falling on the world by night
The dew of heaven shines and sings,
And Jesus, in this holy time,
Wakens our wilderness with springs.