

Time on our hands

A monk, a man of prayer, a contemplative, are all the ways Thomas Merton has been described. He was more than all of those. He was a photographer, a writer, a correspondent, a friend and confidante to many people, and he was a poet. He was probably more than these but that will do. He was a complex human being with many gifts and many failings, but he knew he was a child of God, first and foremost he was God's child.

There are hundreds of poems, gathered into one volume, "The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton" that will give a lifetime of reading. Some are good, some not so good, and some are brilliant. As a child of God, he knew who he was in the eyes of God and I think his poem "The Candlemas Procession", as well as giving pause for thought, takes us deeper into what being a child of God is about. As we open our churches again, and let the light in (and out) it may help us think about who we are in the eyes of God.

The Candlemas Procession

Lumen

Ad revelationem gentium.

Look kindly, Jesus, where we come,
New Simeons, to kindle,
Each at your infant sacrifice his own life's candle.

And when Your flame turns into many tongues,
See how the One is multiplied, among us, hundreds!
And goes among the humble, and consoles our sinful kindred.

It is for this we come,
And, kneeling, each receive one flame:
Ad revelationem gentium.

Our lives, like candles, spell this simple symbol:

Weep like our bodily life, sweet work of bees,
Sweeten the world, with your slow sacrifice.
And this shall be our praise:
That by our glad expense, our Father's will
Burned and consumed us for a parable.

Nor burn we now with brown and smoky flames, but bright
Until our sacrifice is done,
(By which not we, but You are known)
And then, returning to our Father, one by one,
Give back our lives like wise and waxen lights.

(Lumen Ad revelationem gentium – A Light to enlighten the gentiles)