

Love Prevails:

Thomas Merton's Last Year 1968

Introduction

an interfaith community of the spirit

A Beast of a year

MLK assassination, April 4

journal entry, April 6

Love Prevails

Let me only say how deeply I share your personal grief as well as the shock which pervades the whole nation. He [MLK] has done the greatest thing anyone can do. In imitation of his Master [Christ] he has laid down his life for his friends and enemies."

Theology of Love

- Merton Letter to Coretta Scott King
April 5

Pilgrimage to East Asia

... may I not come back
without having settled the great affair, and found also the great
compassion, *mahakaruna*.

- Merton's Journal, October 15

Dalai Lama

It was a very warm and cordial and at the end I felt we had become
very good friends and were somehow quite close to one another.

- Merton's Journal, November 8

I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man. This
was the first time I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality
in anyone who professed Christianity.

- Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*

Closing Prayer in Calcutta

in

UNITED IN PRAYER

I will ask you to stand and all join hands in a little while. But first, we realize that we are going to have to create a new language of prayer. And this new language of prayer has to come out of something which transcends all our traditions, and comes out of the immediacy of love.. We have to part now, aware of the love that unites us, the love that unites us in spite of real differences, real emotional friction...The things that are on the surface are nothing, what is deep is the Real. We are creatures of love. Let us therefore join hands, as we did before, and I will try to say something that comes out of the depths of our hearts. I ask you to concentrate on the love that is in you, that is in us all. I have no idea what I am going to say. I am going to be silent a minute, and then I will say something...

Oh God, we are one with You. You have made us one with You. You have taught us that if we are open to one another, You dwell in us. Help us to preserve this openness and to fight for it with all our hearts. Help us to realize that there can be no understanding where there is mutual rejection. Oh God, in accepting one another wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept You, and we thank You, and we adore You, and we love You with our whole being, because our being is in Your being, our spirit is rooted in Your spirit. Fill us then with love, and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, united in this one spirit which makes You present in the world, and which makes You witness to the ultimate reality that is love. Love has overcome. Love is victorious. Amen.

—Special Closing Prayer (offered at the First Spiritual Summit Conference in Calcutta, 1968). AJ 318-319