

Thomas Merton in Rome July 3 - July 12, 2012

IN 1933, THOMAS MERTON — 18 YEARS OLD, IMMATURE, CONFUSED — TOOK A TRIP TO ITALY.

He spent most of his time in Rome, where at first he visited the imperial ruins. But then he began visiting the great churches — Sts. Cosmas and Damian, St. Praxed's, St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, St. Peter's, St. Sabina. He encountered Byzantine mosaics and Renaissance art; and momentously, as he says, "for the first time in my life I began to find out something of Who this Person was that men called Christ." It was in Rome with its treasury of Christian art that his conception of Christ was initially formed. He bought and began to read the New Testament.

In this ten-day program, we will visit the places in and around Rome which Merton visited, read his accounts of those visits, and discuss the later parts of his life to which they point. We will then consider the essential elements of his continuing legacy as it pertains to our own time, viewing it both from a North American and a European perspective.

Program leaders: **Jonathan Montaldo** has most recently created a ten-booklet series for small group dialogue, *Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton*. His editions of Merton's work also include *The Intimate Merton*, *Dialogues with Silence: Merton's Prayers & Drawings* and *A Year with Thomas Merton*. **Kathleen Deignan, CND** is Professor of Religious Studies at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY. The founding director of Iona Spirituality Institute, she is the author of *When the Trees Say Nothing: Thomas Merton's Writings on Nature* and *Thomas Merton: A Book of Hours*.

For more information about *Thomas Merton in Rome*, please contact Judith Hardcastle, Program Director, Thomas Merton Society of Canada.

He also had a mysterious experience of the living presence of his father, who had died the year before. Out of this experience he began, again for the first time, to pray. Interestingly, in view of his later monastic vocation, it was in Italy that he first visited a Trappist monastery, Tre Fontane. "And thus," he says, "without knowing anything about it I became a pilgrim." What began as a vacation had become pilgrimage.

Thomas Merton Society of Canada

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