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From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries

March Message

Dear friends,

This Lent I have abstained from watching TV, and have committed to noticing when and where I make use of technology, and done my best to engage technology only when necessary. One of the happy outcomes of this discipline—in addition to most importantly, much more quality conversations with each of my four daughters—has been a return to reading from some favorite spiritual writers. My latest enjoyment has been reading excerpts from *The Pocket Thomas Merton* (pages 164-166), and following where the meditation takes me. What follows is a section that I read recently, and share it because reading it resonated with me and reminded me I look forward to reading more Merton...

“We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others. What do I mean by loving ourselves properly? I mean, first of all, desiring to live, accepting life as a very great gift and a great good, not because of what it gives us, but because of what it enables us to give to others.” (*No Man is an Island*, XX)

“If we live for others, we will gradually discover that no one expects us to be “as gods.” We will see that we are human, like everyone else, that we all have weaknesses and deficiencies, and that these limitations of ours play a most important part in all our lives. It is because of them that we need others and others need us. We are not all weak in the same spots, and so we supplement and complete one another, each one making up in himself for the lack in another.” (*No Man is an Island*, XXI)

“Our task now is to learn that if we can voyage to the ends of the earth and find ourselves in the aborigine who most differs from ourselves, we will have made a fruitful pilgrimage. That is why pilgrimage is necessary, in some shape or other. Mere sitting at home and meditating on the divine presence is not enough for our time. We have to come to the end of a long journey and see that the stranger we meet there is no other than ourselves—which is the same as saying we find Christ in him. For if the Lord is risen, as He said, He is actually or potentially alive in every man. Our pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher* is our pilgrimage to the stranger who is Christ our fellow pilgrim

and brother.” (*Mystics and Zen Masters*, 112) *Site of the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

“If I can unite in myself the thought and the devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin Fathers, the Russians with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself the reunion of divided Christians. From that secret and unspoken unity in myself can eventually come a visible and manifest unity of all Christians. If we want to bring together what is divided, we cannot do so by imposing one division upon the other or absorbing one division into the other. But if we do this, the union is not Christian. It is political and doomed to further conflict. We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.” (*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 12)

A blessed Lent to you all. I look forward to celebrating at the end of the month with all of you that brilliant, abiding truth: He is Risen!

Faithfully,
Cathy Quinn
Clergy Associate for Family Ministries