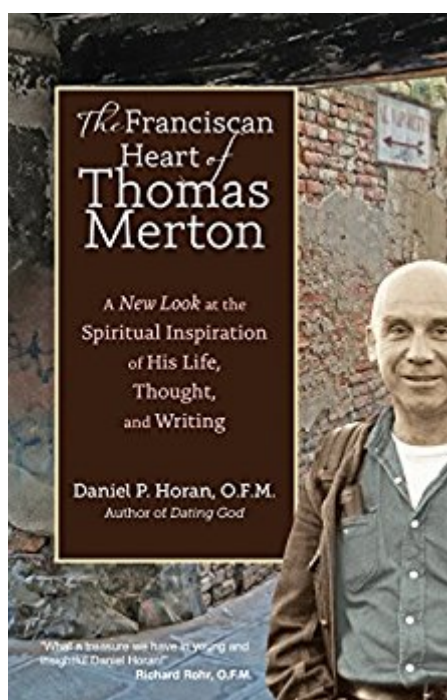


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# The Franciscan Heart Of Thomas Merton: A New Look At The Spiritual Inspiration Of His Life, Thought, And Writing



## Synopsis

Daniel Horan, O.F.M., popular author of *Dating God* and other books on Franciscan themes and expert on the spirituality of Thomas Merton masterfully presents the untold story of how the most popular saint in Christian history inspired the most popular spiritual writer of the twentieth century, and how together they can inspire a new generation of Christians. Millions of Christians and non-Christians look to Thomas Merton for spiritual wisdom and guidance, but to whom did Merton look? In *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*, Franciscan friar and author Daniel Horan shows how, both before and after he became a Trappist monk, Merton's life was shaped by his love for St. Francis and for the Franciscan spiritual and intellectual tradition. Given recent renewed interest in St. Francis, this timely resource is both informative and practical, revealing a previously hidden side of Merton that will inspire a new generation of Christians to live richer, deeper, and more justice-minded lives of faith.

## Book Information

File Size: 5118 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Ave Maria Press (September 22, 2014)

Publication Date: September 22, 2014

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01MSTR6KO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #178,645 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #16

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Christian Books & Bibles > Worship & Devotion > Monasticism & Asceticism #36 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Institutions & Organizations #52 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Worship & Devotion > Monasticism & Asceticism

## Customer Reviews

Dan has given us another great book! I had the pleasure of reading the manuscript while in production, and I have been awaiting its publication ever since. As a casual reader of Merton and the Franciscan tradition, I am grateful for Dan's informative and accessible commentary on the lives of Merton and Francis. My favorite parts of the book are the many chapters Dan dedicates to overlapping theological themes in the works of Merton and the Franciscan tradition. Dan brings his typical clarity of thought and prose to complex theological themes--from theological anthropology and christology to theologies of creation and interreligious dialogue, just to name a few. Not only did I learn great deal from this book, but I was also challenged to reflect on my Christian life in important ways.

A Great book for Merton lovers that connected the dots between Merton's early years teaching in a Franciscan University and personally studying there. The explanation of Franciscan spirituality and theology was very helpful and worth reading the book even if one is not a Merton fan. Daniel Horan is a logical and interesting writer, presenting many facts to support his observations of the impact of Franciscan theology and spirituality in Thomas Merton's life as observed from his writings and ideas. Some parts of the book could have been tightened up but I enjoyed reading all of the details. I am thankful for certain key ideas that Horan presented that are useful to all Christians. In particular the chapter on prophecy and the opportunity for all Christians to grow into this calling and his explanation of why Merton is said to have functioned in a prophetic role for our culture. I have a master's degree in Spirituality from Bellarmine University in Louisville Kentucky and still learned many details from Horan about Thomas Merton (Father Louis). Thus, I highly recommend this book for all Merton scholars and students of Christian Spirituality.

As someone who has read Thomas Merton since he was thirteen years old, who is about to celebrate his sixty-ninth birthday on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi in a few days, who has edited several volumes of Merton's work and served as President of the International Thomas Merton Society, and who is past being eager to read another book about Merton, rather preferring to continue reading Merton himself, I am taken aback at how much I enjoyed and appreciated this new, because more intense, focus employed by Daniel Horan on the Franciscan foundations and influence upon Merton's Cistercian vocation and on key elements of his spiritual legacy. The heart of Horan's good book are Parts II and III. In Part II, "Franciscan Foundations," he employs original research to present a time-line that is more expansive and detailed, than the one more ordinarily

constructed by Merton scholars as only brief, of Merton's interest in becoming a Franciscan. He highlights the instigation of Merton's desire to become a priest and Franciscan as it was mentored by Merton's friend and former professor, Daniel Walsh. He sheds better focus on how individual Franciscan friars, especially a foremost scholar of the Franciscan tradition, Father Philotheus Boehner, were crucial in encouraging Merton's studies in Franciscan philosophy and theology, while Merton taught English at what was then Saint Bonaventure College in Olean, New York. In Part III, "Reflections on Faith," Horan successfully uncovers the Franciscan ground of key ideas associated with Merton's writing on spirituality, especially the idea of the "true self," his Christ-centered theology, the motive of Christ's incarnation as an excess of God's love, and Merton's life-long appreciation of his kinship with all beings in creation. Horan carefully examines how much Merton's theological and artistic perspectives in these key ideas are grounded in the writings of Franciscans John Duns Scotus and Saint Bonaventure. Most importantly, he brings to the forefront Merton's continuing reverence for Saint Francis of Assisi and how, beginning from the time Merton becomes a Third-Order Franciscan while teaching at St. Bonaventure's, Francis was a major model for how Merton sought to live out his own search for God in his own century. Horan's writing is clear and his judgments about Francis and Merton are connected to twenty-first century life so that a reader gets the points for her own contemporary experience, but there is nothing light-weight about his text. Although he wears his learning lightly and can write for the general reader, Horan is a scholar. I do judge that this book is not a general introduction into the thought and life of Thomas Merton. It is best approached by someone who has read Merton elsewhere, but "The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton" polishes the Merton corpus anew so that hidden veins of Merton's intellectual history can be better uncovered and the richness below the surface of his thought can be better appreciated. I don't know Daniel Horan personally and have no ax to grind on his behalf, but I am happy to endorse his new book publicly and wish him good work in the many decades of living and writing ahead for this young Franciscan priest and scholar. Jonathan Montaldo

Although I have followed Thomas Merton ever since I was a young when he first wrote Seven Story Mountain, Merton's insight into the spirituality of St. Francis is presented by Fr. Daniel Horan, OFM is one any Christian might want to emulate. Deacon John Edgerton, Tarpon Springs, FL

This is an excellent book, and I must admit that the first chapter threw off base. It is a challenge for me to follow the Franciscan path realistically. Having been associated with a Cistercian community for over 40 years, it is where I attend Sunday services, I have read numerous books by Thomas

Merton and other Cistercian publications. I feel most persons interested in advancing in spiritual life will find this book rewarding.

This book went beyond my expectations. Reading it for the second time. So much information and written in a clear, understandable manor. Thank you

This work is not a quick read. Rather, it is one to be read several times in order to better grasp multiple dimensions of Thomas Merton's decisions. I have read other works about Merton and this one certainly provides a good insight into Merton's life decisions.

A wonderful new facet on the study of Merton's life. Merton has been studied as a Catholic, as a Catholic moving towards Zen and eastern religions, as a philosopher, as a peacenik, and now as a Franciscan. He is a diamond with many facets, none exclusive of the other. Young Fr. Horan is always a delight to read, his prose is easy and clear.

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