



Advent Daily Reflections
December 13, 2024

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Today's reading is from Thomas 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...

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 themselves for the lack in another.

Today's Reflection is by Maeve Farrell:

Christianity can often be a cudgel with which to flagellate oneself. The rules are exacting, and demand commitment of no less than your entire spirit. However, it also provides ultimate certainty in unconditional forgiveness from the Divine itself. I often find myself caught in, and deeply compelled by, the tension between these two truths. We will always fall short of God's expectations for us. It's a certainty of life as much as death itself is. So how can we hope to be enough for Him and worthy of divine forgiveness?

In this passage, I think Merton finds one of the ways in which these two truths can coexist and shape our understanding of how to live. If we existed in isolation, our limitations would be too much to overcome, and we'd be defined only by our sin and failure. Through our connections with others, we are given the opportunity to complement one another, bringing each other asymptotically closer to the aim of perfection.

There's something freeing in that to me. We can't be "as gods", as Merton puts it. Nor does anyone expect us to be, least of all God Himself. But what we are expected to do is live for others. Simple enough, right?



Maeve is a software engineer and lifelong Brooklynite who began attending Holy Apostles in 2021. She appreciates the fellowship, community, and fun! In her spare time, she loves to cook, bake, play music, run, and read.