

A little more information about some of the matters raised
in the course booklet for

THE PSALMS -

prayers for today's church

Session One

Page 3 of the Course booklet

Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O. (January 31, 1915 - December 10, 1968) was an American Catholic writer and mystic. A Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky, he was a poet, social activist, and student of comparative religion. In 1949, he was ordained to the priesthood and given the name Father Louis.

Track [4] on the CD / p. 2 in the Transcript booklet

Sir Noël Peirce Coward (16 December 1899 - 26 March 1973) was an English playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, known for his wit, flamboyance, and what *Time* magazine called "a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise".

Track [5] on the CD / p. 3 in the Transcript booklet

C S Lewis was raised in a religious family that attended the Church of Ireland. He became an atheist at age 15, though he later described his young self as being paradoxically "angry with God for not existing". His early separation from Christianity began when he started to view his religion as a chore and a duty; around this time, he also gained an interest in the occult, as his studies expanded to include such topics.

He eventually returned to Christianity, having been influenced by arguments with his Oxford colleague and friend J R R Tolkien and by the book *The Everlasting Man* by G K Chesterton. Lewis vigorously resisted conversion, noting that he was brought into Christianity like a prodigal, "kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape." He described his last struggle in *Surprised by Joy*:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.

Track [7] on the CD / p. 4 in the Transcript booklet

Eliezer "Elie" Wiesel KBE (born September 30, 1928) is a Romanian-born Jewish writer, professor, political activist, and Nobel Laureate. He is the author of 57 books, including *Night*, a work based on his experiences as a prisoner in the Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald concentration camps.

When Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, the Norwegian Nobel Committee called him a "messenger to mankind," stating that through his struggle to come to terms with "his own personal experience of total humiliation and of the utter contempt for humanity shown in Hitler's death camps", as well as his "practical work in the cause of peace", Wiesel had delivered a powerful message "of peace, atonement and human dignity" to humanity.

Session Two

Track [9] on the CD / p. 6 in the Transcript booklet

The Bible passage about Elijah to Rose Hudson-Wilkin is referring to 1 Kings 19.

Track [11] on the CD / p. 7 in the Transcript booklet

Tommaso d'Aquino, OP (1225 - 7 March 1274), also known as Thomas Aquinas, was an Italian Dominican friar and Catholic priest who was an immensely influential philosopher, theologian and jurist in the tradition of scholasticism. He is heralded as the most influential Western medieval legal scholar and theologian.

The Catholic Church honours Thomas Aquinas as a saint and regards him as the model teacher for those studying for the priesthood, and indeed the highest expression of both natural reason and speculative theology. In modern times, under papal directives, the study of his works was long used as a core of the required program of study for those seeking ordination as priests or deacons, as well as for those in religious formation and for other students of the sacred disciplines (philosophy, Catholic theology, church history, liturgy, and canon law).

Session Four

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A retired nurse from London who travelled to Switzerland to end her life disliked the "indignity" of ageing, her partner has said.

Gill Pharaoh, 75, was apparently healthy when she made the decision to go to the Lifecircle clinic in Basel.

Campaigners against assisted dying have described the case as "chilling".

But her partner John Southall told the BBC: "Choosing the time you die is a human right."

Ms Pharaoh wrote in a blog published by the Sunday Times: "I feel my life is complete and I am ready to die."

She said while she was largely healthy, an attack of shingles five years ago and tinnitus had made it difficult to take part in the activities she had once enjoyed.

She wrote: "I am not just whinging. Neither am I depressed. Day by day I am enjoying my life.

"I simply do not want to follow this natural deterioration through to the last stage when I may be requiring a lot of help."

'Deeply troubling'

Care Not Killing, a group which campaigns against assisted dying, condemned Ms Pharaoh's case as "deeply troubling".

A spokesman said: "It sends out a chilling message about how society values and looks after elderly people in the UK.

"It seeks the introduction of death on demand for those who fear becoming a burden, even if they are otherwise fit and healthy."

Her partner, John Southall, told BBC London he had put a lot of questions to her over the years about her intention to get help to take her own life, but said he saw it as "her decision".

He added: "It was not for me to feel confident [in her decision], but I did agree with the rationale and the logic".

He explained that in her career as a palliative care nurse she had seen "a lot of people in pretty miserable circumstances - it gave her a dislike of the indignity of that".

He added: "Choosing the time you die is a human right, who should deny us that?"

A 2014 study by Zurich University suggested an average of around one person a fortnight travels from the UK to Switzerland to receive help to take their own life.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-33759490>

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