Opinion
Guest Voices



James Finley (NCR screenshot/YouTube/Center for Action and Contemplation)



by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," for Holy Week, I speak with my friend Jim Finley, a beloved teacher of contemplation and mysticism.

When he was a teenager, Jim entered the Abbey of Gethsemani and was a novice and later a friend of Thomas Merton. Eventually, he left the monastery, became a clinical psychologist, and opened his practice in Los Angeles, where he still lives.

He wrote a book about Merton's spirituality, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*. Jim has taught and lectured on Merton, spirituality and mysticism for more than 50 years, and these days is a faculty member of Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr's Living School at the Center for Action and Contemplation. Jim hosts a free popular podcast, "Turning to the Mystics," which has hundreds of thousands of regular listeners. He is author of several other bestsellers, such as *The Awakening Call*, *The Contemplative Heart* and his recent memoir, *The Healing Path*.

This year, Orbis Books is launching a 10-volume series by Jim on the mystics, such as Thérèse of Lisieux, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart. The first volume is on Merton.

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"I saw Merton as a living mystic," Jim tells me. "I was so honored to be in his presence. He was my spiritual director, so every other week for six years, I would meet with him and he would always ask the three same questions: 'How's it going?' Then, 'How's it going in your surrender to God who accessed your heart to lead you to this place?' And finally, 'How's it going in discovering the depth of the second question percolating in the messy details of the first question'?"

Jim says he learned from Merton that "the only way to ever be at peace is to accept myself as I am, because I'll never be anyone else."

"The infinite presence of God is pouring itself out, whole and complete in the very presence of ourselves and others," Jim said. "We can never lose God's love. Jesus is God's complete surrender to us. We have to accept that we are infinitely loved and accepted."

Listen to the full episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.