

THE POPE & THOMAS MERTON: CENTRALITY OF THE WILL

Simulácrá géntium argéntum, et aurum, ópera mánuum hóminum.
Os habent, et non loquéntur: óculos habent, et non vidébunt.
Aures habent, et non áudient: neque enim est spíritus in ore ipsórum.
Símiles illis fiant qui fáciunt ea: et omnes qui confídunt in eis.

Psalm 134: 16-18

It is worthy of note that Pope Francis and the time-serving bishops and clergy who support him in his foolish views have plunged themselves in the sea of errors that enveloped, and brought about the downfall of, Thomas Merton.¹ The preoccupation of the Amazon Synod with the physical and sexual, manifest in the earth 'goddess' Pacha Mama, parallels Merton's obsession in his last weeks with the shrines of Mahabalipuram and the Hindu 'god', Shiva. Clearly these clerics are failing to fulfil their duty of reciting the Divine Office. Every week they should be repeating the lines set out above—in the vernacular if not in the Latin—which condemn the idolatry on which they are bent. The condemnation is explicit—

May they become like the things they have made: and everyone who trusts in them.

The little saint of the Legion of Mary, Edel Quinn, used repeat: "What matters is the will!" That short sentence ought to be a mantra for us who seek the conversion of our fellows. One can have all the arguments in the world to prove the folly of a certain course of action but they are useless if the one whom we are addressing will not listen. Long before Merton had abandoned orthodoxy he exposed the issue with clarity.

"[A]lthough the will cannot force the intellect to see an object other than it is, it can turn it away from the object altogether, and prevent it from considering that thing at all."²

The refusal of Pope Francis to heed the admonitions addressed to him over the last six years is grounded in a refusal to allow his will to admit their arguments. He has closed the door of his mind to his opponents. He knows better. They can teach him nothing.

Only God can change the will and those who have most influence with Him are his contemplative religious, those who *devote themselves* to His Will. It is here we must focus our attention; it is these we must ask for intercession.

Michael Baker

November 1, 2019—*All Saints Day*

¹ See the author's two papers at http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/merton_tragedy_1.pdf and http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/merton_tragedy_2.pdf

² *The Seven Storey Mountain*, New York, 1948. Published in Great Britain, with certain excisions and editing by Evelyn Waugh, as *Elected Silence*, London (Burns & Oates), 1949, (My copy, *Elected Silence*, 1969 reprint) at pp. 150-1.