

I have been enjoying a new book of meditative poems and prayers during my times of meditation & prayer written by a good friend, Judith Carpenter. These two were helpful in starting a train of thought which picked up on some prayer time enhanced by the writings of Henry Nouwen several years ago:

### **Chronos**

Plan your time, use your time

Manage your time

Mark time

Buy time, Put in your time

take time

Make good time

Race against time

Run out of time

Pass the time

Waste time

Kill time

Seek free time

Be ruled by time

### **Kairos**

Time out

Time-less

Time after time

Pregnant time

The fulness of time

Outside of time

Space/time

Present here

Mindful now

For the time being

Beyond time

All the time

Any time

The right time

Til the end of time

Judith Perry Carpenter in Peacework Quilt 365 Meditative Offerings, Seafire Press, Rockland Maine, 2009 pages 48&49

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Chronos, generally understood as chronological time as we know it, moment by moment and Kairos, which is generally understood to refer to moments out of ordinary time, not locked into the step by step passing of time . I have long pondered over these two Greek words and the idea that we experience two very different kinds of time. Thomas Merton offers a third kind of time which he calls "Temps Vierge" in his Asian Journal:

"The contemplative life must provide an area, a space of liberty, of silence, in which possibilities are allowed to surface and new choices~ beyond routine choice~ become manifest. It should create a new experience of time, not as stopgap, stillness, but as "temps vierge" ~ not a blank to be filled or an untouched space to be conquered and violated, but a space which can enjoy its own potentialities and hopes~ and it's own presence to itself. One's own time. but not dominated by one's own ego and its demands. Hence open to others ~ compassionate time, rooted in the sense of common illusion and in criticism of it." Thomas Merton, The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, New directions, 1968

After much reading and thinking and prayer, I would loosely define temps vierge (virgin time) as a time of silent worship of God at a place of intersection between time and Eternity, the crossroads of Chronos and Kairos, which we don't create or find but which happens as God speaks into our hearts as we are silent and attentive to His presence. This happens to any Christian who takes the time to be quiet before God in prayer.

Thoughts from Merton's earlier journals help me to integrate his words on "temps vierge" into my practice of prayer and contemplation:

*"This is the land where you have given me roots in eternity, O God of Heaven and earth. This is the burning promised land, the House of God, the gate of heaven, the place of peace, the place of silence, the place of wrestling with the angel."*

Thomas Merton in Entering the Silence The Journals of Thomas Merton Volume Two 1941- 1952 Edited by Jonathan Montaldo, Harper Sn Francisco, page 473

Teach us Lord, as we come to you in silence, with adoration and worship in our hearts, to root our lives in your presence. Give us roots in Eternity that we may live for you here and now, caring for others in need as you do. Lead us, Christ our Savior, as we live by your command to love one another as we have been loved by you and as you were loved by the Father. May we know you in the silence of "temps vierge" and hear you even in the noise of our daily labor. God bless you and keep you!

Under The Mercy,

Howie

P.S. Below is the website where Judith's book may be purchased. It is not available in bookstores yet but I trust it soon will be. I would highly recommend it.

[www.seafirepress.com](http://www.seafirepress.com) Ask for Peacework Quilt by Judith Perry Carpenter

