



# Monastic Interreligious Dialogue

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## Opening Ritual

Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB

from **Gethsemani Encounter II, April 2002**

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The ordinary abbey prayers were on our schedule: Vigils, Lauds, Mass, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline. We had Benediction on Sunday evening. Each day at 6:15 am, we had a silent sitting in the Guest Chapel. The special Christian rituals were a Procession to the Shrine of the Garden of Gethsemani, The Mandatum (Foot Washing Rite), and Anointing of the Sick. The Buddhist rituals included a Theravada chanting rite to help address/overcome greed. Tonglen Practice (prayer to enlarge compassion), a Zen healing rite and a final Dedication of Merit.

The liturgies create a sense of oneness and transcendence of differences. Ritual also celebrates distinctions and pays honor to origins. We treasure our roots so we kept to our own traditions yet participated with shared gestures of sacred time and space. The wreath of flowers we placed at Merton's grave was a solemn moment. I literally gasped holding back tears when I saw 50 monks dressed in white meet us at the Chapter door and lead us to our meeting place. We were welcomed inside the Cloister as "friends of Thomas Merton." We had a skillful musician, Dennis Skelton, who with a single recorder or trumpeter set the tone for our sustained dialogue with each other, along with the birds, wind, and rain. Harmony.

Continued in **Introduction and Welcome (Gethsemani Encounter II, April 2002)**

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- **Introduction and Welcome (Gethsemani Encounter II, April 2002)**



**Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB**, was the executive director of the MID board from 1989-2004. She was prioress at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana and is the author of a number of books, including *Thoughts Matter* and *Islam Is . . .*

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