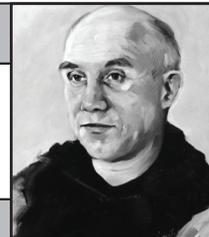


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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ITMS Board Elections

As provided in the Bylaws of the International Thomas Merton Society, officers and directors of the society serve for two years. Terms run from General Meeting to General Meeting. Officers are elected by the Board of Directors, and board members by the membership at large. Elections for the Board of Directors will take place in the coming weeks by both online and paper voting. Members whose email addresses are on file will have received an invitation and instructions on how to vote electronically on March 17; any current ITMS members desiring to vote electronically who did not receive this email should contact the ITMS by email at: mmeade@bellarmine.edu; or by calling: 502-272-8099. Members with no available email address have been sent a paper ballot by mail. Any other ITMS members who would prefer to vote by mail may request a paper ballot by contacting the ITMS prior to April 22 at the email address or telephone number listed above. The deadline for submitting votes is May 15, 2025. Six directors are selected from a slate of twelve candidates assembled by the Nominating Committee: Michael Moore (chair), Deborah Kehoe and Emma McDonald Kennedy.

The following are candidates for the board:

Rose Marie Berger is a Catholic poet, writer and peace activist, and a senior editor for *Sojourners* magazine and author of the poetry collection *Bending the Arch* (2019). She has traveled to Ukraine, Colombia, Bosnia and elsewhere to support faith-rooted peacemaking. She is active in the global Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. She is co-editor of *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and World*. Her poetry has appeared in the books *Watershed Discipleship* and *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*. She is a current member of the ITMS Board of Directors.

Elizabeth Burkemper graduated in 2022 from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Religion and Ecology and where she now works with the Life Worth Living Program. She earned her undergraduate degree in Peace Studies and Sustainability at the George Washington University. A 2017 Daggy Scholar, she presented on “Countering ‘Strangerness’ in Late Capitalism” at the 2021 ITMS General Meeting, and she currently serves as host to the Tuesdays with Merton webinar series. She is a current member of the ITMS Board of Directors.

Raymond Carr is an international public theologian whose research interests are theologically ecumenical, historically sensitive and radically inclusive. He is presently a research associate and director of the “Codex Charles H. Long Papers” at Harvard University and president of the Society for the Study of Black Religion (SSBR). He is the author of several articles, book chapters, and most recently of *Theology in the Mode of Monk: An Aesthetics of Barth and Cone on Revelation and Freedom*. He has published and presented papers at ITMS conferences and currently serves on the ITMS Board of Directors.

John “Jack” Collins is a co-facilitator, together with his wife Nancy Hughes, of the Merton Chapter at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute, Shirley, MA. He has been an active member of the Merton Society since 2009 and is a recent graduate of the Living School at the Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque, NM. He is currently doing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, 19th Annotation retreat. After thirty years on active duty in the U.S. Army Medical Department, he served five years as a VA Medical Center Director.

Abbi Fraser graduated from UCLA in 2022 with a BA in Public Affairs. She quickly dove into the

world of the Catholic Worker, spending her days making soup, folding clothes, accompanying folks, and contemplating God on the subway thanks to the likes of Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Gustavo Gutierrez and her friends. A former Daggy Scholar, she will be making a presentation entitled “This Day Will Not Come Again” at the 2025 ITMS Nineteenth General Meeting. She currently works for TENx10, an ecumenical movement focused on radical discipleship to make faith matter more for young people.

Sylvia Grevel was recently ordained in the Anglican Church and is serving as a chaplain in aged care and leads a weekly Queer Service in Perth, Western Australia. She is a theologian, Benedictine Oblate and an actively engaged international advisor to the ITMS. She is currently working to establish a strong Merton network in Australia, with a chapter in Perth. She has published several articles on Thomas Merton, with a particular focus on art and creativity. She has also served on the board of the European Society of Women in Theology and Religious Studies.

Emma McDonald Kennedy is assistant professor of Christian ethics at Villanova University, where she teaches classes on bioethics, social ethics and contemplation and social action. Her current research projects examine moral agency, reproductive healthcare and biotechnologies, with resources from Christian ethics and qualitative methodologies. A former Daggy Scholar, she presented at the 2019 ITMS General Meeting, was a speaker for Tuesdays with Merton in 2023, and has contributed book reviews to *The Merton Seasonal* and *The Merton Annual*. She currently serves as the ITMS Board Treasurer.

David M. Odorisio is Associate Professor at Pacifica Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, CA, where he serves as Chair of the Psychology, Religion, and Consciousness MA/PhD program. He is editor of four volumes, including: *Thomas Merton in California: The Redwoods Conferences and Letters* and *Merton & Hinduism: The Yoga of the Heart*. He is a former Shannon Fellow, Daggy Scholar and Youth Advisor to the ITMS Board. He has published in both *The Merton Seasonal*

and *The Merton Annual* and serves as Co-Chair of the Mysticism Unit for the American Academy of Religion.

Anne Pearson, a former Daggy Scholar, wrote her Honors thesis on Thomas Merton’s writings on racism and their continued relevancy in our current political and social environment. She has presented this research in Argentina and Great Britain, and as a TEDx talk. She also serves as the co-chair of the Daggy Scholars Committee. She currently lives in Washington, D.C., where she creates programming for graduate nursing students at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and addresses the impact of neurodiversity on education inequity.

Marcela Raggio is professor of American Literature at Cuyo National University in Mendoza, Argentina. At Argentina’s National Council for Research, she has specialized in comparative literature and translation studies, focusing on Thomas Merton and how his writings and contacts with Latin American writers are key to a fruitful dialogue between North and South America. She organized two biannual Argentine Thomas Merton Conferences and edited a bilingual volume on Thomas Merton. She is also author of the volume *Thomas Merton, el monje traductor* and has published in *The Merton Seasonal* and *The Merton Annual*, along with other academic journals. She is a current member of the ITMS Board of Directors.

Jim Robinson is a member of the Religious Studies department at Iona University, where he serves as Director of the Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit. He is a GreenFaith fellow, and much of his teaching and scholarship emerges at the intersection of spirituality, ecology and social justice. He is a former Shannon Fellow and currently serves as co-chair of the Daggy Scholars Committee. He completed his Ph.D. at Fordham University with a dissertation focusing on Thomas Merton and Rosemary Radford Ruether. He is actively involved at Agape Community, Benincasa Community and the New York Catholic Worker.

Kathleen Witkowska Tarr, founder of the ITMS Alaska Chapter, lives in Anchorage, and is author of *We Are All Poets Here*, a spiritual memoir which relates details about Merton’s 1968 Alaska sojourn.

Her Merton-related writings have appeared in *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope, Merton & Indigenous Wisdom, Anchorage Daily News, The Catholic Anchor* and *The Merton Seasonal*. She has presented at several ITMS General Meetings and the "Tuesdays with Merton" webinar. She is an affiliated scholar at USC's Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies and holds an MFA in literary nonfiction from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a current member of the ITMS Board of Directors.

E. Glenn Hinson (1931-2025)

Edward Glenn Hinson, Baptist theologian and friend, correspondent and scholar of Thomas Merton, died on January 30, 2025 at the age of 95. Born in St. Louis, Missouri on July 27, 1931 to Lloyd Allen Hinson and Docia Frances Crow, he grew up on a farm in the Missouri Ozarks, graduating from Sullivan High School in 1949. After receiving his B.A. degree in 1954 from Washington University, he went on to earn a Bachelor of Divinity and doctorate in Theology degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY in 1957 and 1962, followed by a D.Phil. degree from Oxford University in 1974. On September 1, 1956, he married Martha Ann Burks (1930-2018) in St. Louis, with whom he raised two children, Christopher Glenn Hinson and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty. He taught church history at Southern Seminary from 1962 until 1992, moving to the faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond until his final retirement in 1999, with visiting professorships at numerous other institutions. A pioneering ecumenist, he served on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (1977-92) and National Council of Churches (1981-87) and took part in the Southern Baptist/Roman Catholic Scholars Dialogue (1977-87), the international Baptist/Roman Catholic Conversations (1984-88), and bilateral dialogues with other Christian bodies and people of other faiths. He was author and/or editor of thirty-seven books in church history and spirituality, including his autobiography, *A Miracle of Grace* (2012), as well as over 1000 articles and book reviews.

On November 7, 1960, early in his teaching career, he first met Thomas Merton when bringing a

group of Southern Baptist Seminary students to the Abbey of Gethsemani, and a friendship developed that according to his daughter Elizabeth "changed his life and the trajectory of his scholarly career" as the two men developed and nurtured a mutually appreciative ecumenical relationship through visits and correspondence, which includes eight extant letters from each, dating from May 1961 through November 1967. Merton wrote of a visit of Hinson and two colleagues in a journal entry from June 1961: "These three are getting to be good friends now . . . Great simplicity and goodness: we get along very well together and the hermitage is a fine place for free and uninhibited discussion. . . . This is not 'official dialogue' and that is a blessing. It is purely and simply a Christian contact of persons who are 'in Christ' according to His mercy and the sincere good will of each" (*Turning Toward the World* 129-30).

In 1987, Glenn Hinson was one of the founding members of the International Thomas Merton Society, and served as its recording secretary in 1987-89, treasurer in 1989-91 and vice president in 1991-93. He was a presenter at three early ITMS General Meetings, including his plenary session presentation at the Fifth General Meeting entitled "Thomas Merton, My Brother": The Impact of Thomas Merton on My Life and Thought," subsequently published in *The Merton Annual* 11 (1998) 88-96, one of a dozen articles he wrote about Merton, focusing especially on matters of ecumenical spirituality and the integration of contemplation and action, particularly peacemaking, all key elements of his own scholarship and activity. His contacts with Merton are a major element in his autobiography, as well as in his contribution to the Merton Centenary Volume *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope* ("O Happy Chance" [211-14]) and his article "Lessons from the School of Love: Thomas Merton – A Centennial Tribute" in *The Merton Seasonal* 40.4 (2015) 19-31. William Apel provides a comprehensive portrait of the friendship in chapter 7, "Openness: The Merton-Hinson Letters," in *Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006) 103-23, which includes Merton's December

4, 1964 to Hinson, the only published piece of this correspondence.

A memorial service celebrating Glenn Hinson's life was held on March 15, 2025 at Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, KY, which included remembrances from family members Rev. Dr. G. Lee Hinson-Hasty and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty as well as former colleagues, followed by a communion service and the recitation of Thomas Merton's prayer "My Lord God . . ." from *Thoughts in Solitude*.

Martin E. Marty (1928-2025)

Martin E. Marty, the distinguished church historian whose long career included a memorable interaction with Thomas Merton, died February 25, 2025 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the age of 97. Born on February 25, 1928 in West Point, Nebraska, son of Emil A. and Anna L. Wuerdemann Marty, he was educated at Concordia Lutheran Prep School in Milwaukee, Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis, from which he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1952, and the University of Chicago, earning a master's degree in 1954 and a doctorate two years later. In 1952 he married Elsa L. Schumacher, with whom he raised four sons and two permanent foster children. One year after his wife's illness and death from cancer in 1981, he wed Harriet J. Meyer, the widow of a seminary classmate, a devoted relationship that endured until his death 43 years later. An ordained Lutheran clergyman, he pastored churches in Washington, DC, Maryland and suburban Chicago. Beginning in 1963, he taught at the University of Chicago Divinity School, retiring in 1998 as the Fairfax M. Cone Professor Emeritus of the History of Modern Christianity. He was author of more than sixty books, including the National Book Award winner *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (1972), *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (1984) and the three-volume *Modern American Religion* (1986-1996). For a half-century he served as an editor of *The Christian Century* magazine, and for more than 40 years wrote his biweekly newsletter *Contact*. He published hundreds of scholarly articles along with a comparable number of essays, columns, reviews, prefaces and forewords for numerous books. He

was the recipient of more than 80 honorary degrees as well as the Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1995), and the National Medal for the Humanities (1997). He served on two presidential commissions, as president of multiple scholarly societies, and on numerous boards, was an official observer at the third session of the Second Vatican Council (1964), and an activist for religious inclusivity and civil rights, including participating in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march.

On January 8, 1965, Thomas Merton published a highly laudatory review of Marty's new book *Varieties of Unbelief* in *Commonweal* magazine (reprinted as "The Unbelief of Believers" in *Faith and Violence* [199-204]). A week later, Marty's much less positive review of Merton's 1964 volume *Seeds of Destruction* appeared in *The Sunday [New York] Herald Tribune*, strongly critical of what Marty saw as an unbalanced attack in the section "Letters to a White Liberal" on the sincerity and commitment of those whites paying lip service to ideals of racial justice so long as their own lifestyles were not affected, an attempt, Marty thought, to take on the mantle of a white James Baldwin. Two and a half years later, on page 8 of the August 30, 1967 issue of *National Catholic Reporter* (3.44), in the aftermath of what Merton himself would call "The Hot Summer of Sixty-Seven" (*Faith and Violence* 165-81), Marty published a brief article headed "To: Thomas Merton; Re: Your Prophecy" in which he apologized for the harshness of the earlier review and declared, "you were correct." Rereading the book, he found that "What bothers me now is the degree of accuracy in your predictions and prophecies in general. . . . Now it seems to me that you were 'telling it as it is' and maybe 'as it will be,'" before concluding by identifying himself as "your regained admirer and friend." Merton responded in a letter on September 6, 1967, thanking Marty for his generosity, explaining in some detail his current thoughts on the racial situation, his own continued commitment to non-violence but his recognition that he has "no right to impose non-violence on the Negro." He concludes with appreciation for "your fine letter, a most rewarding one for me," and his gratitude that "we understand each other after

these four [sic] years” (*Hidden Ground of Love* 454-58). Marty’s subsequent summary of Merton’s significance for American religious history in his book *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*, which began, “No American was a better pathfinder for his compatriots than the Catholic monk Thomas Merton,” was excerpted as “Thomas Merton: Pathfinder” in *The Merton Seasonal* 9.3 (1986) 14. At the ITMS Twelfth General Meeting in 2011 in Chicago, he was a plenary speaker on the topic “‘Another World to Live In’: Thomas Merton and ‘Soul.’” *The Merton Annual* 25 (2012) includes an edited transcript of an interview that Vaughn Fyale, OFM conducted with Marty in June 2010 (23-29) that provides his appreciative retrospective evaluation of the 1965 controversy and Merton’s contributions to Christian life in the context of the early twenty-first century.

Martin Marty is survived by his wife Harriet, sons Joel (Susie), John (Connie), Peter (Susan), and Micah; lifetime foster daughter Fran Garcia Carlson and lifetime foster son Jeff Garcia, stepdaughter Ursula Meyer (Jamie Newcomb), nine grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. A memorial service of thanksgiving in celebration of his life was held on March 29, 2025 at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

Lawrence S. Cunningham (1935-2025)

Lawrence S. Cunningham, the John A. O’Brien Professor of Theology Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and distinguished scholar of Thomas Merton, died February 20, 2025 in South Bend, Indiana at the age of 89. Born September 23, 1935, he was raised in Florida and did early studies for the priesthood at St. Bernard’s Seminary in Rochester, NY and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned a licentiate in theology, before deciding to pursue an academic rather than an ecclesiastical career, subsequently receiving a master’s degree in literature and a doctorate in humanities at Florida State University. After 21 years on the faculty at Florida State, in 1987 he moved to Notre Dame, where he taught for a quarter century, including serving as chair of the Department of Theology from 1992 to 1997, retiring from full-

time work in 2012. He was author and/or editor of more than two dozen books, ranging from textbooks such as his co-authorship of the multiple editions of *Culture and Values: A Survey of the Humanities* and of *The Sacred Quest: An Invitation to the Study of Religion*, to numerous books on saints, some specifically on Francis of Assisi, on Catholicism, on prayer, on spirituality, to *The Chapels of Notre Dame*, a lavishly illustrated “coffee-table” volume. His *Things Seen and Unseen: A Catholic Theologian’s Notebook* (2010) provides an informal commentary on his experiences in the classroom and the study. He was also editor of the *Christianity* volume of the *Norton Anthology of World Religions* (2015). He also wrote some 400 articles, columns and reviews for both scholarly and popular audiences. A significant aspect of this prodigious activity is his work on Thomas Merton.

Cunningham was a founding member of the International Thomas Merton Society in 1987, having already contributed articles to the volumes *The Message of Thomas Merton* (1981) and *The Legacy of Thomas Merton* (1986), among the first of more than three dozen articles and reviews on Merton. His acclaimed anthology *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* (1992) received the ITMS “Louie” award for outstanding contribution to Merton studies in 1993; it was followed by his edition of *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk’s True Life* (1996), the third volume of Merton’s complete journals, and his biographical and critical study *Thomas Merton and the Monastic Vision* in 1999. He also provided the Merton entries for a number of reference works, including *American National Biography* (1999). At the ITMS Fourth General Meeting in 1995, he gave the springboard address on “Harvesting New Fruits: Thomas Merton’s ‘Message to Poets’” (subsequently published in *The Merton Annual* 9 [1996] 21-33), and at the Seventh General Meeting in 2001, he presented a plenary session address entitled “Thomas Merton and the Monastic Vision” in the church at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Writing of Merton’s continuing influence, he said, “Thomas Merton had a profound gift of writing about the reality of God, derived from his own monastic experience, without sounding ‘pious’ or,

what is even more off-putting, without falling into the swamp of academic or scholarly jargon. In his writing there is something *memorable* in the deepest sense of the word” (*We Are Already One* 220).

He is survived by his wife Cecilia, his daughters Sarah Mary and Julia Clare, her husband Steve Uknuis, and his granddaughter Mazzy Uknuis. A funeral Mass was celebrated on February 25, 2025 in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the Notre Dame campus.

Gregory K. Hillis (1975-2024)

Gregory K. Hillis, a major figure in the contemporary generation of younger Thomas Merton scholars, died on October 8, 2024, at the age of 49, following eleven months of illness with a rare form of cancer. Born on May 1, 1975 to Jeanne Hughes and Bruce Hillis, he grew up in Rimbey and Kanakaskis, Alberta, Canada in an evangelical Christian family. He studied at Rocky Mountain College in Calgary, Alberta, where he met Kim Kauffeldt, who would become his wife, and developed an abiding interest in theology, spirituality and the history of Christianity. Shortly after graduation and their marriage one month later, the Hillises moved east to Ontario, where he pursued a second bachelor’s degree at the University of Waterloo, followed by graduate study at McMaster University in Hamilton, where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the fifth-century bishop and theologian St. Cyril of Alexandria. Their sons Isaac and Sam were born there in 2005 and 2008, to be followed in 2011 by Leo. In 2007, he was received into the Catholic Church and after completing his degree in 2008 he was hired by Bellarmine University, home to the Thomas Merton Center, the principal repository of Merton’s archives, to teach historical theology, continuing in that position for fifteen years. His scholarly articles on patristic theologians were published in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, *Augustinian Studies* and elsewhere, and his Introduction to the translation of Cyril’s writing on the Book of Genesis appeared in 2018. While at Bellarmine he was a frequent visitor to the Abbey of Gethsemani and became a friend of the community there; he also wrote numerous essays for *America* and other popular religious magazines along with

his scholarly articles. In the summer of 2023 he became executive director of the Aquinas Center of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, a position he held until his death less than a year and a half later.

His first acquaintance with Thomas Merton came at a period of questioning about his future career, shortly after his marriage and move east for school, as he relates in his article “*The Seven Storey Mountain and My Crisis of Vocation*” (*The Merton Journal* 30.2 [2023] 58-64). Reading Merton’s autobiography eventually led to a deep and broad immersion in Merton’s work and to writing on Merton that began in 2014 and led to articles and essays in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Journal*, *The Merton Seasonal*, *The Tablet* and *America*, culminating in his book *Man of Dialogue: Thomas Merton’s Catholic Vision* (Liturgical Press, 2021), for which he won the 2022 Catholic Media Association first-place award in the category of biography and the Merton Society’s 2023 “Louie” award for outstanding contribution to Merton studies. Of this work James Martin, SJ wrote: “Greg Hillis’s beautifully written and expertly researched book restores Merton’s Catholicism to where it should be in studies of his remarkable life: at the center,” a lasting scholarly legacy paralleled by a lasting spiritual legacy: in an article for *America* on Julian of Norwich, written shortly after receiving his diagnosis, he wrote: “I take most comfort right now in a God who suffered profoundly in Jesus Christ and, in some mysterious way, now suffers alongside me and alongside all who suffer. . . [I]f we come to understand that God suffers alongside us as one who truly knows what it means to suffer, our anger morphs into love and our suffering mysteriously becomes a means of transformation.”

He is survived by his wife and sons, his father Bruce and sister Kristy, his grandmother Betty and mother-in-law Laura, his niece and nephews and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. His funeral Mass took place on October 17, 2024 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Atlanta. He was buried at the Cistercian Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia. Donations in his memory may be sent to Catholic Relief Services.

John H. Berger (1935-2025)

John Henry Berger, longtime coordinator of the Northern California chapter of the ITMS, died on February 17, 2025 at the age of 89. Born in Lincoln, Nebraska on Sept. 8, 1935, son of Henry J. Berger, a farmhand and mechanic, and Catherine Gingrich, a teacher. Two years later the family moved to Portland, Oregon, where he attended St. Stephen's Grammar School and Central Catholic High School, from which he graduated in 1953 (and where he first read Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*). In 1957 he attended the University of Portland where he earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and subsequently a master's in American literature with a focus on secondary education. He served as an Air Force Second Lieutenant, on active duty during the Cuban Missile crisis. While stationed in Lake Charles, Louisiana, he met Barbara Ely Bird of Magnolia, Louisiana, a pioneer in the field of speech therapy. They were married in 1962 in Portland, and moved the next year to Sacramento, California with their sixth-month old daughter Rose Marie; daughter Kate followed in 1966 and son Joe in 1968. He became a beloved English teacher at the newly opened Rio Americano High School in Sacramento, CA, part of the San Juan Unified School District, where taught for 33 years, retiring in 1996, and was included as an outstanding teacher in the *Who's Who among American Teachers* volume; he also served as president of the San Juan Teachers Association in 1979 during a contentious strike. In 1990 he and Barbara spent a year in Eindhoven, Netherlands under a Fulbright Teacher Exchange program. He also taught English to returning veterans at Sacramento State College and after retirement did research for legislation on higher education for the California State Assembly.

He and Barbara were deeply involved in post-conciliar Catholicism at the Newman Center of Sacramento State, and later at St. Francis and St. Ignatius Parishes in Sacramento, as well as the local Sacramento Catholic Worker Community, where the Bergers met and befriended Cistercian Brother (later Father) Maurice Flood, a student of Thomas Merton. They were also actively involved with the American branch of Monastic Interreligious

Dialogue (AIM-USA) and Bridgefolk, a Roman Catholic–Mennonite interreligious dialogue group.

In 1990, with Tim McHargue, John formed the Northern California chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, which met at St. Francis as long as the parish was staffed by Franciscans, with annual “field trips” to the Cistercian Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, CA; in recent years he was part of a similar group at St. Ignatius. He was a regular participant in ITMS General Meetings, co-leading a workshop with Tim McHargue at the 2005 conference in San Diego on “Merton’s Message of Peace, Social Justice and Nonviolence in his ‘Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra concerning Giants,’” a topic revisited in their recently coauthored article “Understanding Our Exact Position: Contemplating Merton’s ‘Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra concerning Giants’” (*Merton Seasonal* 48.4 [Winter 2023] 8-18). His poems “Merton’s Time Management System” and “Tension, Thomas, Tension” appeared in the Fall 1998 issue of the *Seasonal* (23.3:18-19), and he contributed reviews to issues 29.3 (Fall 2004) and 35.1 (Spring 2010). According to Tim, “You could not find a better partner than John. He was astute, endlessly curious and inventive, always thinking of ways of bringing folks together and creating community.” He was also full of good-natured humor: “He wasn’t beyond cracking jokes at Merton’s expense and playfully taking issue with the ‘Cult of Mertonians.’ He would certainly be considered one himself, such was his deep knowledge of the life and times of Thomas Merton.”

His Memorial Service, which took place at St. Ignatius Church on February 17, included recitation of the Merton Prayer (“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going . . .”) and a eulogy by his daughter Rose, a current member of the ITMS Board of Directors. He is survived by his wife Barbara, daughter Rose Marie (Heidi Thompson), Kate Berger Auble, Joe Berger, and grandchildren Gage, Sorelle and Zev Berger. Memorials in his memory may be sent to the Sacramento Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker Community at secure.socloaves.org or PO Box 13495, Sacramento, CA 95813.

Philip John LoDolce (1941-2025)

Philip J. LoDolce, longtime active member of

the Chicago Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, died on February 8, 2025 at the age of 84 after a short illness. He was born on January 3, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois, son of Joseph and Angeline LoDolce. After graduating from St. George High School, he attended DePaul University before taking over the LoDolce Meat Company in 1964, the family business that he ran until his retirement 61 years later; the company produced Italian sausage that was voted the best in the Chicago area numerous times. He was a parishioner at Mary Queen of Heaven Church in Cicero, Illinois, and was active in Alcoholics Anonymous, Contemplative Outreach Chicago and the ITMS. Aware of his declining health, Phil and his family hosted a “Living Wake” gathering on January 18 attended by more than one hundred family members and friends, including ITMS president Judith Valente, who wrote a reflection about this gathering, available online at: <https://judithvalente.medium.com/the-beauty-of-a-living-wake-6dc89ceal1c47>. Chicago Chapter coordinator Mike Brennan spoke at the gathering to express his gratitude and appreciation for this friendship of two decades, beginning with an encounter at an ITMS chapter meeting shortly after he had become the group’s coordinator: “it was 20 years ago that I first met Phil LoDolce, outside of the Dominican Priory in River Forest, where I had just unloaded a stack of boxes with meeting supplies from my car. Phil immediately started helping me get the meeting set up – and he never stopped helping. He handled the grill and donated the sausages at all our early chapter picnics in the backyard of the monastery on Harlem.” They attended ITMS General Meetings together in 2007 and 2009, presenting a proposal at the latter conference to host the next General Meeting in Chicago, which was accepted by the society Board. Subsequently, he continued, “Phil was instrumental as we scouted locations and made the arrangements for that meeting, and in 2011, we held that conference at Loyola University, which was a great success.” He concluded his reminiscence: “Phil has been a confidant, a support, and a loving and caring friend for many years. I am so grateful for that friendship, and for this opportunity to remember

his many kindnesses, and to thank him publicly, on my own behalf, and on behalf of the International Thomas Merton Society.” Phil is survived by his children, Gina, Philip, Richard and John and their spouses, as well as his eleven grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren.

Patrick Hartnett (1954-2024)

Canon Patrick Hartnett, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough in North Yorkshire, England and a member of both the International Thomas Merton Society and the British Thomas Merton Society, died on July 25, 2024 at the age of 70. He was born on May 27, 1954 in Middlesbrough. He studied for the priesthood at St. Patrick’s College, Thurles, Tipperary, Ireland, and was ordained at St Joseph’s Church in Middlesbrough, on June 15, 1979. He subsequently served in parishes in Hull, Heddon, York and Ingleby Barwick. In 2015, he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Spirituality and Worship for the diocese, and the following year became a member of the Cathedral Chapter and College of Consultors and was made a canon. In 2019 he became parish priest at All Saints Church in Thirsk, but due to ill health, took early retirement in September 2023. He was still able to attend the TMS biennial conference held April 5-7, 2024 in Cumbria, UK but died less than four months later. His funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Middlesbrough, on August 20.

Russo Chapter Grants

The International Thomas Merton Society invites applications for grants from ITMS chapters and affiliates to provide financial support, up to a maximum of \$500 each, for chapter/affiliate events, including but not limited to inviting visiting speakers. These grants honor the memory of Anthony (Tony) Russo (1941-2022), founder of the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky ITMS Chapter, longtime ITMS Chapters Coordinator, facilitator of more than a dozen annual retreats on Merton at the Abbey of Gethsemani, and frequent conductor of Chapters Workshops at ITMS General Meetings. They are funded through the generosity of his wife Josie. Applications must include a detailed proposal of the project for which the grant will be used, a statement of how the project will

contribute to the work of the chapter, and a proposed expense budget, including disclosure of any other sources of funding awarded or applied for, with amounts received or requested. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2025. Applications will be reviewed by an appointed committee and approved by the ITMS Board, and applicants will be notified about awards by July 1, 2025. Awards must be used between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. Following the event, award recipients are required to submit by July 31, 2026 an accurate expense account and a report on the implementation of the project. Completed applications for grants, or requests for further information, should be sent for forwarding to the committee chair to ITMS Resident Secretary Dr. Paul M. Pearson, International Thomas Merton Society, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville KY 40205; e-mail: merton@bellarmine.edu.

ITMS Authors

Eric Martin is the author of *The Writing on the Wall: Signs of Faith against Fascism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023) [\$23.99 paper; \$9.99 ebook], in which he uses biblical exegesis, storytelling, interviews, thought experiments, art and theology to explore how Christians and others can rethink notions of civil disobedience, nonviolence, love, prayer and liturgy to en flesh a worthy faith in the face of “fascist creep.” Gregory Boyle, SJ writes: “Few books you read this year will be as provocative as Eric Martin’s *The Writing on the Wall*. To ‘provoke’ is a ‘calling forth’ to form a church of divine in-breaking, ‘grace with feet,’ and a radical discipleship so foreign to our current status quo. It is a call to an embodied active love that refuses to be a place for ‘sheltered piety.’ Like the folding of a thousand paper cranes, is it about peace or fighting white supremacy? Yes.”

Michael McGregor is the author of the novel *The Last Grand Tour* (Portland, OR: Korza, 2025) [\$20 paper; \$9.99 ebook], in which American tour guide Joe Newhouse deals with personal struggles and professional difficulties in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, marked by both the dark deeds of old Europe and the freedoms and hopes of a new

era, experiencing the shifting lines between fidelity and freedom, illusion and reality, regret and desire on a journey through Germany’s past and present before coming to an unexpected climax in Venice. Screenwriter Jon Raymond writes: “A frequently funny, often melancholy, always deeply romantic voyage through the history-haunted landscapes of Western Europe, accompanied by a busload of unforgettable characters. In the hands of tour guide extraordinaire Michael N. McGregor, it becomes a journey of the heart, filled with longing and brio.”

Bonnie Thurston has recently published *The Stones of the Last Week: Impediments to Easter* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2024) [\$12.95 paper; \$10.99 ebook], a series of reflections on Christ’s declaration “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out,” challenging readers to consider their own “stones” – the difficulties, hindrances and obstructions in their spiritual lives – from the perspective of talking stones, stones of destruction, impermanent stones, stones that measure distances and the stone marking life and death. Barbara Reid, OP writes: “With her characteristic poetic flare and deep spiritual insight, Bonnie Thurston leads readers into a profound encounter with Christ through the rocks and stones that strew his path in his last week of earthly life. Especially helpful during Lent, this little gem of a book is one I will return to again and again.”

Judith Valente has recently written *The Italian Soul: How to Savor the Full Joys of Life* (Newburyport, MA: Hampton Roads, 2025) [\$16.95 paper], a pilgrimage of the heart, a journey toward change that will allow its readers to approach life with a more contemplative stance and recreate a sense of *la dolce vita* – the sweet life – wherever they might be, a cross between a travel dispatch and a spirituality guide for seekers who are yearning for ways to bring more balance, sanity, and a greater sense of the transcendent into their daily lives. James Martin, SJ writes: “*The Italian Soul* speaks to the growing yearning that I see among so many to live more joyfully and mindfully amid the demands and distractions of daily life and the growing tumult

of the world. . . . This is a book for spiritual seekers and all who want to bring a piece of the Italian way of life into their own homes.”

Robert Weldon Whalen is the author of *Casablanca's Conscience* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2024) [\$90 cloth; \$25 paper], a new look at a beloved classic film that explores the philosophical dynamics of *Casablanca* on the eightieth anniversary of its release, focusing on the film's key themes of exile, purgatory, irony, love, resistance and memory, as well as its iconic characters, in the context of philosophical and theological discourse of their real contemporaries, Hannah Arendt, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Albert Camus. Author Noah Isenberg writes: “Whalen offers a fresh, innovative, and thoroughly readable approach to what many regard as the ultimate holy grail of Classical Hollywood. He reevaluates *Casablanca* against the illuminating, eye-opening backdrop of philosophical and theological discourse . . . Readers are bound to discover plenty of new ideas amid the book's far-reaching, trenchant insights.”

CORRECTION: in the print edition of the Fall 2024 *ITMS Newsletter* (31.2), the publisher of *All My Eyes See: The Artistic Vocation of Father William Hart McNichols* was misidentified; the volume was issued by Orbis Books.

Tuesday with Merton Series

On March 18, the Tuesdays with Merton webinar series, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and co-sponsored by the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union, presented the annual Fourth and Walnut Lecture by James Finley, entitled “Being a Healing Presence in a Wounded and Traumatized World,” in both live-streamed and in-person format. Upcoming Tuesdays with Merton, held on the second Tuesday of each month, will include: Sarah Fuller and Becky McIntyre: “Merton as Visual Artist and Creating Socially Conscious Art in the Twenty-First Century” on April 8; Edward Sellner: “Kindred Spirits: Thomas Merton, Jack Kerouac and Zen” on May 13; Ryan Bell: “Pilgrims in a Polarized Church:

Thomas Merton and Raymond Hunthausen” on September 9.

To register for the webinars go to: <http://merton.org/TWM/> and follow the highlighted “Register Here” link. Previous Tuesdays with Merton presentations are available on the ITMS YouTube channel and as audio podcasts.

Argentine Conference Call for Papers

The Fourth Argentine Thomas Merton Conference will take place August 28-29, 2025 at the Cuyo National University in Mendoza, Argentina, organized and cosponsored by the Argentine Westlands Merton Society Chapter. The Conference will be held both in person at UNCuyo and online, to foster international participation. The organizing committee includes Marcela Raggio, Guillermina Perera de Saravia, Eduardo Salinas, Carlos Villegas and Verónica Mastrodonato. This upcoming conference aims particularly at presenting Merton as poet and translator, especially in his dialogue with Latin American poets and poetry; however, other topics and themes will be accepted, according to presenters' interests and expertise. Sessions will include: presentations by invited scholars, in dialogue with local professors and researchers; symposia and presentation sessions; presentation of experiences by Merton chapters; and artistic interventions. Proposals of 250-word presentation abstracts (including author's name and affiliation, explanation of theoretical framework, issue under analysis and preliminary conclusions [TNR 12-point font; 1.5 line spacing]) should be sent by July 25 to conference chair Marcela Raggio at marcelar@ffyl.uncu.edu.ar. Optional full paper submission may be sent by August 10. Registration fees are as follows: for Argentine speakers: AR\$25000; speakers from abroad: US\$30; Argentine students: AR\$8.000; foreign students: US\$9.60; Argentine attendees: AR\$15.000; foreign attendees: US\$18. Registration will open on April 1 at <https://autogestion.ffyl.uncu.edu.ar/eu>. Questions or requests for further information should be sent to: reunionescientificas@ffyl.uncu.edu.ar.

Merton Happenings

On November 12, 2024, Fr. Bryan Massingale gave the 2024 Thomas Merton Lecture on

Spirituality at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, entitled "Courageous Hope in Precarious Times."

On February 1, 2025, Kirk Willcox led a one-day retreat entitled "Thomas Merton: A Prophet for Our Times" at the Mt. Carmel Priory Retreat Centre in Varroville, New South Wales, Australia.

On February 10, 2025, Michael Higgins gave a presentation on Thomas Merton and Pope Francis, entitled "The Monk and the Pope," at the chapel of St. Mark's College in Vancouver, British Columbia, co-sponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Canada and the Centre for Christian Dialogue of St. Mark's College.

In March, Bonnie Thurston gave the Lenten Retreat to the Sisters of the Love of God (Anglican) in Oxford, UK on "The Desert Spirituality of Thomas Merton."

On March 22, Elizabeth Holmes led a study day on the Life and Works of Thomas Merton for Be Still, the Chichester Contemplative Prayer Group in the UK.

On March 28, Thomas Malewitz gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton's Novel *My Argument with the Gestapo* as an Example of Early North American Magical Realism: A Confluence of Surrealism and Traumatic Imagination" as part of the "War & Trauma" session at the College English Association annual conference in Philadelphia, PA; on the following day, Maryann DiEdwardo gave a presentation entitled "The Significance of the Writing of Thomas Merton, Cultivating Peace, Qualitative Research" as part of the "Popular Culture: Iterations of Freedom" session at the conference.

Upcoming Events

On Tuesdays from April 22 through May 20, Jon Sweeney will be presenting an e-course sponsored by *Spirituality & Practice*, entitled "Exploring Fluid Religious Identity with Thomas Merton." The cost is \$85. To register or for further information, see: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/>

[course/view/10345/exploring-fluid-religious-identity-with-thomas-merton](https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/course/view/10345/exploring-fluid-religious-identity-with-thomas-merton).

On April 26, Gordon Oyer will discuss "Seeding Hope in Precarious Times with Thomas Merton," based on his book *Signs of Hope*, with Fr. John Dear in a Zoom Presentation for the Beatitudes Center for the Nonviolent Jesus. For further information see the center website at: <https://beatitudescenter.org>.

On May 27, Sophronia Scott will give a presentation entitled "On Spiritual Friendships – Anam Cara, Thomas Merton, and Pursuing Relationships That Enlighten Our Lives" sponsored by the World Community for Christian Meditation at the Meditatio Centre, St Mark's Church, Myddelton Sq, London; for further information, see: <https://meditatiocentreondon.org/events/spiritualfriendships>.

In June Bonnie Thurston will give a presentation for the annual meeting in Detroit of the Anam Cara Fellowship, focused on Thomas Merton's teachings on prayer.

On June 22, following the conclusion of this year's ITMS General Meeting, current President Judith Valente and former board member Michael N. McGregor will discuss their new books, *The Italian Soul: How to Savor the Joys of Life*, and *An Island to Myself: The Place of Solitude in an Active Life*, at Tattered Cover Book Store in downtown Denver.

On July 31-August 3, Dom Alexandre de Andrade, OSB will lead a retreat entitled "Merton e Mestres Zen" ("Merton and the Zen Masters") at the Mosteiro de São Bento in São Paulo, Brazil.

On September 27, Paul M. Pearson will lead "A Day on Thomas Merton: Poet, Monk, Prophet" at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, UK.

Chapter and Affiliate News

On November 16, 2024, the New York City Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society held its annual retreat, led by Robert Ellsberg,

entitled “A Journey Faith: Walking with Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day & Other Companions along the Way” at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. On January 25, the chapter celebrated Merton’s 110th birthday with Fr. Michael Holleran leading the group in contemplative prayer and Jim Robinson conducting discussion of Merton’s insights. Further information is available at; info@thomasmertonnyc.org or thomasmertonnyc.org or cchristinyc@gmail.com.

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On April 1 and May 6, the New Jersey chapter of the ITMS will discuss James Finley’s new memoir *The Healing Path*. On Tuesday, June 3, the chapter will present “Thomas Merton & His Novices: A Visit with Dan Erwin,” who as Brother William was a novice in the 1950s under the direction of Thomas Merton. The presentation will be available through Zoom to all who have indicated their interest by contacting chapter coordinator Greg Ryan at GJRyan@WCCM.org; the link will be made available on the day of the presentation to those planning to attend.

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On April 16, the Indianapolis Chapter of the ITMS will host a discussion of “Thomas Merton’s Contemplative Wisdom for Crisis Times” at the Episcopal Church of All Saints in Indianapolis. For further information contact chapter coordinator Mark Hudson at: markchudson@gmail.com.

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On February 16, the Chicago ITMS Chapter hosted Peg Benson for a discussion on “Writer to Writer: Mary Gordon and Thomas Merton,” at Euclid Avenue United Methodist Church in Oak Park, IL. On March 22, the chapter co-sponsored a one-day symposium at Dominican University, River Forest, IL, with the Siena Center at the university, entitled: “An Inquiry: Emerging Technologies and Their Role in the Surge of Christian Nationalism – With Insights and Warnings from Thomas Merton, Marshall McLuhan and Jacques Ellul,” with Richard Putz and Fr. Vaughn Fayle, OFM (via Zoom). This event was made possible in part by a Russo Chapter Grant from the International Thomas Merton Society. On May 18 it will host a presentation by

Iconographer Joe Malham. For further information, contact chapter coordinator Mike Brennan at 773-447-3989; email: cc.itms@gmail.com.

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On March 17-18, the Rock Island, IL Merton group sponsored a retreat at the Benet House Retreat Center entitled: “24 Hours with Thomas Merton and His Poetry,” led by Merton Center Assistant Director Mark C. Meade. The group meets virtually on the third Monday of every other month for discussion, led by coordinator Sr. Bobbi Bussan, OSB. For further information contact: rbussan@smmsisters.org; 309-912-221.

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On March 7, 2025, the Washington, DC ITMS chapter heard a presentation by Hugh Turley entitled “Thomas Merton: Peacemaker – How He Lived, How He Died, and Why it Matters” at St. Anselm’s Abbey School. For further information contact: tmsociety@fastmail.fm.

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On April 15, the North Central Connecticut ITMS chapter meeting, conducted on Zoom, focused on: “How Thomas Merton’s Reflections on Nonviolent Resistance Inform Today’s Nonviolence Movements,” led by Mike Smoolca and Martha DeGiovani. For further information on chapter activities, see the chapter website: <https://www.invalumen.org/northctitms.html> or contact Mike Smoolca at: m-smoolca@hotmail.com.

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On May 15, the bi-monthly Merton Reading Group of the British Merton Society will discuss Merton’s essay “Christian Culture needs Oriental Wisdom.” For further information, contact: tmsreadinggroup@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:

www.merton.org/ITMS