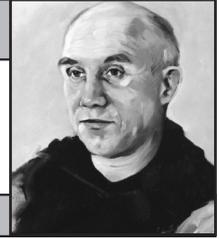


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## 2021 ITMS General Meeting Program Set

At its June 2020 meeting, the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society approved the program for the ITMS Seventeenth General Meeting, to be held June 24-27, 2021 at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. The theme of the meeting is: "Thou Inward Stranger," taken from Merton's poem "Stranger" (*The Strange Islands*, 1957), with presentations focusing both on the inward journey of contemplation and on the outward encounter with the stranger and outcast in society. Plenary speakers include Marie Dennis, Carrie Newcomer, Parker Palmer, Andrew Prevot and Bonnie Thurston. The program will also feature an address by ITMS President David W. L. Golemboski, a presentation by Gail Mandell and Keith Egan on Merton's significant connections with the college, nineteen concurrent sessions, twelve workshops, guided prayer sessions, plays and films.

**Marie Dennis** is co-president of Pax Christi International, the global Catholic peace movement, a position she has held since 2007. She previously worked for Maryknoll from 1989 to 2012, including 15 years as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She is editor of *Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence* (2018), the report of the historic 2016 Vatican meeting on gospel nonviolence that she co-chaired, and co-author of *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God* (2015).

**Carrie Newcomer** is a singer, songwriter and author who has produced 16 solo CDs and has received numerous awards for her music and related charitable activities. She regularly speaks and teaches about creativity, vocation, activism and spirituality and has written two collections of essays and poetry as companion pieces to recent albums: *A Permeable Life: Poems and Essays* (2014) and *The Beautiful Not Yet: Poems, Essays and Lyrics* (2016).

**Parker Palmer** is a writer, speaker and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. A member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), he is the founder and Senior Partner of the Center for Courage & Renewal and author of ten books, including *On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old* (2018), *A Hidden Wholeness* (2009), *The Courage to Teach* (2007, 2017) and *The Promise of Paradox* (1980, 2008), which includes "In the Belly of a Paradox," his classic essay on Merton.

**Andrew L. Prevot**, associate professor of theology at Boston College, is the author of *Theology and Race: Black and Womanist Traditions in the United States* (2018) and *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality amid the Crises of Modernity* (2015) and co-editor of *Anti-Blackness and Christian Ethics* (2017).

**Bonnie B. Thurston** is a founding member, past president and former board member and secretary of the ITMS. She is an ordained minister and retired professor of New Testament, she now living in solitude in West Virginia. She is author of the recent book *Shaped by the End You Live For: Thomas Merton's Monastic Spirituality* (2020) and editor of *Merton and Buddhism* (2007), *Hidden in the Same Mystery: Thomas Merton and Loretto* (2010) and *Thomas Merton: On Eastern Meditation* (2102). She is also the author of many books on scripture and on spirituality as well as numerous volumes of poetry.

Opening sessions on Thursday afternoon of the conference will include a First-Timers' Session, an ITMS Chapters Workshop, a Merton scholarship and publications workshop, and two emerging scholars sessions with Emilie Grosvenor, R. Zachary Karanovich, Ashtyn Morris, Matthew Reid, William Simpson and Ethan Strouse. There will be an opening inter-faith prayer service on Thursday afternoon and a

closing Mass on Saturday evening. Entertainment will include musical interludes by Carrie Newcomer during her conversational workshop with Parker Palmer and Douglas Hertler's performance of *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity*.

Concurrent session presenters include:

- William Apel: "Merton and the Hibakusha";
- Kathleen Baker: "Searching for the Stranger";
- Alda Balthrop-Lewis: "Merton and Arendt";
- Zhaohui Bao: "Merton and Chuang Tzu";
- Elizabeth Burkemper: "Countering 'Strangerness' in Late Capitalism";
- Michael Carey & Dung Tran: "Monastic Hospitality and Community";
- Mary Frances Coady: "Merton and Renewal";
- Ellyn Crutcher: "Houses of Prayer: From Vision to Reality";
- Paul Dekar: "Merton's and Cardenal";
- Christopher Fici: "Merton's Ecological Vision";
- Marjorie Gourlay: "Merton and the Refugee";
- Gary Hall: "Communicating with the Stranger";
- Fred Herron: "Merton: Experience, Text, Event";
- Gregory Hillis: "Merton & Angelica Collins, OCD";
- Daniel Horan: "Merton and Naomi Burton Stone";
- Deborah Kehoe: "Merton, Mary Karr & Poetics";
- Alan Kolp: "Pivotal Experiences: Merton & Delio";
- Dominiek Lootens: "Merton & St. Maximus";
- Glenn Loughrey: "Merton and Aboriginal Seeing";
- Jamal Lyksett: "Merton's Reading of Kierkegaard's";
- Liam Lynch: "Reaching toward God and Man";
- Gray Matthews: "Unmasking the Contemplative";
- Mark Meade: "Facing Quarantine Anxiety with Merton";
- Anthony Nuccio: "Jägerstätter and Merton";
- Patrick O'Connell: "Merton's Strange Archipelago";
- David Odorisio: "Merton's Radical Ecumenism";
- Gordon Oyer: "Letters to Persons of Color";
- Paul Pearson: "Merton and the 12 Steps of Humility";
- Michael Plekon: "Merton: Stranger or One at Home?";
- Christopher Pramuk: "Merton and Melissa Raphael";
- Paul Quenon: "Exploring 'The Early Legend'";
- Stephanie Redekop: "Literary Essays & Crisis Discourse";

- James Robinson: "Merton's Engagement with Rosemary Ruether and Rosemary Haughton";
- Eileen Sullivan: "Merton's 'John the Baptist' Role for the Era of Christ and Sophia";
- Kathleen Tarr: "Pilgrimage and Traveling with the Inward Stranger";
- Robert Whalen: "Merton as Outsider";
- P. E. Wilson: "Overcrowded Solitude."

Presenters of workshops, prayer sessions and meditative sessions include:

- Robin Adair & John Seryak: "On the Roads of Gethsemani";
- Morgan Atkinson: "Elena Malits Interview" [film];
- Christine Bachich, Jacqueline Chew & Jonathan Montaldo: "I, Solitude, Am Your Professor";
- Martha Baily: "Sailing to the Moon" [play];
- Christine Bochen: "Reading *Day of a Stranger*";
- Cassidy Hall: "*Day of a Stranger*" [film];
- Aaron Kerr & Emily Muntean: "Merton in Undergraduate Ministry and Teaching";
- Jeffrey Kiernan: "Solitude and Loneliness";
- Carol Lenox: "Are We Strangers to the Birds?";
- Sylvia Maddox: "Merton: Contemplative Hospitality";
- Thomas Malewitz: "Poetry as a Catalyst for Reconciliation in National Tragedy";
- Eric Martin: "Merton's Jazz Meditation Today";
- William Meyer: "Interbeing Self & Stranger";
- Paul Pynkoski: "Merton as Stranger: Witness, Poetry and Protest";
- Paul Quenon & Judy Valente: "Merton and the Art of Letter-Writing";
- Renee Roden, "Raskolnikov, Merton and Me" [play];
- Jennifer Trently: "*Visio Divina*: Using Merton's Art to Reflect on the Stranger";
- Monica Weis: "Merton, Music, and the 'More.'"

The program committee for the Seventeenth General Meeting is chaired by ITMS Past President Mark Meade, with Arlene Montevecchio as site coordinator assisted by Jessica Coblenz. Committee member include Cassidy Hall, Daniel Horan, OFM, David Golemboski, Jonathan Montaldo, David Orberon, Christopher Pramuk, Julianne Wallace and Judith Valente.

While current plans are to hold the conference on-

site, the program committee continues to assess the situation considering the COVID-19 pandemic. There will be a generous cancellation and refund policy both for individuals feeling uncomfortable attending in person and for all registrants in the event that the conference needs to be presented fully online. Further details of this policy will be made available with the registration form and on the conference website; the committee will keep those registered abreast of new developments and precautions.

**Registration materials, with further information on the schedule, costs and accommodations for the conference, will be included in the Winter 2020 issue of The Merton Seasonal. Further information is also available at the Merton Center/ITMS website: [merton.org/2021](http://merton.org/2021).**

#### ITMS Racism Statement Released

In response to the current crisis of racial oppression and injustice in the USA, ITMS officers and board have issued “A Statement of Commitment” dated July 4, 2020 entitled “The Struggle for Racial Justice in the United States.”

The statement consists of two main parts, following a brief introduction in which the purpose of the statement is described as responding “in the spirit of Thomas Merton” to the “litany of tragic events related to race-relations” that have recently convulsed American cities and towns in the midst of the global pandemic. Recognizing that it is impossible to be certain of just how Merton himself would articulate and act upon the issues and needs of the present situation, the ITMS leadership nevertheless commits itself to witness to the basic human and Christian principles and values that Merton exemplified in his own place and time.

In its first main section, “Context: Merton’s Witness in the Cause of Racial Justice,” the statement cites material from numerous Merton works, including “Letters to a White Liberal,” “Religion and Race in the United States,” “The Time of the End Is the Time of No Room,” “Hagia Sophia” and his poem “Picture of a Black Child with a White Doll,” to illustrate Merton’s prophetic denunciation of the heresy of white supremacy, his consideration of the biblical concept of *kairos*, the time of decision, opportunity and judgment that demands a response of faith and

action, his awareness of the intrinsic connection of the black freedom struggle in America with similar efforts of people of color throughout the world, his willingness “to confront Christendom with the principles of Christ,” and his dedication to actualizing “a sacred vision of the human person and of the common good.” It points out that perhaps Merton’s most significant contributions to the movement for racial equality and social justice can be found not in his formal writings but in his cultivation of personal relationships transcending differences of race, ethnicity, gender and religion, at events such as the 1964 Gethsemani Peacemakers Retreat and the conferences with contemplative religious women leaders in 1967-1968, and in reflections found in his personal journals, “where he interrogates not only ‘white Christianity,’ but firstly, *himself*,” and in his letters to an astoundingly broad spectrum of diverse correspondents.

The second part of the document, “The Mission of the ITMS Today,” opens with the ITMS Vision and Mission Statements, followed by five points applying these declarations in the light of current problems and prospects. First, belief in “the innate connectivity of all humanity” requires a rejection of all “illusory difference” and an affirmation that the Society is called to align itself with “the movement for racial justice, interracial encounter, healing, and reparation.” Second, the statement affirms that the presence of the Spirit of God is found in a special way in the hopes and aspirations of the marginalized, and the mission of the Society is not only to study Merton’s words and work but to continue it by listening to and elevating the voices of the neglected and oppressed. Third, there is a necessity for humble recognition and repentance for individual and group failures to address adequately “the scourge of racial injustice or aspire to the level of racial solidarity reflected in Merton’s life and work.” Fourth, the context of the global pandemic provides an incentive and opportunity to explore new ways of connecting and interacting with others transcending differences and distances. Fifth, there is an awareness of a need for discernment as to how the Society might position itself more boldly “as a public voice and ally in the movement for racial justice as well as other issues,”

while at the same time recognizing and respecting the diversity of legitimate perspectives within the ITMS. The statement concludes with an expression of appreciation for the work of Society members that has been and continues to be done “by scholars, poets, artists, and activists, to engage the witness of Merton and his contemporaries in the struggle for racial justice,” and particularly commits the Society “to supporting and elevating the work of the next generation of students and scholars in the mission of the ITMS,” both generally and as it relates to this crucial issue.

The text of the full statement can be found on the Merton Center/ITMS website at [merton.org/ITMS/Racial-Justice-Statement-July-2020.pdf](http://merton.org/ITMS/Racial-Justice-Statement-July-2020.pdf) and as an insert in this issue of *The Merton Seasonal*.

#### **Merton at Lewis Funeral**

Thomas Merton received prominent notice at the July 30, 2020 funeral of Georgia congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis (1940-2020), who died of cancer on July 17. In his tribute to Lewis at the funeral, held at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where Martin Luther King had been pastor, former president Bill Clinton lauded Lewis’ humanity, strength and unwavering belief in a future without racism. Referring to the events of March 7, 1965, when Lewis was severely beaten by Alabama state troopers at the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma as he led a group of 600 demonstrators on a march to the state capital of Montgomery, Clinton said that in his backpack Lewis had put “an apple, an orange, a toothbrush, toothpaste to take care of his body because he figured he would get arrested. And two books, one by Richard Hofstadter on America’s political tradition to feed his mind, and one, the autobiography of Thomas Merton, a Roman Catholic Trappist monk who was the son of itinerant artists making an astonishing personal transformation. What’s a young guy who’s about to get his brains beat out and planning on going to prison doing taking that? I think he figured that if Thomas Merton could find his way and keep his faith and believe in the future, he, John Lewis, could too.”

There is a discrepancy here between Clinton’s reference to Merton’s book being his autobiography, *The Seven Story Mountain*, and former Maryland governor Martin O’Malley’s recollection that it was *New Seeds of Contemplation* (see the Spring 2020 *ITMS Newsletter*

2-3). In his 1998 autobiography *Walking with the Wind*, Lewis says only that he brought “a couple of books,” not identified, in his “green Army backpack” (332), but when relating the events of his participation in the first Freedom Ride to desegregate interstate buses in May 1961, he mentioned that in his carry-on bag he had several books, one on Gandhi and the Bible, another “by Thomas Merton” (135) – this time definitely not *New Seeds*, which hadn’t yet been published. Merton’s importance for Lewis (along with a certain imprecision about sources) is particularly evident in his recollections of a crucial point in his involvement in the civil rights struggle, when his commitment to non-violence was beginning to be challenged by younger, more radical members of the organization he led, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He writes: “I continued to cast my lot with Gandhi and Thoreau. And Thomas Merton,” then adding that at a meeting on February 12, 1965, shortly after being re-elected as SNCC chair, he “shared a passage from Merton’s book, *Seeds of Contemplation* [actually *Seeds of Destruction*]: ‘Is it possible for Negroes and whites in this country to engage in a certain political experiment such as the world has never yet witnessed and in which the first condition would be that whites consented to let Negroes run their own revolution, giving them the necessary support, and being alarmed at some of the sacrifices and difficulties that this would involve?’ I then answered that question myself. ‘If the movement and SNCC are going to be effective in attempting to liberate the black masses,’ I said, ‘then the civil rights movement must be black controlled, dominated and led’” (365). Thus Merton provided inspiration and encouragement to Lewis for his commitment both to nonviolence and to black leadership, principles that would continue to guide him throughout his long and distinguished life.

#### **Shannon Fellowships Awarded**

At its June 2020 meeting, the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society approved awards of 2020-2021 Shannon Fellowships to Aubrey Derryberry Durnin, for a project entitled “Thomas Merton: The Man, the Artist, the Rockstar,” that would draw on Merton’s audio recordings and visual art for her own work as artist, educator, writer, healer and performer; and to Patrick O’Connell, for research in Merton’s reading notebooks, correspondence and other

archival material to be used in a series of essays on Christian teachers and saints who had a significant influence on Merton's own spirituality.

The Shannon Fellowship program was established in 1997 in honor of the late Msgr. William H. Shannon, the founding president of the ITMS, to promote scholarship on Merton and his work. Up to five annual awards, of a maximum of \$750 each, are granted to scholars for research on primary-source Merton materials at the Merton Center at Bellarmine University or other archival collections. This year's selection committee includes Paul M. Pearson (chair), Fiona Gardner and Joseph Raab.

**The deadline for applications for Shannon Fellowships for 2021-22 is March 15, 2021.** Awards must be used between July 1, 2021 and July 31, 2022. Awards will be based on the quality of the proposal submitted and on the need for consulting archival materials at the site proposed. Applicants must be members of the ITMS; they may join the Society at the time of application by including a check for \$25, made out to "ITMS", along with their proposals. Current officers and Board members of the ITMS, as well as grant committee members, are not eligible for fellowships during their term of office. Fellowships may be granted a maximum of two times to any applicant.

Application for Shannon Fellowships must include:

- a detailed proposal of 500-750 words explaining the subject and goals of the applicant's research and the rationale for consulting primary sources at the Merton collection selected by the applicant; applicants are strongly encouraged to demonstrate in their application that they have consulted online finding aids for the Merton Center (<http://www.merton.org/Research>) or for other archival collections of Merton's work (a list of subjects of previous awardees can be found under Previous Research Topics on the web site);
- a letter of recommendation from a scholar familiar with the applicant's qualifications and research interests;
- a proposed expense budget: grants will cover costs of travel to and from collections; expenses for accommodations and food during time of research at archives; costs of photocopying;
- disclosure of any other sources of funding awarded

or applied for, with amounts received or requested.

**Applications are encouraged from established scholars, from researchers without academic affiliation, and from students and younger scholars, including those engaged in research for theses and dissertations.**

Completed applications for fellowships should be sent to **Dr. Paul M. Pearson, Director, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40205; email: [pmpearson@bellarmine.edu](mailto:pmpearson@bellarmine.edu)**. The committee's recommendations will be presented at the June 2021 meeting of the ITMS Board of Directors, who will make the final decisions on awards, and results will be communicated to applicants shortly thereafter.

#### Daggy Scholarships Available

The International Thomas Merton Society will once again sponsor the Daggy Youth/Student Scholarship Program to make it possible for young people to participate in the ITMS General Meeting. The program is named in honor of the late Dr. Robert Daggy, founding member and second president of the ITMS and longtime director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University. Up to fifteen scholarships will be awarded, covering all costs (except transportation) of attendance at the Seventeenth General Meeting of the ITMS, to be held June 24-27, 2021 at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. The awards will also include one year's free membership in the ITMS. Young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-nine, and full-time undergraduate students up to the age of forty, are invited to apply. (Those under eighteen at the time of the conference must be accompanied by a parent or adult chaperone, whose registration will not be covered by the scholarship.)

Scholarship applicants should submit a statement explaining why they are interested in learning more about Thomas Merton and how they think they would benefit from attending the ITMS General Meeting. They should also obtain a recommendation from a youth minister, campus minister, pastor, teacher, or other qualified adult explaining in what capacity he/she knows the applicant and why the applicant should be considered as a qualified candidate for an ITMS scholarship.

Completed applications, including the recommen-

dation, must be submitted by March 15, 2021, to the scholarship committee chair, Jamie Fazio, Nazareth College, 4245 East Avenue, Rochester, NY. 14618-3790; e-mail: [jfaziol@naz.edu](mailto:jfaziol@naz.edu). Applications should include the age of the applicant, proof of educational status (if applicable), telephone number and email address (if available) as well as a return address. An application form and further information can be found at: <http://www.merton.org/ITMS/scholarships.aspx>.

Any ITMS member who knows an eligible young person / student that would benefit from attending the 2021 General Meeting should encourage him or her to apply for a scholarship.

### **ITMS Strategic Planning Process**

Since 2018, the ITMS Board of Directors has been engaged in a process of listening, reflecting, envisioning and planning for the future of the Society. Spearheading this effort have been the members of the Strategic Planning Committee: Alan Kolp (chair), David Golemboski, Cassidy Hall, Deborah Kehoe, Paul Pearson and Theresa Sandok. The committee and the full Board have worked to identify the strengths of the ITMS and to build on those areas where the Society is thriving, while also striving to enhance areas of potential growth.

As part of this effort, the Board conducted a survey of ITMS members in late 2019, to which over 400 individuals responded, indicating the relative importance of various activities and benefits of society membership for developing their own interests in Merton and his work. A summary of the survey results is available on the ITMS website at: [www.merton.org/ITMS/Survey-Summary.pdf](http://www.merton.org/ITMS/Survey-Summary.pdf).

Additionally, Board members hosted a series of listening sessions with ITMS members during spring of 2020. Then, during its June 2020 meeting, the Board adopted three strategic goals to guide the Society's efforts over the coming 2-3 years. Those goals are:

- Create new (and expand existing) online vehicles for generating and sharing digital resources from ITMS members, chapters and associates.
- Expand current programs and create new opportunities to attract a greater diversity of people in the activities of the ITMS between and beyond General Meetings.
- Develop the ITMS's capacity to bring Merton's

synthesis of contemplation and action to bear upon contemporary social and political dynamics.

The Board has committed to holding itself accountable to advancing these goals in the months and years to come. ITMS members are encouraged to note related new initiatives from the ITMS, and to share feedback on these efforts with any of the ITMS Officers or Board members.

### **Mary Helms (1938-2019)**

Mary Pitts Helms, cofounder of the Thomas Merton Interfaith Chapter of Southern Delaware, died at her home in Rehoboth Beach, DE on December 23, 2019 from complications due to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

She was born on March 4, 1938 in Richmond, VA, daughter of the late Francis and Thelma Pitts of Sparta, VA. She received her bachelor's degree in Sociology from George Mason University and her master's degree in Human Resource Management from American University. She worked as a life and career coach, executive search consultant, business owner and human resource leader, and was involved in a number of philanthropic endeavors. With her partner George Beckerman she founded and coordinated the innovative interfaith ITMS chapter until her illness made this no longer possible. An author and poet, she published two books of verse after becoming ill and credited ALS with saving her life by helping her find her inner voice. She is survived by her three sons, a daughter and nine grandchildren, as well as her dear companion George. A memorial service was held on January 4, 2020 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Lewes, DE.

### **Tuesdays with Merton Series**

A webinar series sponsored by the International Thomas Merton Society and the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, is being presented on the second Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m. It is free and open to the public, with prior registration, required for live viewing, available at: <http://www.merton.org/ITMS/TWM>, which also has information on each presenter and topic. Presentations will subsequently be posted for viewing on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbhlMM9VgwmVPwlmrv5uYpQ>.

On September 8, Daniel P. Horan, OFM began the

series with a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton and Black Lives Matter; Spirituality and Racial Justice for Our Time.” Upcoming presenters include: Bonnie Thurston (October 13); Christopher Pramuk (November 10); Jonathan Montaldo (December 8); James Finley (January 12, 2021); and Christine Bochen (February 9).

#### Lax Website

A website and online newsletter devoted to the life and work of Thomas Merton’s close friend, the poet Robert Lax, has been created by Lax biographer and ITMS member Michael N. McGregor. The site is described as “dedicated to presenting and celebrating Lax’s life and works, as well as the lives and works of others who bring together faith and art or seek to promote peace, joy and love in this world.” The August 2020 newsletter includes reflections on Lax in relation to Merton’s “Message to Poets”; report of an event in Tulsa, OK directed by Mia White creating a “living poem” from Lax’s “black/black/white/white”; news of a Lax retrospective in Germany and of an Italian circus celebrating the release of the Italian translation of Lax’s *Circus of the Sun*; news of a forthcoming illustrated limited edition of *Circus of the Sun*; reprinting of two short Lax poems; as well as other brief notices. Information on McGregor’s biography *Pure Act: The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax* is also available on the site, as well as an opportunity to sign up for the newsletter. The site can be accessed at: <http://www.robertlax.com>.

#### ITMS Authors

Michael W. Higgins and Kevin Burns have recently coauthored *Impressively Free: Henri Nouwen as Model for a Renewed Priesthood* (Paulist Press, 2020 [\$16.95 paper]), in which they explore the genesis and development of the celebrated spiritual writer’s understanding of priestly ministry that corresponds to the vision of Pope Francis for a reformed and renewed presbyterate. James Clarke writes: “Liberating, hopeful, inspiring and comprehensive – the best book on the subject yet. It gives us a new and memorable vision of the priesthood as exemplified in the life of our soul companion.”

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Bernadette McNary-Zak has written *Humble Aspiration: Constructing an Early Christian Ideal*

(Liturgical Press, 2020 [\$24.95 paper]), in which she considers how various types of humility operated in specific contexts involving ascetic women in the early church and how such women represented a form of self-renunciation that enabled them to serve as models of Christian humility for women and men alike. Judith Sutura, OSB writes: “In a world where humility is often misunderstood, especially as applied to women, this book offers a deep and wide exploration of the concept. McNary-Zak gathers views of humility from ancient and modern sources into a resource unlike any other currently available.”

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Jon Sweeney has recently published *James Martin, S.J.: In the Company of Jesus* (Liturgical Press, 2020 [\$16.95 paper]), a volume in the “People of God” series of inspiring contemporary Catholics; poet and memoirist Mary Karr writes: “Jon M. Sweeney has composed a detailed, fascinating portrait of one of our great spiritual leaders, James Martin. Sweeney’s fastidious research and elegant prose make this a page turner I read with relish and finished with regret. It’s a gift to nonbelievers as well as Catholics, lapsed and devout.”

#### Call for Papers for CEA

The International Thomas Merton Society will once again sponsor panels and presentations at the College English Association annual convention, to be held at the Birmingham Sheraton Hotel in Birmingham, AL, April 8-10, 2021. The conference is a gathering of 500-600 scholar-teachers committed to literature, writing, college teaching and related fields. This year’s theme is “Justice,” and one or more Merton panels are planned, along with possible individual presentations at other concurrent sessions. An allied organization of the CEA, the ITMS will provide limited financial support to defray expenses for presenters. Possible topics include: Merton’s resistance to all forms of injustice (racism, individualism, violence, nationalism, white supremacy etc.); Merton and: Gandhi; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Malcolm X; John Howard Griffin etc.; spiritual roots of protest and the way of nonviolence; resurgence of interest in Merton’s writings on justice (*Seeds of Destruction; Faith and Violence; Emblems of a Season of Fury* etc.); key essays on racial justice (“Letters to a White

Liberal”; “Religion and Race in the United States”; The Hot Summer of Sixty-Seven” etc.); key poems on racial justice (“And the Children of Birmingham”; “Picture of a Black Child with a White Doll”; “May 4, 1968” etc.).

Proposals of 200-500 words for a 6-8 page paper (15-minute presentation time) are due by October 1, 2020, to be submitted electronically at: <https://www.conftool.pro/cea2021>. Participants must be members of the CEA (\$50/year) by January 2021. Those interested in speaking at the convention are encouraged to contact Monica Weis SSJ, coordinator of the CEA Merton sessions, at [mweis9@naz.edu](mailto:mweis9@naz.edu) for further information on submitting a proposal and on CEA membership; additional information is available in the full Call for Papers at the CEA web site: [www.cea-web.org](http://www.cea-web.org).

#### Awards for ITMS Authors

Among the 2020 Association of Catholic Publishers awards, *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM received first place in the “Theology” category.

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At the Catholic Press Association 2020 Catholic Media Conference, the second place award for sacraments was given to *Impressively Free: Henri Nouwen as a Model for a Reformed Priesthood*, by Michael W. Higgins and Kevin Burns.

#### Merton Happenings

On January 24, a book launch celebration for the new Fons Vitae Merton Series volume *Merton and Indigenous Wisdom*, edited by Jonathan Montaldo, Paul Pearson, Virginia Gray Henry, Anne Ogden and Neville Blakemore. The event is available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oufTXvVpfwo&feature=youtu.be>.

#### Upcoming Events

On February 22, 2021, ITMS Vice President Christopher Pramuk will deliver the Fifteenth Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY. For further information see: <http://www.merton.org/Events/#CP>.

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The Spring 2020 Road Scholar “Week with Thomas Merton” Program will take place March 14-19 at the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University,

Louisville, KY. For further details see <http://www.merton.org/Events/#1> or contact Abigail Walsh at: [awalsh03@bellarmine.edu](mailto:awalsh03@bellarmine.edu) or 502-272-8161.

#### Chapter and Affiliate News

On August 16, the ITMS Chicago Chapter cosponsored its first “Zoom Meeting” in collaboration with Contemplative Outreach Chicago, featuring chapter member Judith Valente discussing “What Would Thomas Merton Say about the ‘New Normal’?” On September 20 at 2 p.m., Julie Leininger Pycior will lead a free “Zoom” workshop entitled “Despite Everything, and Because Everything Is at Stake: Facing Our Crises with the Help of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day,” cosponsored by Contemplative Outreach Chicago, based on her new book, *Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and the Greatest Commandment: Radical Love in Times of Crisis*. Required registration can be made at: <https://ticketbud.com/events/a6706138-f20c-11ea-ae5f-42010a71700d>. For further information contact chapter coordinator Mike Brennan at: [cc.itms@gmail.com](mailto:cc.itms@gmail.com) or 773-447-3989.

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Members of the ITMS Alaska Chapter gathered July 17, 2020 at St. John’s Orthodox Cathedral in Eagle River, on the site where Merton led a retreat for the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood in September 1968. The group spent time in solitary walks in the surrounding woods, visited the nearby St. Sergius Chapel, listened to excerpts from Merton’s Alaskan Journal, and discussed Merton’s love for Russian theology and spirituality, the state’s Russian history and his travels in 1968 throughout the more remote parts of Alaska. For further information, contact coordinator Kathleen Tarr at: [ktarralaska@gmail.com](mailto:ktarralaska@gmail.com).

Send all Merton-related news to:

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