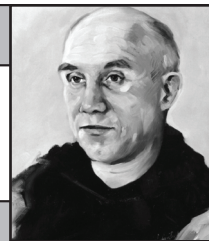


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 30, No. 2

Fall, 2023



## **Eighteenth General Meeting Held in Person**

“Sophia Comes Forth, Reaching” was the theme of the Eighteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society, held June 22-25, 2023 at Saint Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, marking a return to the traditional in-person format after the 2021 conference had to be held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. A total of 211 participants from 31 states and six countries attended.

General session addresses included: Maria Clara Bingemer (participating virtually): “Women in Merton’s Life: Notes on His Experience with the Feminine”; Simone Campbell, SSS: “Hunger for Hope: Contemplation and Political Action”; Sophia Park, SNJM: “Dancing with Thomas Merton in the Borderland”; and Shannen Dee Williams: “America’s Real Sister Act: Illuminating the Hidden History of Black Catholic Nuns in the African American Freedom Struggle”; also featured was a panel discussion by “Women Who Helped Us Know Merton,” including Christine M. Bochen, Kathleen Deignan, CND (participating virtually), Lynn Szabo, Bonnie Thurston and Monica Weis, SSJ. ITMS President Christopher Pramuk delivered the presidential address entitled “By Bowing My Ear a Little, I Have Received Her.” The program included 40 presentations over the course of its three days: 25 concurrent session papers and twelve workshops, guided prayer and special presentations, as well as three opening sessions, three screenings of the Cassidy Hall film “Day of a Stranger” and an opening evening cocktail reception featuring music by Starheart and “toasts” celebrating the contributions of Thomas Merton Books proprietors Jeannette and Jim Cantrell, *Merton Seasonal* Editor Pat O’Connell and recently retired *Merton Annual* editors Deborah Kehoe and Joseph Raab. The closing Eucharist on Saturday afternoon, with Daniel Horan, OFM as presider and Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP as preacher, was followed

by the ITMS banquet at the Hilton Garden Inn on the St. Mary’s campus.

The Program Committee was chaired by immediate ITMS past president David Golemboski with Daniel P. Horan, OFM as site coordinator, and included Jessica Coblenz, Emma McDonald, Mark Meade, ITMS Treasurer David Orbersen, ITMS President Christopher Pramuk, Kathleen Tarr, Judith Valente and Monica Weis, SSJ.

The Nineteenth General Meeting will be held June 19-22, 2025 at Regis University, Denver, Colorado. The Program Committee for the conference includes: Christopher Pramuk, chair and site coordinator; Ben Burkemper, Elizabeth Burkemper, Roger Butts, ITMS Treasurer Emma McDonald Kennedy (ex officio), Paul M. Pearson, Paul Pynkoski, Kathleen Witkowska Tarr and ITMS President Judith Valente (ex officio).

## **New Officers and Board**

The Officers and Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society for 2023-2025 were announced by outgoing president Christopher Pramuk during the ITMS Eighteenth General Meeting on June 22, 2023. In accordance with the ITMS by-laws, the officers were chosen by the Board and members of the Board by the membership at large, from a slate prepared by the ITMS nominating committee: Christine Bochen, Deborah Kehoe, Emma McDonald Kennedy and Paul Pynkoski. A total of 203 ITMS members, 20% of the membership, participated in the election, 185 through on-line voting and 18 by mail.

Officers are Judith Valente, president; Paul Pynkoski, vice president; Michael Moore, secretary; Emma McDonald Kennedy, treasurer; Christopher Pramuk will continue to serve on the board as past president. Newly elected members of the board are: Elizabeth Burkemper, Marcela Raggio and Sophronia Scott; Rose Marie Berger, Alan Kolp and Kathleen Witkowska Tarr were re-elected to the board.

**Judith Valente**, a retired journalist and poet from New Jersey who currently lives in central Illinois, has served as a member of the ITMS Board and as Society vice president. She is the author of the spiritual memoir *Atchison Blue* as well as two books of poetry; her most recent book is *How to Be: A Monk and a Journalist Reflect on Living & Dying, Purpose & Prayer, Forgiveness & Friendship*, coauthored with Br. Paul Quenon (2021), a sequel to her *How to Live: What the Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us about Happiness, Meaning, and Community* (2018). She covered stories for *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, *The PBS News Hour* and the Chicago NPR affiliate; her work in print journalism includes reporting for *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *America Magazine*. She is married to retired Illinois Circuit Court Judge Charles Reynard.

**Paul Pynkoski** is an active member of the Church of the Redeemer, Toronto, ON, where he coordinates literature discussions at the Common Table, a drop-in for those who are vulnerable or homeless. He is a founding member of Voices for Peace, an ecumenical conference on peacemaking and has contributed to *The Merton Seasonal*, *The Merton Annual*, *Orthodoxy in Dialogue* and *The Anglican*. He has presented at the International Thomas Merton Society General Meeting and the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, exploring through contemporary music and Merton's writing, the intersection of spirituality, politics and the arts. He has served most recently as secretary of the International Thomas Merton Society.

**Michael Moore** is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A former military chaplain, he is a member of Veterans for Peace and a member of the Wisdom Council for Abbey of the Arts, a virtual monastery and global online community. Since retiring from the Air Force, he has served churches in Minnesota, Florida, Colorado and Georgia and is currently interim/transitional minister at Swift Presbyterian Church in Foley, Alabama. He received a Certificate in Christian Spiritual Formation from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia and is a retreat/course leader for Columbia's Center for Lifelong Learning. He and his wife Denise have three adult sons and currently live in Orange Beach, Alabama, where they enjoy contemplative nature

walks, contemplative photography, reading and leading retreats.

**Emma McDonald Kennedy** is a recent Ph.D. graduate of Boston College, where she studied bioethics, Catholic moral theology and women's health. She holds a Master of Arts in Religion degree from Yale Divinity School. A Daggy Scholar in 2017, she presented a paper at the 2019 ITMS General Meeting on Merton, Robert Lax and Fanny Howe. While at Yale, she coordinated a monthly Thomas Merton Reading Group. She has served most recently as a member of the ITMS Board. She is currently Assistant Professor in the Theology and Religious Studies Department of Villanova University.

**Christopher Pramuk** is the University Chair of Ignatian Thought and Imagination at Regis University, Denver, CO, and served as the 2021-2023 President of the International Thomas Merton Society. His books include *Hope Sings, So Beautiful: Graced Encounters across the Color Line* (2013), *The Artist Alive: Explorations in Music, Art and Theology* (2019), as well as *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (2009), winner of the 2011 ITMS "Louie" award for best contribution to Merton studies, and *At Play in Creation: Merton's Awakening to the Feminine Divine* (2015).

**Rose Marie Berger** is a poet and peace activist who is poetry editor and senior editor for *Sojourners* magazine, for which she writes a regular column. She presented the keynote address, "Direct Transmission of Faith," at the ITMS Sixteenth General Meeting in 2019. She is co-editor of *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and World* (2020) and author of the poetry collection *Bending the Arch* (2019). She lives in Oak View, CA. She is a current member of the ITMS Board.

**Elizabeth Burkemper**, born and raised in Troy, Missouri, is a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School, where she received a Master of Arts in 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. She is interested in snail mail, ecopoetry and practices of cultivating attentiveness and responsiveness to multispecies entanglements in everyday life. A 2017 Daggy Scholar,

she presented on “Countering ‘Strangeness’ in Late Capitalism” at the 2021 ITMS General Meeting. She is a member of the St. Louis Area Chapter of ITMS.

**Alan Kolf** is Faculty in Residence at Baldwin Wallace University in Cleveland, where he is the emeritus holder of the Chair in Faith & Life. He is a lifelong member of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and a Benedictine Oblate. He currently serves on the ITMS Board of Directors. He teaches, speaks and writes about Merton, publishing in *The Merton Seasonal*, and has a particular interest in the work of Ilia Delio. He is author of a new book, *Better Humans, Better Performance*, which uses the classical virtues to boost human performance.

**Marcela Raggio** lives in Mendoza in western Argentina and teaches American literature and specializes in translation studies at Cuyo National University (UNCuyo). She has organized three Argentine Thomas Merton Conferences at UNCuyo, in 2018, 2021 and 2023. She has served as an International Advisor to the ITMS, and published articles in *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal* and elsewhere, and is author of *Thomas Merton, El Monje Traductor (Thomas Merton, the Translator Monk)*.

**Sophronia Scott** is a novelist, essayist and contemplative thinker whose book *The Seeker and the Monk: Everyday Conversations with Thomas Merton* received the ITMS 2021 “Louie” Award. Her presentations on Merton include “Uncovering a Hidden Wholeness: The Essence of Unity & Merton’s Hope for the Human Race,” the 2022 Merton Black History Month Lecture at Bellarmine University. She holds a BA from Harvard and an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her latest book *Wild, Beautiful, and Free*, is a historical novel set during the Civil War.

**Kathleen Witkowska Tarr** is founder of the Alaska Chapter of the ITMS and author of *We Are All Poets Here: Thomas Merton’s Journey to Alaska*. Her essays have appeared in *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton’s Message of Hope* (2015) and *Merton & Indigenous Wisdom* (2019) and in *The Merton Seasonal*. She has presented at the Eighteenth General Meeting of the ITMS (2021) and on the Tuesdays with Merton podcast. She is former Mullin Scholar at USC’s Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies and is a current member of the ITMS board.

Committee chairs for 2023-2025 include: Michael Brennan: Chapters and Affiliates; Jim Robinson: Daggy Scholarship; Paul Pynkoski: International; Judith Valente & Michael Brennan: Membership; Michael Moore: Nominating; Patrick O’Connell: Publications; Michael Moore: Retreats; Paul Pearson: Shannon Fellowship; Christopher Pramuk: Social Concerns and Outreach; Theresa Sandok: Tuesdays with Merton.

### Louies Awarded

The 2023 Thomas Merton Awards, informally known as “Louies,” were presented by outgoing ITMS president Christopher Pramuk on June 25, 2023 during the concluding banquet of the ITMS Eighteenth General Meeting. The award is a bronze bust of Thomas Merton created by sculptor David Kocka. The recipient of the “International” award, given to an individual who has made a significant contribution on an international level to the promotion of Merton’s writings (in English or in translation) and to the presentation of his ideas, is Marcela Raggio. The recipient of the “Thomas Merton” award, given to an individual whose work has made a significant contribution to Merton studies, is Gregory Hillis. The recipient of the “Society” award, given to a member of the ITMS whose distinguished service has contributed to the aims of the Society and the furthering of its goals, is Paul Quenon, OCSO.

**Marcela Raggio** lives in Mendoza in western Argentina and teaches American literature and specializes in translation studies at Cuyo National University (UNCuyo). She has organized three Argentine Thomas Merton Conference at UNCuyo, in 2018, 2021 and 2023. She has served as an International Advisor to the ITMS, and published articles in *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal* and elsewhere, and is author of *Thomas Merton, El Monje Traductor (Thomas Merton, the Translator Monk)*. She is a newly elected member of the ITMS Board of Directors.

**Gregory Hillis** is author of *Man of Dialogue: Thomas Merton’s Catholic Vision* (Liturgical Press, 2021), which was awarded first place in the biography category at the 2022 Catholic Media Association conference, at which it was called “an inspiring read that brings a person into the mind of Thomas Merton and challenges the reader to pursue the spiritual life in earnest.” After fifteen years teaching in the Theol-

ogy Department at Bellarmine University, he recently began his new position as the Executive Director of the Aquinas Center at the Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta.

**Paul Quenon, OCSO** has been a member of the Cistercian community at the Abbey of Gethsemani since 1958, and was a novice under Thomas Merton. He is a photographer, author of a number of books of poetry, co-author with Judith Valente of the book *How to Be* (2021) and winner of the 2019 Catholic Press Association Book Award in the memoir category for his book *In Praise of the Useless Life*. He is the longtime coordinator of the ITMS chapter that meets at the Abbey of Gethsemani, and has served as guide and mentor for Daggy Scholars at numerous ITMS General Meetings as well as at the scholars retreats at the monastery.

#### Shannon Fellowship Awarded

At its June 2023 meeting, the ITMS Board of Directors awarded a 2023-2024 Shannon Fellowship to Augustė Žiėkyte, a first-year Ph.D. student at Vilnius University in Lithuania; drawing on her previous studies in literary theory, semiotics, philology and religious studies, she plans to explore Merton's unpublished work on his religious experiences.

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 included Paul M. Pearson (chair), Fiona Gardner and Joseph Raab.

**The deadline for applications for Shannon Fellowships for 2024-2025 is March 15, 2024.** Awards must be used between July 1, 2024 and July 31, 2025. 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 (or \$40 to include *The Merton Annual*), 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 the following:

- 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 2024 meeting of the ITMS Board of Directors, who will make the final decisions on awards, and results will be communicated to applicants shortly thereafter.

Full details are available on the ITMS web site at: <http://merton.org/ITMS/fellows.aspx>.

#### Daggy Scholarships Awarded

Seventeen young people were able to attend the ITMS Eighteenth General Meeting at St. Mary's



College, Notre Dame, IN as recipients of Daggy Youth Scholarships. These awards, named in honor of the late Robert E. Daggy, long-time director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and resident secretary and second president of the ITMS, cover all registration, room and board expenses for attendance at ITMS General Meetings and include a year's free ITMS membership. The selection committee for this year's scholars was co-chaired by Bobby Nichols and Jim Robinson.

This year's recipients of Daggy Scholarships included: Oliver Ash (New York); Ryan Bell (Colorado); Jordan Bennett (Kentucky); Anne Burkemper (Missouri); Lucy Cobble (Minnesota); Maria Dach (Florida); Laurin Ernst (Germany); Abbi Fraser (New York); Abigail Fruk (Michigan); Silvana Martinez (Indiana); Harley Mathews (Kentucky); Oliver Mesmer (Connecticut); Julia Morrow (Illinois); Mathilde Nielsen (New York); A. Rosys (Kentucky); Michael Snellen (Kentucky); Huili (Kathy) Stout (Ohio); Natalia Tapsak (Pennsylvania); Mia Terracino (Connecticut); Jacob Zorowski (Indiana).

#### ITMS Authors

Mary Frances Coady's new book is *Caryll Houselander: A Biography* (Orbis, 2023) (\$28 paper), the life of the English Catholic author of *A Rocking Horse Catholic*, her autobiography, *This War Is the Passion, The Reed of God* and other influential classics of Catholic spirituality. Biographer Dana Greene writes: "Maise Ward, who knew Caryll Houselander and published many of her books, called her a 'Divine Eccentric.' Houselander suffered much in her short life. She was singular, awkward, and odd, and also the most popular and prolific writer for Catholics in postwar England. She focused on the passion of Christ and how personal suffering might be linked to it. Based on deep research, grounded in the historical and religious context, and written in accessible prose, Mary Frances Coady's biography of Caryll Houselander adds to understanding this 'Divine Eccentric.'" \* \* \* \* \*

Paul R. Dekar's most recent book is *Journeying with Hope into a New Year: Reflections for Advent and Christmas* (Resource Publications, 2022) (\$28 cloth; \$13 paper; \$11 ebook), a collection of 31 daily

meditations for the month of December, including a scriptural text, a brief reflection and a prayer, intended to move the reader beyond the commercialism of the season and to be led to magnify the One who is the reason for celebrating Christmas and making New Year's resolutions.

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William D. Glenn has recently published *I Came Here Seeking a Person: A Vital Story of Grace; One Gay Man's Spiritual Journey* (Paulist Press, 2022) (\$29.95 paper; \$20.07 ebook), a contemporary account of a spiritual journey by a sober, gay, ex-Jesuit clinician and community leader writing at the complicated intersection of faith, psychology, sexuality, culture and exponential social change. Mirabai Starr writes: "This gorgeously-written book . . . is a beckoning, a heart-song, an invitation to discover the face of the divine in each other. This is a magnificent book!" Novelist and Catholic deacon Ron Hansen calls it "a deep and fascinating book worthy of the great Thomas Merton, whom Bill considers his mentor." Spiritual director Sunny Manuel, SJ adds: "Bill shows us how grace lands in the various chapters of his life and leads him to risk whatever it takes to find his way home to deep and lasting love. His story will help us to stay true to our own."

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Padraic O'Hare has recently published *An Invincible Summer Within: Contemplation Practice* (Cascade, 2022) (\$39 cloth; \$24 paper/ebook), a book of sessions of contemplation (meditation) practice suitable for a broad variety of readers and practitioners, featuring material from an influential group of spiritual teachers, particularly Thomas Merton. Author James Carroll writes: "Padraic O'Hare's invitation to an invincible summer is gently irresistible, making available the vast wisdom of the human inwardness that alone points the way to genuine communion. O'Hare is a guide worth trusting, following, and sitting with. His book is both wonderfully practical and deeply mystical. The world's most sacred words are here, but so is the holy silence to which they open." Theologian Francis X. Clooney, SJ adds that the book "offers the fruits of a lifetime of wise meditation told to us and experienced in many years of practice. A

host of spiritual masters hover around this book . . . but most important for O'Hare is the larger community of women and men with whom he has ministered and meditated for so long and so faithfully. This is a rare how-to book that is grounded in deep wisdom that never rests short of the practice."

#### **Sheila Milton (1935-2023)**

Longtime ITMS member Sheila Mary Milton died on February 17, 2023 at the age of eighty-seven. Born in Ripley, Surrey, England on August 19, 1935 to Herbert W. and Bessie (Staines) Milton, she trained as a nurse, studying and working at the prestigious London Hospital, before emigrating to Ottawa, Ontario, where she met Shashanka Shekhar Mitra, a recent Ph.D. graduate from the University of Michigan. After their marriage they lived in Toronto and then in Chicago, where their daughter Nila was born. In 1966, they moved to Kingston, Rhode Island, where their son Shaibal was born the following year. Although their marriage ended in 1974, they continued to raise their children together and remained on close terms until Shashanka's death in 2012. Returning to school, she earned bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Rhode Island, writing her master's thesis on the imagery of bells in the poetry of Thomas Merton, a study subsequently published in volume 2 of *The Merton Annual*. Over the next quarter century, she shared a creative relationship with Christian Hempstead, exploring Roman Catholic mysticism and pacifism and engaging in the community of Christ the King Church in Kingston. She was an early and active member of the International Thomas Merton Society, speaking at conferences throughout the country and writing for publications including *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal* and *The Merton Journal* (England) and contributing to the volumes *Your Heart Is My Hermitage* (1996) and *Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope* (2015). She became a particular expert on Thomas Merton's mother Ruth, writing numerous articles about her and editing *Tom's Book: To Granny with Tom's Best Love – 1916*, Ruth's detailed journal of her oldest son's early years, with a lengthy introduction (2005). She is survived by Nila, her husband Thomas Otilige and grandsons Hugh and Quinn, of Canterbury, Connecticut; by Shaibal

and his partner Patricia Lindsay, of Bay Shore, New York; and by many cousins in the Staines and Milton families, in England, Australia and elsewhere. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on February 25, 2023, at Christ the King Church in Kingston, followed by burial at New Fernwood Cemetery.

#### **Richard R. Berendes (1946-2023)**

Richard R. "Dick" Berendes, a longtime member of the International Thomas Merton Society, died on April 12, 2023 from complications due to an acute liver condition. Born May 6, 1946 in Sparta, Wisconsin to Richard and Rita (Kappeler) Berendes, he was raised in the Wisconsin towns of Summit Ridge, where he was baptized at St. John's Church, and Norwalk. Soon after graduating from Brookwood High School in 1964, he joined the Brothers of St. Pius X and earned an LPN degree from Western Technical College; he served as a nurse at St. Francis Hospital (now Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare) in La Crosse in the 1970s. He subsequently received his RN degree from Finley Hospital School of Nursing in Dubuque, Iowa, and then a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Iowa in Dubuque. After initially becoming friends with Patricia Wieser as coworkers at St. Francis Hospital, then taking separate paths of education in different cities, he met her once again at the hospital in 1975, and they were married on October 2, 1976 at Blessed Sacrament Church in La Crosse. Their two sons Chuck and Gabe were born in 1980 and 1981. In the latter year he became staff nurse at St. Francis Nursing Home, eventually serving as supervisor, director of nursing, and, after earning his administrator's license, took on that position at St. Francis Nursing Home. In the early 1990s, he also earned a Master of Arts degree from Regis University in Denver, CO. He retired in 2009 after 34 years of service to Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare. He was a committed member of the Merton Society, attending Merton conferences throughout the US and in Great Britain, where he and Earl Madary co-presented a paper at the 2002 Oakham Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland entitled "Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day: The Marriage of Contemplation and Action – A Call To Radical Hospi-

tality,” later published in the volume *The World in My Bloodstream: Thomas Merton’s Universal Embrace*. His plans to attend the ITMS Eighteenth General Meeting in June 2023 with his two sons were prevented by his final illness and death.

He was instrumental in the founding and sustenance of The Place of Grace, a Catholic Worker Home in La Crosse, serving meals and praying with people experiencing homelessness. He was a frequent visitor at New Melleray Abbey in Iowa and St. John’s University and Abbey in Minnesota. He served on the Board of Regents for the School of Theology and Seminary at St. John’s from 2008 to 2013. In 2022, he became a committed member of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians, whose membership includes Christian men and women called to a contemplative lifestyle with a desire to model their lifestyle on Cistercian practices and values. He is survived by his wife Patricia Berendes, and his children, Chuck Berendes and his wife Polly and Gabe Berendes and his wife Anne, his grandchildren Charlotte, Louie, Hank, Eddie and Benet; his brother Mike and sister, Sue Horsfall, her husband and their two children. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on April 10, at Mary, Mother of the Church in La Crosse.

#### **Don R. Osborn III (1946-2023)**

Don R. Osborn III, professor emeritus at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY and longtime member of the International Thomas Merton Society, died April 5, 2023 at the age of 76, after a prolonged illness. Born September 2, 1946, he was a graduate of Miami University of Ohio and received a master’s degree and a doctorate in psychology from Northwestern University. He was a member of the Bellarmine Psychology Department for four decades, with a particular focus on social psychology. He was active in community service as a founder and former board member of a local neighborhood association and in the Highlands Connection, a coalition of neighborhoods. He also assisted in a number of early “Elderhostel” programs on Thomas Merton organized by the Bellarmine Thomas Merton Center. He is survived by his wife of 47 years, art historian Maggie Meloy, his son Drew and wife Ginger, his granddaughter Niamh and sister Laurie. A celebration of his life was held on April 10.

#### **Albert Borgmann (1937-2023)**

Albert Borgmann, professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Montana and scholar of contemporary technology, including the contributions of Thomas Merton on the topic, died on May 7, 2023 at the age of 85. Born in Freiburg, Germany on November 23, 1937, he began his college studies at the University of Freiburg and received his undergraduate degree at the University of Texas, a master’s degree in German Literature from the University of Illinois, and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Munich. He met his wife Nancy at the University of Illinois and they married in 1963 in the historic Freiburg Cathedral. After finishing his doctorate he and his wife returned to the United States, and in 1970 he became a US citizen. Following faculty appointments at the University of Illinois (1964-65), DePaul University (1965-67) and the University of Hawaii (1967-70), he began teaching at the University of Montana in 1970, and retired in 2020 after a half-century of teaching there. Among his many books are *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1984), *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (1992), *Holding onto Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium* (1999), *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (2003) and *Real American Ethics: Taking Responsibility for Our Country* (2006). In 2013 he received the Golden Eurydice Award for his contributions to philosophy. University of Montana Philosophy Department Chair Armond Duwell wrote: “Albert was a monumental figure in philosophy of technology. His seminal work *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* forever changed the discussion in philosophy of technology.” He was the keynote speaker for a conference on Sept. 23-24, 2011 at Bellarmine University entitled “Contemplation in a Technological Era: Thomas Merton’s Insight for the Twenty-First Century.” The address was subsequently published as “Contemplation in a Technological Era: Learning from Thomas Merton” in *The Merton Annual* vol. 24; in his Introduction to that volume Gray Matthews wrote: “As our practice of contemplation deepens, Borgmann argues, our capacity to confront and respond to the fullness of reality increases in

wisdom and in communion with others.” His funeral was celebrated at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Missoula on May 11. He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife Nancy, who died in 2009. He is survived by his three daughters, Andrea, Caitlin and Kendra and their families, including six grandchildren.

#### **Willy Slavin (1940-2023)**

Willy Slavin, a priest of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, Scotland and a well-known and beloved figure in British Merton circles, died on July 21, 2023 at the age of 83. Born in Bristol and raised in Glasgow, he attended Blairs College Seminary in Aberdeenshire, studied for the priesthood at the Scots College in Rome and subsequently studied psychology at the University of Glasgow. He was a tireless advocate for the poor and marginalized, an educational psychologist in the schools of the East End of Glasgow, founder of the Scottish Drugs Forum, a chaplain in Glasgow’s Barlinnie Prison for years, a missionary in Bangladesh and parish priest in various parishes in the archdiocese. After retiring in his 70s he lived as a hermit in a hut on the Falkland estate in Fife and wrote a memoir, *Life is Not a Long Quiet River*, published in 2019. He hosted a meeting of the Thomas Merton Society in his parish of St Simon’s in the West End of Glasgow. His article “Merton’s Prophetic Voice – A Meditation for Advent” appeared in the Advent 2015 issue of *The Merton Journal* (22.2), and a number of book and film reviews appeared in the same periodical.

#### **Third Argentine Merton Conference**

On September 7-8, 2023 the Third Argentine Thomas Merton Conference was held at the UNCuyo University in Mendoza, Argentina, with both in-person and virtual participants. The opening session featured a welcome by Dr. Gustavo Zonana, Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Humanities and Prof. Marcela Raggio, conference organizer, followed by a musical performance by UNCuyo students Javier Avellaneda and Valentina Toranzo. Presentations included:

- María Helena Barrera-Agarwal (Ecuador): “Taller y Charla sobre Thomas Merton y Carrera Andrade: Epistolario y Poesía” (Workshop & Discussion on Thomas Merton & Carrera Andrade: Letters & Poetry);
- Andrea Cruz (Argentina). “The Case Study of the

Role of the Translation of the Poem “Peace” written by Thich Nhat Hahn under the Light of Thomas Merton’s Theory of Translation of Poetry”;

- Dominiek Lootens (Germany): “Thomas Merton, Women’s Spirituality and Ecowomanism”;
- Lilian Nasserian (Kenya): “Communicating Equality in Patriarchal Society”;
- María Paz Sánchez (Spain): “Presentación sobre Textos Mertonianos” (Presentation on Mertonian Texts);
- Anne Pearson (USA): “Where Custom and Law Systematically Conceal Rights: Thomas Merton and Land Rights Violations”;
- Paul Pearson (USA): “Wisdom Cries the Dawn Deacon: Thomas Merton and the Ox Mountain Parable”;
- Paul Pynkoski (Canada): “Ecology and Resistance in Thomas Merton”;
- Andrea Roust and Emilia Kark (Argentina): “Unveiling Nature’s Significance through the Eyes of Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Merton: A Call for Ecological Responsibility”;
- Cristóbal Serrán Pagan y Fuentes (USA): “At Home in the World: Thomas Merton and Rosemary Ruether on the Beloved Creation”;
- Guadalupe Zorrilla (Argentina): “Conciencia Social: Implicaciones de la Filosofía Educativa de Thomas Merton en el Mundo Postcovid” (Social Conscience: Implications of the Educational Philosophy of Thomas Merton in the Post-covid World).

#### **Tuesdays with Merton Series**

The Tuesdays with Merton webinar series, cosponsored by the International Thomas Merton Society and the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, IN, takes place on the second Tuesday of each month. Initiated by the ITMS Board in collaboration with the Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary’s College, a highly successful third year of monthly “Tuesdays with Merton” is available on Zoom and continues to attract a substantial audience. Speakers for 2022-2023 have included Daniel Horan, OFM, Julianne E. Wallace, Alan Kolp, David Golemboski, Emma McDonald, Robert Grip, Mary Frohlich, RSCJ, Patrick F. O’Connell and Jim Robinson. On September 12, Mark C. Meade spoke on “*The Seven Storey*



*Mountain at Seventy-Five: Classic or Déclassé.*” On October 10, Cassidy Hall will give a presentation entitled “Queering Thomas Merton”; the December 12 presentation will feature Gray Matthews speaking on “Contemplative Mayhem.” For further information and to register for these programs, see: <http://merton.org/ITMS/TWM/>. To view past presentations in the series see: <http://merton.org/ITMS/TWM/TWM-Archive.aspx>.

#### **Inaugural Fourth & Walnut Lecture**

On November 14, at 7 p.m. (EST), Ilia Delio, OSF will deliver the first annual Fourth and Walnut Lecture, entitled “Merton’s Christophany and the Second Axial Monk,” co-sponsored by the International Thomas Merton Society and the Center for the Study of Spirituality of St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, IN, in Carroll Auditorium, Madeleva Hall on the St. Mary’s Campus. The free lecture will be available both in person and on-line. In her presentation, she will discuss Thomas Merton’s epiphany on the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets as a significant breakthrough into Christ-consciousness and the opening up of what Raimon Panikkar calls, “Christophany.” This new consciousness propelled an inversion of Merton’s monastic life toward ever deepening relationships with a world of complexity. Relying on insights from Carl Jung, Raimon Panikkar and Teilhard de Chardin, she will explore Merton’s Christophany as a radical theology, a mutational disruption of the Neoplatonic quest, and the ushering in of a new monastic consciousness reflective of the second axial age, marked by the hyperpersonal monk of planetary consciousness. For further information and to register, see: [merton.org/ITMS/Walnut.aspx](http://merton.org/ITMS/Walnut.aspx).

#### **Owen Merton Exhibition in Bermuda**

In mid-December 2023, an exhibition of the paintings of Bermuda by Owen Merton will open at the Bermuda National Gallery in Hamilton and will run through mid-August 2024. This exhibition will mark the first time that these paintings by Thomas Merton’s father, done while he and his young son were on the island in 1922-23, will be shown in Bermuda itself. The paintings are on loan from the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University. For further information see the Gallery website at: <https://bng.bm>.

#### **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 March 21-23, 2024 at the Westin Buckhead Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, GA. The conference is a gathering of 500-600 scholar-teachers committed to literature, writing, college teaching and related fields. The theme for this fifty-third annual meeting is “Transformations,” 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 transformations: from monastic silence to cultural criticism; Merton’s evolving positions on race, nonviolence, technology, environment, etc.; Merton’s adaptations: from personal journals to published texts (e.g. *Conjectures*); Merton’s poetic visions and revisions (e.g. *Geography of Lograire*); Merton’s developing theological insights.

Abstracts of 200-500 words for a 6-8 page paper (15-minute presentation time) are due by November 1, 2023, submitted to: <https://www.conftool.pro/cea2024>. Participants must be members of the CEA (\$50/year) by January 2024. 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: <http://cea-web.org>.

#### **Mertonians Receive Climate Awards**

On July 27, at the closing session of the “*Laudato Si’* and the U.S. Catholic Church” conference at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, the Catholic Climate Covenant announced the winners of its first group of U.S. *Laudato Si’* Champions Awards, honoring faith and environment leaders, including two figures with close connections to Thomas Merton. Catholic Climate Covenant is a national nonprofit that strives to promote environmental sustainability and ecological conversion among U.S. Catholic communities through education, outreach and advocacy in

response to the Church's call to care for the creation, our common home (see <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org>).

Winner in the individual category was former International Thomas Merton Society president Kathleen Deignan, CND, cited as "known for exceptional leadership and contributions to environmental education and advocacy."

Eric Anglada of Cuba City, Wisconsin, a 2007 ITMS Daggy Scholar whose entrance into the Catholic Church on December 10, 2006 was largely prompted by his reading of Thomas Merton, along with his wife Brenna Cussen Anglada, received the family award for their "exceptional contributions to the St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm and Agronomic University, as well as a strong commitment to the local community."

### **TMS Conference Scheduled**

The Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will hold its biennial conference entitled "Thomas Merton: Back among Friends" on April 5-7, 2024 at Rydal Hall, a Christian retreat center located in Ambleside, Cumbria, in the English Lake District. The event marks the return of the TMS meetings after the cancellation of the 2020 and 2022 conferences due to the coronavirus pandemic. The program has been conceived as a response to Merton's invitation, at the end of *New Seeds of Contemplation*, to "forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance." Speakers will include Sam Cross, Daniel P. Horan, OFM, Victor Niachayeu, Anne Pearson, Paul M. Pearson, Sonia Petisco Martínez, Paul Pynkoski and Kathleen Tarr, with special guest Miggy Scott. For further information, contact the TMSGBI at: [celebration@thomas-merton-society.org.uk](mailto:celebration@thomas-merton-society.org.uk).

### **Merton Happenings**

Over the past year, Sylvia Grevel has been leading a series of day retreats at the Benedictine Monastery of New Norcia, West Australia on the life and work of Thomas Merton. The topics were: "Called to Freedom" (October 2022); "Called to Silence & Solitude" (December 2022); "Called to Be a True Self" (February 2023); "Called to Relationship & Prayer" (April 2023); "Answering in Creativity" (June 2023); "Answering in Sophia Wisdom" (July/2023); "An-

swering in Inclusivity & Interreligious Dialogue" (August 2023). The series will be repeated in 2024; for further information see [www.sylviaagrevel.com](http://www.sylviaagrevel.com) or the monastery website at: <https://www.newnorcia.com.au>.

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On April 30, The Contemplative Society (<https://www.contemplative.org>) sponsored a one-day online retreat led by James Finley entitled "Exploring the Mysticism of Thomas Merton."

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On May 10, Douglas Hertler performed his one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity" at the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto.

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On June 2, Vaughn J. Fayle, OFM spoke on "Thomas Merton and his Four Freedom Songs" at Maryhouse, the Catholic Worker house in lower Manhattan, New York City.

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On June 2, St. Augustine's Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio, hosted a discussion by Hugh Turley, co-author of *The Martyrdom of Thomas Merton: An Investigation* and *Thomas Merton's Betrayers: The Case against Abbot James Fox and Author John Howard Griffin*.

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On June 6, Hugh Turley gave a talk on his book *Thomas Merton's Betrayers: The Case against Abbot James Fox and Author John Howard Griffin* at the Leo C. Byrne Residence, in St. Paul, MN.

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On June 8, Hugh Turley gave a presentation entitled "Was Thomas Merton a Christian Martyr?" at the Lexington Landing, St. Paul, MN.

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On June 3-16 Susan Nowak SSJ, Christine Bochen and Jamie Fazio led a pilgrimage program for Nazareth University students to Rome, Florence and Assisi, with particular attention to the key sites for Thomas Merton's 1933 visit to Rome, as described in *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

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From September 16 through November 25, Ron Dart is teaching a graduate course (in-person and via

Zoom) for St. Stephen's University of New Brunswick, Canada entitled "Thomas Merton: Contemplative Prophet."

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On September 17, Douglas Hertler performed his one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity" at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center of Pittsburgh as part of a celebration honoring Center co-founder Molly Rush, at which a habit worn by Thomas Merton was presented to Paul M. Pearson, director of the Bellarmine University Thomas Merton Center, to be permanently housed in the Center's archives.

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On September 30, Sophronia Scott led a study day entitled "Thomas Merton and the Transformative Power of Love" at the Meditatio Centre in London, UK, sponsored by the World Community for Christian Meditation.

### Upcoming Events

On October 13-15, Gary Hall will teach a residential course entitled "From Communication to Communion: Thomas Merton's Writing and the Desire to (Re) connect" at Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Flintshire, UK; the program will also include an open lecture on "Merton as Theological Companion in the Midst of Trouble" on October 14; for further information see: <https://www.gladstoneslibrary.org/events>.

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On November 12, Hugh Turley will give a presentation at the Church of the Ascension & St. Agnes in Washington, DC entitled "Thomas Merton: Peacemaker – How He Lived, How He Died, and Why it Matters."

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On November 21, the Catholic Studies Unit of the American Academy of Religion will sponsor a session at the AAR Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX entitled "Sense and Saintability: A Roundtable Reimagining the Multisensory Spiritual Labors of Thomas Merton." Participants will include Rachel Lindsey (Saint Louis University), Alda Balthrop-Lewis (Australian Catholic University), Stephanie Redekop (University of Toronto) and Brian Harnetty (Ohio State University), with a response by Andrew

Prevot (Boston College) and Jennifer Scheper Hughes (University of California, Riverside) as president.

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On November 23, Gary P. Hall will give an online presentation sponsored by the Fintry Trust of London entitled "Thomas Merton and the Complex Art of Simply Living"; for further information, see: <https://thefintrytrust.org.uk/events/simply-living>.

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On January 19-21, 2024, Br. Ephrem Arcement, OHC will lead a retreat entitled "In Silence with Thomas Merton" at Holy Cross Episcopal Monastery, West Park, NY, the inaugural presentation of a new "In Silence . . ." retreat series exploring the life and spirituality of a particular mystic of the Christian tradition. The suggested donation for the weekend is \$350. To register, contact the Holy Cross Guesthouse office by phone (845-384-6660, ext. 3002) or email ([guesthouse@hcmnet.org](mailto:guesthouse@hcmnet.org)).

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On February 20, 2024, the Eighteenth Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture will be given at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY by Dr. Raymond Carr, a visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School; for further information see: [www.merton.org/Events/#RC](http://www.merton.org/Events/#RC).

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On February 24, Douglas Hertler will perform his one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity" at Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center in West Hartford CT; for further information see: <https://www.holyfamilyretreat.org/calendar/cce-enrichment-february2024>.

### Chapter and Affiliate News

The Chicago Chapter of the ITMS has found a new meeting place at Euclid United Methodist Church in Oak Park, IL and will resume its meetings after the covid-imposed hiatus beginning on October 15, 2023 and scheduling future meetings for the third Sunday of subsequent months. At the October meeting, Tony Sorgi will speak to the group on "Watching for the Beloved: Bringing the Arts of Christian Spirituality to a Troubled World." 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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On September 12, the Belmar, NJ ITMS Chapter hosted an online presentation with biographer Hugh Turley entitled “Why What You Think You Know about Thomas Merton’s Death Is Wrong.” At its October 3 meeting, the chapter will begin its reading and discussion of Merton’s book *The Way of Chuang Tzu*. For further information contact chapter coordinator Greg Ryan at: [GJRyan@wccm.org](mailto:GJRyan@wccm.org) or 732-681-6238.

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On September 30, the Corpus Christi New York City ITMS Chapter hosted a presentation by Jim Robinson entitled “Practicing Sacred Reciprocity: Insights from Thomas Merton and Robin Wall Kimmerer” at the church, in observance of the Season of Creation. For further information see the chapter website at: <https://www.thomasmertonnyc.org>.

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The Encino, CA ITMS Chapter meets on the third Sunday of each month for prayer, study and discussion at the Holy Spirit Retreat Center. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for October 15, November 19, December 17 and January 21. For further information contact chapter coordinator Sr. Chris Machado, SSS at: 818-285-3354.

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The Grand Rapids Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society met on August 9 the Richard L. Root Library in Kentwood and continued its discussion of Merton’s *New Seeds of Contemplation*. For further information contact chapter coordinator Bill Murphy at: [bill@thomasmertonsociety-grandrapids.org](mailto:bill@thomasmertonsociety-grandrapids.org) or see the chapter website: [www.thomasmertonsociety-grandrapids.org](http://www.thomasmertonsociety-grandrapids.org).

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The Father Boniface Hardin Indianapolis Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society meets on the third Wednesday of each month (except December) at the Center for Interfaith Cooperation. At its August meeting, Fr. Dan Horan, OFM was the guest speaker. Dr. Thomas Brown was the speaker at the September 20 meeting. The topic for the October meeting will be Merton and nature. At the November meeting, Mark Meade will address the group on: “*The Seven Story Mountain 75 Years Later*.” For further information contact chapter coordinator Mark Hudson at

[markchudson@gmail.com](mailto:markchudson@gmail.com) or Virgil Boyd at [vibojr@gmail.com](mailto:vibojr@gmail.com).

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The summer 2023 quarterly meeting of the North-Central Connecticut ITMS Chapter was held via Zoom on June 21. The evening included a review and dialogue on Thomas Merton’s essay entitled “The Good Samaritan,” led by chapter coordinator Mike Smoolka. On September 20, at the fall meeting, also online, the group listened to the recording of Merton’s conference “The Feminine Mystique: Focusing on the Whole Person,” followed by discussion. For further information contact chapter coordinator Mike Smoolka at: [msmoolca@hotmail.com](mailto:msmoolca@hotmail.com); or visit the chapter homepage at: [www.invalumen.org/northctitms.html](http://www.invalumen.org/northctitms.html).

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On April 2, a session on “Merton & Jazz” was held at Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, BC, co-sponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Canada. On May 26, the Society sponsored a presentation by Douglas Christie entitled “Spirituality and Community in a Time of Loss” at St. Andrew’s United Church in North Vancouver (rescheduled from March 10). On May 27, Douglas Christie led a one-day retreat (also rescheduled from March) entitled “The Desert Within,” focused on the image of the desert (long important to both Jewish and Christian religious identities and central to the Christian mystical tradition) to consider what it might mean to incorporate silence, stillness and solitude into one’s own spiritual practices and to ask how such practices can help recover a sense of hope and meaning in a world that too often feels devoid of both. For further information see the Society web site: [www.merton.ca](http://www.merton.ca), or contact Susan Cowan, Community Relations Director, at [tmssc@telus.net](mailto:tmssc@telus.net) or 604-988-8835.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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*The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:*  
**[www.merton.org/ITMS](http://www.merton.org/ITMS)**