

International Thomas Merton Society

NEWSLETTER

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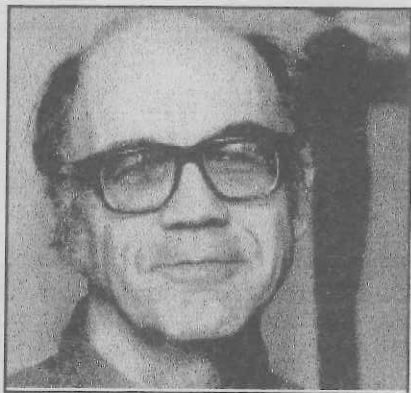


Art: Jim Cantrell

Keynote Speaker: Jim Douglass

Author, theologian and peace activist James Douglass, a friend and correspondent of Thomas Merton, will be the keynote speaker for the Fifth General Meeting of the ITMS, to be held at Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama, June 12-15, 1997.

Douglass is the author of five books on the theology and practice of Christian nonviolence: *The Nonviolent Cross* (1968), *Resistance and Contemplation* (1972), *Lightning East to West* (1980), *Dear Gandhi: Now What?* (with Shelley Douglass) (1988), and *The Nonviolent Coming of God* (1991). His most recent book received the 1992 Pax Christi Book Award as well as the 1992 First Place Award for books on spirituality



Jim Douglass, Fifth General Meeting Keynote Speaker

from the Catholic Press Association.

From 1963 to 1965, Jim Douglass served as a theological advisor on questions

of nuclear war and conscientious objection to Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council in Rome. He first met Thomas Merton in 1965 while teaching at Bellarmine College in Louisville, KY. They continued to correspond when Douglass moved to British Columbia while writing *The Nonviolent Cross*, a seminal work on Christian nonviolence, and later to Hawaii. Merton's letters to Douglass are included in *The Hidden Ground of Love* (1985), the first volume of Merton's correspondence. As William H. Shannon comments in the headnote to these letters, Douglass's "thinking and writing have been strongly influenced by the New Testament, and by the writings of Gandhi and of Merton. The fact that he named one of his children Thomas Merton Douglass is perhaps as much a sign of his hopes for his son as it is a tribute to Merton."

Douglass has also taught at the University of Hawaii and in the Program for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence at the University of Notre Dame. In 1977, with his wife Shelley, he helped found the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action alongside the Trident nuclear submarine base near Seattle, Washington. Ground Zero developed an extended community of people in 250 towns and cities across the country who vigiled along the railroad route of Trident nuclear weapons shipments. In the course of the nonviolent campaign to stop Trident, Jim Douglass served a year and a half in jail for acts of civil disobedience. The witness of his words and actions was a strong influence on the decision of Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen to become an outspoken advocate of nonviolence and nuclear

disarmament.

In 1989 the Douglasses moved to Birmingham, Alabama to continue their work on behalf of peace and justice. In 1993 they founded Mary's House, a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality in Birmingham for homeless families. They are members of a predominantly African-American Catholic parish, and have been prominent opponents of policies based on environmental racism, which locates hazardous waste sites in minority neighborhoods.

Since moving to Alabama Jim Douglass has been involved in a number of efforts to promote peace in the Middle East and in the former Yugoslavia. He has taken part in a series of peace walks in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan, and in Iraq soon after the Persian Gulf War. He has visited Sarajevo and Belgrade, and has worked on behalf of an interfaith pilgrimage of religious leaders to the sites of the Balkan War. The Douglasses have recently been active in "Voices in the Wilderness," a campaign to end UN sanctions against the people of Iraq, which according to a recent *New York Times* report may have contributed to the deaths of over a half million Iraqi children since the end of the Gulf War. They write, "We support the search for nonviolent international pressure, but starving children does not seem nonviolent to us." Jim Douglass travelled to Iraq most recently in February, 1996.

Jim and Shelley Douglass have received the Adin Ballou Peace Award from the Unitarian Universalist Peace Fellowship, the Martin Luther King Award from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Paul Beeson Peace Award from the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Pope Paul VI Teacher of Peace Award from Pax Christi USA.

Arline Newton (1926-1996)

The ITMS lost one of its key supporters

and contributors when Arline Newton of Lincoln, Nebraska died on May 6, 1996, after a lengthy illness.

Arline was the first ITMS Chapters Coordinator, and was instrumental in the founding and growth of chapters throughout the United States and abroad during the years (1988-1993) in which she served the Society in this position. She also served two terms as a member of the ITMS Board of Directors (1989-1993) and was the leader of the local ITMS Chapter in Lincoln, where she was also active as a member of the Interfaith Council, the American Cancer Society, and the local Cancer Support Group.

Arline is survived by her husband Clarence, her sons Daniel and David, and five grandchildren.

At the Fourth General Meeting of the ITMS at St. Bonaventure University in June 1995, Arline received a "Louie" award as "a member of the ITMS whose distinguished service has contributed to the aims of the Society and to the furthering of its goals."

The ITMS made a donation in memory of Arline to the Peoples City Mission in Lincoln. Individual ITMS members or local chapters who wish to make donations may send them to the mission at 110 Q Street, PO Box 80636, Lincoln, NE 68501-9917. The Lincoln ITMS Chapter made a donation in memory of Arline to the ITMS, which will be used to provide funds for needy attendees at ITMS General Meetings.

The program for Arline's Memorial Service, held May 11, 1996 at the Vine Congregational United Church of Christ in Lincoln, included a passage from Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation* which beautifully captures both Arline's appreciation for Merton and her own work in planting seeds of appreciation in members of ITMS chapters throughout the country and the world: "Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants *something* in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and

wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity and love." Certainly that "good soil" characterizes the life and work of Arline Newton.

Merton, Lax & St. Bona's

Many ITMS members attending the Fourth General Meeting at St. Bonaventure University in June, 1995 became aware of some of the rich store of Merton materials available in the archives of St. Bonaventure's Friedsam Memorial Library. Since that time, a new development has taken place: the Merton-Lax room, located in the library basement across from the archives, has recently been opened. Due to the efforts of Library Director Paul Spaeth and Assistant University Archivist Lorraine Welsh, all of the library's Merton materials, as well as those of his close friend Robert Lax, have now been gathered together in a single room, where they can be conveniently consulted and studied by researchers and others interested in Merton.

The most significant primary materials at St. Bonaventure are various journals, class notes and other premonastic writings composed while Merton was studying at Columbia or teaching at St. Bonaventure. The Merton Room has bound photocopies available of Merton's handwritten "Perry Street Journal" of 1939-1940; the handwritten "St. Bonaventure Journal" of 1940-1941 and the typed "Brown Journal" transcriptions from the same period; the Fitzgerald File (named for the seminarian to whom Merton gave the material), a varied collection of early novel fragments, journal entries, poems, essays, a book review, and notes on reading; the typescript of "The Labyrinth," an almost complete version of Merton's early unpublished novel; class notes from Columbia on poetry, on medieval, seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century

literature, on romanticism and romantic poets; and teaching notes from Merton's St. Bonaventure English courses. While the originals of these precious materials are kept in the library archives, they are available for consultation should this be necessary.

The Merton-Lax room also contains a very extensive collection of published materials by and about Merton, conveniently shelved according to the system of the Breit-Daggy Bibliography (which Lorraine Welsh calls "second only to the Bible around here"). The collection includes not only books, many of them rare and/or first editions, but a large number of Merton articles, magazines containing original publication of Merton poems, reviews of Merton works, and critical studies of Merton from various journals.

Certainly one of the most important resources of the collection is the group of more than seventy books once owned by Merton and donated by him to the St. Bonaventure Library when he left for Gethsemani in December, 1941. Some of the volumes include his signature and a few have marginal notations as well. The poetry of Donne, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Yeats among other English writers, as well as works by such foreign-language authors as Cocteau, Gongora, Lorca and Pirandello, are among the books, many of which had remained unnoticed for decades in the library stacks.

The room also houses eighteen boxes of miscellaneous Merton materials, including offprints, typescripts of preliminary versions of articles, poems and books, copies of monastic lecture notes, some with extensive handwritten annotations, and other items. Much of this material was sent by Merton to his friend Fr. Irenaeus Herscher, the longtime St. Bonaventure librarian; Merton's agent, Naomi Burton Stone, has also donated much valuable material, including extensive correspondence between herself and Merton, to which access is restricted during her lifetime.

In addition to this very significant collection of Merton materials, the Merton-

Lax Room also houses what is one of the two or three most extensive archival collections of material by and about the poet Robert Lax, Olean native and Thomas Merton's Columbia classmate, who first brought his friend to St. Bonaventure. As well as a comprehensive collection of hard-to-find Lax books, chapbooks and broadsides, St. Bonaventure houses the bulk of Lax's correspondence.

The Merton-Lax Room is open to Merton students and researchers weekdays between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. For further information, contact Lorraine Welsh, Assistant University Archivist, Friedsam Memorial Library, St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY 14770, or call (716) 375-2323.

Contributions Sought

ITMS member Pen Lytle is assembling for publication a collection of personal stories of the ways in which individuals have been influenced by Thomas Merton in their spiritual journeys. For more information, or to submit material, contact Penelope Lytle, 26 Radnor Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, or call (412)-823-2995.

Chapter News

Since its inception in 1993, the St. Louis Chapter of the ITMS has sponsored a reading group which meets about five times a year to discuss a chosen book by or about Merton. The group is currently reading and discussing *New Seeds of Contemplation*. Previous works discussed include *The Asian Journal*, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, and William Shannon's Merton biography, *Silent Lamp*. "Merton Retreats" are also held throughout the year. For information contact **Pauline Pearson**, 2220 Oriole Drive, Florissant, MO 63033.

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On Sunday afternoon, February 11, the New Mexico Thomas Merton Society sponsored a reflection on Merton's writings about St. Francis of Assisi and his followers, led by Natalie Owings. She is a member of the Northern New Mexico Animal Protection Society, which provides a sanctuary for sick, wounded and homeless animals until they can be adopted by caring people. She is also in the process of becoming a member of the Third Order of St. Francis.

For information, contact **Peggy Jones**, 825 East Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

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The Auburn, NY chapter of the ITMS sponsored a Merton study day on April 27 featuring ITMS President Pat O'Connell, who spoke on Merton as prophet and sage and on Merton's paschal spirituality. For information, contact **Tom Fogarty**, 65 Walnut St., Auburn, NY 13021.

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The Washington DC chapter of the ITMS recently sponsored a presentation by Glenn Hinson, who spoke on the significance of Merton for his own faith journey. For information, contact **Mary K. Stanford**, 5953 Searl Terrace, Bethesda, MD 20816.

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The Massachusetts chapter of the ITMS held its May 26 meeting at St. Joseph's Abbey, in Spencer, MA, at the invitation of Fr. Basil Pennington, OCSO. For information, contact **Ed Farley**, 262 Wentworth Ave, Lowell, MA 01852.

Huston Smith on Merton

Religion scholar, Huston Smith, presented the third annual Thomas Merton Commemoration at the Midtown Arts Center, St. Louis, Missouri on Friday, May 10. His topic was: "In the Tracks of Thomas Merton."

Send ITMS Newsletter contributions to:
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