

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 5, No. 1

Spring 1998



Art: Jlm Cantrell

## Bob Daggy Remembered

**"I picked up my mother's Bible the day  
she died, and a slip of paper fell out  
on which she had copied a Chinese proverb.**

**It was so like her and it has helped me  
(it also has a Merton ring to it):**

**You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow  
from flying over your head.  
but you can keep them  
from nesting in your hair"**

**--Robert Daggy to Harriet Hope  
Summer, 1992**

*The following tributes to the late Dr. Robert E. Daggy, long-time director of the Thomas Merton Studies Center at Bellarmine College, editor of The Merton Seasonal, Resident Secretary and second president of the International Thomas Merton Society, tireless supporter of Merton scholarship and Merton scholars for more than two decades, were written by Msgr. William H. Shannon, the founding president of the ITMS, and by Dr. Thomas Del Prete, the current president. Dr. Daggy died on December 15, 1997 and was buried at the Abbey of Gethsemani on December 17.*

I have among my files of letters a thick folder holding my correspondence with Bob Daggy. We met for the first time at Vancouver in 1978 during a Merton conference there which celebrated the tenth anniversary of Thomas Merton's death.

The first letter I have from Bob is dated July 16, 1979. In this letter he told me that he had arranged for me to stay at Lenihan Hall for a visit to the Merton Studies Center that I had planned for August. That was one of many visits during which I came to know Robert Daggy, as we began to build a friendship.

I prize a letter he wrote me on June 28, 1982, in which he said: "One of the fringe benefits of this job has been that it has brought me a number of friendships that I value. . . . What I think I appreciate most about our friendship is the ease with which we conduct it. I thought after you left that each time you come, no matter how long the interval between visits, it's almost as if you hadn't been away and as though no time had passed. That is rare and I am glad for it."

When I first came to know Bob, I thought of him as a gifted archivist by profession and a secular humanist in thought. He knew the Merton collection thoroughly. His superb knowledge of the collection was most helpful to scholars who came to the Merton Studies Center to do research. It seemed clear to me that his principal interest in Merton was bibliographical and biographical. Those were the areas in which he first started writing about Merton.

I wondered when Merton's thinking was going to influence his own. I felt that eventually it would. I believe I know when it happened. It was 1991. The ITMS was meeting for the second time. The meeting was in Rochester, New York. Bob was president of the Society and at the banquet gave the

presidential address. That address was different from anything he had produced before. For the first time, to my recollection at least, he was grappling with Merton's thought and faith. Bob began to go beyond biography and bibliography to areas of Merton thought. Before long he was giving Merton retreats! This was something he would surely have shied away from in his early days at Bellarmine College.

How much he shared Merton's faith, we shall probably never know. But I am convinced that he did share it in some way. I can think of no other explanation for the wonderful calm and inner peace with which he lived his last days of this mortal existence. In dying he passed from death to the life that ultimately is the only life worth living. Our love goes with him. Farewell, sweet prince! Till we meet once more!

William H. Shannon

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Undoubtedly, you, like me and so many others, recognize and deeply appreciate the unique role that Bob Daggy played in Merton studies and in the Merton Society. It is unlikely that anyone will ever do more than Bob did to ensure that Merton's legacy was mined responsibly for the benefit of scholars and the world at large. And few will ever accumulate and communicate so well the detailed knowledge of Merton's life and work that Bob had.

I first met Bob face-to-face when I arrived - unfortunately unannounced - at the Merton Center to do some research. I was a rather naive graduate student, and had unwittingly violated protocol with my unexpected arrival. The Merton Center gatekeeper eyed me warily, but allowed me to stay. I came to understand Bob's posture as gatekeeper as a matter of guardianship. The riches of the Merton archive were safe with Bob.

Bob was one of the founders and leaders of the International Merton Society. His efforts

helped guide the growth of the Society during the first decade of its existence. Even in illness he never stopped trying to help, and was ever-responsive to the needs of the membership of the Society, including the needs of the many members he knew well, cared deeply about, and called his friends. I am glad to have a photo of us taken on the day he was made aware that a room in the Merton Center would be dedicated in his name, just a couple short months before he died.

Bob was, and will ever remain, one of the central characters of the Society. We can be grateful that his journey took him to Bellarmine and from there to so many of us.

Thomas Del Prete

#### Fourth and Walnut Marker

To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Thomas Merton's "Fourth And Walnut" experience, a historical marker was placed at this location in Louisville (now Fourth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard) at a ceremony on March 18, 1998.

Following noon Mass at the Cathedral of the Assumption and a procession to the site, Bellarmine College students read the famous passage from Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* describing his experience of spiritual identification with the passersby in the busy Louisville shopping district. After brief remarks by Mary Becker, chair of the Thomas Merton Center Foundation, which provided financial support for the project, the bronze plaque from the Kentucky Historical Society was unveiled.

The text on the marker reads: SIDE 1 : "THOMAS MERTON (1915-68) Trappist monk, poet, social critic, and spiritual writer. Born in Prades, France. After education at Cambridge, and Columbia Univ., he entered Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, Ky., 1941; ordained as priest, 1949. His autobiography

The Seven Storey Mountain (1948), earned international acclaim. He is buried in abbey cemetery." SIDE 2: "A REVELATION Merton had a sudden insight at this corner Mar. 18, 1958, that led him to redefine his monastic identity with greater involvement in social justice issues. He was 'suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people....' He found them 'walking around shining like the sun.' Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, a reception was held in the auditorium of the Cathedral. Initiative for the project came from Rev. George Kilcourse, Bellarmine College theology professor and ITMS Board member.

#### James Laughlin (1914-1997)

James Laughlin, Thomas Merton's first publisher and longtime friend, died November 12, 1997 at the age of 83, of complications following a stroke.

Heir of the founder of the fourth largest steel company in America, Laughlin began the New Directions Publishing Company in 1936 while still in college at Harvard. Among the authors published by Laughlin were such outstanding literary figures as Djuna Barnes, Vladimir Nabokov, Ezra Pound, Delmore Schwartz, Dylan Thomas, Nathaniel West, Tennessee Williams and William Carlos Williams. Critic Brendan Gill called him "the greatest publisher America ever had."

Merton's first published volume, *Thirty Poems*, was issued by Laughlin in 1944, and he continued as the publisher of Merton's poetry through the appearance of the *Collected Poems* in 1977 and *Eighteen Poems* in 1986. He also published such significant Merton prose works as *Seeds of Contemplation* (1949) and its revision, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1961), *Bread in the Wilderness* (1953), *The Wisdom of the Desert* (1960), *Gandhi on Nonviolence*

(1965), *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (1965), *Raids on the Unspeakable* (1966), *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968), *The Asian Journal* (1973) and *The Literary Essays* (1981). A total of twenty-six volumes of Merton's work appeared under the New Directions imprint. Laughlin also served as a trustee of the Merton Legacy Trust, which has been responsible for overseeing the publication of all Merton materials since his death.

According to *The New York Times*, "Because of his willingness to listen to all suggestions and his close friendship with many of his authors, he thought of them as 'an extended family'"; this family certainly included Merton, whom Laughlin visited numerous times at Gethsemani. *Thomas Merton and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, edited by David Cooper, was published in 1997 by W. W. Norton in a series that also includes Laughlin's correspondence with such luminaries as Henry Miller, Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, Schwartz and William Carlos Williams. Laughlin is survived by his widow, Gertrude Huston Laughlin, by his daughter and two sons, and by six grandchildren.

#### Walter H. Capps (1934-1997)

United States Congressman and Merton editor Walter Holden Capps died suddenly of a heart attack on October 28, 1997. A former professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he authored or edited fourteen books, Capps was elected to the House of Representatives in 1996 from the Twenty-Second District of California. In his brief time in Congress, he provided a strong voice for peace and human rights; shortly before his death, he circulated a petition among his colleagues requesting the release of Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng, who was recently freed from prison after President Jiang Zemin's visit to the

United States.

Congressman Capps was a Nebraska native who received his doctorate in religion from Yale University. A former president of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion, Capps was featured some years ago on *Sixty Minutes* for his popular and influential course at UCSB on the meaning of the Vietnam experience for American culture, a topic on which he published two books. He also edited a book on Native American religions and wrote on the rise of the religious right and on religious studies as an academic discipline.

His colleague, Professor Stan Lusby, writes of Capps, "His interest in contemplative practices, and their importance as modes of religious life, was manifest in his work on the career of Thomas Merton as a monk whose life and writings aroused a renewed interest in the western monastic tradition and, as well, in contemplative practices within Asian traditions." In 1976, Capps wrote *Hope against Hope: Moltmann to Merton in One Theological Decade*, one of the first books to consider Thomas Merton in the context of contemporary theological dialogue. He was the editor of *Thomas Merton: Preview of the Asian Journey* (1989), the transcripts of Merton's discussions with the Fellows of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in the Fall of 1968, for which he also wrote the Introduction. Merton was also featured in his anthology *Silent Fire: An Invitation to Western Mysticism* (edited with Wendy Wright, 1978) and in his study *The Monastic Impulse* (1982).

President Clinton paid tribute to Capps by saying that he "brought constant values, a rare perspective and a sense of moral grounding that public life too often lacks, and will sorely miss." Senator Bob Kerry of Nebraska commented that Capps "showed people that a man can be decent and principled in the House . . . [H]is spirit left a mark on us. He showed us how to live."

### Merton Stamp Campaign

A campaign to encourage the United States Postal Service to consider issuing a commemorative stamp honoring Thomas Merton has been initiated by ITMS member Normand Goupil.

Letters in support of the proposal should be sent to: USPS Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, Room 5301, 475 L'Enfant Plaza West S.W., Washington, DC 20260-2420.

### Kansas Merton Conference

The Fifth Kansas Merton Conference was held November 14-16, 1997 at the Mount Community Center in Atchison. Its theme was "Summoned to Explore the Heart: The Vitality and Relevance of the Spirituality of Merton." The Kansas conference, sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of Atchison and coordinated by Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB, is the longest running annual conference devoted to Merton, and attracts Merton scholars from across the country.

The Keynote Address by Fr. Gary Young, C.R. on Friday evening was entitled "The Electric Monk: Merton in 2097." Saturday's presentations included:

- John King, University of Arkansas: "Merton's Own Voice on Prayer";
- Erlinda Paguio, University of Louisville: "The Heart That Knows God: Thomas Merton's Study of Sufism";
- Patrick O'Connell, Gannon University: "Merton's Wake-Up Calls: *Aubades* and Monastic Dawn Poems from *A Man in the Divided Sea*";
- Monica Weis, SSJ, Nazareth College: "Exploring the Heart of Merton and Nature";
- Donald St. John, Moravian College: "Merton's *Chuang Tzu*: An Ecological Reading";

- Jim Hartz, Clarksville, TN: "Merton's Calcutta Talk and Non-Conceptual Meeting of the Minds: The Only Possible Building Block for Genuine 21st Century Global Community";

Saturday evening featured a performance by William Koch, University of Iowa, entitled "An Evening with Walt Whitman: The Solitary Singer Meets the Solitary Explorer."

Sunday's presentations included a talk by Christian Hempstead, Saunderstown, RI, entitled "Metaphors of Tyranny in Merton's *The Behavior of Titans*," followed by a dramatic reading of Merton's "Atlas and the Fatman" from *The Behavior of Titans*, scripted by Sheila M. Hempstead-Milton and featuring Fr. Gary Young as First Narrator, Stacey Koch (with Bill Koch) as Second Narrator, Jack Hope as Third Narrator, Don St. John as the voice of Merton, Gregory Hammett as Atlas, and William Koch II as the Fatman.

For information on purchasing tapes, which are available for all presentations, or on the **Sixth Kansas Merton Conference**, scheduled for **October 16-18, 1998**, contact Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB, The Mount Community Center, 751 South 8th Street, Atchison, KS 66002.

#### Nazareth Conference

"Celebrating Thomas Merton: The Song of Glory in Paper Flesh," a two-day conference focused on Thomas Merton's journals, was held at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY on October 24-25, 1997.

On Friday evening, October 24, Jonathan Montaldo, editor of the third volume of Merton's journals, delivered a lecture in celebration of the Wilmot Library's Thomas Merton Room entitled "'Seeking God' in the Journals of Thomas Merton: Loving Winter When the Plant Says Nothing."

Saturday's presentations included: Christine M. Bochen, "Learning to Love: An Editor's

Reflection on Volume VI of Merton's Journals"; Monica Weis, SSJ, "Sacramental Nature in Volume III of Merton's Journals (A Work in Progress)"; "Thomas Merton: A View from the Journals," with Christine Bochen, Jonathan Montaldo and Msgr. William H. Shannon; and Msgr. Shannon, "Thomas Merton: Was He a Rebel?"

#### Merton/Day Symposium

A symposium to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton and the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement and a Merton friend and correspondent, has been scheduled for April 3-5, 1998 at Rivier College, Nashua, New Hampshire. The conference, entitled "What, Then, Must We Do? - The Legacies of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day" was organized by Rivier faculty member and ITMS member Bradford T. Stull.

Featured presenters included poet and peace activist Daniel Berrigan, SJ, a close friend of both Merton and Day, on "What, Then, Must We Do?: The Legacies of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day," and Harvard University theologian Marc H. Ellis, on "Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and the Jews: A Meditation on the Future of Ecumenical Religiosity." A one-woman play about Dorothy Day, "Haunted by God," was performed by its co-ordinator, Lisa Wagoner of Chicago.

Concurrent sessions included:

- "Merton and the Power of Poetics" with Emily Archer, Mt. Vernon, NH, Jeannine Thyreen, Waynesburg, PA and Fr. George Kilcourse, Louisville, KY;
- "Merton, Day, and the Call to Responsibility" with John Sniegocki, Notre Dame, IN, Marilyn Sunderman, RSM, Standish, ME and Michael George, Fredericton, NB, Canada;



- "Merton, Day, and the Created Word" with Jack Cook, Oswego, NY and M. L. Liebler and Company, Detroit, MI;
- "Webs of Influence: Merton, Day, and Related Figures" with Geri Wagner, Blossvale, NY, Walt Chura, Albany, NY and Brenda Rudman, Exeter, NH;
- "Dorothy Day and the Social Order" with Harry Murray, Rochester, NY, David L. Gregory, Jamaica, NY and Geoffrey B. Gneuchs, New York, NY;
- "Dorothy Day and the Challenge to/of the Church" with Maria Malkiewicz, Notre Dame, IN, Frances Jensen, Chicopee, MA, Matthew R. Smith, Eggertsville, NY and Tim Hanchin, Seattle, WA;
- "Life Tales: The Formation and Reception of Merton and Day" with Mark Massa, SJ, Bronx, NY, Julie Leininger Pycior, Bronx, NY and Don Nugent, Lexington, KY.

#### **Merton in Maine**

St. Joseph's College of Maine is sponsoring a weekend symposium entitled "Thomas Merton: A Man for All Seasons" to be held August 7-9, 1998.

The program Friday, August 7 will feature a guided nature walk with readings from Merton and a keynote address by Jonathan Montaldo, followed by a reception and a film festival on Merton.

On Saturday, August 8, tentative plenary speakers for the morning include Sr. Elizabeth Wagner, Dr. Brad Stull, Sr. Betsy Quinn and Sr. Marilyn Sunderman, followed by noonday prayer; Dr. Christine Bochen and Dr. Monica Weis SSJ are tentatively scheduled for afternoon sessions, followed by discussion, liturgy and a guided nature walk (featuring different Merton readings); a banquet will be followed by a poetry reading of Merton by the lake and showing of Merton films.

The conference will conclude on Sunday, August 9 with a prayer service.

Registration before June 30 is \$120, after July 1: \$130; optional lobster bake: \$23; campus housing: single (2 nights): \$52 total; double (2 nights) \$40 total.

For further information contact Krista Rodin, Dean of Continuing and Professional Studies, St. Joseph's College, Standish, ME 04084-5263; phone: (207)893-7803 or e-mail: [krodin@sjcme.edu](mailto:krodin@sjcme.edu).

#### **Merton Conversion Conference**

To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of Thomas Merton's conversion and baptism at Corpus Christi Church in New York City, the Iona College Spirituality Institute is sponsoring a weekend conference, November 13-15, 1998. Entitled "Merton's Catholicism," the meeting is cosponsored by Corpus Christi Parish.

The keynote address will be given Friday evening, November 13, by theologian Michael Downey, with responses by Regina Bechtle and Anthony Padovano.

Among workshop presenters at Saturday sessions will be: Regina Bechtle, Daniel Berrigan, SJ, Joseph and Sally Cunneen, Kathleen Deignan, CND, Eileen Egan, Robert Kennedy, SJ, Patrick O'Connell, Anthony Padovano and Mary Luke Tobin, SL.

For further information on the conference, contact the Iona Spirituality Institute, 715 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10801; phone: (914) 633-2233; e-mail: [IonaSI@aol.com](mailto:IonaSI@aol.com) or [PClarke@Iona.edu](mailto:PClarke@Iona.edu).

#### **Merton Retreats**

The following ITMS-sponsored retreats will be held in the spring, summer and fall of 1998:  
**May 12-13** - Santa Sabina Center, 25 Magnolia Avenue, San Rafael CA 94901; presenters: Fr. Joe Watt, Harriet Hope,

Susannah Malarkey. Write or call the center (415-457-7727) for more information.

**July 12-19** - Kordes Enrichment Center, 841 E. 14th Street, Ferdinand, IN 47532; theme: "Mercy within Mercy - Seeing God through Merton's Eyes"; presenter: Jane Marie Richardson, SL. Write or call the center (800-880-2777, ext. 2907) for more information.

**October 2-5** - Abbey of Gethsemani, 3642 Monks Road, Trappist KY 40051-6102; theme: "The False Self and the True Self: Exploration of the Spiritual Journey through Song and Poetry"; presenters, Fr. Patrick Collins and Br. Paul Quenon, OCSO. Write or call the monastery (502-549-4133) for more information.

### Merton Happenings

ITMS President Tom Del Prete presented a day-long conference entitled "Meditation and Dialogue with Merton" at St. Stephen's Priory Retreat Center, Dover, MA, on February 14.

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ITMS Board member and Cleveland Chapter Coordinator Sr. Donna Kristoff OSU recently completed teaching as eight-week continuing education course at Cuyahoga Community College entitled "Thomas Merton and the Wisdom of the East." Sr. Donna will be giving a six-week course beginning April 7 at the Baldwin-Wallace College Institute for Learning and Retirement on "The Letters of Thomas Merton."

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Fr. Francis Kelly Nemeck, OMI and Sr. Marie Theresa Coombs will be leading a 40-day desert experience June 21-July 31, following the principles of St. John of the Cross and Thomas Merton, at the Lebh Shomea House of Prayer, Box 9, Sarita TX 78385; for further information write or call (512) 294-5369.

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Sr. Pat Keller will be presenting "A Guided

Experience of Contemplative Prayer," based on the teachings of John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and Thomas Merton, at the Tau Center, 511 Hilbert Ave., Winona, MN 55987, June 28-July 4; the cost is \$325. For further information write or call (507) 454-2993.

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Fr. Patrick Collins will be presenting a retreat on "The Spirituality of Thomas Merton" at the Weber Center, Adrian, MI, August 9-15; for further information call (517) 266-400 or visit the website at <http://www.op.org/adrian>.

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Ring Lake Ranch, an ecumenical retreat center in Dubois Wyoming, will include in its 1998 Summer Series of retreats Dr. Kenneth Burton's program on Thomas Merton; for further information contact the Ring Lake Ranch office at 1232 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA 94109, (415) 563-3420, <gdKnight88@aol.com>.

### Chapter News

The Santa Sabina Center has continued its monthly "Thomas Merton Reflection Evenings," focused this year on the third volume of Merton's complete journals, *A Search for Solitude*. On May 22-24, James Finley, author of *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* and other books, will lead a silent retreat on "The Seeker's Heart." For information contact **Harriet Hope**, Santa Sabina Center, 25 Magnolia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901.

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The Thomas Merton Society of Michiana marked its second anniversary on February 20. Among its recent presentations were Tom Peterson on "Encounters of the Heart: A Taste of Merton Spirituality" on September 24, Grace Smith on "Merton's Life Journey" on October 15, and Lynda Ward on "Awaiting the God of Peace: An Advent Retreat" on December 13. The Contemplative Prayer

group meets regularly on Tuesday evenings at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, while the monthly Merton Book Discussion Group is currently discussing *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*; a Merton Peace and Justice Group is in the process of forming. For information contact **Jan Jenkins**, 3621 Sullivan Court, South Bend, IN 46614.

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The Merton Study Group of Lexington, KY focused on Merton and oriental religions during the fall semester, with readings from *Mystics and Zen Masters*, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* and *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. For information contact **Tom Mullaney**, 1858 Bellefonte Drive, Lexington, KY 40503.

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The Louisville, KY Chapter celebrated its first anniversary on September 28 with a potluck supper at the home of chapter coordinator Erlinda Paguio. The group has been discussing Merton's *Springs of Contemplation* (edited by chapter coordinator Sr. Jane Marie Richardson) at its monthly meetings. For information contact **Erlinda Paguio**, 7317 Honiasant Road, Louisville, KY 40214.

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On November 9, the New Mexico Chapter sponsored a group reflection on "Merton and Contemplative Prayer," based on unpublished notes of a student of Merton at Gethsemani. For information contact **Peggy Jones**, 825 East Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

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Activities of the Rochester, NY Chapter include the Merton Prayer Group and the Merton Study Group, each of which meets monthly; the topic of discussion for this year is Merton's *Thoughts in Solitude*. Members also attended Dr. Christine Bochen's lecture at Nazareth College on November 4 entitled, "Anything New? An Editor's Reflection on Thomas Merton's Journals." For information contact **Kay McGowan**, 196 Gregory Hill Road, Rochester, NY 14620.

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The Capitol University Chapter will be studying Merton's *The New Man* at its monthly meetings during Spring, 1998. On January 24, a day-long joint meeting with the Merton group at St. Andrew's Church was held, featuring viewing and discussion of *Merton: A Film Biography*. Five members of the group visited the Abbey of Gethsemani the weekend before Christmas, and plans for a March retreat at the abbey were being formulated. Members were also invited to take a course on the literature and thought of Thomas Merton, to be taught by Professor David Belcastro. For information contact **Nancy Kellog**, 5915 Headley Road, Gahanna, OH 43230.

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The recently formed Shenango Valley Chapter, which includes sixteen members from Greenville, Hermitage and Sharon, PA, meets biweekly for discussion of Merton's writings and a twenty-minute session of contemplative prayer. For information contact **Diane Kilgore**, St. Joseph Church, 79 Case Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146.

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The newly formed Vancouver Chapter of the ITMS met January 27 to hear Dr. Ross Labrie speak on "Thomas Merton: Christian Romantic." There were more than 40 in attendance. At the group's March meeting, Lynn Szabo, a 1997 ITMS Shannon Fellow, spoke on silence in Merton's poetry. A one-day symposium is being planned for next fall. For information contact **Judith Hardcastle**, 705-706 Chilco Street, Apt. 705, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, V6G 2R1.

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In October the Merton Vrienden (Friends of Merton), the ITMS Affiliate in Belgium, sponsored a weekend conference entitled, "Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen: Typical Resemblances and Differences." For information contact **Constant Broos**, Rue St.-Hubert, B-5100 Dave, Belgium.