

International Thomas Merton Society

NEWSLETTER

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Art: Jim Contrell

New Director for Merton Center

Jonathan Montaldo has been appointed by Bellarmine College and the Merton Legacy Trust as the new Director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine College, Louisville, KY, the official repository of Merton's papers and the major resource center for scholarly study of Merton's life and work.

Center Director Dr. Theresa H. Sandok, OSM resigned as of January 1, 1999 to become Professor of Philosophy and acting Dean of Arts and Sciences at Bellarmine College. Dr. Sandok had served as director since June 1997, when the late Dr. Robert E. Daggy, who had been in charge of the Center since 1974, resigned because of illness.

Montaldo received a master's degree from Emory University, with a particular focus on Merton's work, and has done further graduate study at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia.

He served as editor of the Volume 2 of Merton's complete journals, *Entering the Silence*. He is presently co-editing with Brother Patrick Hart a volume of selections from the complete journals, and is also editing a collection of Merton's prayers. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the ITMS and has traveled widely as a retreat-master and lecturer on Merton.

According to Montaldo his immediate focus at the Center will be to develop and implement a master plan defining the work needed to preserve archival materials and make them more accessible to scholars and to the wide audience interested in Merton's work.

Mitch Finley to Speak in Waterloo

Mitch Finley, award-winning author of numerous books on topics relating to family life, spirituality and the contemporary Catholic Church, will deliver one of the main addresses at the upcoming Sixth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society, to be held June 10-13 at St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, Ontario. His topic will be: "Thomas Merton and the Joy of Becoming Catholic."

Finley earned a B.A. in Religious Studies from Santa Clara University and an M.A. in Theology from Marquette University. A full-time free-lance writer since 1982, Finley is a six-time award winner from the Catholic Press Association and has also received an Award for Excellence and a Silver Medal Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, as well as the Excellence in Writing Award from the American Society of Journalists and Authors.

The father of three sons, he is perhaps best known for his book *Christian Families in the Real World*, written with his wife Kathy (1984; revised and updated in 1996 as *Building Christian Families*). He has written more than two dozen volumes, including titles such as *Everybody Has a Guardian Angel . . . And Other Lessons I Learned in Catholic Schools* (1993), *The Gospel Truth: Living for Real in an Unreal World* (1996), *The Joy of Being Catholic* (1996) and *The Seeker's Guide to Being Catholic* (1997). Finley is also a syndicated columnist for the Catholic press, and his work has appeared in dozens of

religious and secular magazines and newspapers.

A long-time ITMS member, he credits Thomas Merton as influencing not only his faith but his way of writing, "particularly with regard to his use of slang and his inclination to write in a lively style." He has written about Merton in his book *Catholic Spiritual Classics* (1987) as well as in *Season of Promises: Praying Through Advent With Julian of Norwich, Thomas à Kempis, Caryll Houselander, Thomas Merton, Brother Lawrence, Max Picard* (1995).

Forthcoming books include: *The Seeker's Guide to the Saints* (Loyola Press, 1999), *The Catholic Virtues* (Liguori Press, 1999), *Prayer for People Who Think Too Much* (Jewish Lights, 1999), and *The Saints Speak Today* (Servant Publications, 1999).

Because of scheduling conflicts, nature writer Barry Lopez, who had been scheduled to speak at the General Meeting, will be unable to participate.

Anne McCormick Named Trustee

Mrs. Anne McCormick has been named one of the three trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust, which is responsible for overseeing all aspects of Thomas Merton's publications. She joins current trustees Robert Giroux and Thomasine O'Callaghan, and replaces the late James Laughlin, who died in November 1997.

Mrs. McCormick has served as permissions secretary for the Trust since 1976. She was invited at that time to serve as the principal contact person between the Trust and the public, especially scholars, by now-retired Trustee Naomi Burton Stone, a long-time colleague and mentor at Doubleday Publishing Company.

Since February 1969, Mrs. McCormick has worked at Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, where she is currently a Director of Subsidiary Rights.

Toth New Director of Center Foundation

The Thomas Merton Center Foundation Board has appointed Robert Toth as Executive Director. Toth has been a member of the Foundation Board since 1996, serving as Treasurer and as Co-chair of the Development Committee. Before beginning his new position, he worked in health-care administration and development in the Cleveland, Ohio area.

The Merton Center Foundation, an independent, non-profit corporation established in 1995 through the joint efforts of the Abbey of Gethsemani, the Merton Legacy Trust, Bellarmine College, and individuals interested in Merton's thought, is dedicated to providing financial and other forms of support to the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine College and to other programs dedicated to promoting the life and work of Thomas Merton.

Toth indicated that the Foundation is in the process of revising its strategic plan to focus on building an endowment fund, in order to provide financial support to the Center and to foster contemplation and spirituality in a world of action through programs and educational materials based on Merton's life and works.

Youth Scholarships for General Meeting

The International Thomas Merton Society will once again sponsor a Youth Scholarship Program to make it possible for young people to participate in its General Meeting. Ten scholarships will be awarded, covering all costs (except transportation) of attendance at the Sixth General Meeting of the ITMS, to be held at St. Jerome's College, Waterloo, Ontario, June 10-13, 1999. The awards will also include one year's free membership in the ITMS. **Young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-nine are invited to apply.**

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

Completed applications, including the recommendation, must be submitted by April 15, 1999 to the scholarship committee chair, **Dr. Monica Weis, SSJ, Department of English, Nazareth College, 4245 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618-3790.**

Applications should include the age of the applicant, telephone number and email address (if available) as well as a return address.

Any ITMS member who knows a young person (14-29) that would benefit from attending the 1999 General Meeting in Waterloo should encourage him or her to apply for a scholarship.

Corpus Christi Commemoration

On November 14, 1998, more than two hundred people filled Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan, scene of Thomas Merton's baptism into the Catholic Church on November 16, 1938, to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of that event at a one-day conference entitled "The Conversions of Thomas Merton."

The event was cosponsored by Corpus Christi Parish and the Spirituality Institute of Iona College, New Rochelle, NY. A joint committee led by Brenda Fitch Fairaday from the parish and Kathleen Deignan, CND and Peggy Amlung Clarke from the Institute planned and implemented the program.

The morning session took place in the

church itself, and was preceded and followed by informal tours of the baptistry where Merton received the sacrament. It began with a prayer service led by Sr. Kathleen and Fr. John Giuliani, founder and director of the Benedictine Grange in West Redding, CT, which featured readings from Merton's "Hagia Sophia" and other works, songs by Sr. Kathleen, and liturgical dance by Joan Baird of the Omega Dance Company of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The Keynote Address by Dr. Anthony Padovano, author of *The Human Journey: Thomas Merton, Symbol of a Century* and many other works, was entitled "The Eight Conversions of Thomas Merton" and focused on key moments of transformation in Merton's life. Respondents were Regina Bechtle, SC, director of the Center for Leadership and Spirituality at the College of Mount St. Vincent, Riverdale, NY, and Merton scholars Christine M. Bochen and Jonathan Montaldo, editors of the sixth and second volumes of Merton's complete journals, respectively.

After a catered luncheon in the basement of the church, participants adjourned to Union Theological Seminary a short distance away for the afternoon workshop sessions. Space for the conference was donated by the seminary in memory of the late scripture scholar Fr. Raymond Brown, SS, who had taught there for many years. The sessions, which were each given twice during the afternoon, included:

- Christine Bochen & Jonathan Montaldo: "Awakening to Wisdom's Voice: 'Continuing Conversion' and the Feminine in Merton's Journals";
- Joseph and Sally Cunneen & Robert Giroux: "Merton and Catholic Intellectual Life";
- Kathleen Deignan, CND: "Merton's Mystical Routes";
- Eileen Egan: "Merton's Radical

- Catholicism”;
- Robert Kennedy, SJ: “Merton’s Turn to the East”;
- Rabbi Shaul Magid: “Tradition and Liberation: Monasticism as a Modern Alternative”; and
- Patrick O’Connell: “‘Then Life Will Have to Begin’: Personal and Social Transformation in Thomas Merton’s New York City Poetry.”

The day concluded with a reception in the Seminary lounge which featured recollections and reminiscences by Merton friends and correspondents, including Daniel Berrigan, SJ, Eileen Egan, and Tommie O’Callaghan.

The Sunday High Mass at Corpus Christi on the following day featured a work specially commissioned for the occasion, a choral setting of Merton’s poem “On the Anniversary of My Baptism,” and was followed by a reception in the Fr. George Barry Ford Auditorium.

The event received extensive press coverage, including a full-page article in the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Call for Papers

The Third General Meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be held April 7-9, 2000 at Oakham School, Rutland, England. The conference theme is “Thomas Merton: A Mind Awake in the Dark,” taken from Merton’s essay “Day of a Stranger.” Speakers will include Canon A. M. Allchin, Lawrence Cunningham and Bonnie Thurston. Proposals for a variety of presentations are invited: scholarly papers, workshops exploring specific dimensions of Merton’s life and work, sessions on teaching and giving retreats with Merton, dramatic, poetic, or musical interpretations of Merton; scholarly papers may focus on topics such as (but not limited to) Merton’s understanding of Buddhism, his poetry, his

journal writing, especially “Day of a Stranger,” his relationship with the English mystics, and his social thought on the eve of a new millennium. Papers should be designed for presentation in thirty minutes (10-12 double-spaced pages maximum). Proposals, including an abstract of no more than 250 words, should be sent prior to July 15, 1999 to: Paul M. Pearson, The Thomas Merton Society, 18 Colby Road, Upper Norwood, London. SE19 - 1HA, UK; email: p.pearson@ucl.ac.uk.

Pilgrimage to Prades

Donald Grayston will lead a pilgrimage/tour July 16-25, to Prades, France, Thomas Merton’s birthplace. The program will include lectures and discussion, ample free time, and a chance to meet local members of the ITMS, as well as visits to Merton sites. Total land cost \$1345 Canadian (approx. \$900 US; 5% discount for two persons registering and rooming together); includes accommodation, breakfast daily, two noon meals, four evening meals, scheduled land transportation, instructor’s services. Does not include travel to and from Prades, other meals, incidentals. Undergraduate credit available (Humanities/Religious Studies) for additional fee. Write: The Pilgrimage Program, Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3, Canada; or contact Donald Grayston at 604-291-5516, email: donald_grayston@sfu.ca.

Kansas Merton Conference

The Sixth Kansas Merton Conference was held October 16-18, 1998 at the Mount Community Center, Atchison, KS. Hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Atchison and coordinated by Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB, the Kansas Conference is the longest running annual conference devoted to Merton and draws scholars and participants from across the country. The theme of this year’s

gathering was "Summoned to Explore the Heart: Lessons from Merton's Heart that Strike a Chord in Our Own Hearts."

The Keynote Address was given by ITMS Treasurer Erlinda Paguio and was entitled "Seeds of Contemplation from Meister Eckhart for Merton." Other presentations included:

- Dr. Frank Fennell, Loyola University, Chicago: "Simple and Sincere Accounts': Thomas Merton in Our Time";
- Jim Hartz, Clarksville, TN: "Black Wool in the Bramble: The Meeting of Thomas Merton and Chogyam Trungpa";
- Sheila Hempstead, Saunderstown, RI: "Shared Facts, Different Stories: The Mother of Thomas Merton";
- Dr. William Koch, Waterloo, IA: "Thomas Merton's Uncommon Common Sense";
- Brad Mattingly, Campbellsville University, KY, & Daniel Mattingly, Murray State University, KY: "Kentucky's Nurture of Thomas Merton";
- Patrick O'Connell, Gannon University, Erie, PA: "Merton's Vision of the Kingdom"; and
- Fr. Gary Young, CR, Nazareth, KY: "Merton and the Infernal Machine: *Deus et Machina*."

For information on purchasing tapes, which are available for all presentations, or on the **Seventh Kansas Merton Conference**, scheduled for **October 15-17, 1999**, contact Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB, The Mount Community Center, 751 South 8th Street, Atchison, KS 66002.

Pittsburgh Merton Center Anniversary

The Thomas Merton Center, a peace and social justice ministry in Pittsburgh that is also an affiliated chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

The center originally developed in 1973 to promote and support peace advocacy during the Vietnam War, under the leadership of Molly Rush, who continues as a staff person a quarter-century later.

Its deep Catholic roots have blossomed over the decades to include a strong ecumenical dimension. Its Mission Statement reads: "The Thomas Merton Center works to instill a consciousness of values and to raise the moral questions involved in the issues of war, poverty, racism and oppression. TMC members are people from diverse philosophies and faiths who find common ground in the nonviolent struggle to bring about a more just and peaceful world community."

The Center has been deeply involved in such issues and causes as the United Farmworkers' boycotts, racial justice efforts and protests against apartheid, support of the Pittsburgh labor movement, antinuclear issues, and the Sanctuary Movement for Central American refugees. It has also sponsored reflection opportunities such as a "Pray and Resist" group, a Merton Study Group, as well as annual retreats.

Over the years, the Center has annually presented its Merton Award to a figure who exemplifies the ideals of the Center and of its namesake. Among those honored have been Joan Baez, Daniel Berrigan, Dom Helder Camara, Helen Caldicott, Dorothy Day, Fr. Miguel D'Escoto, Marion Wright Edelman, Dick Gregory, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen, Winona LaDuke, Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, and Howard Zinn. The 1998 award was given to author Studs Terkel.

The Center's monthly newsletter, *The New People*, frequently includes material about Merton as well as features on the various social issues with which the Center and its members are involved. Further information is available from the Thomas Merton Center, 5125 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224-1637; phone: 412-361-3022.

Louisville Anniversary Commemoration

On December 10, 1998, the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton was celebrated in Louisville by a memorial mass and a panel discussion, both sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center Foundation.

A noon eucharistic liturgy was concelebrated at the Cathedral of the Assumption by Thomas C. Kelly, OP, Archbishop of Louisville, and Timothy Kelly OCSO, Abbot of Gethsemani. The homilist was Matthew Kelty, OCSO, Merton's confessor and close friend. (The homily is published in this issue of *The Merton Seasonal*.)

At 5:30 that evening, Bellarmine College hosted a panel of "Women Who Knew Merton," discussing Merton's influence on their lives and the lives of others. The panelists included Sr. Margaret Brennan, IHM, Sr. Myriam Dardenne, OCSO, Madelyn Meatyard, Tommie O'Callaghan, and Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, SL; Merton scholar and editor Christine Bochen served as moderator.

Merton on the Radio

Heretic Blood, a three-part series on the life and work of Thomas Merton, was aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Company's *Ideas* program on December 2, 9 and 16. Written and narrated by Canadian Merton scholar and ITMS member Michael Higgins and produced by Bernie Leucht of the CBC, the series included original music by Canadian composer Peter Togni and featured noted Canadian actor R. H. Thompson as the voice of Merton.

Each of the three hour-long programs, arranged chronologically to survey the major events of Merton's life, featured excerpts from Merton's writings and interviews with Merton friends and scholars as well as fellow monks. Participants included Abbot John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO, Christine Bochen, Abbot Flavian Burns, OCSO, Robert Giroux, Jacques

Goulet, Donald Grayston, the late John Howard Griffin, Patrick Hart, OCSO, Glenn Hinson, Abbot Timothy Kelly, OCSO, Matthew Kelty, OCSO, Ross Labrie, Robert Lax, Michael Mott, Tommie O'Callaghan, Paul Quenon, OCSO and William Shannon.

The series is available for purchase on audiocassette from: Ideas Transcripts, Box 500, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1E6. The price is \$24.95 (Canadian).

Merton was also featured on a segment of National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition* program on December 13. Lynn Neary interviewed Merton scholar Lawrence Cunningham, Lee Edwards, who became a Catholic after reading Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*, and Merton's secretary Br. Patrick Hart, OCSO, to discuss the reasons for Merton's continuing influence thirty years after his death.

Lake Erie Merton Festival

The third Lake Erie Merton Celebration took place on the four Sundays of Advent at Gannon University, Erie, PA to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of Thomas Merton's death. Similar lecture/discussion series had been held in 1988 and 1993.

Speakers for the 1998 series included:

- November 29: Michael Higgins, St. Jerome's University: "Heretic Blood: Thomas Merton's Spiritual Geography";
- December 6: Donna Kristoff, OSU, Pepper Pike, OH: "Reintegrating Heaven and Earth: Thomas Merton and Art";
- December 13: Monica Weis, SSJ, Nazareth College: "Dancing with the Raven: Thomas Merton and Nature";
- December 20: Patrick O'Connell, Gannon University: "The Turning Point of History: Thomas Merton's Vision of the Kingdom."

Merton Happenings

Rev. Michael Callaghan, CM spoke on "Thomas Merton and *The Cloud of Unknowing*" on February 5 at Maryhouse, the Catholic Worker house in New York City.

Lawrence Cunningham led a weekend retreat entitled "The Many Faces of Thomas Merton" March 12-14 at Graymoor Spiritual Life Center, Garrison, NY.

Jane and Michael Myers facilitated a Merton Contemplative Retreat December 10-13 at the Madonna Retreat & Conference Center, Albuquerque, NM; the Center also hosted day-long conferences on "Merton as Journal Writer" with Chris Burnham on January 30 and on "Merton and Contemplative Prayer" with Samuel Dennis, OSB on February 27.

Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán and Rev. Stephen Ross OCD gave a presentation entitled "The Spiritual Geography of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and Thomas Merton" at Smith College on October 18.

Betsy Quinn led a retreat on "Silence and Solitude with Merton as Guide" March 26-28 at St. Joseph Christian Life Center, Winslow, ME.

Wayne Simsic presented a day of reflection on "Thomas Merton as Spiritual Guide" on March 13 at East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA.

Bonnie Thurston presented a week-long continuing education course on "Thomas Merton: His Life and Thought" at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary January 11-15.

Chapter News

The Albany, NY Chapter sponsored a

retreat entitled "Conversations with Thomas Merton" December 12-13 at the Jesuit Retreat House, Auriesville, NY. Speakers included Sr. Katherine Hanley, CSJ, Msgr. William H. Shannon, and Joseph Nugent.

The Capital University Chapter (Columbus, OH) is continuing its discussion of Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation* at its monthly meetings. Fr. Thomas Shoneberger, former personal secretary of Thomas Merton, spoke to the group at its January meeting. A chapter retreat at Bethany Spring retreat house, New Haven, KY, was held November 13-15, and another is being planned for May or June. For further information contact: Nancy Kellogg, 5915 Headley Road, Gahanna, OH 43230.

The Cincinnati Chapter organized a two-day retreat entitled "Merton's Journey to the East" October 23-24 with Br. Anthony Distefano, OCSO of the Abbey of Gethsemani. A spring workshop is planned for May 7-8. The group meets monthly for discussion of Merton readings and audiotapes. For information contact: Tony Russo, 8087 Bridgetown Road, Cleves, OH 45002.

The St. Louis Chapter hosted Fr. Tom Nelson for a one-day retreat June 6 entitled "Paradox and Prophecy: The Springs of Compassion" and on December 12 co-hosted a day-long commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Merton's death, featuring Abbot James Conner OCSO and Dorothy LeBeau. The Merton Reading Group continues its discussion of the Merton journals, currently focused on *Learning to Love*. For information contact: Pauline Pearson, 2220 Oriole Drive, Florissant, MO 63033.

The Vancouver, BC Chapter continues to

meet monthly. Anglican bishop Michael Ingham spoke at the January 19 meeting on Merton and inter-faith dialogue. On February 16, Lynn Szabo led a discussion on Merton and the language of silence. Fr. George Kilcourse was guest speaker at the March 12 meeting, and on March 14 led a one-day retreat on Merton's multi-faceted identity as a model for spiritual integration. The April meeting will feature Peter MacLachlan on Merton and Zen, and at the May meeting Judith Hardcastle will discuss her visit to the Abbey of Gethsemani and the Bellarmine College Merton Center. For further information contact: **Judith Hardcastle**, 705-706 Chilco Street, Apt. 705, Vancouver, British Columbia V6G 2R1.

The Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will hold its third Southern Regional Meeting in Winchester April 17; Paul Pearson will speak on "From Clairvaux and Pleasant Hill to Mt. Olivet: Thomas Merton's Geography of Place." Esther de Waal will lead a retreat at Ampleforth Abbey August 31-September 3 on "Thomas Merton: The Prophetic Contemplative." On October 9, a conference on "Thomas Merton: Vision of the East and West in Christendom" with Canon A. M. Allchin and Jim Forest will be held at Oxford. For further information contact: **Paul M. Pearson**, The Thomas Merton Society, 18 Colby Road, Upper Norwood, London. SE19 - 1HA, UK; email: p.pearson@ucl.ac.uk.

Coming Events

Fr. Patrick Eastman will lead a retreat on "The Spirituality of Thomas Merton" April 16-18 at St. Scholastica Center, P.O. Box 3489, Fort Smith, AR 72913; phone: 501-783-1135.

Wayne Simsic will lead a retreat on

"Praying with Thomas Merton" April 30-May 2 at Villa Maria Retreat Center, PO Box 424, Villa Maria, PA 16155; phone: 724-964-8861; ext. 3358.

Lawrence Cunningham will lead a weeklong course on Thomas Merton June 6-12 at the Spring Hill College Summer Institute of Christian Spirituality. For information contact Graduate Studies/SICS, Spring Hill College, 4000 Dauphin Street, Mobile, AL 36608; phone: 334-380-3094; email: grad@shc.edu.

"Mystics for Our Day: Julian, Hildegard, Merton, Nouwen" will be offered June 14-17 at St. Joseph Renewal Center, Tiffin, OH. For information, phone: 419-443-1485 or email: sjrc@bright.net.

St. Stephen Priory will host "Crucible of Witness: A Retreat on Dorothy Day, Edith Stein, Thomas Merton and Jessica Powers" June 20-26; for information write: St. Stephen Priory, PO Box 370, Dover, MA 02030; phone: 508-785-0124; email: ThePriory@aol.com.

Retreats International, a summer program at Notre Dame University, will include sessions on "A Passion for Integrity: Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton" with Anthony Padovano, June 27-July 3, and on "The Spirituality of Thomas Merton" with Fr. Patrick Collins, July 4-9; for information call 219-631-5320 or email retreats.I@nd.edu.

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center will host a "Retreat with Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Merton" July 25-31; for information write: Retreats, 120 E. Boyston Road, Hiawatha, IA 52233.

Send all news of Merton-related events to: **Pat O'Connell**, Box 1028, Gannon University, Erie, PA 16541; oconnell001@gannon.edu.