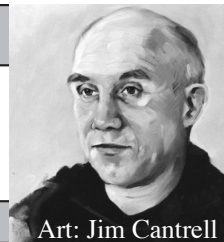


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Art: Jim Cantrell

Merton Anniversary Prompts Media Coverage

The fortieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton on December 10, 1968 received national and international attention through numerous media events. Morgan Atkinson's film *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, which premiered December 10, 2006, was broadcast on PBS stations throughout the country during the week of December 7-13, 2008. In connection with the film and the recent release of the companion book of the same title, which features interviews with Merton friends and scholars, many of whom appeared in the film, Fr. Edward Beck interviewed Atkinson and Jonathan Montaldo, the book's coeditor, on December 12 on ABC's *Nightline* program; the video can be viewed at <http://abcnews.go.com/search?searchtext=thomas%20merton&type=>. During the week of November 23, the PBS program *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* aired a profile of Merton featuring correspondent Judy Valente, who interviewed Morgan Atkinson, Merton Center Director Paul M. Pearson, Brother Paul Quenon, OCSO of the Abbey of Gethsemani, ITMS Chicago Chapter coordinator Mike Brennan and Sr. Suzanne Zuercher, OSB, author of *Merton and the Enneagram*. The interview and related material can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/episode-no-1212/profile-thomas-merton/1378>. Valente also hosted a program on Merton featuring interviews with Fr. Vaughn Fayle, OFM, Mike Brennan and Sr. Suzanne Zuercher on WBEZ, the Chicago public radio station, on December 15. On December 14, BBC Radio 4 aired a 30-minute interview by Mike Woolridge with Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, entitled "Remembering Merton"; the program also featured readings from Merton's work and musical performances by the Abbey of Gethsemani Schola, singer Kate Campbell and others.

Merton/Dalai Lama Banner Unveiled

On October 20, 2008, forty years after the encounter between Thomas Merton and the Dalai

Lama in Dharamsala, India, a banner featuring a well-known photograph of the two men was unveiled during a ceremony at the Center for Interfaith Relations in downtown Louisville, KY, less than a block from Thomas Merton Square. The ceremony featured chanting by Tibetan Buddhist monks and a prayer by Rev. William Fichteman, pastor of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption, which asked, "Grant that we may learn from them the way to dialogue and understanding, the way to justice and peace." Jan Arnow, executive director of the Center, said the banner would be "not just a commemoration of an interfaith meeting between two wonderful men" but "a reunion of their spirits." The banner was sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University.

Autographed Conjectures Auction at Nazareth

An autographed copy of Thomas Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* will be auctioned off at the town meeting on Saturday afternoon, June 13, 2009 at the ITMS Eleventh General Meeting at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY. The copy is a first edition, cloth, in good condition, with a slightly chipped dust jacket; its inscription reads: "For Edward Dietz, best wishes, T Merton." The donation is a gift from the Ohio State University ITMS Chapter in Columbus, OH, and the money raised will be used for the Daggy Scholarship Fund. Write-in bids from those unable to attend the conference will be accepted until the end of May 2009, and should be sent to: Auction Bids, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40205.

Website Features Merton Scenes

A new website entitled "Seeing Through the Eyes of Thomas Merton: The New York Years," featuring photographs of sites mentioned by Merton in his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* can now be viewed at http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/merton_sheridan.html. The site, hosted by the St. Bonaventure University Library, was assembled by Jan Sheridan, director of

the St. Joseph Center for Spirituality in Clarence, NY, through a 2008 ITMS Shannon Fellowship grant. The site features 34 excerpts from Merton's autobiography, each accompanied by one or two photographs illustrating the passages quoted, with particular focus on sites in New York City and the Olean area in which St. Bonaventure, where Merton taught in 1940-41, is located.

Award for Merton-Andrews Letters

A Meeting of Angels: The Correspondence of Thomas Merton with Edward Deming & Faith Andrews, edited by Paul M. Pearson, received a 2009 Award of Merit from the Kentucky Historical Society in its Local History Category. The award was presented to publisher Larry Moore of Broadstone Books on March 7 at the society's awards ceremony, which was held at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort.

Virginia Burton (1918-2009)

Virginia Burton, a close friend of Thomas Merton during his student days in New York City, died February 22, 2009 in Richmond, VA, at the age of 90. Born in St. Louis, Lucille Virginia Burton moved as a child to Richmond, where her father was a dentist. After graduating from Barnard College, she worked in the public relations department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and later worked in the Egyptology Department at the Brooklyn Museum. She returned to the Metropolitan in 1960 as a curatorial assistant, and rose to the position of Associate Curator before her retirement in 1977. As the principal curator of Egyptian art at the museum, she frequently travelled to the Middle East, and was responsible for overseeing the transfer of the Temple of Dendur, given to the United States by the Egyptian government in 1965 and allotted to the Metropolitan in 1967. "Ginny" Burton is mentioned frequently in Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and in *Run to the Mountain*, the first volume of his journals. He was visiting at her Virginia home when the Second World War began in 1939. In a journal entry on June 23, 1965 (*Dancing in the Water of Life* 259), Merton speaks of her as "the symbol of the girl I ought to have fallen in love with but didn't (and she remains the image of one I really did love with a love of companionship not of passion)."

Laura Daigle, OSB (1921-2009)

Sister Laura Daigle, OSB, of St. Scholastica Monastery, Duluth, MN, a longtime ITMS member, died January 4, 2009 at the age of 87, after a very brief illness. Marie Daigle was born Dec. 9, 1921, in St. Mathias, MN, the daughter of Theodore and Hazel (Tougas) Daigle. She attended Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Grade School, Cloquet, MN and Stanbrook Hall High School in Duluth, from which she graduated in 1939. That same year she entered St. Scholastica Monastery and made her monastic profession in 1941, receiving the name Laura. After teaching in Washington, DC and Minnesota schools, she earned a BS degree and an RN from The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth in 1958, and subsequently served as a nurse in various Minnesota facilities until her retirement in 1991. In 1978 Sr. Laura founded the Thomas Merton Center at St. Scholastica Monastery, which later became a chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society. She was a regular participant at ITMS General Meetings. Sr. Laura was buried at St. Scholastica Monastery on January 9 after the celebration of her funeral Mass at Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel.

Joanne Flynn (1935-2008)

Longtime ITMS member Joanne Flynn, along with her husband Frank, died tragically in an automobile accident on November 12, 2008, while on a visit to the Abbey of Gethsemani. Daughter of Joseph J. and Constance (Vatterott) Kelley, she was a graduate of the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, MO and Maryville College of the Sacred Heart in St. Louis, and received a M.A. in Theology from St. Louis University. She served as a papal volunteer missionary in Bolivia, and worked as a teacher at Pattonville High School, Cardinal Ritter High School and in the Rockwood School District. She served as the director of the Siloam Institute of Prayer in Manchester, MO; she was a frequent visitor to the Bellarmine Merton Center and the Abbey of Gethsemani. She was a workshop presenter at the ITMS Ninth General Meeting, and her work on Merton and caregiving was published in the Summer 2006 edition of *The Merton Seasonal*. She was married to Frank Flynn, a graduate of Boston College and longtime salesman for the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, for over forty years. She is survived by her brothers Joseph and Patrick Kelley and her sister Constance Bailey, her children Casey, Kelley and Tim Flynn and Eileen Weingart, and six grandchildren. The Flynn's funeral was celebrated November 22 at St.

Anselm Church, Creve Coeur, MO, followed by burial at St. Joseph Parish Cemetery. The Flynn family has donated Joanne Flynn's extensive collection of Merton materials to the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University.

Jean Jadot (1909-2009)

Archbishop Jean Jadot, the chief papal representative to the United States in the 1970s, died Wednesday, January 21, 2009 in Brussels, Belgium, at the age of 99. Before coming to the United States as Apostolic Delegate in 1973, Jadot had served in a similar capacity in Southeast Asia from 1968 through 1971, and had been present at the 1968 Bangkok meeting at which Thomas Merton died. Paul Wilkes' interview with Abp. Jadot, in which he spoke of Merton as "a kind of prophet," one who "not so much opened new ways, but reopened old ways which we had forgotten," is included in Wilkes' documentary *Thomas Merton: A Film Biography* and his collection of interviews, *Merton By Those Who Knew Him Best*. Jean Jadot was born in Brussels on November 23, 1909, the son of world-renowned engineer Lambert Jadot. He earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium at the age of 21, and after being ordained a priest in 1934 worked as a pastor in various Belgian parishes, and later as a chaplain in the Belgian Congo and as an official in Church missionary programs. Ordained a bishop in May 1968, he served as papal delegate to Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia, and then in 1971-1973, in West Africa. In the spring of 1973, he became Pope Paul VI's envoy to the United States, where he was known for his concern for the poor and for minorities, and for being responsible for the appointment of more than one hundred bishops, who were marked by their pastoral orientation. In 1980, Abp. Jadot was appointed to lead the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians, from which he retired in 1984, returning to Brussels for the remainder of his life. Archbishop Jadot is survived by two sisters.

John of the Cross Wasserman (1930-2008)

Fr. Edmund "Cap" Wasserman, known as Father John of the Cross while a monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani, died December 25, 2008, in Toledo, OH after a two-year battle with cancer. Born in Toledo in 1930, son of Margaret and Edmund Wasserman, he attended Gesu Grammar School and Central Catholic High School, and in 1948 entered the Abbey of Gethsemani, where he took simple vows in 1950

and was ordained a priest on June 6, 1955. He studied under Thomas Merton while Merton was Master of Students at Gethsemani, and according to Fr. James Conner was "perhaps Merton's closest friend in the monastery." After ordination he became Merton's first Undermaster of Novices, and in 1958 became Master of Students, and about two years later Master of Novices for the lay brothers. Fr. John of the Cross is mentioned with some frequency in Merton's journals, including a passage later incorporated into *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* in which Merton praises his preaching as the best in the community. He served for a time as Merton's confessor. In late 1962, after a period of unrest and tension with Abbot James Fox, which Merton comments on in his journal, Fr. John of the Cross left Gethsemani, never to return. In his poem "Gethsemani (May 19, 1966)," published in *Eighteen Poems*, Merton refers to Fr. John of the Cross as "A taut, embittered / Young Christ / Pierced by righteous insults." Though he remained away from the abbey, he refused to request a dispensation from his vows until persuaded to do so by Abbot Timothy Kelly in 1999; at that time he was not required to seek laicization from the priesthood and so was able to remain a priest in good standing until his death. After leaving Gethsemani, he moved to Detroit, earned a Masters Degree from the University of Detroit, and taught in inner-city Detroit Public Schools for a quarter century, often celebrating Mass in his apartment and ministering to young people in his neighborhood. He adopted James, a young African American who took Fr. John's surname as his own. Merton was able to stay in indirect contact with Fr. John through his sister Anita, a Carmelite nun in Cleveland, with whom Merton maintained a correspondence (published in part in *The School of Charity*). At the request of his family, Fr. John's funeral took place January 5, 2009 in the Guest Chapel at the Abbey of Gethsemani, celebrated by Fr. James Conner, who also delivered the eulogy, and attended by Sr. Anita, Fr. John's brother Robert, his adopted son James with his wife Juanna and two children, and a number of the monks. His ashes were buried in the extern cemetery at Gethsemani.

TMS Call for Papers

The Eighth General Meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be held April 9-11, 2010 at Oakham School, Rutland, England. The conference focus is "The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air," taken from the title of the third section of Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. Papers responding to

themes found in this section of *Conjectures*, approached in the light of the present world situation, are sought for presentation at the conference; ideas for workshops, meditation and creative activities are also invited; submissions focusing on personal reflections as well as non-academic presentations are also welcome. Possible topics include: the psychology of crisis and the fear of change; the spark within everyone that belongs entirely to God; vocation; beauty and nature; the religious genius of the Protestant Reformation; Christ, “beyond purity and impurity”; Bonhoeffer and ethics; the Fourth & Walnut epiphany; anti-semitism; war; politics; interreligious dialogue; etc. Academic papers will be allotted 30 minutes; workshops will run 90 minutes; dramatic, poetic, artistic and musical presentations may run 45 or 90 minutes. Papers can be submitted for publication in *The Merton Journal* following the conference, so presenters should consider this in the preparation of their texts. Proposals of no more than 500 words should be submitted by June 30, 2009 to Larry Culliford, PO Box 2567, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 0BR, UK; or by email: auud26@dsl.pipex.com.

ITMS Authors

Paul Dekar has recently published *Community of the Transfiguration: The Journey of a New Monastic Community* (Wipf & Stock, 2008) [\$23.00], the story of an Australian intentional community, arising from the Baptist tradition and ecumenical in outlook, which Episcopal Bishop Andrew St. John has called “one of the hidden and unexpected gems of the contemporary Australian Christian scene” and Br. Jeffrey Gros has described as “a window into the possibilities of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the prospect of a world remade”; further information can be found at http://wipfandstock.com/cascade_books.

Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton (Orbis, 2008) by Merton friend and correspondent Jim Forest has been reissued to mark the fortieth anniversary of Merton’s death in an updated version that incorporates material from Merton’s complete journals and other material published since the previous edition, which appeared in 1991 (reviewed in *The Merton Seasonal* 17.1 [Spring 1992] 22-23).

Bonnie Thurston has recently published *The Spiritual Landscape of Mark* (Liturgical Press, 2008) [\$12.95], of which John Donahue, SJ writes, “By combining the skill of an exegete, the imagination of a poet, and the religious sensitivity of a wise woman,

Thurston has brought from her storehouse things old and things new” and Professor Morna Hooker notes, “she opens our eyes to the significance of the details in St. Mark’s story that we so easily miss – details about where events take place – not just in the wilderness and the garden, but in the house and by the sea, on the mountain and in the city. In this book, spirituality is based on sound scholarship. To read St. Mark’s story through Bonnie Thurston’s eyes is, as she herself puts it, to make the Gospel dance”; further information can be found at www.litpress.org

St. Bonaventure Lecture Series

A series of lectures on Thomas Merton is being given throughout the Spring 2009 semester at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY, where Merton taught in 1940-1941. On January 27-28, Dr. Barry Gan, director of the Center for Nonviolence at St. Bonaventure, and Dr. Mark Huddle of the St. Bonaventure History Department spoke on Merton’s “Letters to a White Liberal.” On February 3-4, Fr. Daniel Riley OFM, university chaplain, spoke on “Learning to Live – In a World of Colors, Cultures and Callings”; on February 17-18, Fr. Riley presented a companion lecture: “Learning to Love – From Racism to Romance: Finding our Way from our Head to our Heart.” On March 13, Dr. Anthony Bannon, director of the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY, gave a presentation for faculty and staff on “Merton and Contemplation through his Photographs”; on March 13-14, Dr. Bannon, a St. Bonaventure alumnus, led an overnight retreat for students entitled “Reflections on Thomas Merton” at Mt. Irenaeus, the university retreat center. On March 31, Dr. Patrick O’Connell of Gannon University will speak on “Wisdom and Prophecy: The Two Poles of Thomas Merton’s Mature Spirituality.” On April 1, University Ministries will hold a rededication of the Thomas Merton Center, the campus ministry building, with Fr. Robert Struzynski, OFM, coordinator of academic programs for Mt. Irenaeus, as the presenter, and Robert Donius, vice president for University Ministries, as presider.

Merton Happenings

On October 23 Malgorzata Poks presented a paper entitled “Points for Meditation on the Nuclear Age: Thomas Merton, Carey Schonegevel McKenzie, and Gerald Vizenor” at the annual conference of the Polish Association for American Studies conference, entitled “The Past in the Present: American Uses of History.”

On Sunday November 2, the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Providence, RI presented a program entitled "Celebrating the Dream: A Concert Celebrating the Lives of Martin Luther King, Thomas Merton and Alexander Peloquin," that included a lecture by Fr. Vaughn Fayle, OFM on the Merton-Peloquin collaboration and a performance of Merton and Peloquin's "Four Freedom Songs" performed by the cathedral's Gregorian Concert Choir and Orchestra.

On November 15-16, a Thomas Merton Workshop and Photo Exhibition was held at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Atlanta, cosponsored by the Aquinas Center of Theology at Emory University.

On November 16, John Collins spoke on "Thomas Merton: A Man for All Seasons" at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Marblehead, MA.

On December 6, James Finley directed a one-day retreat entitled "Remembering Thomas Merton: Contemplative Practice for Today" at Loyola University, cosponsored by the university's Institute for Pastoral Studies and the Chicago Chapter of the ITMS.

On December 10, Fr. Robert Barron spoke on "The Spirituality of Thomas Merton" at the Mission Chicago luncheon at the Union League Club, Chicago.

On December 10, the Chinese Culture Institute at Beijing University held a commemoration of the death of Thomas Merton, organized by the Sino-American Institute for Transpersonal Studies and attended by a large group of Chinese and American scholars. Cyrus Lee spoke on Merton's life and spirituality and Mary Phillips discussed the circumstances surrounding Merton's tragic death. The gathering also featured addresses by two Chinese scholars, Tang Yi-Chie, who discussed the methodology of religious dialogue between East and West, and Mou Chung-chen, who addressed the problem of religious freedom in China. The gathering concluded with a banquet at the Hospitality Hall of the Chinese Culture Institute.

On December 13, a program held at Sts. Matthew and James Church, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, entitled "A Man for Our Season," featured Rev. David Emmott and

Rev. Kenneth Carveley speaking on "Thomas Merton and the Human Future," with poems by Merton set to music by John Jacob Niles performed by Damian O'Keefe and John Peace.

On January 20, filmmaker Morgan Atkinson showed his film *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, followed by a discussion, at Linfield College, McMinnville, OR.

On February 12, Paul M. Pearson gave a presentation entitled "A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton" at the Anderson County Public Library, Lawrenceburg, KY.

On February 20-22, John King led a retreat on Thomas Merton and Prayer at St. Scholastica Retreat Center, Fort Smith, AR.

On February 26, Jonathan Montaldo gave a presentation entitled "Uncaging Our Minds and Opening the Ears of Our Hearts: Thomas Merton's Legacy for Contemplative Living" at Seton Hall University, S. Orange, NJ.

On February 28, Fiona Gardner led a retreat on "Thomas Merton, Contemplative Prayer and Intra-religious Dialogue" at Westbury on Trym Baptist Church in Bristol, UK.

On March 14, 2009, Monica Weis SSJ presented a day-long Merton retreat for St Anne's Parish in Houston, TX on "Spiritual Awakenings: Discovering God in Nature."

Upcoming Events

James Douglass will speak on "Merton, JFK and the Unspeakable" on March 24, 2009, at 7 p.m. in Frazier Hall, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, sponsored by the Bellarmine Thomas Merton Center. Admission is free. For further information contact the Center at 502-452-8177.

On March 27-28, Sheila Carroll, OSF will present a weekend retreat entitled "Thomas Merton: A Mystical Guide for You Who Seek 'More'" at the Sophia Center, Atchison, KS; for more information see the Center website: www.mountosb.org/sophia/offerings.

Upcoming events at Bethany Spring, the Retreat Center of the Merton Institute for Contemplative Living in New Haven, KY, include Lenten Bridges to Contemplative Living Retreats: March 21-23, March 27-29, March 30-April 1; Bridges to Contemplative Living Retreats: May 1-3, May 18-20, May 29-31, June 12-14, July 10-12, July 13-15, July 17-19; Dream Workshop: April 3-5; Holy Week Retreat: April 8-12; Bridges Facilitator Training Retreat: April 27-29; Contemplative *Lectio Divina*: Reading Your Life Story as a Holy Text: May 8-10; Thomas Merton and Mary Oliver: Poets of the Sacred: May 15-17, July 2-5, July 23-26; In the Dark Before Dawn: Thomas Merton's Poetry & Prayer: June 18-21; Intimate Merton Retreat: June 25-28; for further information, phone: 502-899-1991; email: contactus@mertoninstitute.org.

On April 24-26, John Dear, SJ will present a program entitled "Gandhi, King, Day and Merton – Peacemaking Ancestors" at Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center, Bangor PA. For further information see: <http://www.kirkridge.org>; phone: 610-588-1793.

On May 1-3, Sr. Suzanne Zuercher will lead a retreat entitled "The Enneagram, the Spiritual Journey and Thomas Merton" at Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, NE; for further information see: www.stbenedictcenter.com; phone: 402-352-8819.

On May 14, Paul M. Pearson will give a presentation entitled "A Meeting of Angels: Thomas Merton and the Shakers" at the McCracken County Public Library, Paducah, KY. For further information, see: <http://mclib.net/adultevenings.html>.

On May 30, a program entitled "Thomas Merton's Celtic Soul: Nature Mystic and Ecological Prophet" will be held at All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland, sponsored by the An Croi Wisdom Learning Community. Speakers include Larry Culliford on "The Appeal of Thomas Merton"; Kathleen Deignan, CND on "Love for the Paradise Mystery – Thomas Merton: Ecological Prophet"; and Paul M. Pearson on "Merton's Celtic Soul and Sense of Place" and "Merton's Zen Photography." The cost is €55. For further information contact An Croi: 018352156 / 0876240071; email: ancroi@eircom.net; website: www.ancroi.ie.

A presentation entitled "Thomas Merton's Dreams and the Individuation Process" will be given by Bob

Haden as part of "God's Forgotten Language," the summer dream conference to be held at the Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC, June 7-12, 2009. For more information see www.hadeninstitute.com.

On June 29-July 1, Jonathan Montaldo will present a Bridges to Contemplative Living workshop at the Institute for Church Life's "Wisdom and Witness" Conference at the University of Notre Dame; for further information see the Institute website: www.nd.edu/~icl/index.

On July 6-10, Patrick O'Connell will present a course entitled "Monastics & Mystics: Through the Eyes of Thomas Merton" at the Chalmers Institute of the Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, BC; he will also deliver a lecture on July 8 entitled: "Sixty Years of Tears: An Anniversary Encounter with Merton's *Tears of the Blind Lions*" to mark the anniversary of the opening of the VST Merton Room. For more information see: <http://www.vst.edu/chalmers/index.php>.

On July 10-12, Jonathan Montaldo will present a "Merton and Contemplative Living" Retreat at the Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford, OH; cost is \$175. For further information see the Center website: <https://www.jesuitspiritualcenter.com/Retreats/Topical.aspx>.

On July 12-19, Sr. Colleen O'Sullivan will be conducting an eight-day retreat using the writings of Thomas Merton entitled "The Way of Contemplation" at St. Joseph's Retreat Centre, Baulkham Hills, New South Wales. For further information see: www.stjosephscentre.org.au/services.

On July 12-24, Bonnie Thurston will present a program entitled "Thomas Merton & Contemplative Living" at Ring Lake Ranch, Dubois, WY; continuing education credits for the program are available through Iliff School of Theology; for further information see: www.ringlake.org; phone: 888-458-5253.

The next "Week with Thomas Merton" Elderhostel at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY will be held from Sunday October 11 through Friday October 16, 2009; for further details contact Linda Bailey: phone: 502-452-8161; e-mail: lbailey@bellarmine.edu.

Chapter/Affiliate News

The program for the seventh year of the Thomas Merton Study Group at St. Mary's Parish, Shrewsbury,

MA is entitled “*The Seven Storey Mountain Revisited*”; for further information see: www.stmarysparish.org and click on “Growth”; or contact John Collins: email: jpcoll@aol.com; phone: 508-753-6203.

The Washington, DC ITMS Chapter sponsored a presentation by Abbot John Eudes Bamberger on “Merton and the Life of Prayer” on December 6 at St. Anselm’s Abbey School. The chapter’s Merton Study Group has been reading and discussing Merton’s *New Seeds of Contemplation*. For further information contact John Farrelly, OSB: email: mjfarrelly547@aol.com; phone: 202-269-2300.

The Thomas Merton Society of the Capital Region (NY) met on December 10 at St. Francis Chapel in Albany to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton; the meeting included evening prayer, a tape of Fr. Louis’s Bangkok talk, discussion and light refreshments. For further information contact Walt Chura, SFO: email: waltchura_sfo@yahoo.com; phone: 518-456-3201.

At the October meeting of the ITMS Chicago chapter, Fr. Vaughn Fayle discussed the correspondence between Dr. Martin Marty and Thomas Merton. On November 16, Judith Valente and Charles Reynard, co-editors of the anthology *Twenty Poems to Nourish Your Soul*, made a presentation entitled “Soul Friends: Merton and Modern Poets.” The chapter commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton with a Mass on December 10 celebrated by Fr. Francis Cusack at the Passionist Monastery. At its January meeting, the group viewed the documentary *A Zen Life – D. T. Suzuki* and at its February meeting saw a video biography on the life of the visionary mystic Hildegard of Bingen; in March Sr. Suzanne Zuercher, OSB addressed the chapter on “Merton the Prophet.” On April 19 Fr. Vaughn Fayle, OFM will discuss “Merton on Unredeemed and Redeemable Technology” and on May 31 Pat O’Connell will give a presentation on “Wisdom and Prophecy: The Two Poles of Thomas Merton’s Mature Spirituality.” The chapter meets in the Rectory Assembly of Immaculate Conception Church, 7211 W. Talcott, Chicago. The Merton Readers Group discussed Merton’s *The Waters of Siloe* at its October, November and December meetings; the group began its discussion of *Mystics and Zen Masters* at its February and March meetings at the Passionist Monastery. For more information contact chapter coordinator Mike

Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com; phone: 774-447-3989; chapter information is also available at <http://ccitms.blogspot.com>.

The Northern California ITMS Chapter discussed *Wisdom of the Desert* at its September meeting, Merton’s Advent writings at its November meeting, and *Disputed Questions* at its January meeting. On March 21, a day of prayer at the Trappist Abbey in Vina, CA is planned. On March 29, William Apel will be the guest speaker. May and July meetings will focus on *The Inner Experience*. For further information contact John Berger: bergerjh@rcip.com.

The San Diego ITMS Chapter sponsored a retreat with Fr. William Meninger, OCSO entitled “*The Cloud of Unknowing: A Theology of Contemplative Prayer*” January 30-February 1, 2009 at the Viña de Lestonnac Retreat Center, Temecula, CA. The group continues its regular Thursday meetings for prayer at St. Brigid Church in San Diego, with the second Thursday of each month a gathering for business and discussion of Merton’s work. For further information see the chapter website: <http://www.sandiegomerton.org>; or contact John Alexander: phone: 858-345-7843; email: john@sandiegomerton.org.

The inaugural meeting of the Mid-Michigan ITMS chapter in October attracted eleven members, with several others expressing interest but unable to attend. Members received ITMS handouts, website references, membership information, 2009 General Meeting details, and a copy of *The Pocket Merton*. For further information contact Mark Shaw: mshawin@yahoo.com.

Five members of the Clinton Township, MI Merton Study Group spent a week during summer 2008 in Kentucky, where they visited the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, made a pilgrimage to the site of Merton’s Fourth and Walnut epiphany, made a private weekend retreat at Bethany Spring with Director Jonathan Montaldo, and joined the monks at the Abbey of Gethsemani for vespers and Sunday Mass and later visited Merton’s grave site. For further information contact Mary T. Corcoran: tariecorcoran@comcast.net.

The Wall, NJ ITMS Chapter discussed Merton’s *The Sign of Jonas* at its November meeting, and viewed the film *Into Great Silence*, on the Carthusian monks of La Grande Chartreuse, at its December meeting. At its

January meeting the group began discussion of Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* which continued at the February meeting. For further information contact Greg Ryan at gjryan@optonline.net.

The Lafayette, OR Chapter met November 15 at Guadalupe Monastery to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Merton's death; the meeting featured readings and reflections on Merton's final journey. At its February 21 meeting, the group heard presentations by Br. Mark Filut on "True Freedom"; Mary Sommerset on "Merton and Poetry"; and Doug Speers on "A Tribute to William Shannon." For further information contact Doug Speers: dougsp@teleport.com; 503-246-0722.

The Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky ITMS Chapter is sponsoring a retreat entitled "Thomas Merton: Prophet and Witness" at the Abbey of Gethsemani, October 2-5, 2009, led by Tony Russo. Resources will include material from Abbot John Eudes Bamberger's book *Thomas Merton: Prophet of Renewal*, along with selected Merton writings. For further information, contact Tony Russo, 8087 Bridgetown Road, Cleves, OH 45002; email: trusso@fuse.net; phone: 513-941-5219.

The newly formed Toronto Merton Group has been meeting regularly every 5-6 weeks for the past year to share stories of becoming acquainted with Merton's writings; the format includes discussion, silence, reflections, music, videos, etc. For further information contact Mary L. (Bunny) Stewart: 416-694-9319.

On October 15, the Thomas Merton Society of Canada sponsored a presentation by Dr. Monica Weis entitled "Kindred Spirits in Revelation and Revolution: Rachel Carson & Thomas Merton" at the Canadian Memorial Church & Centre for Peace in Vancouver, British Columbia. On December 10, the Society sponsored an evening of reflections, poetry and contemplative music in remembrance of Thomas Merton at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Vancouver. On January 19, Donald Grayston gave a presentation at the Vancouver Central Library entitled "The Rosebushes at the Hermitage: Thomas Merton's Search for Solitude," featuring a discussion of Merton's correspondence with Prior Anselmo Giabbani of Camaldoli. On March 3, the Society sponsored a presentation by Merton friend and biographer Jim Forest entitled "Thomas Merton: Peacemaker in a Time of War" at the Central Library. On March 6-7, the Society organized a conference entitled

"Peace – A Transforming Vision" at the Canadian Memorial Church & Centre for Peace. On Friday evening, Jim Forest delivered the keynote address, entitled "An Army that Sheds No Blood: Thomas Merton's Response to War," and on Saturday morning delivered a plenary address entitled "Thomas Merton: Peacemaker in a Divided Christendom"; Canadian poet and professor Peter Dale Scott also delivered a plenary address, entitled "Thomas Merton as Visionary Poet of Inner and Outer Peace." Concurrent sessions included Ron Dart: "Thomas Merton, George Grant and Michael Ignatieff: Peacekeepers, Peace-mongers and Peacemaking"; Donald Grayston: "Thomas Merton and Gaza: A Workshop"; Susan McCaslin: "Transformative Solitudes: Merton and Rilke at the Pivot of Silence"; Michael McGregor: "Thomas Merton, Robert Lax and the Poetics of Peace"; Lynn Szabo: "Following the Echo: Thomas Merton's Poetic of Peace"; the one-act play "Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day: Pilgrims and Prophets of Peace" was also performed by Sharon Halsey-Hoover and David Hoover. On March 14, the Society sponsored a one-day conference likewise entitled "Peace – A Transforming Vision" at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, with Jim Forest again the keynoter. Other speakers included Ron Dart on Thomas Merton, George Grant and Michael Ignatieff as preeminent writers on peace; ITMS President Donald Grayston on Merton's ideas about peacemaking in relation to the crisis in Gaza; and Lynn Szabo and Susan McCaslin on the relationship between contemplation, poetry, and peace in Merton's writings. The conference was co-sponsored by Interfaith Services University of Victoria. For further information, see www.merton.ca; phone: 604-669-2546; email: tmisc@telus.net.

The recently formed Japan Chapter of the ITMS held its first meeting on January 26 at the Xavier Center in Yokohama. For further information contact Fr. Edward Vebelun, OSB at evebelun@osb.or.jp.

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The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:

www.merton.org/ITMS