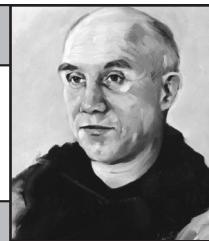


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Merton Center Anniversary

October 16, 2019 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the official establishment of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, the principal repository of Merton's archives and the major resource site for Merton research and scholarship. The library at Bellarmine-Ursuline College, as it was then known, had been the designated location for a Thomas Merton Collection, intended to house a wide range of literary and artistic materials by Merton or related to his work, since its formal inauguration on November 10, 1963, with the approval of the Abbey of Gethsemani and of Merton himself; the Merton Room was dedicated on November 8, 1964. With the establishment of the Thomas Merton Legacy Trust in 1967, Bellarmine was designated as the assigned depository for Merton's manuscripts and other archival materials not otherwise allocated to other locations.

In October 1969, Bellarmine President Msgr. Alfred E. Horrigan announced a major development in the college's commitment to this ongoing project. In formulating a long-range "academic blueprint" for the future, a committee of administrators and faculty had recognized the need for the college to "possess certain distinctive programs and features which allow it to make a unique contribution to the educational community" and decided that the Merton Collection should be "the basis for such a unique feature." On October 16 this action plan for the following decade was approved by the college's board of trustees. Its vision for the proposed Center was strongly supported by the Abbey of Gethsemani and the members of the Merton Legacy Trust.

In his announcement, Msgr. Horrigan identified "one of the most significant and distinctive features of the college in its future growth" as "the development of a Thomas Merton Studies Center which goes

far beyond the original concept of a simple Merton 'Room' or 'Collection.'" He went on to envision "a national and even international center for the study of Merton's work and influence and for the broad field of twentieth-century humanism and spirituality" with "particular concern for the great themes which absorbed Father Merton – peace, freedom, interracial justice, ecumenism, and East-West relations." (Msgr. Horrigan's announcement, along with Merton's own statement at the time of the inception of the Collection, dated November 10, 1963, and the text of the Center's inaugural lecture by Merton's friend and initial biographer John Howard Griffin, were included in the booklet *The Thomas Merton Studies Center* published by Unicorn Press in 1971.)

Early directors of the Center included Rev. Alfred D. Pooler, CP, who, along with Merton Trustee Tommie O'Callaghan, was responsible for early contacts with Merton correspondents that significantly increased the number of letters to and from Merton held by the Center; longtime Bellarmine administrator Msgr. Raymond J. Treece; Baptist minister Raymond Bailey, who during his tenure as Center Director wrote an early doctoral dissertations on Merton, subsequently published as *Thomas Merton on Mysticism* (1975); and Bellarmine theologian and Church historian Clyde F. Crews, who was the founding editor of *The Merton Seasonal* as a Center publication in 1976. When Fr. Crews left the Center directorship in Fall 1976 to resume full-time classroom teaching, Msgr. Treece returned as Acting Director from 1976 to 1980, but the day-to-day operations of the Center, including editing the *Seasonal*, were entrusted to newly hired curator and associate director Robert E. Daggy, who was officially named Center Director in 1985 and continued in that position until his death in 1997, editing numerous volumes of Merton's posthumous works and playing a key role

in the Merton scholarly community. During his final illness former Bellarmine dean Theresa Sandok, OSM became Director of the Center, serving until 1999, when she was succeeded by Merton scholar Jonathan Montaldo, who held the position until 2001. In that year Dr. Paul M. Pearson assumed the directorship, which he still holds, with Mark C. Meade as Assistant Director.

By 1976 the Center had outgrown its quarters in the Merton Room of the Library and relocated to the ground floor of Bonaventure Hall, a dormitory on Bellarmine's upper campus, where it remained until spring 1997, when it moved into its expanded location on the second floor of the newly opened W. L. Lyons Brown Library. Since 1994 the name has been shortened to simply The Thomas Merton Center. In May 1987 the Center hosted a gathering of fourteen Merton scholars for the founding of the International Thomas Merton Society, with Center Director Robert Daggy (and his successors) serving as Resident Secretary of the Society, and *The Merton Seasonal* becoming a joint publication of the Merton Center and the ITMS.

In his 1969 announcement, Msgr. Horrigan noted that the Collection currently included more than 3000 items, 2000 of which were in manuscript form; in the intervening decades it has grown exponentially, presently consisting of over fifty thousand items, including the literary estate, more than twenty thousand pieces of correspondence to over 2,100 correspondents, nine hundred drawings, eleven hundred photographs, six hundred hours of audio taped conferences given by Merton, and several hundred volumes from Merton's own library, consulted in person by more than 3000 visitors and through correspondence and telephone contact by over 6000 researchers and interested readers annually. Msgr. Horrigan also stated that "The Center is conceived, therefore, not simply as a collection of materials, but as an educational agency. . . . The Center will sponsor adult education courses, seminars, and institutes deriving their inspiration from Merton's ideals and insights. It is also anticipated that the Center in due course will sponsor various forms of publication relating to Merton and his influence." A half-century later, the Thomas Merton Center continues to implement this vision of "preserving and extending Merton's" spiritual and literary legacy that prompted its foundation and has inspired the ongoing support not only of

the university but of patrons and donors throughout the country and the world.

Merton at the Selma March

March 7, 2020 marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, a key turning point in the struggle for civil rights for African Americans. A little-known detail about that event was that Thomas Merton was present both in spirit and in word. Leading the march was 25-year-old John Lewis, chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who was expecting to be arrested for participating in this "illegal" demonstration and came prepared for jail, with a backpack containing a toothbrush and toothpaste, an apple and an orange, and two books to read while incarcerated, one of which was Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

In the event, as is well known, Lewis ended up not in jail but in the hospital, having been beaten so badly by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge leading out of Selma that he suffered a fractured skull. In response to this and similar acts of brutality protesters from across the country converged on Selma to complete the interrupted march two weeks later, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., a watershed event that catalyzed the nation and led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. John Lewis went on to become the U.S. Representative for Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, beginning in 1987 and continuing to the present, the dean of the Georgia congressional delegation, often referred to as the Conscience of the House for his principled advocacy of social and racial justice.

Following the historic address to the U.S. Congress by Pope Francis on September 25, 2015, Congressman Lewis reflected on the speech and its connection to events a half-century earlier: "Pope Francis delivered one of the most moving speeches I have ever heard in all my years in Congress. I loved the way he used the life and work of President Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton as the basis of his lesson for all of us. Though I was reluctant to openly shed tears, I cried within to hear his words. I was deeply moved to realize I had a connection in some way with some of those he mentioned. . . . Thomas Merton was a

monk whose words I studied during non-violence training in the Civil Rights Movement. It was amazing that the Pope mentioned the Selma-to-Montgomery march because during the first attempt to march to Montgomery, now known as Bloody Sunday, I carried one of Thomas Merton's books in my backpack. Pope Francis spoke to the heart and soul of Congress and America. It is my hope and prayer that members of Congress will heed his simple call to respect the dignity and divinity of every human being then we would be better servants of the American people, this would be a better country, and a better world.” (For the complete reflection see <https://johnlewis.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-john-lewis-pope-francis-address-congress>.)

At the October 2019 wake at the U.S. Capitol for another African American congressman and civil rights icon, Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley encountered Rep. Lewis. Recalling having been told by Lewis on a previous occasion about *New Seeds* in his backpack, and “Remembering our affinity for Merton, I ask the congressman, ‘What do you think Thomas Merton would say to us as Americans today if he were alive?’ After only a brief moment of reflection, he looked me straight in the eye and said, “Be faithful.” He would say, “Be faithful.” And so it is,” O'Malley concludes: “the clock ticks on, and the reputations of some men soar even as their abilities vanish before our eyes. But some things never die. Some ideas refuse to be buried. Justice. Dignity. Generational progress. The truth that we are all in this together” – ideals shared by the civil rights leader and the monk whose printed words accompanied him on that historic day fifty-five years ago, and whose spirit, Lewis believes, continues to summon Americans to be faithful to their truest principles and their best selves. (For O'Malley's reflections, see: www.shareblue.com/elijah-cummings-martin-o-malley-baltimore-maryland-democrats-congress.)

John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO (1926-2020)

John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO, student, friend, colleague and advisor of Thomas Merton and retired abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Our Lady of the Genesee in Piffard, NY, died February 21, 2020 at the age of 93.

Born in 1926 in Latonia, KY, after military service in the US Navy and medical studies at the University of Cincinnati, from which he graduated in 1949, followed by an internship in Washington, DC, he entered the Cistercian Order at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, KY in 1950. After his two-year novitiate and profession of simple vows, he was a student of Thomas Merton from 1952 through 1955 while Merton was master of students at the abbey. He made his solemn perpetual vows in 1955, and shortly after his priestly ordination in June 1956, in his first trip outside the monastery since his entrance, he accompanied Merton to the 1956 conference on psychiatry and religious life at St. John's Abbey in Minnesota, where Merton's famous encounter with celebrity psychiatrist Gregory Zilboorg took place. The following year he was sent to Washington, DC for a psychiatric residency at Georgetown University Hospital. Upon his return to Gethsemani he worked closely with Merton as novice master to evaluate prospective candidates for admission to the community while also serving as the abbey physician. In the early 1960s he became Master of the Juniorate, in charge of newly professed monks in the recently established monastic formation program. It was he who formally identified Merton's body after it was returned to Kentucky following his death in Thailand in December 1968.

In 1969 he was sent to Rome to serve in the newly created position of Secretary of the Cistercian Concilium Generale, with particular responsibility for guiding the renewal of the Cistercian Order in the post-conciliar period. In 1971, he was elected fourth abbot of the Genesee, a daughter house of Gethsemani, and served in this position for thirty years, until his resignation at age 75 in 2001. During this period he also became a friend and spiritual director of pastoral theologian and prolific author Henri Nouwen, whose two lengthy periods of residence at the Genesee resulted in his books *The Genesee Diary* (1981) and *A Cry for Mercy: Prayers from the Genesee* (1981); he also wrote the preface for Nouwen's *Pray to Live: Thomas Merton, Contemplative Critic* (1972). A scholar of early monasticism, in 1972 he published a pioneering translation of the *Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* of the fourth-century desert father and monastic theologian Evagrius Ponticus,

with an extensive introduction, a figure he first encountered through his studies with Merton. After his retirement he was stationed as temporary superior of the Trappist monastery at Guimaras in the Philippines (2001-2002). Upon his return to the United States, he lived as a hermit on the grounds of his abbey until a serious fall led to his residing in the abbey infirmary during the final years of his life.

He wrote numerous articles and reviews on Merton, in publications such as *America*, *Catholic Digest*, *Cistercian Studies*, *Continuum*, *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal*, *Studia Monastica* and the volumes *Thomas Merton Monk* (1974), *One Yet Two: Monastic Traditions East and West* (1976), *Thomas Merton: Prophet in the Belly of a Paradox* (1978), *The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance in the Twentieth Century* (2008) and *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope* (2015). His homily at the closing liturgy of the Second General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society in 1991 appeared in *The Merton Seasonal* 16.3 (Summer 1991), and his reflections at the Ninth General Meeting of the ITMS in 2005 were published as "Thomas Merton: Monk and Prophet of Peace" in *The Merton Annual* 19. His book *Thomas Merton: Prophet of Renewal*, based on presentations made at a Cistercian monastery in France, was published in 2005. His presentation at Bellarmine University in 2006 entitled "Thomas Merton: The Restless Prophet" is available at: <http://merton.org/Research/AV/Bamberger-2006.mp3>. He also wrote the preface to Merton's novitiate conference volume *Charter, Customs, and Constitutions of the Cistercians* (2015). Extensive interviews focusing on his relationship with Merton can be found in *Merton By Those Who Knew Him Best* (1984), compiled by Paul Wilkes in his preparation for the film *Thomas Merton: A Film Biography*, in which Abbot Bamberger appears, and in the interview with Victor A. Kramer entitled "Merton's Vocation as Monastic & Writer," published in *The Merton Annual* 4 (1991); Morgan Atkinson's interview for his 2007 film *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton* is available at: <https://vimeo.com/393435692>.

His funeral was celebrated at the Abbey of the Genesee on February 25, 2000 by Abbot Gerard D'Souza, followed by burial in the monastic cemetery. In his

homily, Dom Gerard said: "Today we are here for the funeral Mass and the burial of a monk. I purposely singled this out – the monk. With a person as gifted, as multifaceted, as complex as Dom John Eudes was, it would be very difficult to know where to begin. Physician, psychiatrist, linguist, scholar, preacher and speaker, Secretary General of our Order at a most critical time, Abbot of this community for 30 years. . . He could not but be the monk. You do not become a monk by living in a monastery or putting on a habit or fussing with the minutiae of monastica. You become a monk only when God is all in all. This is the organizing principle. Fr John Eudes had it to the full. All of you who have met him can testify to this. He was the monk." (For the complete text of the homily, see: <https://www.geneseabbey.org/february-25-2020>.)

Ernesto Cardenal (1925-2020)

Ernesto Cardenal Martínez, Nicaraguan priest, poet and revolutionary figure, former novice, close friend and correspondent of Thomas Merton, died March 1, 2020 at the age of 95.

Born January 20, 1925 to a prominent upper-class family in Granada, a city on Lake Nicaragua, he studied Spanish literature at the University of Mexico from 1942 to 1946, and from 1947 through 1949 studied American literature at Columbia University. While at Columbia, in addition to reading Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Ezra Pound, Cardenal first encountered the poetry of Columbia alumnus Thomas Merton, as well as his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*. "From then on I could not resist," he told filmmaker Paul Wilkes in his interview included in the volume *Merton By Those Who Knew Him Best*. "I read all of Merton's books." After spending some time in Europe, he returned to Nicaragua in the early 1950s where he wrote a good deal of poetry on his country's colonial history, as well as love poems and political epigrams that circulated in mimeographed form to evade government censorship. He became more deeply involved in a political resistance movement in opposition to the dictatorship of Luis Somoza García, leading up to the unsuccessful April 1954 uprising against Somoza in which some of his colleagues were imprisoned or killed. In 1956, the year in which Luis Somoza was assassinated, only to be replaced by Anastasio Somoza Debayle, Cardenal

underwent what he described as a “radical religious conversion” that led to a decision “to dedicate myself totally to God.”

As a result, in 1957 Cardenal entered the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, where for two years his novice master and spiritual director was Thomas Merton. At the end of his novitiate, Cardenal left the abbey due to health problems, but continued to work toward ordination in his studies in Cuernavaca, Mexico and in Columbia, and was ordained in Granada in 1965. Soon after leaving Gethsemani an extensive correspondence began between Cardenal and his former novice master that would continue until Merton’s death in December 1968. With the encouragement of Merton, shortly after his ordination Cardenal began a small lay monastic community made up largely of peasant families at Solentiname, an island archipelago in Lake Nicaragua. In his preface to Cardenal’s book of prose meditations written at Gethsemani and entitled *Love (Vida in el Amor* in the original Spanish), Merton wrote: “Ernesto Cardenal left Gethsemani because of ill-health. However, today I can see that this is not the only reason: it did not make sense to continue at Gethsemani as a novice and as a student when actually he was already a teacher. Today he is an ordained priest and the founder of a contemplative community that lives in the spirit of the wisdom and in the humility of love which are so signally evident in these pages. His community is located precisely at a place where it is most needed – in Central America, where there are no contemplative religious orders. This book, this hymn to life and love, gives testimony of the renewal of the Church in Latin America.” The community’s dialogues on the Sunday scripture readings were later published as *The Gospel in Solentiname* and were widely circulated in the original Spanish and in English translation, a concrete exemplification of the Latin American theology of liberation espoused by Cardenal.

At this time Cardenal’s poetry also began to attract wide popular attention. In his 1963 volume *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, Merton included his translations of some Cardenal poems, including selections from his collection *Gethsemani, Ky*, written during his novitiate, referring to Cardenal in his introductory note as “rightly recognized as one of the most significant

of the newly mature generation of Latin American poets.” (These translations and Merton’s friendship with Cardenal are discussed in detail in Malgorzata Poks’ book *Thomas Merton and Latin America: A Consonance of Voices* [2007].) Among his best-known works are (in English translation) *Prayer for Marilyn Monroe and Other Poems*, *Zero Hour*, *Psalms and Homage to the American Indians*; the most recent translation is *Pluriverse: New and Selected Poems* (2007). A translation of his long elegy, “Coplas for the Death of Merton,” is included in the volume *A Merton Concelebration: Tributes from Friends of the Poet-Monk* (1981).

The collection of correspondence, a total of 54 letters from Merton and 38 from Cardenal, now available in the volume *From the Monastery to the World* (2017), provides an illuminating perspective on a mutually supportive relationship of these two figures, each of them at key, though very different, points in their lives. Cardenal continues to rely on Merton for spiritual guidance and early on Merton reassures him that his present situation represents “part of the vital evolution of your vocation . . . a step in your spiritual maturity”; he continues to provide advice and encouragement as Cardenal pursues the path to ordination and eventually to Solentiname, considering Merton as the community’s spiritual father. At the same time, Cardenal nurtures Merton’s growing interest in Latin American culture and literature, facilitating contacts with various writers and artists as he had already begun to do while at Gethsemani. Merton in turn encourages Cardenal’s immersion in the indigenous traditions of his homeland that will give rise to some of his most celebrated writings, telling his correspondent that he has “a very clear vocation to understand and interpret the religious riches of pre-Columbian America and of the traditions that have still survived from that hidden past.” They continually send one another their latest writings and those of their friends, and work to get one another’s work translated and published in their respective countries – Cardenal virtually functioning as Merton’s literary agent in the Hispanic world. The correspondence abruptly ended with Merton’s death in December 1968, leaving unfulfilled tentative plans for an extended visit to Solentiname on his return

from his Asian journey. In his final letter to Cardenal, dated July 21, 1968, he writes: "I have a very definite feeling that a new horizon is opening up and I do not quite know what it is"; he muses once again about various possibilities for a more remote hermitage, praises Cardenal's most recent long poem, expresses disillusion with the American political situation in 1968 and declares, "I very much want to see you all again," a desire remained unrealized.

In the decade following Merton's death, Cardenal and his community become increasingly supportive of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the revolutionary movement committed to overthrowing the Somoza regime. After the destruction of the community by government troops in 1977, Cardenal committed himself fully to the revolutionary cause and moved from a stance of nonviolence shared with Merton to an acceptance of the validity of armed resistance. After the Sandinista victory and the exile of Somoza in 1979, Cardenal became Minister of Culture in the new government, encouraging creative work in poetry and crafts throughout the country as he had done with his community at Solentiname, seeking what he referred to as the "democratization of culture." He remained in the position until 1987, when the Ministry of Culture was dissolved and merged with another government agency. In 1983, Pope John Paul II's visit to Nicaragua brought Cardenal unwanted notoriety as the videotape of a kneeling Cardenal at the Managua airport being rebuked by a finger-waving pontiff who strongly opposed Cardenal's political involvement in a leftist government was seen across the globe. The following year he was stripped of his priestly faculties by the church and could no longer celebrate the sacraments, a disciplinary action imposed as well on his brother Fernando, a Jesuit and also a government minister, who died in 2016 shortly after Pope Francis restored him to active ministry. Canonical sanctions imposed on Ernesto Cardenal were lifted by the pope in February 2019.

Initially a strong defender of Sandinista policies, even when challenged by sympathetic critics like peace activist Daniel Berrigan about political prisoners, universal military conscription and justification of violence, by the 1990s Cardenal had become increasingly disillusioned by corruption and authoritarianism

among the Sandinista leadership, and in 1994 he left the Sandinista party and joined an opposition group, stating: "I think an authentic capitalism would be more desirable than a false revolution." Yet he never renounced his revolutionary principles, telling the *New York Times* in January 2015: "I am a revolutionary. Revolutionary means that I want to change the world." He continued: "The Bible is full of revolutions. The prophets are people with a message of revolution. Jesus of Nazareth takes the revolutionary message of the prophets. And we also will continue trying to change the world and make revolution. Those revolutions failed, but others will come."

Michael Mott (1930-2019)

Michael Mott, poet, novelist and official biographer of Thomas Merton, died October 11, 2019 at his home in Atlanta, GA at the age of 88 after a short illness.

Born in Hampstead, North London on December 8, 1930, he was the son of Eric Mott, a solicitor, and American sculptor Margaret "Totts" Berger. During World War II, he and his younger brothers John and Tony were sent to stay with his mother's family in Colorado, and he attended boarding school at the Riverdale Country School in New York. Upon his return to Britain in 1944 he attended the Stowe School in Buckinghamshire, and after completing military service studied history at Oriel College, Oxford, followed by art history studies at the Courtauld Institute in London and travels through Europe and the Middle East. He worked as an art editor at Thames & Hudson Publishers from 1961 to 1964, then as an editor at *The Geographical Magazine* from 1964 to 1966; he was also assistant editor of the literary magazine *ADAM International Review* from 1956 to 1966. In 1957, *The Cost of Living*, the first of his eleven collections of poetry, was published, followed in 1962 by the first of his four novels, *The Notebooks of Susan Berry*. In 1961 he married fashion designer Margaret Watt, and a year later the couple's twin daughters Amanda and Sophie were born.

In 1966, the family moved to the United States, when he became a professor of creative writing at Kenyon College in Ohio and poetry editor of the prestigious *Kenyon Review*. He later became writer-in-residence at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, where he was active in the civil rights movement and

in Atlanta arts and cultural life, cofounding the Callanwolde Readings Program, which sponsors presentations featuring poets and writers. In 1974, he received the Governor's Award in Fine Arts from then Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter. In 1978-1979 and again in 1985-1986, Mott was writer-in-residence at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA. He subsequently returned to Ohio to teach at Bowling Green State University, from which he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1992. Following Margaret's death in 1990, he became actively involved in pastoral care programs in Williamsburg, VA, where he returned to live after his retirement, and where in 1992 he married Emma Lou Powers.

In 1978, he was commissioned by the Thomas Merton Legacy Trust to write the authorized biography of Thomas Merton after the withdrawal of original biographer John Howard Griffin due to illness. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1979-1980 to pursue his research. *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* was published in 1984 and remained on the *New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list for nine weeks. It was the runner-up for the 1985 Pulitzer Prize in biography and has sold more than 60,000 copies in nine printings. For his work he received a Christopher Award in 1984 as well as an Ohioana Book Award, a Bowling Green Olscamp Research Award and the Nancy Dasher Book Award, all in 1985. He also received an honorary doctorate from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, in 1983. He was a plenary speaker at the Fourth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society at St. Bonaventure University in 1995; his address, "'Do Not Disturb': Thomas Merton at St. Bonaventure," is available on the Thomas Merton Center web site at: <http://merton.org/Research/AV/Mott-1995-ITMS.mp3>.

His archives are housed in The Michael Mott Collection at the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, which includes drafts and notes for his published and unpublished works, both poetry and prose; journals, diaries and notebooks; and correspondence with his publishers and with numerous religious and literary figures, including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, who has also written extensively on Thomas Merton.

He is survived by his widow Emma Lou Powers, his daughters Sophie and Amanda, his granddaughter Shakiera Sarai, his brother John Mott, eight nieces and nephews and fourteen grand-nieces and grand-nephews. A Celebration of Life service was held at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Atlanta on October 19, 2019.

Thomas Nelson, CM (1936-2019)

Fr. Thomas Nelson, CM, an early bibliographer of Thomas Merton who wrote his licentiate thesis at the Gregorian University in Rome on "The Discovery of the True Self in the Thought of Thomas Merton" in 1984, died on October 5, 2019 in Denver, CO at the age of 83.

He was born in St. Louis, MO on June 26, 1936, one of five children of Robert and Mary Nelson. After a decade working in the business world, he entered the seminary and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of St. Louis in 1975. In 1982, he joined the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians), a community of Catholic priests and brothers committed to evangelizing those who live in poverty and to the formation of clergy and laity to serve the same mission. His ministry included teaching assignments at St. Thomas Seminary, Denver; Cardinal Glennon College, St. Louis; Good Shepherd Seminary, Maralal, Kenya; Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis; and DePaul Center, Nairobi, Kenya. In St. Louis, he worked with the Karen House Catholic Worker community and with the Handicapped Encounter Christ program, bringing able and disabled people together for retreats and social interaction. In the mid-1990s, he moved to Denver to serve as founding chaplain of the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, an organization that brings young adults to Denver to spend a year of direct service with the poor and homeless, live in community and engage in spiritual formation and prayer centered on the preferential option for the poor. He also worked actively with the Denver Catholic Worker House and Soup Kitchen; helped to found a Rocky Mountain Handicapped Encounter Christ group; and worked with other groups dedicated to the poor and marginalized. He also served for several years as chaplain for the Native American Catholic Community of St. Kateri. His deep interest in inter-religious dialogue and spirituality motivated him to

teach a course in the Christian contemplative tradition at the Naropa Institute, a Buddhist university in Boulder, CO. He also regularly led retreats for religious and lay groups around the country, drawing on the life and work of St. Vincent de Paul, Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton.

He was affiliated with the Lakewood, CO Chapter of the ITMS, which he encouraged to “keep the flame of Merton alive,” according to chapter coordinator Gerry Prus, who also noted: “One member of our group said Tom said that at his death he would fear Merton in heaven more than Jesus. A small sample of his Irish humor. We will miss him greatly.”

He is survived by his sisters Patricia Reinerman and Mary Margaret, brother Joseph, and numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated at the Church of the Risen Christ in Denver on October 14, 2019.

Mark Filut, OCSO (1933-2019)

Brother Mark Filut, a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, Carlton, OR and a longtime member of the International Thomas Merton Society, died on September 20, 2019 at the age of 86. He was born in 1933 in Milwaukee, WI and entered the Cistercian Order at Guadalupe in 1973, making his solemn profession in 1978.

He was a frequent presenter at ITMS General Meetings, leading workshops at the Tenth General Meeting in 2007, the Eleventh General Meeting in 2009, the Twelfth General Meeting in 2011 and the Thirteenth General Meeting in 2013, and directing meditation sessions at the Fourteenth General Meeting in 2015.

His funeral Mass was celebrated at the abbey on September 25, followed by burial in the community cemetery.

ITMS Conference Presentation Grants

At its June 2019 meeting, the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society approved a proposal to subsidize the costs of attendance for ITMS members making presentations on aspects of Thomas Merton’s life, thinking, writing and/or creative work at academic, professional or creative conferences not primarily focused on Merton. Those eligible for grants include academics, graduate students, creative writers, artists, filmmakers and others selected to make presentations at such conferences.

Grant proposals should include: a summary of 150-200 words detailing the name of the conference at which the presentation will take place, the conference date and location, the intended audience, and the aspects of Merton’s life or work to be addressed; and a summary of projected expenses. Successful proposals will demonstrate: a significant explanation or discussion in the presentation of some aspect of Merton’s life, thinking, writing and/or artistic work, with a connection of the presentation to the theme/topic of the professional conference.

Presentations at national/international conferences will be eligible for grants of up to \$250; grants for presentations at local and regional conferences will be capped at \$150. Grant amounts will be determined by the evaluation committee. Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis, subject to availability of funds. Individuals submitting proposals must be members of the ITMS, or the cost of a one-year Society membership will be subtracted from their grant amount. Priority will be given to proposals from individuals who have not previously received a Presentation Grant. Final awarding of funds will occur following completion of the event, and will be dependent on receipt of a PDF of the conference program (with name and presentation title highlighted) and receipts for relevant expenses. Proposals should be submitted via email to Dr. Monica Weis, SSJ, Chair of the ITMS Education Committee at: mweis9@naz.edu. Information on the grants program is also available on the ITMS web page: <http://merton.org/ITMS/funding>.

Merton at CEA

On March 26-28, 2020, the College English Association will hold its Annual Conference at the Marriott Resort & Spa in Hilton Head, SC. The conference is a gathering of 500-600 scholar-teachers committed to literature, writing, college teaching and related fields. This year’s theme is “Tides.” The International Thomas Merton Society is sponsoring two panels with six presentations at the conference. Panel 1, “Rising Tides of the Spirit,” includes the following presentations: Paul M. Pearson, “Images of the Sea in the Life and Thought of Thomas Merton”; Christine M. Bochen, “Brought Together on the Tide of God’s Mercy: Merton’s ‘Climate of Mercy’”; Bernadette McNary-Zak, “Tidal Formation in the Creative Si-

lence of God.” Panel 2, “Resisting Tides of Injustice,” includes the following presentations: Renee Roden, “Thomas Merton’s Contemplative Spirituality of Revolution”; Monica Weis, SSJ, “Rain, Contemplation and Social Responsibility: Merton’s Challenge”; Christian Smith, “Thomas Merton and the Economics of Attention.” The ITMS will also be hosting dinner for the panelists on Friday evening. The International Thomas Merton Society is an affiliated society of the College English Association.

Oakham Conference 2020

The 2020 Residential Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be held April 2-4, 2020 at Oakham School, Rutland, England, alma mater of Thomas Merton. The theme of the conference is “Contemplation and Fruitful Action,” based on Merton’s declaration in his essay “Contemplation in a World of Action” that a contemplative orientation, a special dimension of personal development and inner discipline, is “a necessary ground for fruitful action.”

Keynote speakers are Christopher Pramuk, holder of the Chair of Ignatian Thought and Imagination and associate professor of theology at Regis University in Denver, Colorado, and Ursula King, Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Bristol University. Also featured will be author, photographer, podcaster and filmmaker Cassidy Hall, current secretary of the International Thomas Merton Society, who will present her new film *Day of a Stranger*, a portrait of Thomas Merton during his final hermitage years. Artist in residence at the conference will be Ernesto Lozada-Uzuriaga, painter, illustrator, graphic-narrative author and an ordained Anglican priest.

Other speakers presenting papers or leading workshops include: Larry Culliford, “Thomas Merton in Alaska – 8 Lessons, No Carols, Plenty Wisdom”; Peter Ellis, “The Broken Attachment: The Influence of His Boarding School Experiences on Merton”; Fiona Gardner, “Living in the ‘Unlivable’ World: ‘Much to Be Done and Much to Pray For’”; Gary Hall, “‘What I Wear Is Pants. What I Do Is Live. How I Pray Is Breathe’: Discovering Meaningful Action with Thomas Merton”; Thomas Malewitz, “Thomas Merton and

Leonard Cohen: Contemplative Poets and Agents of Change”; Sonia Petisco Martinez, “The Dark Night of the Soul: Tracing the Influence of St. John of the Cross on Thomas Merton’s Poetry”; Samuel McNally-Cross, “Thomas Merton and Contemplation as Resistance”; Gordon Oyer, “Merton and Contemplation as a Quest for Connection”; Paul M. Pearson, “Thomas Merton and St. Benedict’s ‘Tools of Good Works’”; Anthony Purvis, “Prophetic Voices and the Poetic Imagination”; Emma Wallace, “‘The Freeweaver’: Sacred Activism and The Hermit-Monk – Intentional Living as a Means of Fruitful Activism.” The conference will also include the Thirteenth Biennial General Meeting of the TMSGBI; a Merton Quiz session; morning meditation sessions; the conference banquet; the conference Eucharist celebrated by Maureen Pickering assisted by Ernesto Lozada-Uzuriaga and preceded by a period of meditative chanting, introduced and led by James D’Angelo.

Conference registration forms are available on the TMS website: <http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk>; scholarships are available for full-time students. For inquiries and requests for further details contact: treasurer@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk.

Polish Merton Symposium

On October 22, 2019 a Thomas Merton Symposium entitled “Traveling in Geographical and Spiritual Dimensions” was held at the Institute of Humanities, University of Silesia, Poland. After an introductory welcome by symposium organizer Malgorzata Poks giving information on the International Thomas Merton Society, which provided funding for the conference through its Merton Centenary Anniversary grant program, the following presentations were given: Kathleen Witkowska Tarr, “From the Inner Frontier to the Last Frontier: Thomas Merton’s 1968 Alaska Journey”; Maciej Bielawski, “From *Seeds of Contemplation* to *New Seeds of Contemplation*”; Malgorzata Poks, “‘Lamb Admits Ties to Cain’: The Human, the Less-than-Human and the Kin(g)dom in Thomas Merton’s *The Geography of Lograire*.” The day concluded with a musical interlude – Merton, the Civil Rights Movement and Jazz, and the screening of the Morgan Atkinson film *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*.

Deignan Institute Established

On October 3, 2019, the Kathleen Deignan, CND Institute for Earth and Spirit at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY was officially dedicated, funded by Iona alumnus Christopher J. O'Connor, one of Sister Kathleen's first students at Iona. The Mission of the Institute is to continue Sr. Kathleen's decades-long efforts to foster an integral and peaceful Earth community in the light of religious faith, evolutionary cosmology and environmental science. The Institute will work in collaboration with the three ventures she founded during her 40-year tenure at Iona: The Iona Spirituality Center, The Thomas Merton Contemplative Initiative and The Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue. Challenged by our planetary crisis while rooted in the inspiring legacy of St. Columba's medieval monastic university at Iona, Scotland, the Institute will feature transformative environmental education, spiritual animation and creative celebration as modeled by Kathleen Deignan, thirteenth president of the International Thomas Merton Society.

ITMS Authors

Daniel P. Horan, OFM has recently published *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology* (Orbis, 2019 [\$25 paper]), which moves away from a anthropocentric understanding to resituate humanity within the broader community of creation while highlighting the true catholicity of personhood within Christian tradition. Ilia Delio, OSF writes in her Foreword to the book: "By humbly seeking wisdom from the scientific, philosophical and social-scientific communities, Horan argues, we can gain new insight on personhood and a wider perspective of where the human stands in the overall sphere of nature itself."

Aaron K. Kerr has recently published *Encounters in Thought: Beyond Instrumental Reason* (Cascade, 2019 [\$20.00 paper]), in which he considers exemplars of authentic creative thought (including Thomas Merton) marked by openness, wonder, receptivity and contemplation, and the dysfunction and fragmentation that can be caused by the contemporary frenetic consumption of information, encouraged by technological and digital culture. Albert Borgmann writes: "We live in a time that's alluring with its promises and uncertain

with its prospects. We find ourselves floating in its currents. Aaron Kerr gently pulls us to firm ground, letting us see where the firm ground is flourishing and that there is a tradition of people who disclose to us the splendor of the simple. At the same time, Kerr's book is clearly structured and eminently teachable."

Donald P. St. John has written *Chuang Tzu's "Crazy Wisdom" for Elders* (Balboa Press, 2019 [\$14.99 paper]), drawing on the classic work of the ancient Taoist storyteller/philosopher to critique our society's conventional understanding of aging and its biased interpretations of the qualities exhibited by elders as well as alternative positive "ways" for an elder to develop his or her often neglected potentials and powers for elder growth.

Jon Sweeney has recently published *St. Francis of Assisi: His Life, Teachings, and Practice* (St. Martin's Press, 2019 [\$14.99 paper]), which has been described by Christine Valters Paintner as "a delightful introduction to the life and teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. Written from a generous heart so clearly steeped in his wisdom and teachings, full of both reverence and lightheartedness. Especially invigorating is the section on spiritual practices where readers are invited to embody Franciscan spirituality through connection to creation, joy, embrace of paradox, and simplicity."

Old Yet New

Larry Culliford has published *The Big Book of Wisdom: The Ultimate Guide for a Life Well Lived* (Legend Press, 2020 [\$12.59 paper]), a much-expanded version of his *Seeking Wisdom: A Spiritual Manifesto* (2018). Anglican Canon John Twisteton writes of the book: "Culliford's gift is in opening up a big picture, placing his readers within it, and showing how we as individuals can change the world"; Sister Jayanti writes: "Culliford's call to us to rediscover and nurture our own inner wisdom is just what is needed in these uncertain times."

Susan Tiberghien has published the Twentieth Anniversary Edition of *Circling to the Center: Invitation to Silent Prayer* (Chiron, 2019 [\$16.95 paper]). Msgr. William H. Shannon wrote of the original edition, "Everyone who yearns for a deeper life of prayer will

delight in this book. What we hear is the voice of authentic experience.” Jungian analyst Patricia Ellwood writes: “Susan Tiberghien invites the reader onto the path of silent prayer to the bedrock of the Self, to the spheres beyond the ego. She presents a refreshing and profound approach with an irresistible resonance of authenticity. This book offers what every soul is yearning for: her own path to silence and all that lies there. A must for every seeker of the deeper Self.”

Merton Happenings

On September 21, 2019, Douglas Hertler presented his one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* at Holy Trinity Church, New York City.

On October 5, Ron Dart led a “Dinner with Thomas Merton” discussion at a potluck meal, hosted by Rosana Chisholm, in Abbotsford, BC.

On October 26, Ron Dart gave a presentation entitled “Exploring the Spiritual Wisdom of Thomas Merton” at the SPA Centre, Abbotsford, BC.

On November 2, Adrian Burke, OSB led a day of recollection on “Thomas Merton’s Spirituality of Nonviolence” at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, KY.

On December 5, Douglas Hertler presented his one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* at the Northeast Wisdom School, Charles Town, WV.

On March 8, 2020, Douglas Hertler presented his one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, Niskayuna, NY.

Upcoming Events

On March 3, 10, 17 and 24, Vanessa Hurst will teach a continuing education course entitled “Thomas Merton: Being an Artisan of Joy” at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY; for further information see: <https://www.bellarmino.edu/ce/EnrichmentCoursespgp>.

On March 14, Fr. Francisco Rafael de Pascual, OCSO will give a presentation on Thomas Merton at a conference entitled “Mística de Puertas Abiertas” (“Mysticism of Open Doors”) sponsored by Confer-

encia Española de Religiosos at the Residencia Amor de Dios in Madrid.

On March 15, Douglas Hertler will present his one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* at The Center at Mariandale, Ossining, NY; for further information see: <https://mariandale.org/event/mertonandme>.

The Spring 2020 Road Scholar “Week with Thomas Merton” Program will take place March 15-20 at the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY. The Fall 2020 program is scheduled for October 18-23. For further details contact Abigail Walsh at: awalsh03@bellarmine.edu or 502-272-8161.

On March 29, Douglas Hertler will present his one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* at the Church of the Assumption, Emerson, NJ; for further information see: <https://www.assumptionemerson.org/calendar>.

On May 8-10, Bonnie Thurston will lead a Merton and Women weekend (for Mother’s Day) at Sacred Heart Benedictine Monastery in Cullman, AL; for further information see: <https://www.shmon.org/event/merton-and-women>; or contact Sr. Elisabeth, OSB at: lynnelisabethosb@gmail.com.

On May 29-June 1, Fr. Guerric Heckel, Paul M. Pearson and Douglas Hertler will lead a retreat on Thomas Merton at Mepkin Abbey, Moncks Corner, SC, which will include a public performance of Hertler’s one-person play, *Merton & Me: A Living Trinity* on May 29. For further information see the abbey retreat website at: <https://mepkinabbey.org/retreats-at-a-glance>.

Larry Culliford will give a presentation entitled “Finding Peace and Growth Opportunities in the Midst of Chaos,” based on material from Thomas Merton’s 1968 conferences in Alaska, at the Sixth International Conference of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality, to be held June 1-3 at St. John University, York, UK; for further information see: <https://spiritualityinstitute.ie/events/1-3-june>

2020-spirituality-in-research-professional-practice-and-education.

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On July 12-17, Fr. Anthony Ciorra will lead “A Retreat with Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen” at The Center at Mariandale, Ossining, NY. For further information see: https://mariandale.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TCAM__SpringSummer-2020-Brochure.pdf.

Chapter and Affiliate News

On December 10, the Cleveland ITMS Chapter held their annual Advent Taizé Prayer gathering to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton in the chapel of the Ursuline Sisters at Merici Crossings, Pepper Pike, OH. On February 18, chapter member Robert Toth led a discussion of the recently published book *Thomas Merton and Indigenous Wisdom*, for which he was a contributor. For further information contact Chapter Coordinator Donna Kristoff, OSU, at dkristoff@ursulinesisters.org or 440-229-5779.

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On November 16, the New York City ITMS Chapter held its Annual Retreat/Day of Recollection, led by Fr. Daniel Riley, OFM, on the theme “The Prophetic Merton: The Word That Opens Hearts to Hope,” at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. On January 25, the chapter celebrated Merton’s birthday with a presentation by Michael W. Higgins entitled “The Trappist Twist: Merton & Nouwen in Conversation.” On April 25, Bonnie Thurston will speak to the group on “Merton’s Monastic Wisdom for the Rest of Us,” based on her new book, *Shaped by the End You Live For: Thomas Merton’s Monastic Spirituality*. The chapter reading group is meeting twice monthly at the rectory of Our Lady of Good Counsel/St. Thomas More Church in Manhattan to discuss *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals*, facilitated by volume co-editor Jonathan Montaldo. For further information visit the chapter website at: <http://www.thomasmertonnyc.org>, or contact: info@thomasmertonnyc.org.

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At its monthly meetings from December through February, the Belmar, NJ ITMS Chapter has been discussing *Learning to Love*, the sixth volume of

Thomas Merton’s complete journals. At its March 18 and April 22 meetings the group will discuss Merton’s *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and the focus of the May 20 meeting will be *Thoughts in Solitude*. On June 17 chapter members will view the new Martin Doblmeier film, *Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story*. For further information contact Greg Ryan at: GJRyan@optonline.net or 732-681-6238.

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On January 19, the Chicago Chapter of the ITMS hosted a presentation by Jon Sweeney on his new book, *James Martin, SJ: In the Company of Jesus*, at Immaculate Conception Rectory Assembly. On February 16, Pauline Viviano spoke to the group on “The Time of No Room: Thomas Merton’s Reflections on the Past Century.” On March 15, Anthony Nuccio will give a presentation entitled: “What Does It Mean to Be at Peace? A Mertonian Engagement with Antifascist Organizing and Thought.” For further information contact Chapter Coordinator Mike Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com or 773-447-3989.

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On November 24, the Northern California Chapter of the ITMS began its discussion of *Thomas Merton: A Life in Letters*, continued at its January 26 meeting; the group will meet again on March 29, and spend Palm Sunday, April 5, at the Trappist monastery at Vina, CA. For further information contact John Berger: 916-482-6976.

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On October 26, the Thomas Merton Society of Canada hosted a celebration and discussion of the late Donald Grayston’s memoir *Conversations with a Painting* at St. Faith’s Anglican Church in Vancouver, BC. For further information see the society web site: www.merton.ca, or contact Susan Cowan, Community Relations Director, at tmssc@telus.net or 604-988-8835.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:
www.merton.org/ITMS