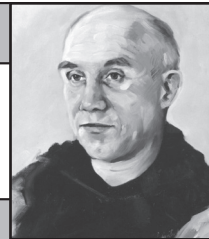


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Fifteenth General Meeting a Success

“Overshadowed by Mercy: Pilgrimage, Prayer, Prophecy” was the theme of the Fifteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society, held June 15-18 at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY. More than 250 people attended the conference, from 37 states and five other countries.

General session addresses included Scott Russell Sanders: “Reading Merton in the Rain”; M. Shawn Copeland: “The Watchmen and the Witnesses: Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King and the Exercise of the Prophetic”; Michael N. McGregor: “Harpo and the Clown of God: The Seven-Storeyed Friendship of Thomas Merton and Robert Lax”; Luke Timothy Johnson: “The Formation of Monastic Mercy in the Magnificat and Benedictus” (read by Michael Higgins in the absence of Dr. Johnson, who had to return home before his address due to an emergency).

Michael W. Higgins delivered the Presidential Address entitled “Light in a Darkening Landscape,” preceded by welcoming remarks by St. Bonaventure President Dennis DePerro and followed by a benediction by Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, St. Bonaventure President Emerita. Paul Spaeth moderated a general session entitled “Robert Lax: In His Own Voice” that featured a film by Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel entitled “Why Should I Buy a Bed When All That I Want Is Sleep?” and a performance of Robert Lax’s “Psalm” by pianist Jacqueline Chew and dancer Christine Bachich.

An exhibit of memorabilia and photographs entitled “Merton and Lax: Imagery and Word” was open throughout the conference in the Beltz Gallery of the Quick Center for the Arts, and an exhibit entitled “Conversion of Place: Geographic Change in Merton’s America,” curated by Kathleen Baker, was open daily in the Friedsam Memorial Library. An exhibition at

the Heritage Room of the neighboring motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany entitled “Thomas Merton, Elaine Bane and the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany” featured correspondence and other memorabilia on Merton’s friendship with Sr. Elaine Bane of the Allegany Franciscan community and their work together to organize the 1967 and 1968 retreats for contemplative prioresses at the Abbey of Gethsemani and to develop a “retiro” or contemplative center at the Allegany convent.

A concert entitled “Seven Contemplative Songs on Poems of Thomas Merton” composed by James D’Angelo and performed by Scott Dispensa was held Friday evening in the Rigas Theater of the Quick Center for the Arts. The closing Eucharistic liturgy for the feast of Corpus Christi was celebrated by Rev. Daniel P. Horan, OFM with a homily by Rev. Bonnie Thurston. It was followed by a concluding session entitled “Celebrating Thirty Years of ITMS,” with panelists Christine M. Bochen, Jamie Fazio, David G. Golemboski, Sarah Kothe, Patrick F. O’Connell and Bonnie B. Thurston, moderated by Monica Weis, SSJ. The conference included five opening sessions, thirty-one concurrent sessions, workshops, performances and guided prayer sessions with forty-six presenters, as well as meditation and worship sessions.

The site coordinator for the conference was Julianne E. Wallace; the Program Committee was co-chaired by David M. Belcastro and Paul M. Pearson, and included Christine M. Bochen, Margaret Carney, OSF, ITMS President Michael W. Higgins, Joseph Q. Raab, Paul Spaeth, Julianne Wallace and Monica Weis, SSJ.

New Officers and Board

The Officers and Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society for 2017-2019 were announced by outgoing president Michael W. Higgins at the Town Meeting of the ITMS Fifteenth General

Meeting on June 17, 2017 at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY. In accordance with the ITMS by-laws, the officers were chosen by the Board and members of the Board by the membership at large, from a slate prepared by the ITMS nominating committee, David Golemboski (co-chair), Deborah Kehoe, Alan Kolp, Patrick F. O'Connell and Gordon Oyer (co-chair). On-line voting procedures for the Board were included as an option for the first time for the 2017 election and increased participation substantially.

Officers are Mark C. Meade, president; David Golemboski, vice-president; Cassidy Hall, secretary; and David Orberon, treasurer; Michael W. Higgins will continue to serve on the board as past president. Newly elected members of the board are: Michael Brennan, Michael McGregor and Judith Valente; Deborah Kehoe, Patrick F. O'Connell and Theresa Sandok, OSM were re-elected to the board.

Mark C. Meade is Assistant Director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and previously served as ITMS Vice President and Treasurer and as co-chair of the Communications Committee. He has been a board member of the Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and has served on the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

David Golemboski is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri after completing his Ph.D. in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. He is a former Daggy Scholar and has previously served as ITMS Secretary and as co-chair of the Nominations Committee.

Cassidy Hall is a writer, photographer, filmmaker and trained counselor. Her web site, 17spaces.org, is a record of her pilgrimages to the seventeen Cistercian monasteries in the United States. She was part of the production team for the film *In Pursuit of Silence*, shown at the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting, and has written for *The Huffington Post* blog and *Patheos*.

David Orberon is a recent graduate of the Ph.D. program at the University of Louisville, where his dissertation focused on Thomas Merton's response to the problem of evil and the influence of Zen on this issue in the last years of his life. He earned a Master of Theological Studies degree from the St. Meinrad School of Theology and has been teaching theology

part-time at Bellarmine University since 2007. In addition to his academic interests, he has worked in the areas of insurance and risk management for the last 25 years, and is currently Senior Director of Risk Management for Papa John's International.

Michael W. Higgins, Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT, is a columnist, television commentator, radio documentary maker and author of numerous books, including *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*, *Power and Peril: The Catholic Church at the Crossroads*, *Stalking the Holy: In Pursuit of Saint-Making*, *Unquiet Monk: Thomas Merton's Questing Faith* and *Thomas Merton: Faithful Visionary*.

Michael Brennan has served as Chicago Chapter ITMS coordinator since 2005 and helps update the ITMS Facebook pages. He was site coordinator for the Twelfth General Meeting of the ITMS in Chicago in 2011, and was a presenter at the Fourteenth General Meeting in 2015. He has served as coordinator of ITMS chapters, written reviews for *The Merton Seasonal*, and contributed an essay to the Merton centennial volume *We Are Already One*. A fleet service clerk with American Airlines since 1979, he has edited the O'Hare Interfaith Chapel bulletin for 30 years and serves as communications coordinator for his union. He lives in Chicago with his wife, Margaret, and daughter, Mary.

Deborah Kehoe teaches World Literature and Traditional Grammar at Northeast Mississippi Community College and Professional Writing at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where she lives with her husband George. A member of the ITMS since 2001, she has frequently presented papers at ITMS General Meetings and has published essays and reviews in *The Merton Annual* and *The Merton Seasonal* and is co-editor of *The Merton Annual*.

Michael N. McGregor is the author of the biography *Pure Act: The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax*. His writings on Merton and Lax have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal*, *The Merton Journal*, *Notre Dame Magazine*, *Image*, *Poetry* and *Poets & Writers*. Former Director of the MFA program in Creative Writing at Portland State University, he has received numerous

awards for his teaching and writing. In the spring of 2017 he was a Lenna Endowed Visiting Professor at St. Bonaventure University, and was a keynote speaker at the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting in June 2017 at St. Bonaventure University.

Patrick F. O’Connell, Professor of English and Theology at Gannon University, Erie, Pennsylvania, is a founding member and former president of the International Thomas Merton Society and has been editor of *The Merton Seasonal* since 1998. He is co-author (with William H. Shannon and Christine M. Bochen) of *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (2002) and has edited eight volumes of Thomas Merton’s monastic conferences, most recently *The Cistercian Fathers and Their Monastic Theology* (2016), as well as Merton’s *Selected Essays* (2013) and *Early Essays: 1947-1952* (2015).

Theresa Sandok is president of the Servite Sisters of Ladysmith, WI, and former professor of philosophy and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Belarmine University. She served as interim director of the Thomas Merton Center in 1997-98. She presented a paper on “The Contemplative Vision of Thomas Merton” at the first conference of the Polish Merton Society in Lublin in 2002 and has translated many works of Polish philosophers into English.

Judith Valente is a journalist and poet from New Jersey who currently lives in central Illinois. As an award-winning writer, she is the author of the spiritual memoir *Atchison Blue* as well as two books of poetry, and has co-authored with Brother Paul Quenon a series of daily meditations. As a broadcast journalist she covered stories for *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, *The PBS News Hour* and the Chicago NPR affiliate; her work in print journalism includes reporting for *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *America Magazine*. She is married to retired Illinois Circuit Court Judge Charles Reynard.

ITMS President Mark Meade also announced that ITMS members from six countries will serve as International Advisors for 2017-2019. They are: Lars Adolfsson (Strängnäs, Sweden), Maria Barros (São Paulo, Brazil), James G. R. Cronin (Cork, Ireland), Linda Espie (South Oakleigh, Australia), Dominiek Lootens (Borgerhout, Belgium) and Ryan Scruggs (Montreal, Canada).

Paul Pearson will continue to serve as ITMS Resident Secretary and will also become ITMS Accounts Manager. Patrick F. O’Connell will continue as editor of *The Merton Seasonal* and Deborah Kehoe and Joseph Raab as co-editors of *The Merton Annual*. Michael Brennan will serve as ITMS Chapters Coordinator.

Michael W. Higgins is Chair of the Program Committee for the Sixteenth ITMS General Meeting, to be held at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, June 27-30, 2019; members of the committee include: Christine Bochen, Kevin Burns, Cassidy Hall, David Orberon (*ex officio*), Mark C. Meade (*ex officio*), Joseph Raab and Natalie Terry (site coordinator).

Chairs of ITMS committees include: Monica Weis: Education; Cassidy Hall: Mentorship; David Golemboski: Nominations; Pat O’Connell: Publications; Julianne Wallace: Retreats; Jamie Fazio and Virginia Ratigan: Daggy Scholarship; Paul Pearson: Shannon Fellowship; Mark Meade: Strategic Planning and Outreach.

Louies Awarded

The 2017 Thomas Merton Awards, informally known as “Louies,” were presented by outgoing ITMS president Michael W. Higgins on June 17, 2017 at the banquet of the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY. The award is a bronze bust of Thomas Merton created by sculptor David Kocka. The recipient of the “International” award, given to an individual who has made a significant contribution on an international level to the promotion of Merton’s writings (in English or in translation) and to the presentation of his ideas, is Donald Grayston. The recipient of the “Thomas Merton” award, given to an individual whose work has made a significant contribution to Merton studies, is Jim Forest. The recipient of the “Society” award, given to a member of the ITMS whose distinguished service has contributed to the aims of the Society and the furthering of its goals, is Robert Grip.

Donald Grayston is an Anglican priest, retired professor of religious studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, Canada, and former president of both the International Thomas Merton Society and the Thomas Merton Society of Canada. He is author of *Thomas Merton and the Noonday Demon: The Camaldoli Correspondence* (2015), *Thomas Merton: The Making of a Spiritual Theologian* (1985) and numerous articles on Merton and his work.

Jim Forest, a close friend and correspondent of Thomas Merton, is author most recently of the award-winning *The Root of War Is Fear: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers* (2016), as well as the acclaimed biography *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton* (rev. ed. 2008) and numerous other books, including *Love Is the Measure: A Biography of Dorothy Day* and the forthcoming *At Play in the Lions' Den: A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan*.

Robert Grip is news anchor at WALA television in Mobile, AL. He has served as ITMS board member, treasurer, vice president and the society's twelfth president. He was a site coordinator at the First General Meeting of the ITMS, and served as program chair for both the ITMS Fifth and Thirteenth General Meetings, and has regularly been the presenter at the "First Timers' Workshop" at ITMS General Meetings.

Shannon Fellowship Awarded

At its June 2017 meeting, the ITMS Board of Directors awarded a 2017-2018 Shannon Fellowship to Fordham University doctoral student Eric Martin, who will work on two related projects using the archives at the Bellarmine University Thomas Merton Center: his doctoral dissertation, "A Theology of Dis/Obedience: The Conversion of Daniel Berrigan, 1953-1966"; and a related project, "Thomas Merton and the Berrigan Brothers: Friendship in Fidelity."

The Shannon Fellowship program was established in 1997 in honor of the late Msgr. William H. Shannon, the founding president of the ITMS, to promote scholarship on Merton and his work. Up to five annual awards, of a maximum of \$750 each, are granted to scholars for research on primary-source Merton materials at the Merton Center at Bellarmine University or other archival collections. This year's selection committee includes Paul M. Pearson (chair), Fiona Gardner and Joseph Raab.

The deadline for applications for Shannon Fellowships for 2018-2019 is March 15, 2018. Awards must be used between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. Awards will be based on the quality of the proposal submitted and on the need for consulting archival materials at the site proposed. Applicants must be members of the ITMS; they may join the Society at the time of application by including a check for \$25, made out to "ITMS", along with their proposals. Cur-

rent officers and Board members of the ITMS, as well as grant committee members, are not eligible for fellowships during their term of office. Fellowships may be granted a maximum of two times to any applicant.

Application for Shannon Fellowships must include the following:

- a detailed proposal of 500-750 words explaining the subject and goals of the applicant's research and the rationale for consulting primary sources at the Merton collection selected by the applicant; applicants are strongly encouraged to demonstrate in their application that they have consulted on-line finding aids for the Merton Center (<http://www.merton.org/Research>) or for other archival collections of Merton's work (a list of subjects of previous awardees can be found under Previous Research Topics on the web site);
- a letter of recommendation from a scholar familiar with the applicant's qualifications and research interests;
- a proposed expense budget: grants will cover costs of travel to and from collections; expenses for accommodations and food during time of research at archives; costs of photocopying;
- disclosure of any other sources of funding awarded or applied for, with amounts received or requested.

Applications are encouraged from established scholars, from researchers without academic affiliation, and from students and younger scholars, including those engaged in research for theses and dissertations.

Completed applications for fellowships should be sent to **Dr. Paul M. Pearson, Director, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40205; email: pmpearson@bellarmine.edu**. The committee's recommendations will be presented at the June 2018 meeting of the ITMS Board of Directors, who will make the final decisions on awards, and results will be communicated to applicants shortly thereafter.

Daggy Scholarships Awarded

Twenty-one young people were able to attend the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY as recipients of Daggy Youth Scholarships. These awards, named in honor of the late Robert E. Daggy, long-time director of the

Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and resident secretary and second president of the ITMS, cover all registration, room and board expenses for attendance at ITMS General Meetings and include a year's free ITMS membership. The selection committee for this year's scholars was cochaired by Virginia Ratigan and Jamie Fazio.

This year's recipients of Daggy Scholarships included:

- Melissa Alfaro, Iona College;
- Phillip William Antilla, Seattle University (graduate student);
- Keighlee Arp, Loyola University Maryland (graduate student);
- Nicholas Basile;
- Elizabeth Burkemper, George Washington University;
- Stephen Copeland;
- Jason Damon, Franciscan postulant;
- Emily Delventhal-Sali, Nazareth College;
- Abrey Felliccia, Ithaca College;
- Philip Garrity, Harvard Divinity School;
- Andrew Hayes, University of Mississippi;
- Ashely Hubaykah, graduate, Iona College;
- Ceire Kealty, Iona College;
- Silva Matti, graduate, Rochester Institute of Technology;
- Emma McDonald, graduate, Middlebury College, VISTA volunteer;
- Eric Moran, Alvernia University;
- Steven Osso-Carbonaro, Nazareth College;
- Will Peterson, Peace and Justice Intern, University of Kentucky Newman Center;
- Monika Rabjohn, Nazareth College;
- Stephanie Redekop, Boston College (graduate student);
- Aiden Zamzow, Siena Heights University.

Bylaws Changes Approved

At the Town Meeting on Saturday, June 17 at the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY, the assembled membership unanimously approved two proposed changes in the Society Bylaws submitted by the ITMS Board of Directors to divide the responsibilities of the ITMS Treasurer into two positions, a Treasurer and an Accounts Manager: a specification (Article 6, Section 4, Item e) that the Treasurer shall "meet all require-

ments for maintaining access to Society accounts"; and a specification that the Accounts Manager cannot serve simultaneously as the Treasurer. These changes have been incorporated into the bylaws, which can be found on the ITMS web site at: <http://merton.org/ITMS/documents/ITMS%20BYLAWS.pdf>.

Merton as Pulitzer Finalist

In a previously unnoticed letter from Henry Seidel Canby, one of the three members (along with Louis Untermeyer and Alfred Kreymborg) of the 1950 Pulitzer Prize Advisory Committee, to Carl W. Ackerman, Dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, notifying him of the committee's unanimous recommendation of *Annie Allen* by Gwendolyn Brooks to receive that year's award for poetry, Thomas Merton's volume *The Tears of the Blind Lions* (New York: New Directions, 1949) is included on the list of finalists along with books by six other authors, including John Ciardi, Jose Garcia Villa, Dilys Bennett Laing, Hyam Plutzik, Muriel Rukeyser and Theodore Spencer.

Canby calls the works on this list "all . . . of high competence, and all deserving great praise" but adds: "There are potential takers of the Pulitzer Prize in the future in this group, but the Committee unanimously does not wish to recommend this year any one of them," preferring Brooks, who became the first African American to be awarded the prize.

There is no evidence that either Merton or his publisher James Laughlin was aware that Merton's volume had been a finalist for the prize. In fact, even before the publication of *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, in journal entries for January 29 and March 20, 1949 (see Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence* 273, 294) Merton indicates his intent to cease writing poetry, and he gives his rationale for doing so in the headnote for "Major Orders," part three of his edited journal for those years, *The Sign of Jonas* (127-28). He did not publish another volume of poetry until *The Strange Islands* (1957), eight years later. Canby's letter with its mention of Merton, first noticed by John Smelcer, can be found at: <http://www.pulitzer.org/article/frost-williams-no-gwendolyn-brooks>.

ITMS Fiftieth Anniversary Grants

The International Thomas Merton Society invites applications for grants from ITMS Chapters and

Affiliates to provide financial support for programs commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton on December 10, 1968. Grants up to a maximum of \$2000 each will be awarded to help defray the costs of organizing a one-day (or longer) regional event in the fall of 2018. Events should be planned to draw an audience from a wider area than would attend a shorter afternoon or evening event. The deadline for applications is December 31, 2017.

Awards must be used between September 1 and December 31, 2018. Applications will be reviewed by a committee appointed by the ITMS president and approved by the ITMS Board of Directors. Current ITMS officers and board members may not vote on their own proposals. Applicants will be notified of awards granted by January 31, 2018. After the event, successful applicants will be required to submit an accurate expense account and a report on the implementation of the project by March 1, 2019.

Applications for Fiftieth Anniversary Grants must include the following: a detailed proposal of the project for which the grant will be used and a statement of how the project will contribute to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Merton's death; a proposed expense budget and disclosure of any other sources of funding awarded or applied for, with amounts received or requested.

Completed applications for grants, or requests for further information, should be sent to the ITMS Resident Secretary for forwarding to the Committee Chair: Dr. Paul M. Pearson, International Thomas Merton Society, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville KY 40205; email: merton@bellarmine.edu.

Call for Papers for CEA

The International Thomas Merton Society will once again sponsor panels and presentations at the College English Association annual convention, to be held in St. Petersburg, FL, April 5-7, 2018. The conference is a gathering of 500-600 scholar-teachers committed to literature, writing, college teaching and related fields. This year's theme is "Bridges," and one or more Merton panels are planned, along with possible individual presentations at other concurrent sessions. An allied organization of the CEA, the ITMS will provide limited financial support to defray expenses for presenters. Possible topics include:

building bridges between contemplation and action / between monastery and world / between solitude and community / between believers and non-believers; bridging the distance between races / cultures / religions; bridging the hemispheres: north and south / east and west; overcoming duality.

Proposals of 200-500 words for a 6-8 page paper (15-minute presentation time) are due by November 1, 2017. Participants must be members of the CEA (\$50/year) by January 2018. Those interested in speaking at the convention are encouraged to contact Monica Weis, SSJ, coordinator of the CEA Merton sessions, at mweis9@naz.edu for further information on submitting a proposal and on DEA membership; additional information is available in the full Call for Papers at the CEA website: <http://www.cea-web.org>.

Call for Papers for Rome Conference

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, the Monastic Institute of Sant' Anselmo in Rome will sponsor an international symposium June 12-15, 2018 entitled: "Thomas Merton: Prophecy and Renewal" that will consider how Merton's legacy remains relevant for the present day. This interdisciplinary conference will focus particularly on the way in which Merton engaged the prophetic elements of the monastic witness that he believed could make a major contribution to a renewal of human and Christian life. Featured keynote speakers include Michael Casey, OCSO and Paul M. Pearson.

Proposals of no more than 250 words, and a short biographical statement of 1-2 sentences, should be submitted by November 30, 2017, by e-mail to: ufficiorettore@anselmianum.com. For more information, see: merton.anselmianum.com; ufficiorettore@anselmianum.com; www.thomasmerton.eu.

Huston Smith (1919-2016)

Huston Cummings Smith, religious studies scholar and author of *The World's Religions*, which has sold over three million copies and remains a popular introduction to comparative religion, died on December 30, 2016 at the age of 97, at his home in Berkeley, CA. He met Thomas Merton in 1968 while they were both in Calcutta at the Temple of Understanding Conference there, and wrote about their encounter in his essay "Fantasies of a Pilgrim Together," included in the

2015 centenary volume *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope*.

Smith was born May 31, 1919 in Suzhou, China, the son of Methodist missionaries. He studied at Central Methodist University in Fayette, MO, was ordained a Methodist minister but then attended the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he received a doctorate in 1945. He later taught at the University of Denver, Washington University in St. Louis, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Syracuse University and the University of California, Berkeley. He was the author of more than a dozen books, including an autobiography, *Tales of Wonder*.

In 1955, while in St. Louis, he turned his college course on world religions into a series of programs for the National Educational Television network, the precursor to the Public Broadcasting System, and this became the basis for *The Religions of Man*, first published in 1958 and in a revised version as *The World's Religions* in 1991. He was later featured in the 1996 five-part PBS series, "The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith," hosted by Bill Moyers.

Smith writes of his meeting with Merton that he decided to attend the Calcutta conference when he saw Merton's name on the presenters' list, "for he had worked his way to the top of the list of persons I most wanted to meet," and adds: "We became fast friends," subsequently sharing a flight together from Calcutta to New Delhi and humorously fantasizing of taking a pilgrimage together from Kathmandu, Nepal to a monastery in Pokhara, a seventeen-day walk from the nearest town.

In 1943, he married Kendra Wieman, daughter of University of Chicago theologian Henry Nelson Wieman. He was preceded in death by his daughter Karen and a granddaughter, Serena, and is survived by his wife, their two daughters Gael Rosewood and Kimberly Smith, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

British Merton Conference at Oakham

The Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will hold its Twelfth General Meeting and Conference April 6-8, 2018, at Oakham School, Rutland, UK, Thomas Merton's alma mater. The conference theme, "Facing the Life-and-Death Issues," is taken from Merton's August 1961 letter to Dorothy

Day in which he wrote: "I don't feel that I can in conscience, at a time like this, go on writing about things like meditation, though that has its point. I cannot just bury my head in a lot of rather tiny and secondary monastic studies either. I think I have to face the big issues, the life-and-death issues."

Plenary speakers will be Pat Gaffney, who has served since 1990 as General Secretary of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, and Gordon Oyer, author of *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat*, which received the 2015 International Thomas Merton Society "Louie" Award.

Presenters at concurrent sessions and workshops include: Mario I. Aguilar: "Merton, Life and Death: The Hermitage Years"; William Apel: "The Gospel According to Thomas Merton: On Facing the Big Issues, the Life-and-Death Issues"; Quentin J. Broughall: "Tweeting from the Cloister: Modern Monasticism and Making the Trivial Meaningful in an Age of Social Media"; Nass Cannon: "Concupiscence or Caritas: A Choice of Guiding Spirits"; Kirsty Clarke: "The Root of All War Is Fear: Thomas Merton's Theology of Peace and Non-violence"; James G. R. Cronin: "Burn His Books: American Opposition to Thomas Merton in 1968"; Stephen Dunhill: "Thomas Merton & Christian de Chergé: A Shared Interfaith Vision"; Peter Ellis: "Merton and the Deep Amerindian Past"; Fiona Gardner: "Towards Crisis and Mystery – The Wind Blows Where It Pleases"; David Golemboski: "The Familiar Perspectives of American History: Thomas Merton on Black and Indigenous Oppression in the United States"; Daniel P. Horan, OFM: "Beyond Bystanding: Thomas Merton's Guidance in the Age of Trump and Brexit"; Farai Mapamula & Gary Hall: "From Birmingham, Alabama to Birmingham, UK"; Sonia Petisco Martínez & Fernando Beltrán Llavador: "Unseen until Words End: Rethinking Language with Thomas Merton"; Paul M. Pearson: "Contemplation in a World of Violence: Thomas Merton's Monastic Approach to the Life-and-Death Issues."

Throughout the conference there will be an exhibition of art by Ric Stott, who will also give a presentation on his work. The program will also include the conference dinner on Friday evening, the society

general business meeting, and a program of worship and meditation culminating in a celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday.

Cost for the conference is £230 for members and £250 for non-members; some small bursaries are available for people on low incomes — primarily students and those on income support. To register, or for further information, see the TMS website: www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk; or contact booking secretary Liz Hanvey – TMS2018, 15 Godwin Close, Winchester, UK S022 5JN; email: bookings@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk.

Merton/Nouwen Conference at Yale

On November 3-4, 2017, a conference entitled “Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton: Spiritual Guides for the Twenty-first Century” will be held at the Yale Divinity School in New Haven, CT. Keynote speakers include Ronald Rolheiser, OMI (introduced by Sue Mosteller, with a response by Mary Clark Moschella); Robert Ellsberg: “‘The Home Where I Have Never Been’: The Restless Journeys of Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen”; Jim Forest: “Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen: Western Explorers of the Christian East” (introduced by Paul Pearson); and Michael Higgins: “Pure and Fresh Seeing: Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton as Sacred Disrupters” (introduced by Kerry Robinson, with a response by Karen Pascal).

Panel sessions include: “Men of Letters” with Gabrielle Earnshaw and William Apel; “Spiritual Masters” with James Smith and Monica Weis; and “The Role of the Arts for Merton and Nouwen” with Paul Pearson and Carol Berry. The program will also feature an open microphone session on “Remembering Henri Nouwen at Yale” featuring faculty, friends and former students, facilitated by Jim Hackney, and the publication party for the new book *You Are Beloved*.

For further information see: <http://divinity.yale.edu/lifelong-learning/henri-nouwen-and-thomasmerton-spiritual-guides-21st-century>; or phone: 203-432-5466.

ITMS Authors

Jim Forest’s newest book is *At Play in the Lions’ Den: A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan* (Orbis, 2017) (\$28 cloth). Bishop Thomas Gumbleton writes: “*At Play in the Lions’ Den* takes us into the heart of this very human prophet on his journey

where Jesus seems to tell him, as he told Peter, ‘You will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go’ (John 21:18). And we know Dan kept his joyful smile, even as he ended up in a difficult place, as prophets generally do. Jim Forest’s life has been deeply touched by Dan Berrigan and after reading his memoir, you will know another dedicated and prophetic follower of Jesus.”

* * * * *

Mark Plaiss has recently published *No End to the Search: Experiencing Monastic Life* (Cistercian Publications, 2017) (\$24.95 paper). Abbot Vincent Bataille, OSB writes: “Mark Plaiss describes in detail the daily routine of a monastic’s life. He explains, as well, how the monastic values and routine have influenced his own life, a married layman in the teaching profession. This book might be an invaluable resource for someone discerning a monastic vocation. All the pieces are there.”

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Michael P. Plekon has recently published *The World as Sacrament: An Ecumenical Path toward a Worldly Spirituality* (Liturgical Press, 2017) (\$24.95 paper). Peter C. Phan writes: “With *The World as Sacrament*, Michael P. Plekon solidifies his reputation as a world-renowned spiritual guide. He leads us to the company of a cloud of Christian witnesses, women and men, of different Christian traditions, and hailing from diverse cultures and countries. I know of no richer treasure of spiritual insights than this book to feed our spiritual hunger from the lives and teachings of the saints – canonized or not – and to experience God’s gracious presence in everything of the world.”

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Bonnie Thurston has recently published *All the Fullness of God: The Christ of Colossians* (Cascade Books, 2017) (\$21 paper). Barbara Reid writes: “With her characteristic blend of erudition, kitchen-table wisdom, and deep spiritual insight, Bonnie Thurston catches up her readers in her love of Colossians and the One who stands at the center of the letter, drawing us into profound understanding of what it means to have the fullness of God dwelling within, and allowing ourselves to be reoriented to live out what Easter asks.”

Awards for ITMS Authors

The Root of War Is Fear: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers by Jim Forest received a 2017 gold Nautilus Book Award in the category of Religion/Spirituality of Western Thought; Nautilus Awards celebrate and honor books that support conscious living & green values, high-level wellness, positive social change, and spiritual growth. *The Root of War Is Fear* was also awarded a bronze medal by the Association of Catholic Publishers in the General Interest category.

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Michael Plekon's *Uncommon Prayer: Prayer in Everyday Experience* received a gold award in the Religion (Adult Nonfiction) category of the Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Awards, sponsored by *Foreword* magazine, a media company devoted to covering the independent book-publishing industry.

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In the Beginning Was Love by Robert Lax, edited by S. T. Georgiou, received the 2017 Catholic Press Association first-place award in poetry.

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Christopher Pramuk's *Theological Studies* article, "Theodicy and the Feminine Divine: Thomas Merton's *Hagia Sophia* in Dialogue with Western Theology," received the College Theology Society's "Best Article in Theology" award for 2016 at the CTS annual conference at Salve Regina University, Newport, RI in June.

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Paul M. Pearson's presentation at the 2017 College English Association, entitled "Strange Islands: Contemplation in a World of Violence," received the CEA's James R. (Dick) Bennett Award for Literature and Peace, awarded annually for "a paper or project that contributes significantly, through action of understanding, to the prospect of living in harmony with the Earth and humankind."

New Bibliographical Resource Available

A two-part Merton Publications Resource List has been added to the bibliographic resources section available on the Thomas Merton Center web site. Part I, "Publishers List – Books by and about Merton: 2000-2017" lists all book-length publications grouped according to their respective publishers, arranged alphabetically with contact information; Part II, "Journals List: Articles about Merton: 2000-

2017" lists all articles grouped according to the journals (other than *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Journal* and *The Merton Seasonal*) in which they appeared, likewise arranged alphabetically with contact information. The principal purpose of the list is to make information readily available for authors of Merton-related material investigating potential venues for publication. More than four dozen publishers and almost 200 journals are included in the lists, which can be found at: <http://www.merton.org/Research/bibresources.aspx>.

Pilgrimage to Merton's Gethsemani

On March 25-29, Will Peterson and David Cable, recent graduates of the University of Notre Dame and of its ACE Teaching Fellowship Program, made a 75-mile "Modern Millennial Pilgrimage" from the University of Kentucky Newman Center in Lexington, KY to the Abbey of Gethsemani, inspired by the life and work of Thomas Merton. Each evening Peterson and Cable stayed with a host family.

The pilgrims published a travelog of their journey, exploring the contemporary relevance of themes of pilgrimage and hospitality, on the Religion News Service website: ReligionNews.com. The Religion News Foundation provided support for the journey in the form of a web platform and social media, conducted interviews with leading experts in the field and created a resource tab for those seeking to learn more about themes of pilgrimage and hospitality. "In this age of inhospitality, Will Peterson and David Cable and their host families are modeling important values of kindness, welcome and hospitality," said RNF CEO Thomas Gallagher. "Who better than Thomas Merton to model life-giving dialogue with those of one's own faith tradition, and importantly, with those of other faith traditions and none at all?"

Peterson has served as peace and justice intern at Holy Spirit Parish in Lexington, Kentucky, while Cable has been a teacher at St. Anthony Catholic School, a University of Notre Dame ACE Academy in Indianapolis, IN. In discussing the pilgrimage, Peterson said: "David and I are eager to engage with the great spiritual practice of pilgrimage and developing relationships with the wonderful people who form the hospitality network along the way." Christine Pohl, associate provost for faculty development and

a professor of church in society at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY and a leading expert on Christian hospitality, called this revival of “the ancient practices of pilgrimage and hospitality . . . a wonderful and timely project.”

Merton Happenings

On March 18, 2017 Bonnie Thurston led a Merton Quiet Day in Birmingham, AL on “Merton and the Desert,” sponsored by Contemplative Outreach Birmingham and ITMS Birmingham.

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On May 5, the Centro Residenziale Universitario di Bertinoro sponsored a retreat day entitled “Il Silenzio Contemplativo nel Frastuono Contemporaneo: Messaggio ed Insegnamento di Thomas Merton” (“Contemplative Silence amid the Contemporary Din: The Message and Teaching of Thomas Merton”) at the Church of San Silvestro in Rome, featuring presentations by Gianni Tadolini on “What is a Trappist Monk?”; Mario Zaninelli on “Thomas Merton: The Monk, the Theologian, the Man”; and Erio Castellucci on “The Contemplative Life and Christian Witness.”

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At the Sixty-Third Annual Convention of the College Theology Society, held at Salve Regina University, Newport, RI, June 1-4, 2017, with the theme “American Catholicism in the Twenty-first Century: Crossroads, Crisis, or Renewal?” S. Kyle Johnson gave a presentation entitled “Race, Spirit and Eucharist: The ‘Radical Orthodoxy’ of Thomas Merton,” and Daniel P. Horan, OFM spoke on “A Spirituality of Resistance: Thomas Merton on the Violence of Structural Racism in America.”

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At the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in Albuquerque, NM, June 8-11, 2017, Justin D. Klassen gave a presentation entitled “Another Dream of Separateness: Thomas Merton’s Critique of Technocratic Knowing,” and David A. Claimant spoke on “An Ecology of Letters: The Shape of Merton’s Moral Theology through His Cross-Cultural Social Justice Correspondence.”

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On June 10-12, Joe Zarentonello directed a retreat at Bethany Spring, New Haven, KY entitled “Breakthrough with Thomas Merton and Tibetan

Wisdom.” On June 16-18, Sharon Grant led a retreat entitled “Women – Living from Our Souls: 7 Steps of Women’s Spirituality.” On September 2-4, Richard Sisto led a men’s retreat entitled “Immersion in Zen.” On September 15-17, Jonathan Montaldo directed a retreat entitled “Thomas Merton and Mary Oliver – Poets of the Sacred.”

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On June 26, Mario Zaninelli gave a presentation entitled “Teilhard de Chardin and Merton: A Spiritual Confluence” at a conference sponsored by the Italian Teilhard de Chardin Association at the Assumption Monastery in Rome.

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July 3-7 Bonnie Thurston taught a class entitled “With Christian Mantras and a Great Sense of Destiny: Thomas Merton’s Travels in Eastern Religions” at the Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

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On July 17, Gray Henry gave a lecture entitled “Thomas Merton and Sufism” at the Essex Unitarian Church in London, sponsored by the Temenos Academy.

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On August 11-13, Carmel Posa, SGS directed a retreat entitled “Contemplation with Thomas Merton” at Mt. St. Benedict, Pennant Hills, New South Wales, Australia.

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On September 12, Ed Bacon gave a presentation on “Contemplative Wholeness” based on the writings of Thomas Merton at All Saints Episcopal Church, Homewood, Birmingham, AL.

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Vanessa Hurst has been presenting a four-session course entitled “The Compassion and Wisdom of Thomas Merton and Pema Chodron” at Bellarmine University from September 19 through October 10.

Upcoming Events

On October 13-15, Rick Fuhrman will direct a “Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton” retreat at Bethany Spring Retreat Center, New Haven, KY, located one mile from the Abbey of Gethsemani; the suggested donation of \$195 includes lodging, all meals, the retreat and related materials. For further information email: rick@bethanyspring.org or call: 502-507-8576.

On October 20-22, the Thomas Merton Society of the Low Countries will hold its annual Merton Weekend retreat at the monastery of Steyl, Netherlands, led by Br. Thomas Quartier, OSB, on the theme: “Prophetic Germ Cells: A Call – A Modern Monk in Dialogue with Thomas Merton as Monastic Writer, Teacher and Activist.” For further information see: <http://thomasmerton.nl/mertonweekend-2017>.

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The Fall 2017 Merton Road Scholar [elderhostel] week will take place October 22-27, 2017. For further details contact Linda Bailey: 502-272-8161 or: lbailey@bellarmine.edu. The Spring 2018 “Week with Merton” will be held March 11-16, 2018, and the Fall 2018 program will be held October 21-26, 2018.

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On October 26, Daniel P. Horan, OFM will give a presentation entitled “Racism, White Privilege and Thomas Merton on Transformative Spirituality and Justice” as part of the Killeen Chair of Theology and Philosophy Lecture Series at St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI. For further information, see: <https://www.snc.edu/killeen>.

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On October 27-29, Daniel Horan, OFM will lead a weekend retreat entitled “The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton” at Bon Secours Spiritual Center, Marriottsville, MD. For further information, see: <https://rccbonsecours.com/events>.

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From November 2 through December 4, Joyce Rothermel and Carol Gonzalez will teach a six-session course entitled “Thomas Merton: A Spiritual Guide in a Troubled World” for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA. For further information see the Institute web site: <https://www.cmu.edu/osher/about/index.html>.

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On November 3-5, Daniel Horan, OFM will lead a weekend retreat entitled “The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton” at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Spokane, WA; for further information, see: <http://ihrc.net/events/weekend-retreat-on-thomas-merton>.

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On November 4, David Belcastro will give a presentation on “Merton and Yoga” at Contemplative Outreach Chicago’s Sixth Annual Fall Workshop at Goodwin Hall,

Benedictine University, Lisle, IL. For further information, see: <http://centeringprayerchicago.org>.

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On December 2, Daniel Horan, OFM will lead an Advent retreat day entitled “Thomas Merton – His Life, Work and Witness,” cosponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the World Community for Christian Meditation, at The Meditatio Centre, Myddelton Square, London. The cost is £30 (£20 for society members). For further information see: <http://meditatiocentreondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Meditatio-Centre-Programme-2017-final-1.pdf>.

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On March 13, 2018, Scott Russell Sanders will give a presentation entitled “Reading Merton in the Rain” at 7 p.m. at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center.

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On March 22, Fiona Gardner will lead a study day entitled “Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise: The Spiritual Maturity of Thomas Merton” at Sarum College, Salisbury, UK; for further information, contact Alison Ogen: aogden@sarum.ac.uk; phone: 01722 424826.

Chapter and Affiliate News

At its March 15 and April 12 meetings, the Sea Cliff, NJ Chapter of the ITMS completed its discussion of Thomas Merton’s *The Sign of Jonas*. The May and June meetings featured discussion of Merton’s early novel *My Argument with the Gestapo*. At its September 12 meeting, the chapter viewed and discussed the acclaimed PBS documentary *Merton – A Film Biography*. Meetings from October through December will be devoted to discussion of *The Root of War Is Fear: Thomas Merton’s Advice to Peacemakers* by Jim Forest. January through April meetings will focus on the first volume of Merton’s letters, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*. For further information, contact chapter coordinator Greg Ryan at: GJRyan@wccm.org or 732-681-6238.

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On April 23, Frank Cunningham spoke to the Chicago Chapter of the ITMS on his new book *The Vesper Time of Life* at the Presence Resurrection Retirement Community. On July 1, the chapter held a luncheon to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary. At its August 6 meeting, Stephen Millies spoke to the chapter on “The

Merton Option: Religious Responsibility and the Common Good in the Post-Christian Era.” At the September meeting, scripture scholar and chapter member Pauline Viviano spoke on “Merton’s Monastic Prophetic Spirituality: Relevant for Non-Monks.” On October 15, Jon Sweeney will discuss the book *A Course in Christian Mysticism* by Thomas Merton, for which he served as editor, at 2 p.m in the Rectory Assembly of Immaculate Conception Parish, 7211 W. Talcott, Chicago. On November 5, David Belcastro will speak to the chapter on Merton and Camus. On November 19, Paul Pearson will give a presentation on “Merton and Humor,” while on December 10, Rosalie Riegle and Kate Hennessy will speak to the chapter on the latter’s new book: *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty: An Intimate Portrait of My Grandmother*. For further information contact Chapter Coordinator Mike Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com; phone: 773-447-3989; web site: <http://ccitms.blogspot.com>.

At the May 16 meeting of the Cleveland ITMS Chapter, Fr. John Christman, SSS, led a discussion on Martin Scorsese’s film *Silence*. On September 19, the chapter listened to a recording of Daniel Berrigan’s 2008 presentation at Bellarmine University entitled “Nonviolence, Merton and Me.” For further information contact Chapter Coordinator Donna Kristoff, OSU, at dkristoff@ursulinesisters.org or 440-449-1200, ext. 314.

On July 30, the Gethsemani, KY Merton Circle met at Merton’s hermitage for a pot-luck supper and a presentation by Fenton Johnson on his recent publications on solitude and on monastic life. For further information contact chapter coordinator Br. Paul Quenon: paulquenon@monks.org.

At the September 30 meeting of the New York City ITMS chapter, Michael Higgins gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton & David Jones: Celtic Visionaries for our Time and Why We Need to Attend to Them” at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan. On November 4, Christine M. Bochen will lead the chapter’s annual retreat day at Union Seminary on the theme “Living Together in Joy: Thomas Merton’s Invitation to New Life.” The chapter’s Merton Reading Group, led by chapter member Bryon Gordon, will be-

gin its fall sessions on October 18; the selection will be *New Seeds of Contemplation*. For further information visit the chapter website at: <http://www.thomasmerton-nyc.org>, or contact: info@thomasmertonnyc.org.

The Louisville, KY ITMS Chapter will meet October 1 and November 12 from 2-4 pm in the Bellarmine University Library. For further information contact chapter coordinator Ellyn Crutcher: ellyncrutcher@aol.com.

The discussion group of the Washington Chapter of the ITMS, which meets monthly in the Guest Library at St. Anselm’s Abbey, has been reading Thomas Merton’s *Raids on the Unspeakable*. For further information contact: tmsociety@fastmail.fm.

On September 24, the Northern California ITMS Chapter discussed Thomas Merton’s *Love and Living*. The next scheduled meeting is November 26. For further information, contact chapter coordinator John Berger at: 916-482-6976.

On May 1, Kevin Burns gave a multimedia presentation entitled “In the Memory Palace of Thomas Merton” at the Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre in Vancouver, co-sponsored by the university’s J. S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities and the Thomas Merton Society of Canada. The Thomas Merton Society of Canada’s Annual General Meeting took place on July 6, 2017 at the Vancouver School of Theology on the campus of the University of British Columbia. It was followed by a public lecture by Bonnie Thurston entitled “Western Monastics Look East” at Carey Theological College. For further information see the society web site: www.merton.ca, or contact Susan Cowan, Community Relations Director, at tmsc@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