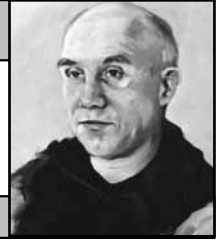


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## Papal Address Highlights Centenary

An unforeseen highlight of the commemoration of the centenary year of the birth of Thomas Merton, which concluded on January 31, 2016, was the address by Pope Francis to the U.S. Congress on September 24, 2015, in which he commended Merton, along with Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and Dorothy Day, as “great Americans” who “shaped fundamental values which will endure forever in the spirit of the American people” and who “offer us a way of seeing and interpreting reality.” After quoting from the opening lines of Merton’s autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the pope presented Merton as “above all a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. He was also a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions.” Together with the other “representatives of the American people,” for each of whom 2015 marked a significant anniversary, Merton was praised by the pope as exemplifying virtues that should continue to inspire their fellow citizens: “Lincoln, liberty; Martin Luther King, liberty in plurality and non-exclusion; Dorothy Day, social justice and the rights of persons; and Thomas Merton, the capacity for dialogue and openness to God.” At the conclusion of his address he pointed to these figures as embodiments of authentic greatness: “A nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as Lincoln did, when it fosters a culture which enables people to ‘dream’ of full rights for all their brothers and sisters, as Martin Luther King sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work, the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogue and sows peace in the contemplative style of Thomas Merton.”

The inclusion of Merton and Day, both Catholics whose radical commitment to the Gospel had chal-

lenged the status quo of both church and state, attracted a good deal of media attention, including print or online articles in *Time*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The Huffington Post* and *National Public Radio*; these articles, along with commentary from religious publications including *America*, *Commonweal*, *National Catholic Reporter* and *Sojourners*, as well as interviews with or articles by such well-known Merton scholars as Bishop Robert Barron, Christine Bochen, John Dear, Michael Higgins, Daniel Horan, OFM, Christopher Pramuk and Monica Weis, SSJ, are available along with additional commentaries on the Thomas Merton Center website at: <http://www.merton.org/Francis.aspx#Press>, which also includes the full text of Pope Francis’ address and information about Merton’s contacts with earlier popes. The address in its entirety is also being published in Volume 28 of *The Merton Annual* (2015).

## Merton Materials Donated to Center

A large cache of personal artifacts of Thomas Merton, previously unknown to have survived, was recently donated to the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, by Missouri author John Smelcer. The materials include articles of clothing and other personal belongings as well as Merton’s book of psalms and prayers and various handwritten notes. Among the items are the denim work jacket and cap Merton is wearing in the photograph used on the dust jacket of Edward Rice’s early biography *The Man in the Sycamore Tree*.

The materials had been stored for nearly a half-century in two trunks, kept in a garage in Kansas City, MO. The story of their rediscovery begins in the 1960s with the admiration of a nun in Brooklyn, NY for Merton’s writings. Given permission by her superior to visit the Abbey of Gethsemani, she arrived at the monastery during a snowstorm and was put up

in the abbey guesthouse. Though Merton initially declined to see her, eventually she was allowed to meet him and a friendship developed. She subsequently transferred to the Sisters of Loretto in nearby Nerinx, KY and Merton became her spiritual director.

She also got to know another of the monks, Br. Irenaeus, who was the monastery's tailor, and eventually the two fell in love. According to her recounting of their vocational struggle, they turned to Merton for advice and he counselled them to look for further growth beyond religious life. Shortly after Merton's death in Thailand on December 10, 1968, the two left their respective religious communities, married, and eventually moved to Missouri. When Merton died Abbot Flavian Burns had instructed Br. Irenaeus to dispose of all Merton's personal belongings to discourage potential relic hunters, but this had not happened at the time he left the monastery. Instead he took the materials with him, and they remained with the couple, unpublicized, throughout their married life up to his death in 2009.

In 2015, an acquaintance told John Smelcer, who was doing research on Merton, that he had heard about a widow in Kansas City who owned a large collection of Merton's personal effects. Intrigued, Smelcer paid the widow a visit, and she showed him the material in the two trunks in her garage. All the articles of clothing were authenticated by Merton's laundry number (127) marked on each of them, and the notes and letters were clearly in Merton's handwriting. Considering Smelcer's visit an answer to prayer, as she was uncertain what to do with this precious material, the widow of Br. Irenaeus passed the belongings on to him, trusting that he would find the right place for them. He in turn contacted the Merton Center, visited in July 2015 with photographs of various materials in the collection, and subsequently donated most of the items to the Center.

"I was just amazed that this collection had survived," Merton Center Director Paul Pearson said, "and it was really quite fortuitous the events that had brought it to his attention and then John getting in touch with us." He noted that most of the articles of clothing were ripped, stained and threadbare, evidence of Merton's regular engagement in manual labor. A number of the items (including the denim jacket) have

one or two laundry number crossed out above Merton's, indicating that they had been passed on from monks who had died or left the order. "One of the things I've noticed from looking at these clothes especially," Dr. Pearson said, "is they prove that Merton walked the walk. He lived the poor monk."

The collection includes Merton's personal Cistercian Trappist illuminated *Psalterium*, published in 1888, numerous items of clothing worn by Merton, including the blue denim "Hercules" work jacket, original signed correspondence from Thomas Merton to both of the couple, and original photographs of Thomas Merton and of his hermitage. In expressing gratitude for this remarkable donation, Paul Pearson commented, "It seems to be kind of coming full circle in a way. These materials that had been Merton's at the time of his death were coming back to their rightful home."

#### **Prison Resource Center Dedicated**

On October 21, 2015, the Edward J. Farley and John Collins Thomas Merton Resource Center was dedicated at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Shirley, MA, where in July 2013 John Collins began the only chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society to meet in a prison. The family of Edward Farley, longtime ITMS chapters coordinator who died in 2015, donated over 30 boxes of books, media and other Merton materials, supplemented by donations from ITMS members throughout the United States and Canada as well as the Netherlands. At the dedication ceremony of the resource center housing this material, attended by inmates, members of the Collins and Farley families, members of the prison administration and prison security personnel, ITMS President Michael Higgins gave a presentation entitled "Random Musings on a Religious Genius – Outlier, Prophet and Contemplative." Reflections and responses were made by inmates and chapter members Timothy J. Muise, Shawn Fisher, Joseph Labriola, Michael Skinner and Jeremy K. Hayes. In attendance was special guest Brooke Anderson, a Vancouver painter and art therapist who has volunteered in the prison system of British Columbia since 2007. The ceremony also included the dedication of a new altar for the chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in which were placed the names of the many volunteers who

have served the inmates over the years. John Collins greeted and introduced guests, Deacon Arthur Rogers, prison chaplain, led the prayer service and Peggy Farley spoke about her father and his many years of dedication to the ITMS. Nancy Collins, associate director of the Shirley ITMS Chapter, gave the final reflections. Reporter Tanya Connor covered the event for the Worcester *Catholic Free Press*.

### **Oakham Conference 2016**

The Eleventh General Meeting and Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will take place April 1-3 at Oakham School, Rutland, UK, the alma mater of Thomas Merton. The theme, taken from a letter of Merton to Czeslaw Milosz, is “Life Is on Our side.” Kenote speakers are John Dear, who will speak on “Life Is on Our Side: Thomas Merton’s Lessons in Peace and Nonviolence” and Fiona Gardner, who will give an address entitled: “Raising ‘Strange Suns for Your New Mornings’: Thomas Merton on Rebirth, Renewal and Resurrection.”

Concurrent session and workshop presentations include: Lars Adolffson: “The Joy of Community and Sacramental Friendship”; William Apel: “This Yes to God: Merton’s Gospel of the Living Christ”; Nass Cannon: “A Certain Victory: Thomas Merton and the Journey of Personhood”; James G. R. Cronin: “The Poetics of History: Thomas Merton’s Use of the Past to Guide Possible Futures”; Larry Culliford: “Merton, Arasteh and Final Integration: Exploring Personal Pathways to Spiritual Growth and Maturity”; Detlev Cuntz: “Thomas Merton and Paul Celan – Poetry after Auschwitz”; Peter Ellis: “What Is with Me? What Am I In?”; Phil Garrity: “What is Left When All is Lost? – Merton and Eckhart’s Apophatic Unknowing as Entry into Divine Mercy”; Gary Hall: “Siding with Life: the Journal of Merton’s Escaping”; Daniel P. Horan, OFM: “Thomas Merton’s Model of ‘Ecological Conversion’ in the Age of Pope Francis”; Susanne Jennings: “Living Comprehensibly: Thomas Merton and the Necessity of Silence”; Gray Matthews: “This Heartbreaking Effort: Contemplative Critique & the Struggle to Express Life”; Mark C. Meade: “Merton’s Censored Struggle with Suicide”; Andrew Nicoll: “The Oakham That Merton Knew”; Paul M. Pearson: “In Silence: Merton’s Invitation to Victory”; Sonia Petisco: “The Seduction of the Divine: Thomas

Merton’s Experience of Love as Self-abandonment.”

The conference will also include a panel discussion with James Cronin, Gary Hall, Mark Meade and Sonia Petisco on “What’s Next with Merton?” chaired by Paul Pearson. Conference artist Jean Lamb will also give a presentation of her work on exhibit. Rev. Maureen Pickering will preside at the closing Eucharist.

### **Chatral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche (1913-2015)**

Chatral Rinpoche, whose encounter with Thomas Merton was one of the most significant events in the latter’s Asian journey of 1968, died on Dec. 31, 2015 at Pharping, Nepal at the age of 102. He was born on June 18, 1913 in the Kham region of Tibet, and was considered one of the foremost Dzogchen Masters from the Nyingmapa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Chatral Rinpoche shunned institutional life and lived as a wandering yogi, retreating in hermitages in remote areas of India and Nepal. He commanded the respect and adulation of many recognized lamas of Tibetan Buddhism. A staunch advocate of vegetarianism, he is known to have bought countless animals from slaughter houses to be freed, a practice he performed throughout his life. Merton met Chatral on November 16, 1968, calling him “the greatest rimpoché I have met so far and a very impressive person . . . a great man, the true practitioner of dzogchen, the best of the Nyingmapa lamas, marked by complete simplicity and freedom.” The two monks developed an almost instant rapport and communicated on a deep level about the spiritual life. Merton said that if he were to study with a Tibetan master “I think Chatral would be the one I’d choose” (see *Asian Journal* 142-44 for his account of the meeting; former ITMS president Donald Grayston writes about his own deeply moving encounter with Chatral in his article “In the Footsteps of Thomas Merton: Asia,” *The Merton Seasonal* 33.4 [Winter 2008] 21-28). Chatral is survived by his wife Kamala and his two daughters, Tara Devi and Saraswati.

### **John H. Ford (1921-2016)**

John H. “Jack” Ford, Ph.D., longtime Louisville educator and friend of Thomas Merton, died February 20, 2016 at the age of 94. A philosopher, he began his teaching career at Ursuline College in Louisville, which merged in 1968 with Bellarmine College (now University), where he served as chairman of the Philosophy Department; he also was adjunct

professor of philosophy at the University of Louisville for more than twenty years. In 1968 he became President of Mount St. Agnes College in Baltimore, MD, returning to Louisville to become Executive Director of Kentuckiana Metroversity, a consortium of Louisville's universities and colleges. A graduate of St. Xavier High School in Louisville, St. Joseph's College of Indiana, Xavier University in Cincinnati and the University of Ottawa, he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II in both the Pacific and Atlantic theatres. During his tenure at Bellarmine, he received several awards, including the first William T. Miles award for outstanding contributions to the college. With the late Msgr. Felix Pitt, then head of the diocesan Catholic school system, he founded the Junior Great Books Program for advanced middle-school students, adopted by more than thirty school systems around the country. He received honorary degrees from St. Joseph's College and Bellarmine University, as well as the Horrigan Award for Distinguished Service and the Distinguished Catholic School Alumni Award from the Archdiocese of Louisville. Along with his wife Gladys, he was a frequent visitor to the Abbey of Gethsemani for more than forty years, at times teaching classes and tutoring there. He is mentioned numerous times in Merton's journals from 1960 through 1966, including his presence on the occasion of Jacques Maritain's visit to the hermitage in October 1966. After his retirement, he and his wife founded Day Spring, a residential community for adults with intellectual disabilities, with which he maintained a close association until his death. He was preceded in death by his parents, Rose Herbert Ford and John B. Ford. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, the former Gladys Jones, three sons, five daughters and four grandchildren. A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated on February 24 at St. Frances of Rome Church, followed by burial at Calvary Cemetery in Louisville.

#### **Peter Barrett (1956-2016)**

Peter Barrett, former Church of Ireland (Anglican) Bishop of Cashel and Ossory, died October 28, 2015 in Dublin, Ireland. After resigning from his see in 2006 due to personal issues, Rev. Barrett became a Roman Catholic and turned to an extensive study of the writings of Thomas Merton. A native of Dublin,

he attended Avoca-Kingstown School and Trinity College, graduating in 1978 with a degree in history and political science, subsequently gaining a master's in philosophy in 1984. He was ordained for the Derry and Raphoe Diocese in 1981 and, after a period in Dublin, became rector of Letterkenny and Gartan in Raphoe and then of St. George's Church in Belfast from 1990 through 1994. Appointed dean of residence and chaplain at Trinity in 1994, he became Dean of Waterford in 1998 and was elected Bishop of Cashel and Ossory in November 2002. He had lectured in Anglican spirituality at the Jesuit Milltown Institute in Dublin and was also one-time vice-president of Monkstown Hockey Club, as well as a qualified hockey umpire. A member of the International Thomas Merton Society for a number of years, he had attended the ITMS Twelfth General Meeting in Chicago in 2011, and had been considering returning to Trinity to do doctoral studies on Merton, with a particular focus on his European roots. A memorial service was held on December 6 at Kilkenny (Church of Ireland) Cathedral, where his ashes are buried. Most Rev. Michael Jackson, Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, said at the time of his death: "Peter's passing is felt with great sadness by a wide range of people and in particular by his family and by all who loved him most dearly. We commend him to the mercy and protection of Almighty God whom he strove to serve with warm devotion in this life. May he rest in peace."

#### **Frazier Museum Exhibit**

The Frazier History Museum in Louisville, KY is sponsoring an exhibit entitled "Thomas Merton: A Familiar Stranger" from January 30 through May 29, 2016. With material drawn from the collections of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and the photographic archives of the *Courier-Journal* of Louisville, the exhibit examines race, nonviolence and compassion through the lens of Merton's words and work. The exhibit provides a glimpse into Merton's life through photographs taken of Merton by renowned photographers, as well as photos taken by Merton himself, and features artifacts belonging to Merton, including his typewriter, clothing that has never before been on display, and correspondence between Merton and Coretta Scott King about the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. A gallery of

photographs from the *Courier-Journal* archives taken during the civil rights movement in 1967 and 1968 are paired with excerpts written by Merton about racial justice, unity and nonviolence. On January 30, 430 people attended the opening of the exhibit, featuring a musical performance by the Louisville Vocal Project and the Bellarmine Schola Cantorum, and remarks by Bellarmine President Dr. Joseph J. McGowan, Louisville Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz and Greg Fischer, Mayor of Louisville. A diverse group of speakers, including Karen Cassidy, Hannah Drake, Greg Fischer, Ron Geoghegan, George Kilcourse, Surekha Kulkarni, Paul Pearson, Penny Peavler and Tom Williams, shared passages from Merton's writings, relating how those writings had an impact on their lives. The reception included a cake baked to commemorate Merton's one-hundred-first birthday. On February 23 the new Morgan Atkinson film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* was shown at the museum. On March 16, Paul Pearson will give a presentation entitled "A Geography of Holiness: The Photography of Thomas Merton"; on April 16, a program entitled "Beyond the Golden Rule: Nurturing Active Compassion in Our Youth" will be held in connection with the exhibit; on May 10, George Kilcourse will give a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton on Racism: A Spiritual Matrix for Engaging Social Justice"; on May 24, a program entitled "Shining like the Sun: Stories from the Heart of Louisville" will be held. Located at the museum's premises at 829 West Main Street in Louisville, the exhibit will be open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. and on Sundays from noon through 5 p.m. For further information see the museum website: <http://fraziermuseum.org/upcoming-exhibitions>.

### **Merton in France Pilgrimage**

The Thomas Merton Society of Canada will once again sponsor a "Thomas Merton in France" pilgrimage program June 8-18, 2016, led by Rev. Judith Hardcastle and Michael Higgins. The ten-day program will be centered in Prades, Merton's birthplace, with trips to St. Antonin, his boyhood home, and Montauban, where he attended school, as well as the sites of the abbeys of St. Michel de Cuxa and Saint-Martin du Canigou. The central themes of his life and work – contemplation, nonviolence, interfaith encounter –

will be the major topics of presentations and group discussions. The inclusive cost of \$2950 (Canadian) includes tuition, ten nights' accommodation (double occupancy; single occupancy \$350 extra), all breakfasts and two evening dinners, group lunch in St. Antonin, picnic lunch en route to Prades, scheduled land transportation, instructor's services and taxes. Not included are transportation to and from Prades (air and land), other meals, health and accident insurance, alcoholic beverages, medical costs, laundry, personal items, excess baggage charges, individual accommodation surcharges, tips, or expenses arising from any causes beyond the reasonable control of the tour leader. For further information contact Judith Hardcastle at 604-985-0408 or by email at [minister@st-andrews-united.ca](mailto:minister@st-andrews-united.ca); or visit [www.merton.ca](http://www.merton.ca).

### **Merton Happenings**

The Friends of Mount Saviour Monastery, Pine City, NY sponsored a year-long series of presentations commemorating the Thomas Merton centenary at Transfiguration Monastery, Windsor, NY. On December 21, 2014 Mary Donald Corcoran, OSB spoke on "Thomas Merton: The Spiritual Journey"; on March 22, 2015 Michael Higgins gave a presentation entitled: "Making and Remaking of the Diarist of Gethsemani," and on October 25 Daniel Horan, OFM spoke on "Thomas Merton and St. Francis of Assisi: The Influence of a Medieval Saint on a Modern Monk."

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On July 16, 2015, Rev. Robert Barron gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton's Metaphysics of Peace" at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI.

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On August 13, 14 and 22, the Chautauqua Catholic Community Seminars at the Chautauqua Institute, New York featured presentations commemorating the centenary of the birth of Thomas Merton. Rev. Francis Gargami, CSSR gave a pair of talks on "Celebrating the 100th Birthday of Thomas Merton and His Legacy: The Early Years and The Later Years"; the following week, a talk on "The Merton-Nouwen Connection" was presented by Rev. Paul A. Milanowski.

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On September 10, 17 and 24 and Oct. 1, Rev. Paul Milanowski gave a series of presentations on Thomas Merton at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.



On September 18-20, a retreat on the theme “Thomas Merton and the Experience of Silence” was held at Stiftelsen Berget, Rättvik, Sweden with Lars Adolfs-son, Bishop Mikael Mogren and Paul Pearson. This event led to the formal establishment of the Swedish Merton Society.

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On September 21 and 28, Dolores Tate-Mayeski gave a two-part presentation entitled “Merton Matters for the New Millennium” for the San Diego School of Christian Studies at First United Methodist Church in San Diego.

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On September 25, Morgan Atkinson introduced his new film *The Many Storeys and Final Days of Thomas Merton* at St. Luke’s Church, El Cajon, CA; the program was presented at St. Monica Church, Santa Monica, CA on September 26; at Pepperdine University Malibu, CA on September 27; at All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, CA on September 28; at the Franciscan Spirituality Center, Portland, OR on September 29; at the Shalom Prayer Center, Mt. Angel, OR on September 30 and October 1; at the St. Placid Retreat Center, Lacey, WA on October 4; at the “Kentucky Voices” gathering, Frankfort, KY on November 12; at Duquesne University (in conjunction with the Thomas Merton Center), Pittsburgh PA on November 13; and at Georgetown College, Georgetown, KY November 30. The film was shown on Kentucky Public Television on December 10, the anniversary of Thomas Merton’s death in 1968.

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From September 26 through November 4, Nazareth College, Rochester, NY featured the exhibition “A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton” at the college library. In association with the exhibit a number of events were held. On the opening day, Merton Center Director Paul M. Pearson gave a presentation entitled “‘I Love Beer, and by That Very Fact, the World’: The Humor of Thomas Merton.” On October 6, actor and playwright James Nagle performed his one-man drama *Thomas Merton: Alive at Fourth & Walnut*, cosponsored by Western New York Call to Action. On November 4, the new Morgan Atkinson film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* was shown, followed by a

panel discussion. On November 4, to conclude the exhibition, Paul Pearson gave a presentation entitled “The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton.”

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On October 10, Tom Nelson, CM gave a presentation entitled “Seeds of Contemplation Sown by Thomas Merton” at the Contemplative Outreach of Colorado Center for Contemplative Living in Denver.

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On October 10, St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland sponsored “A Celebration of Thomas Merton” as part of its Festival of Prayer. The keynote speaker was Canon John McLuckie, with workshops led by Canon Anne Tomlinson and Stephen Dunhill.

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On October 15, Mark Meade gave a presentation entitled “Kneeling with Spiritual Giants – Thomas Merton” at St. Francis Borgia Parish Center in Milwaukee.

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On October 22, Marilyn Sunderman, RSM gave a presentation on “Thomas Merton on Simplicity of Life and Its Lessons for Sustainability” at St. Joseph’s College, Standish, ME as part of the college’s Cultural Affairs Committee Lecture Series.

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On October 24, Gary Hall led a study day entitled “Revolutionary Communion: Chasing Thomas Merton 100 Years On” at The Meditatio Centre, West London, UK.

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On October 28, Paul R. Dekar gave the annual Stuart Ivison Memorial lectureship on the theme “Living the Faithful Life: Thomas Merton’s Spirituality for the Long Haul” at First Baptist Church, Ottawa, Canada; earlier that day, at “The Gathering of Baptists,” a progressive Canadian group, he introduced Merton and his work and discussed Merton’s influence in his own life, and showed the new film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton*.

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On October 30-31, Mary Margaret Funk, OSB directed a retreat on “Thomas Merton and Proven Spiritual Tools of the Monastic Tradition” at St. Benedict Center, Schuyler, NE.

On October 30 and November 6 and 13, Rev. Paul Milanowski gave a series of presentations for 39 participants in the adult education program at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI.

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On November 6-8, a conference entitled “Boundless Grandeur: The Christian Vision of Donald Allchin” was held at Gladstone’s Library, Hawarden, Flintshire, UK, featuring presentations by Kallistos Ware, Fiona Gardner, Denis Morgan, Patrick Thomas and David Keller, reflecting on the legacy of Donald Allchin, including his friendship with Thomas Merton.

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On November 13-15, Sharon Grant led a retreat entitled “Poets of the Sacred: Thomas Merton and Mary Oliver” at the Nazareth Retreat Center, Nazareth, KY.

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On November 14, a study day on the life and work of Donald Allchin cosponsored by the St. Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality and Pusey House, Oxford was held at Pusey House. Presenters included Esther de Waal, Geoffrey Rowell, Barry Orford, Denis Morgan, Fiona Gardner, Charles Miller, David Scott and David Keller.

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On November 15 Holy Cross Cistercian Abbey, Berryville, VA commemorated the centennial anniversary of Thomas Merton’s birth in the retreat house chapel with a lecture by Fr. James Orthmann on “Monk as Marginal Person” preceded by opening comments by Abbot Robert Barnes, and followed by a conversation with Father Maurice Flood who studied with Merton at Gethsemani; the day concluded with a reception in the retreat house library and vespers and benediction in the abbey church.

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On November 16 Francisco Catão and Danilo Mondoni, SJ spoke at the Monastery of Saint Benedict in São Paulo, Brazil on Thomas Merton’s legacy of mercy in the context of Pope Francis’ bull *Misericordiae Vultus* inaugurating the Holy Year of Mercy. The gathering concluded with a performance of traditional spirituals by the Martin Luther King choir.

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On November 17, retired Archbishop Rowan Williams delivered the annual Orwell lecture at Uni-

versity College, London, entitled “Words, War and Reason: Orwell and Thomas Merton on the Crises of Language.” The lecture was subsequently published in *The Guardian* and is available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/dec/12/words-on-war-a-summons-to-writers-orwell-lecture>.

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On November 18, Christopher Pramuk gave a presentation entitled “Merton’s Awakening to the Feminine Divine” at the Call to Action Conference in Columbus, OH.

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On November 21, the Korean Christian Thought Institute held their annual Merton conference in Seoul, moderated by Professor Moon Young Suk. Paul Pearson gave the keynote presentation entitled “Silence in a World of Technobabble: Thomas Merton and the Prophetic Role of Silence,” with responses by Rev. Kwon Hyeok-il and Rev. Prof. Bernard Senécal, SJ. The day concluded with a meditation by Paul Pearson based on photographs by Thomas Merton.

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On November 21-22, the Carmelite Institute Malta sponsored a Thomas Merton Seminar entitled “I Am No Prophet, No Seer, But . . .” organized jointly by the Carmelite Institute and the Society of Christian Doctrine at the Mdina Carmelite Priory on Malta. On December 11 Michael Zammit gave a follow-up lecture entitled “Battling the Noonday Demon – Learning How to Renounce Resentment.” The Titus Brandsma Circle at the Mdina Priory also commemorated the Merton Centenary through an in-depth reading of his works.

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The annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta, GA featured two sessions dedicated to the life and work of Thomas Merton. On November 21, a session entitled “The Life and Times of a Modern Mystic: On the Centenary of the Birth of Thomas Merton” was cosponsored by the AAR Spirituality group and Mysticism group, with Thomas Cattoi presiding; presentations included Jack Downey: “We Drank Many Gin and Tonics’: Desire and Enchantment in Merton’s Buddhist Pilgrimage”; Daniel Horan, OFM: “The Lady, The Dunce and The Monk: How Julian of Norwich and John Duns Scotus Shaped Thomas

Merton's Incarnational Mysticism"; Daniel Rober: "Is Thomas Merton a Saint? Does It Matter? Mysticism, Postmodernity and the Limits of Sanctity"; Katelynn Carver: "The Many-Storied Mountains: A Mertonian Model for the Spiritual Significance of Narrativity"; the respondent was Christine M. Bochen. On November 23, the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies and Society for Hindu-Christian Studies jointly sponsored a session entitled "Thomas Merton at 100: His Influence on the Study of Hinduism and Buddhism"; presentations included Francis X. Clooney: "All the Way from India: Merton in the Mirror of Hinduism"; Thomas Forsthoefel: "Merton and the Axes of Dialogue"; Judith Simmer-Brown: "Communicating in Depth: Merton's Practice Dialogue with Tibetan Buddhism"; and John P. Keenan: "Thomas Merton's Unfinished Journey: From Encounter to Sharing."

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On December 2-5, Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN presented a Thomas Merton Centenary Celebration in association with the opening of the photography exhibit, "A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton," which ran from December 3, 2015 through February 26, 2016. On December 2, Victor Judge gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton and the Awful Silence"; later that day, *Merton and Tao: An Experimental Theatrical Piece Based on Thomas Merton's The Way of Chuang Tzu*, directed by Bill Feehley, was performed. On December 3, Brother Paul Quenon gave a reading with commentary entitled "Life at Gethsemani Abbey: Poetry of Thomas Merton and Paul Quenon," followed by a jazz concert and narrative performance entitled "Merton's Jazz and Memories of a Friend" with Dick Sisto (vibraphone) and Jeremy Allen (double bass). On December 5, a workshop on contemplative leadership was led by Kat Baker of the Cal Turner Program for Moral Leadership in the Professions.

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On December 3, Bishop Robert Barron delivered Columbia University's annual Thomas Merton Lecture, entitled "Thomas Merton: Metaphysics of Peace."

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On December 5, Esther de Waal gave a presentation on "Thomas Merton – Alpha and Omega: Reflections with Merton for Advent" at the United Church,

Winchester, UK, followed by a Eucharist, lunch and informal discussion.

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On December 10, Christopher Pramuk gave a presentation entitled "A Pilgrim Church: Thomas Merton's Witness to the Life of Faith," at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Lexington, KY.

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On December 10, Dom Felipe da Silva, Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Benedict in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, celebrated Mass in commemorating the death of Thomas Merton at the Monastery of the Virgin Mary, where Merton's correspondent and Portuguese translator Sr. M. Emmanuel de Souza e Silva, OSB had lived. The monastery also hosted an exhibition of photos, drawings, objects, letters and documents related to Merton and Sister M. Emmanuel. At the reception which followed Abbot da Silva introduced Fernando Paizer, from the State of São Paulo, as the new coordinator of the Sociedade dos Amigos Fraternos de Thomas Merton, which celebrated the nineteenth anniversary of its foundation as the Brazilian affiliate of the International Thomas Merton Society.

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On December 13, James G. R. Cronin gave a presentation entitled "Quaker Influences on the Catholic Monk and Peace Activist Thomas Merton: The Brave Journey of the 'Everyman'" at the Quaker Meeting House, Summerhill South, Cork, Ireland.

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On December 26, José Antonio Vázquez Mosquera and Miguel Ángel Vicente Hernández gave a joint presentation on "The Significance of an Ecumenical Monasticism for Present-day Monastic Institutions: A homage to Thomas Merton" at the El Ateneo Cultural Center in Madrid, Spain.

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On January 13, 20 and 27, 2016, Jim Kenney presented as series of talks on "Thomas Merton's Mountains" at Common Ground, Deerfield, IL.

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The play *The Glory of the World*, a production of the Actors Theatre of Louisville, written by Charles Mee and directed by Les Waters, was reprised at the Brooklyn Academy of Music January 16 through February 6. An unorthodox response to the Merton centennial, it



is described on the BAM website as an “explosive celebration . . . 17 men in party hats assemble somewhere between Trappist monastery and plywood warehouse to toast Merton’s many faces, asking: What makes a man? What makes a saint? What if nothing is sacred – and everything is? As the night devolves, each facet of Merton’s contested image – silent monk, poet, spiritual anarchist, Buddhist thinker – inspires more speeches, slow dances, make-outs, fist fights, and silent reflections, amassing a layered portrait of what it is to be a human being, full of contradictions and brimming with life.” The play was originally presented at Louisville’s Humana Festival March 20–April 1, 2015.

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On January 23, former Washington National Cathedral dean Gary Hall led a reflection day entitled “Contemplation in a World of Action,” based on the work of Thomas Merton, at the cathedral.

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On February 19-21 Sharon Grant led a retreat on “Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton: Book 2 – Becoming Who You Already Are” at Bethany Spring Retreat Center, New Haven, KY. On March 4-6, Vanessa Hurst led a weekend retreat on “The Wisdom of Thomas Merton and Pema Chodron” at Bethany Spring.

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On February 24, the Tenth Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY was given by C. Vanessa White; her topic was: “‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Thomas Merton, Howard Thurman and the Quest Toward Racial Reconciliation and Peace.”

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On February 26, Christopher Pramuk gave a public presentation entitled “In Everything, Mercy: Thomas Merton and Pope Francis on the Merciful Heart of God” at Holy Family Parish in Louisville, KY, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University; the following day he led a retreat on the same theme at the university’s Chapel of Our Lady of the Woods.

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The spring “Week with Thomas Merton” Road Scholar (Elderhostel) Program was held March 6-11

at the Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY. The fall Merton Road Scholar week will take place at the Center on October 16-21. For further information contact Linda Bailey: 502-272-8161; e-mail: lbailey@bellarmine.edu.

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On March 11, the Monastic Institute of the Pontifical University of Sant’Anselmo in Rome sponsored a conference entitled “Always Stretching Forward toward Christ: The Radical Theology and Unquiet Spiritual Journey of Thomas Merton.” Featured speakers included Jonathan Montaldo on “Always Stretching Forward toward Christ: Thomas Merton’s Restless Journey”; Maurizio Renzini, president of the Thomas Merton Society of Italy, on “The Presence of Thomas Merton”; Bernard Sawicki, OSB, coordinator of the institute, on “The Monasticism of Thomas Merton as a Christological Experience of the Absurd”; P. Trianni on “Interreligious Dialogue and Monasticism in Thomas Merton”; and Mario Zaninelli on “Contemplation in a World of Action.” The program also included a viewing of the new film by Morgan Atkinson entitled *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* and a service of vespers with the Benedictine community at Sant’Anselmo.

#### Upcoming Events

On March 31-April 2, the College English Association annual convention, to be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Denver, CO, will feature five presentations on Thomas Merton. A panel entitled “Poetry as Creative Response to Social Issues” will feature Christine M. Bochen on “*Original Child Bomb* – Found Poetry as Social Protest”; Deborah Kehoe on “*The Geography of Lograire*: Merton’s Epic Response to Inhumanity”; and Monica Weis, SSJ on “Birmingham in the ‘60s: Poems of Protest and Tribute.” Presentations on two other panels in the Creative Writing and Contemporary Culture track include Michael Callaghan, SM on “Creating the Self: the Artistic/Spiritual Journeys of Brian Wilson and Thomas Merton” and JoNelle Toriseva on “The Role of Creation in Colette, Thomas Merton and Gertrude Stein.” The International Thomas Merton Society is an affiliated society of the College English Association.

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On April 8-10 a meditation retreat led by Erik

Dennes will be held at Bethany Spring Retreat Center in New Haven, KY, one mile from the Abbey of Gethsemani. On June 9-12, Joe Zarentonello will direct a retreat entitled "Breakthrough with Thomas Merton and with Tibetan Wisdom." Vanessa Hurst will lead a retreat on the theme "Like Water in the Palm of Your Hand" June 17-19; on July 22-24 she will direct a retreat entitled "Planting Your Seeds of Compassion"; and September 16-18 she will direct a retreat on "Engaging Our Body with Our Mind/Spirit/Heart: Spiritual Communion." For further information on any of these programs see the Bethany Spring website: [www.bethanyspring.org](http://www.bethanyspring.org); or email: [rick@bethanyspring.org](mailto:rick@bethanyspring.org); phone: 502-507-8576.

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On June 26-July 1, Christine Bochen will present a course at the Maryknoll Mission Institute entitled "Awakening the Heart, Mending the World: Merton's Path to Mercy" at the Maryknoll Sisters Motherhouse, Maryknoll, NY. Beginning with an exploration of the epiphanies of mercy that Merton experienced, this program for the Holy Year of Mercy will explore the essential themes of his spirituality – contemplation, compassion and unity – in order to nurture what Merton describes as "a climate of mercy" in our communities and in the world. Tuition for the course is \$200, with a \$50 non-refundable deposit required at the time of registration; room and board per day is \$55. Further information can be found on the institute website: [maryknollsisters.org/maryknoll-mission-institute-2](http://maryknollsisters.org/maryknoll-mission-institute-2); email: [missinst@mksisters.org](mailto:missinst@mksisters.org); phone: 914-941-7575.

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On June 27-30, Marianne Hieb, RSM, Helen Owens, OSF and Jonathan Montaldo will lead a four-day retreat program celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy at the San Alfonso Retreat Center, Long Branch, NJ. The program will be repeated September 26-29. The schedule will include group gatherings, prayer, silence and creative meditations focused on the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi and the writings of Thomas Merton, together with time for contemplative walks on the beach, meditative gazing and journaling, rest and nourishing community. The fee for either program is \$445, including overnight accommodations, three meals provided daily at the retreat center, retreat ma-

terials and creative journaling supplies. For further information and to receive a registration form, contact Beverly Chabalowski: 856-757-3188.

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From October 28 through November 4, 2016, a Holy Year of Mercy Pilgrimage Retreat entitled "Exploring Paths of Mercy: Thomas Merton, Francis of Assisi, and Our Own" will take place in Assisi, Italy, led by Marianne Hieb, RSM, Helen Owens, OSF and Jonathan Montaldo, sponsored by the Lourdes Wellness Center. The schedule will include group gatherings, prayer, silence, input and meditations, with time for contemplative wandering and exploring Assisi's historical Franciscan sites. Retreatants will stay at Assisi's Hotel Giotto, located near the Basilica of San Francesco. The retreat fee, including full program, half-day excursion to sacred Franciscan sites, lodging and two meals daily is \$2690 (single occupancy); \$2340 (double occupancy) – airfare, local travel from airport to Assisi, lunches and personal gratuities not included. \$500 deposit due upon registration; final payment due October 14, 2016. For further information and to receive a registration contact Beverly Chabalowski: 856-757-3188.

### Chapter and Affiliate News

On September 11-12, Bonnie Thurston presented a lecture and retreat day for the Cleveland ITMS chapter on "Thomas Merton, Christian Identity and Zen Buddhism"; at its October 20 meeting, the chapter discussed Merton's essay "Nhat Hanh Is My Brother" and listened to Merton's recorded account to the novices of Nhat Hanh's visit to Gethsemani; on December 20, the group held a Taize prayer service on the theme: "Merton in the Dark before Dawn: Mercy in Advent"; on January 26, the chapter heard and discussed a tape by Anthony T. Padovano entitled "The Human Journey of Thomas Merton" and celebrated Merton's birthday with cake and song. On March 15, Catherine Poland will give a presentation entitled "Monasticism of the Twenty-first Century: Living as a Lay Cistercian of the Abbey of Gethsemani." For further information contact chapter coordinator Donna Kristoff, OSU: 440-449-1200, ext. 314; email: [dkristoff@ursulinesisters.org](mailto:dkristoff@ursulinesisters.org).

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On September 16, the Belmar, NJ Chapter of the

ITMS viewed the film *Merton: A Film Biography* at their monthly meeting. On October 14 they discussed Merton's *Alaskan Journal*, while on November 11 they discussed the Advent and Christmas essays in Merton's *Seasons of Celebration*, and continued this discussion at their December 16 meeting. On January 13, they discussed Merton's *Life and Holiness*, and on February 16 discussed the Lent and Easter essays in *Seasons of Celebration*. On March 16 they will discuss Merton's *He Is Risen*, on April 13 *No Man Is an Island*, and on May 11 *My Argument with the Gestapo*. On June 8 the group will view the DVD *Monks Who Knew Merton*. For further information contact chapter coordinator Greg Ryan: phone: 732-681-6238; email: GJRyan@wccm.org.

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On September 28, the Thomas Merton Society of Canada sponsored a book-launch event at St. Andrew's United Church in North Vancouver, BC, for Donald Grayston's new book *Thomas Merton and the Noonday Demon*, including a presentation, question-and-answer session, reception and book signing. On October 23-24, the Society presented a program and retreat entitled "From Rumi to Coltrane: Exploring Conversation as a Prayer" led by David Belcastro and Angus Stuart at the Canadian Memorial United Church & Centre for Peace in Vancouver, BC. On November 21, the society's "Consonantia: School of Spiritual Practices" held a day-long program of workshops at St. Andrew's, and on November 25 hosted a public lecture by Ross Labrie entitled "Thomas Merton on Art as Truth" at the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. On December 10 the society sponsored a viewing of Morgan Atkinson's new film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* followed by a panel discussion with Donald Grayston, Angus Stuart and Lynn Szabo. On March 4, Douglas Christie gave a presentation entitled "The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Contemplative Practice and Ecological Responsibility" at the Canadian Memorial United Church in Vancouver. On the following day, he led a retreat on the theme "The Need for Roots: Cultivating a Sense of Place" at the Canadian Memorial Centre for Peace, cosponsored by the centre and Earth Literacies. For further information contact Susan Cowan, Community Relations Director, at [tmssc@telus.net](mailto:tmssc@telus.net) or 604-988-8835.

The Thomas Merton Society Interfaith Chapter of Southern Delaware showed the Morgan Atkinson films *Soul Searching*, *The Journey of Thomas Merton* and *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* at the Epworth United Methodist Church's Food 'n Faith Program in Rehoboth Beach on October 7, 14, 21 and 28. The program "Becoming More Comfortable with Contemplation" led by Toni Worsham continued to meet through the beginning of November at the St. Edmond's Education Building in Rehoboth Beach. On March 6-13, an 8-Day Centering Prayer Retreat on the theme "Deepening Our Relationship with God" was directed by Rev. Carlyle Gill at the Virden Center on the campus of the University of Delaware, Lewes. The Peace and Non-Violence Prayer and Discussion Group continues to meet on the second Wednesday of each month at St. Edmond's Education Building in Rehoboth Beach, facilitated by Sr. Maryanne Zakreski, using the book, *Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action* by John Dear. In March the chapter cosponsored a "Merton Mini-Film Festival: Journey of the Spirit" with the Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware: on March 5 a showing of *Merton: A Film Biography* was followed by a discussion moderated by Mary Helms and George Beckerman; then *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton* was shown and followed by a discussion moderated by Rev. J. Thomas Ledbetter; on March 6 a viewing of *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* was followed by a discussion moderated by Rev. Keith Goheen. On the first Sunday of each month, the chapter sponsors a regular interfaith gathering for conversation and contemplation facilitated by Rev. Keith Goheen. For more information, contact George Beckerman at [george.beckerman@gmail.com](mailto:george.beckerman@gmail.com).

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The new Alaska Chapter of the ITMS held its inaugural meeting on October 22 at the Holy Family Center in Anchorage, part of Holy Family Cathedral, whose first archbishop, Joseph Ryan invited Thomas Merton to Alaska in 1968. For further information contact Kathleen Tarr: [ktarralaska@gmail.com](mailto:ktarralaska@gmail.com).

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The Northern California Chapter of the ITMS discussed Merton's *Wisdom of the Desert* at its Septem-

ber 27 meeting, and *The New Man* at its November 29 and January 31 meetings. The group will visit the Cistercian monastery at Vina for its March 20 meeting, on Palm Sunday. For further information contact John Berger: 916-482-6976.

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On November 14, the annual retreat of the Corpus Christi (New York City) Chapter of the ITMS was led by Lawrence Cunningham, on the theme “Contemplation & Ordinary Life – Thomas Merton and the Carmelite Tradition: Teresa, Therese & John.” On January 30, Fr. Daniel Horan, OFM addressed the chapter on “Incarnational Mysticism: The Christ of Thomas Merton & Julian of Norwich”; his presentation was followed by a look at two of the women who influenced Merton’s thought and spirituality: Paul Dinter spoke on Sr. Thérèse Lentfoehr and Cynthia Donnelly on Catherine de Hueck Doherty. On April 23, 2016, the Chapter will mark Earth Day with speakers Patrick O’Connell, who will give a presentation entitled “Their Inscapable Is Their Sanctity: The Traditional Sources of Merton’s Environmental Spirituality” and Monica Weis, SSJ, whose topic will be “Pope Francis, Rachel Carson & Thomas Merton: Challenging Voices.” All events take place at Corpus Christi Church, 529 West 121 Street, New York, NY 10027. For further information contact chapter coordinator Brenda Fairaday at mertonnyc@yahoo.com or call 212-666-9350.

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On October 11, the recently formed Philadelphia/South Jersey ITMS Chapter hosted a Thomas Merton Reflection Afternoon entitled “Autumn Seeds of Contemplation,” featuring reflections by Edward Hastings, at the Driscoll School of Nursing Auditorium of Villanova University, Villanova, PA. For further information contact Barbara Jones at: jones.b@gmercycu.edu or 267-448-1407(w); 215-913-8553 (m).

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On October 18, the Chicago ITMS Chapter heard Gordon Oyer, author of *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest*, discuss the landmark “Peacemakers” retreat led by Thomas Merton in 1964. At its November 15 meeting, the chapter heard Elizabeth-Anne Stewart’s presentation “*Laudato Si*” and the Sanctity of Sycamore Seeds.” On January 17, Shawn Storer and

members of the Catholic Peace Fellowship spoke to the group on Merton’s long suppressed book *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*. On February 16, in lieu of a regular meeting, the chapter attended Morgan Atkinson’s presentation of his new film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton* at Loyola University Chicago, part of the Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage “Faith in Focus” film series. On March 20, Mike Brennan will give a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton and Peter Abelard: Faithful Troublemakers.” For further information contact chapter coordinator Michael Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com; or call 773-447-3989.

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The Dubuque Chapter of the ITMS completed its study of Merton’s *Thoughts in Solitude* with a celebration at its June meeting which also included a viewing of Morgan Atkinson’s film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton*. The 2015 academic year began with a Centenary Celebration at Loras College of the Niles/Merton Song Cycle, music composed by John Jacob Niles for texts of Merton poems, played by Dr. Luke Tyler and recited or sung by vocalist Grace Shanks. At its recent monthly meetings, held at the at St. John Episcopal Parish Center, the chapter has been discussing *The Seven Storey Mountain*. For further information contact chapter coordinator Rev. Marilyn Hendricks: 847-987-1714 or dubuquethomasmerton-chapter@gmail.com.

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At its April 9 spring meeting, the Thomas Merton Society of Washington, DC will hear Alan Kolp speak on Thomas Merton and the Quaker tradition. The society discussion group, which meets monthly, is currently reading Merton’s *No Man Is an Island*. For further information contact Maryle Ashley at tmsociety@fastmail.fm.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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*The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:*

**www.merton.org/ITMS**