

INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Merton's Message Cited in Letter to President

Words of Thomas Merton were prominently quoted in a letter to President Donald Trump signed by over 800 faith leaders preceding the annual National Prayer Breakfast, at which the new president spoke on February 2, 2017. The letter, composed and distributed by Faith in Public Life, which describes itself as “a strategy center for the faith community advancing faith in the public square as a powerful force for justice, compassion and the common good,” urged Trump to recall the message of the Biblical prophets to care for the most vulnerable and marginalized and to recognize that Christ is encountered in a special way in the poor and outcast. Quoting from Merton’s *Faith and Violence*, the letter states: “we are reminded of the words of Thomas Merton, the Catholic monk Pope Francis cited in his address to Congress. ‘Theology does not exist merely to appease the already too untroubled conscience of the powerful and the established.’” It continues: “A troubled conscience is one hallmark of a great leader. A conscience that is not awake to suffering and fails to respond is walled off from the love of God.” Among those signing the letter were Sister Donna Markham, President & CEO of Catholic Charities USA; retired Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, former President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director of NETWORK, Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; Jim Wallis, President and Founder of Sojourners; Rev. William Barber II, President of Repairers of the Breach; Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service; Rev. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor of Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, GA; and Tony Campolo and Shane Claiborne of Red Letter Christians. Presidents of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the umbrella group representing 80 percent of U.S. Catholic sisters, and of the Sisters of

Mercy of the Americas also signed the letter. President Trump’s remarks did not respond to the issues raised by the letter, focusing instead on a proposal to allow churches to endorse political candidates as a matter of religious liberty and including remarks on the low ratings of “The Celebrity Apprentice” – a television program he formerly hosted and in which he continues to have a financial interest – under his successor, former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The complete text of the letter follows:

“As you attend the National Prayer Breakfast, we turn our hearts in prayer for you and our nation. We address you not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Christians who strive to ‘Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly’ with our God. The Hebrew prophets teach us that the powerful must constantly be reminded to protect the downtrodden, the widow, the migrant and the outcast. The Gospel is not about prosperity, but Good News for the poor. In them, we encounter Christ. Our greatness as a nation has never been measured in the might of our military or the heights of our stock market. The depths of our values and commitment to the common good define our American ideals. One person, no matter the office or station in life, can lead and change our nation. God’s people walk together in an unbroken line of solidarity throughout history. From the Hebrew Exodus to the struggle for civil rights in the American South to the moral movement for equal justice for all today, ordinary men and women of faith do extraordinary things when we come together. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray for God’s will to be done on earth. Building this kingdom of justice and peace is our daily task. We pray that you use your office to unite, and turn away from your rhetoric and policy proposals that degrade human dignity. We pray that you remember refugees and immigrants have sacred worth in God’s eyes. We pray that you protect the gift

of Creation – air, oceans, rivers and climate that give and sustain life. We pray that you recognize affordable health care is a human right, not a privilege. We pray that you respect our Muslim brothers and sisters, who should never be targeted or stereotyped because of an extreme few who pervert a peaceful religion. The faith leaders you gathered around yourself during the campaign, and some of those you pray with today, may be reluctant to speak truth to power. And so we are reminded of the words of Thomas Merton, the Catholic monk Pope Francis cited in his address to Congress. ‘Theology does not exist merely to appease the already too untroubled conscience of the powerful and the established.’ A troubled conscience is one hallmark of a great leader. A conscience that is not awake to suffering and fails to respond is walled off from the love of God. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reminds us that when you host a reception or banquet, ‘invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind.’ We pray that you make room in your heart, your administration and your policy agenda for those who have no power in Washington. We stand ready to help you build bridges and knock down walls of indifference and exclusion. If you continue to choose the path of division and fear, we will not hesitate to defend those whom Christ put at the center of the Gospel.”

The Corner of Fourth and . . .

On January 17, 2017, *The New York Times* published an op-ed essay by the widow of iconic former heavyweight champion boxer Muhammad Ali entitled “What Thomas Merton and Muhammad Ali Had in Common.” Lonnie Ali began her essay by referring to Merton’s famous “epiphany” at the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets in downtown Louisville, KY in March 1958, citing Merton biographer William Shannon’s statement that Merton’s recognition of the secret beauty of each of the people he encountered there made him aware of “the glorious destiny that simply comes from being a human person and from being united with, not separated from, the rest of the human race,” and was a major influence on Merton’s passionate commitment during the final decade of his life to the pursuit of peace and social justice. Twenty years later, Ms. Ali notes, Walnut Street was renamed Muhammad Ali Boulevard after the Louisville native, and in 2008, the intersection was dedicated as

Thomas Merton Square – “the divergent paths of the two men” were “merged in the permanent markers of the same city street.” She goes on to highlight the appropriateness of this symbolic encounter of two figures who championed the inherent human dignity of every person and spoke out forthrightly against war, oppression and poverty, Merton as a Christian and Ali as a Muslim. “It is the convergence of their message of faith that bears noting as we mark what would have been Muhammad’s 75th birthday on January 17,” she wrote. Though they never met, “by the 1960s, their voices in support of peace and justice began to merge. Both men had been shaken from their respective sanctuaries of literary and athletic attainment by the harsh realities of a nation deeply divided by war, race and social inequality,” expressed by Ali’s refusal to participate in the war in Vietnam, a position ultimately upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Both men likewise came to respect and celebrate religious diversity and inter-faith cooperation, vividly illustrated after Ali’s death on June 3, 2016, when “at his direction his memorial service included an imam and an Islamic scholar, two Baptist ministers, two Jewish rabbis, a Roman Catholic priest, a Native American tribal chief and faith leader, and a Buddhist monk.” Ms. Ali presented these two very different individuals as models for contemporary Americans at a critical time for their nation and for the world. “As America stands divided once again in the aftermath of a polarizing election, we would do well to follow the example of Thomas Merton and Muhammad Ali in their approach to diversity, pluralism and faith. Regardless of our differences, we share a common humanity, something that will always bind us to each other. We must find ways to reconnect to each other by developing empathy and by giving back. In truth, America has always faced division in varying degrees. The test for America has always been how she manages her division, how she finds and clings to a common purpose, and how she spins the tapestry of her diversity.” The full text of the article can be accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/17/opinion/what-thomas-merton-and-muhammad-ali-had-in-common.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&_r=1.

New Voting Procedures Instituted

In an effort to broaden participation in biennial elections for its Board of Directors, the International Thomas Merton Society has developed revised procedures for voting for candidates in 2017. Members may choose to vote either by mailing in paper ballots, as in the past, or by casting their ballots electronically. The default option for those members whose valid email addresses are on file at the Bellarmine University Thomas Merton Center will be to vote on-line; paper ballots will be sent to those members whose email addresses are not available. Members will be able to select the alternative method of voting by contacting the Merton Center and indicating their preference. Instructions for voting will be sent to all members, along with biographical information for each candidate, by the beginning of April. Ballots must be submitted by May 15. The slate of twelve candidates selected by the ITMS Nominations Committee to run for the six seats on the Board includes: Michael Brennan, Edward Kaplan, Deborah Kehoe, Alan Kolp, Sarah Kothe, Michael N. McGregor, Patrick F. O'Connell, William Paulsell, Theresa Sandok, Ryan Scruggs, Marilyn Sunderman and Judith Valente.

Bylaws Change Proposed

At its June 2016 meeting, the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society approved a proposal presented by the Nominations Committee to divide the responsibilities of the ITMS Treasurer into two positions: a Treasurer and an Accounts Manager. After further discussion, the Board voted to submit to the membership two pertinent amendments to the ITMS bylaws: a specification in the bylaws (Article 6, Section 4, Item e) that the Treasurer shall "meet all requirements for maintaining access to Society accounts"; and a specification that the Accounts Manager cannot serve simultaneously as the Treasurer. A vote on these amendments will be taken at the ITMS Town Meeting on Saturday, June 17 at the ITMS Fifteenth General Meeting at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY.

Herbert W. Mason (1933-2017)

Herbert W. Mason, retired professor of History and Religious Thought at Boston University and friend and correspondent of Thomas Merton, died on January 1, 2017 in Newbury, MA. He received bachelor's,

master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University and became a specialist in Arabic and Islamic studies, as well as classical Mediterranean and Mesopotamian and early Celtic traditions of mythology and literature. A disciple and friend of Louis Massignon, the great French Catholic scholar of Islam (1883-1962), he translated many of Massignon's books into English, including his most influential work, *The Passion of Al-Hallaj*, and was the longtime president of the Association des Amis Louis Massignon. His best-known work is *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative*, a translation of the early Mesopotamian epic poem that was nominated for the National Book Award in 1971. He was also author of *Reflections on the Middle East Crisis* (1970), *Two Statesmen of Medieval Islam* (1971), *The Death of al-Hallaj: A Dramatic Narrative* (1979) and *Moments in Passage: A Memoir* (1979), as well as the novels *Summer Light* (1980) and *Where the Rivers Meet* (1988) and the novella *Gilpin's Point* (1980). He initially contacted Thomas Merton in June 1959 after reading his pamphlet *Prometheus: A Meditation*, given to him by Merton's friend Jean Daniélou, SJ, and was instrumental in putting Merton and Massignon in touch with one another, facilitating an important relationship for both men. He visited Merton at the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1966. He was a plenary presenter, in dialogue with Merton scholar Sidney Griffith, at the ITMS Eleventh General Meeting at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY in 2009. Merton's letters to Mason are included in *Witness to Freedom*, the fifth volume of Merton's letters. He is survived by his wife, Jeanine Young-Mason, his children Cathleen Mason, Paul Mason, Sarah Mason and their families, his step-sons Scott Angell, Gregg Angell and Glenn Angell and their families, and his sister, Sarah Nelson and her family. A funeral Mass was celebrated at Immaculate Conception Church, Newburyport, MA on January 6, 2017, followed by burial at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, where a public memorial service is scheduled to be held on April 22, 2017.

Kathleen M. Archer (1936-2017)

Kathleen Archer, a founding member of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland and a member of the International Thomas Merton Society for more than twenty years, died at her home on January 20, 2017. She was born on

March 28, 1936 and grew up in Nottingham, UK before taking a degree in French at Westfield College, University of London. During her student years she converted to Roman Catholicism, which remained central to her life, although she was often critical of the Church as an institution. Her marriage took her to Kenya, where her three children were born, and then to Uganda. When her marriage ended, she returned to England and settled in Southampton. She was an active participant in her local church and community where her presence was much valued. Her article "Bearing Witness to the Light: A Personal Reflection on the Eleventh Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society in Rochester, New York, 11-14 June 2009," was published in the Advent 2009 issue of *The Merton Journal*, the British Merton Society publication; it was followed a year later by an article in the same journal entitled "Contemplation as Alternative Consciousness," reflections on a retreat day led by Richard Rohr, OFM at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Oxford in August 2010. She is survived by her children Mathew, Alison and James and her granddaughter Lily. Her funeral took place on February 17 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Southampton.

TMS Conference Call for Papers

The Twelfth General Meeting and Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be held April 6-8, 2018 at Oakham School, Rutland, UK. The theme will be "Facing the Life-and-Death Issues," taken from Merton's August 1961 letter to Dorothy Day: "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." Proposals are invited for papers and workshops on the conference theme, considered in the light of Merton's life, work and witness. The proposal form for downloading and submission, along with further information, is found on the society's website: www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk. Completed proposal forms are due by Saturday, July 22, 2017.

Back Issues of *Merton Seasonal* Available

For readers interested in obtaining copies of earlier

issues of *The Merton Seasonal*, information listing available issues and providing details about ordering them can be found on the ITMS web site at: <http://merton.org/ITMS/Seasonal/seasonalavailable.aspx>. The full texts of articles in early issues of the *Seasonal* are gradually being made available on the ITMS web site with all articles (excluding poetry and book reviews) for volumes 15-21 (1990-1996) inclusive now available: <http://merton.org/ITMS/Seasonal/seasonalarchive.aspx>.

On-line Merton Course Offered

A course entitled "Practicing Spirituality with Thomas Merton," created by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, founders and co-directors of the Spirituality and Practice multi-faith and inter-spiritual website, is available on-demand, with flexible starting dates and frequency of contact. The course consists of forty email sessions, each containing a brief quotation from Merton's writings and a practice suggested by this teaching. The course is approved for 6 continuing education credit-hours for chaplains. Cost is \$49.95. For further information, see: <http://www.spirituality-andpractice.com/ecourses/course/view/19>.

ITMS Authors

ITMS member Robert Hudson has recently published two books: *Kiss the Earth When You Pray: The Father Zosima Poems – Forty-Two Meditations and a Prayer* (Apocryphile Press, 2016), and *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, 4th Edition (Zondervan, 2016). Carolyn McCready writes of the latter book: "*The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* is a clear, targeted, and insightful stylebook that answers the rubber-meets-the-road questions unique to Christian writers, editors, and publishers. The A-to-Z format is easy to access, and writers and editors will find the breezy tone helpful with even the most challenging editorial decisions."

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Michael Plekon has recently coedited a volume entitled *The Church Has Left the Building: Faith, Parish, and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century*, published by Cascade Books, an imprint of Wipf and Stock (paperback: \$21.00). Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, writes of this book: "Michael Plekon has in recent years brought to life a wide variety of extraordinary Christian figures, past

and present, and thought through their witness in the light of his richly nuanced understanding of Orthodox theology and tradition. This new book is a sort of wake-up call to all who worry about the future of institutional Christianity: the Church as gift and mystery is a good deal more resilient than the various awkward structures in which it embodies itself, and we need a voice like Plekon's to remind us of this and to recall us to hopefulness."

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Mary Louise (Bunny) Stewart has recently published *The Church as a Volunteer Organization: Common Sense Approaches to Creating Structure* (Hutch Publishing, 2016; \$12CAN). Rev. Lucy Reid writes of the book: "With her subject matter clearly outlined and broken down, and a playful, humorous approach to her material, Stewart informs without overwhelming, analyzes without complicating, and suggests methodologies that are based on common sense and practicality."

Awards for ITMS Authors

Included among the fifty Best Spiritual Books of 2016 by Spirituality and Practice, a multi-faith and inter-spiritual website devoted to resources for spiritual journeys, are two books by members of the International Thomas Merton Society: *Hidden in God: Discovering the Desert Vision of Charles de Foucauld* by Bonnie Thurston and *Uncommon Prayer: Prayer in Everyday Experience* by Michael Plekon.

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At the Fourth Annual Illumination Book Awards, sponsored by the Jenkins Group to celebrate and recognize exemplary books produced by Christian publishing and bookselling, *The Root of War Is Fear: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers* by Jim Forest (Orbis, 2016) was awarded a gold medal.

Merton Blog Series

Throughout the 2016-2017 academic year, Dr. Michael Jenkins, President of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, has been writing a series of blogs on Thomas Merton. Topics thus far have included: "Thomas Merton's 'Plowed Soul'" (Sept. 26, 2016); "Thomas Merton: The Patron Saint of Seekers" (Oct. 7); "Thomas Merton and the False Self" (Oct. 21); "Thomas Merton's Restless Heart" (Nov. 4); "Thomas Merton as 'Exact Contemporary'" (Nov. 18); "Thomas

Merton and the Cure for 'Rhinoceritis'" (Dec. 2); "Merton and the Power of Love" (Jan. 20, 2017); "Thomas Merton, Karl Barth, and Salvation by Grace" (Feb. 3); "Merton and Interfaith Communication" (Feb. 17). They can be accessed at <http://www.lpts.edu/about/our-leadership/president/thinking-out-loud>.

Merton Happenings

On July 20, Jenny Ratigan gave a presentation entitled "Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton: An Introduction" to the Sisters of the Holy Child from Ghana and Nigeria at Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA.

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On October 5, Mario Zaninelli gave a presentation entitled "The Prophetic Witness of Thomas Merton on War" as part of a program entitled "The Journey of Peace – The Lie of War" at the Georgio LaPira Center in Florence, Italy, sponsored by the Focolare Movement in connection with the 2016 Perugia-Assisi peace march.

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On October 11, Jenny Ratigan directed a retreat for the Stephen Ministry at Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA entitled: "The Journey of the Good Samaritan: Thomas Merton and the Way of Mercy."

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On October 13, James Cronin gave a presentation at the annual meeting of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Los Angeles, CA entitled: "Lost in Translation: Employing Thomas Merton's Taoist Writing to Translate Multiple Intelligences Theory to Chinese Graduate Teachers."

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On November 15, the thirty-ninth annual Thomas Merton Lecture was held in the Low Library Rotunda, Columbia University, New York City, sponsored by the Hugh J. and Catherine R. Kelly Endowment and Columbia Catholic Ministry. The presentation, entitled "Mercy and Productive Solitude," was given by Iranian-American scholar, social scientist and urban planner Kian Tajbakhsh, Visiting Professor of Urban Planning, released from detention in Iran on January 16, 2016 after years of imprisonment on charges of undermining Iranian state security.

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On November 20, Christopher Pramuk gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton: Mystic, Monk and Spiritual Master" at Pee Wee's Place, Crescent Spring,

KY, sponsored by Meeting at the Well Education Committee for Adult Faith Formation and the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati Anawim Community.

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On January 14, 2017, Esther de Waal led “A Quiet Day with Thomas Merton” at St. Katherine’s House in London.

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On January 20-21, a conference entitled “The Contemplative as Writer: Thomas Merton” took place at Auburn University, Auburn, AL, sponsored by the Auburn Philosophy and Religion Workshop. Presentations included: Lawrence S. Cunningham: “Contemplation and the Text: The Spiritual Writings of Thomas Merton”; Kelly Dean Jolley: “Under a Doom-shaped Sky, or Hats Off to the Human Condition (A Discussion of Merton’s *Cables to the Ace*)”; Christopher Pramuk: “Contemplation and the Suffering Earth: Merton, Pope Francis and the Next Generation”; Patrick F. O’Connell: “Trappists, Working – Trappists, Praying: Thomas Merton’s Earliest Monastic Poetry”; Bonnie Thurston: “Murdering Judas: Reconciling the Contemplative and the Poet.”

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On January 21, Vanessa Hurst gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton & Relationship: A Constellation of Connections” at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph, OH.

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On February 4, Vanessa Hurst gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton & Relationship: A Constellation of Connections” for the Sisters of St. Benedict, Beech Grove, IN.

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On February 11, Paul M. Pearson gave a presentation to Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis entitled “Thomas Merton: Poet, Monk, Prophet” at St. Christopher’s Catholic Church, Indianapolis, IN.

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On February 16-19, Michael Fish, OSBCam led a retreat entitled “Merton’s Mirror” at the Santa Sabina Center, San Rafael, CA.

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On February 20, Laurie Cassidy gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton’s Wisdom on the Dis-ease of Whiteness,” the Eleventh Annual Thomas Merton

Black History Month Lecture, at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY.

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On March 6-10, the Spring 2017 Road Scholar “Week with Thomas Merton” Program was held at the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY. The Fall 2017 program is scheduled for October 22-27. For further details contact Linda Bailey at: lbailey@bellarmine.edu or 502-272-8161.

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On March 10-12, Sharon Grant led a retreat entitled “Letting Go – Saying Yes When Life Says No” at Bethany Spring Retreat Center in New Haven, KY.

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On March 10-12, a weekend conference on Thomas Merton was held at the Abbey of Koningshoeven, Tilburg, the Netherlands. Presenters include: Willy Eurlings, Jim and Nancy Forest, Sylvia Grevel, Elisabeth Hense, Fred van Iersel and Abbot Bernardus Peeters.

Upcoming Events

On March 30-April 2, 2017, the College English Association annual convention, to be held at the Marriott Resort & Spa in Hilton Head, SC, will feature seven presenters in two panels focused on Thomas Merton, both on Saturday, April 1. The first session, entitled “Thomas Merton’s Paradox of Solitude,” will be chaired by Monica Weis, SSJ, and includes the following presentations: Matthew Boedy: “The Monk as Writer: Not an Island, but a Human”; Esther Nafziger: “Neither Isolation nor Fusion: Hierarchy, Solitude and Society in Thomas Merton’s Theology”; and Bernadette McNary-Zak: “Eremitic Solitude as Island of Resistance.” The second session, entitled “The Monk as Writer” and chaired by Maryann DiEdwardo, includes: Christine M. Bochen: “Thomas Merton’s Cuban Interlude”; Monica Weis, “The Magic of an Island Pilgrimage: Merton in Cuba”; Paul M. Pearson: “Strange Islands: Contemplation in a World of Violence”; and Deborah Kehoe: “Thomas Merton’s Poetic Island Voyages.” The International Thomas Merton Society is an affiliated society of the College English Association.

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On March 31, Patrick F. O’Connell will give a presentation entitled “Poetry as a Creative Response to Social Issues: Thomas Merton’s ‘A Picture of Lee Ying’ and ‘Paper Cranes’” at the Eastern Regional

Meeting of the Conference on Christianity and Literature at Grove City College, Grove City, PA.

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On April 1, a Symposium on Thomas Merton and Meister Eckhart entitled “Dos Almas Embebidas en Gozar de Dios” (“Two Souls Immersed in the Enjoyment of God”) will be held at the Casa d’Espiritualitat Sant Felip Neri in Barcelona, Spain, sponsored by the Fundacio Valors Humans. Sonia Petisco Martinez will give a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton y la Experiencia Poética del Amor” (“Thomas Merton and the Poetic Experience of Love”), based on her new bilingual anthology of Merton’s poetry. She will later be joined by Fernando Beltrán Llavador and Berta Meneses in a roundtable discussion of “Merton y Eckhart en Diálogo” (“Merton and Eckhart in Dialogue”).

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On April 7-9, Sharon Grant will lead a retreat entitled “Exploring Our Spirituality through Prayer” 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 Tibetan Wisdom.” On June 16-18, Sharon Grant will lead a women’s retreat with the theme: “Women – Living from Our Souls: Seven Steps of Women’s Spirituality.” On September 15-17, Sharon Grant will lead a retreat entitled “Thomas Merton and Mary Oliver – Poets of the Sacred.” On October 13-15, Sharon Grant will facilitate a “Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton” retreat. For further information on any of these programs see the Bethany Spring website: www.bethanyspring.org; or email: rick@bethanyspring.org; phone: 502-507-8576.

Chapter and Affiliate News

On October 16, the Chicago ITMS Chapter featured a presentation by Tony Sorgi entitled “Awakening Sacred Heart: Merton’s Quest to Revive Catholic Contemplation.” At its November 20 meeting, Attorney Steve Denny spoke to the chapter on “A Protestant’s View of the Merton Prayer.” On January 15, 2017, the group heard a talk by Dr. Jerry Hiller entitled “Protect Us from All Anxiety – In a Crazy World.” On February 19, Tony Sorgi discussed “Awakening Sacred Heart: The Gift of Attention.” The March 19 meeting of the chapter, cosponsored by the Domini-

can University Siena Center and held at the Priory Auditorium on the Dominican University campus, will feature a presentation entitled “Is the Future of American Religion Already in the Past?” by former *Newsweek* religion editor Kenneth Woodward, introduced by Chicago chapter member and radio and television journalist Judith Valente. For further information contact chapter coordinator Mike Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com or 773-447-3989.

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On October 18, the Cleveland ITMS Chapter heard a presentation by chapter member Rev. Thomas A. Snyder on “Merton and Metaphor.” On December 12, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, the chapter commemorated the anniversary of Thomas Merton’s death with an evening of chant, song, poetry, silent reflection and intercessory prayer, that also honored the four American churchwomen killed in El Salvador in December 1980, including Dorothy Kazel of the Cleveland Ursuline community, with a viewing of the film *Roses in December*, the story of Cleveland lay missionary Jean Donovan, who was also one of the murdered churchwomen. On January 31, the chapter viewed a video presentation entitled “Celebrating a Life and a Legacy: Merton, a Monk for Others,” from the 2015 Festival of Faiths in Louisville, KY, featuring presentations by Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Christopher Pramuk, Morgan Atkinson and Brother Paul Quenon, OCSO. On March 21, Tim Musser will lead a discussion on Jim Forest’s new book *The Root of War Is Fear: Thomas Merton’s Advice to Peacemakers*. For further information contact chapter coordinator Sr. Donna Kristoff, OSU at 440-449-1200, ext. 314; dkristoff@ursulinesisters.org.

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On November 27, the Northern California ITMS Chapter discussed Merton’s *Thoughts in Solitude*. At its January 29 meeting the group discussed essays from *Love and Living*. The chapter will hold its April 9 meeting at the Cistercian monastery in Vina, CA. For further information contact John Berger: 916-482-6976.

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On January 28, the ITMS New York City Chapter hosted “A Tribute to Daniel Berrigan, SJ, and His Relationship to Thomas Merton” with peace advo-

cates and authors, Rev. John Dear and Gordon Oyer, at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. On April 22, the chapter will sponsor a presentation by Paul M. Pearson entitled “Redeeming the Rhinoceros: Thomas Merton’s Monastic Option” at Corpus Christi. For further information visit the chapter website at: <http://www.thomasmertonnyc.org>, or contact: info@thomasmertonnyc.org.

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On March 18-19, The Thomas Merton Society Interfaith Chapter of Southern Delaware will host Christopher Pramuk, who will give a presentation entitled “Solitude and Social Engagement: Lessons from Music & Merton” at Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware in Lewes. On the following day, he will speak on “Racial Justice and the Imagination: Between What Is and What Is Possible” at St. Edmond Catholic Church in Rehoboth Beach, DE. For more information, contact George Beckerman at george.beckerman@gmail.com.

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On October 8, the Discussion Group of the Washington, DC ITMS Chapter discussed “The Wind Blows Where It Pleases,” chapter 14 of Thomas Merton’s *No Man Is an Island*. At its November 12 and December 10 meetings, the group discussed chapters 15 and 16, “The Inward Solitude” and “Silence,” of the same book. The January 2017 meeting was cancelled because of bad weather, but at the February 11 meeting the group discussed the Prologue and the first chapter, “Rain and the Rhinoceros,” of Merton’s *Raids on the Unspeakable*. The discussion group meets monthly at the St. Anselm’s Abbey Guest Library in Washington. For further information, contact: tmsociety@fastmail.fm.

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On December 10, members of the Sociedade dos Amigos Fraternos de Thomas Merton (SAFTM), the Brazilian ITMS affiliate, gathered at the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Petropolis, home of Merton’s correspondent and translator, the late Sr. M. Emmanuel de Souza e Silva, OSB, for a Mass celebrated by Dom Bernardo Bonowitz, Abbot of the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of the New World. Mass was also celebrated the same day by Dom Justino de Almeida Bueno, OSB, at the Monastery of Nossa Senhora das Gracias, in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, organized

by the local reading group and followed by a lecture on “Merton and Mystical Life” by Sibelius Cefas Pereira; and by Father Ademar Bortoletto at the Diocesan Seminary, in Itapetinga, Sao Paulo, followed by a private exhibition and discussion of the new Morgan Atkinson film *The Many Storeys and Last Days of Thomas Merton*. On the following day, Dom Mathias Tolentino Braga, Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Benedict in Sao Paulo, offered Mass to conclude the celebration season, commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Merton’s arrival at the Abbey of Gethsemani, the forty-eighth anniversary of his death, and the twentieth anniversary of the founding of SAFTM. Presently there are twelve reading groups, with one more group currently in formation, in nine states, beginning with the initial group in Sao Paulo in March 2013. Group members gather once a month to share comments, insights and thoughts after reading a text by Thomas Merton and to share fruits of a contemplative spiritual life. For further information contact SAFTM coordinator Fernando Paizer: merton.br@gmail.com; see the society’s website: www.merton.org.br; or visit the society’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/226528897715831/?fref=ts>.

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On March 10, Michael Higgins gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton and John Moriarty: Epic Visionaries of Human Unity” at the Canadian Memorial Centre for Peace in Vancouver, co-sponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Canada and Canadian Memorial United Church & Centre for Peace. On the following day, he directed a retreat on the same topic at the same location. For more information, contact Susan Cowan, Community Relations Director, at tmsc@telus.net or 604-988-8835; website: www.merton.ca.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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