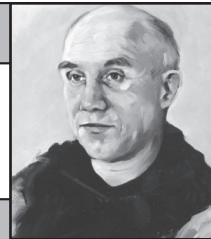


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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**Patrick Hart, OCSO (1925-2019)**

Brother Patrick Hart, Thomas Merton's last secretary and a principal founder of the International Thomas Merton Society, died February 22, 2019 at the age of 93 at the Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, KY, the Cistercian monastic community he had joined in June 1951. Born June 14, 1925 in Green Bay, WI, in 1947 he became a brother in the Congregation of the Holy Cross at the University of Notre Dame, from which he eventually received a bachelor's degree in 1966. Having read Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* during his formation period at Notre Dame, after four years of religious life there he transferred to the Cistercians at Gethsemani, initially as a choir novice and then as a brother. He was given the name Simon, returning to his baptismal name when that option became available in the mid-1960s. He made profession of solemn vows in 1957. After spending a year as part of the new Trappist foundation of New Clairvaux in Vina, CA, he returned to Gethsemani in 1957 to become secretary to Abbot James Fox, a position he held until 1966, when he moved to Rome to study and work at Monte Cistello, the headquarters of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance. During this time he did extensive studies of Celtic monastic spirituality, publishing three articles and a number of book reviews on this topic. In 1968 he returned to Gethsemani to serve as secretary to Thomas Merton, at Merton's own request, with particular responsibilities to oversee Merton's correspondence and publications during the period leading up to and during his Asian journey, which ended in his death on December 10, 1968.

Br. Patrick then served as secretary for successive Gethsemani abbots Flavian Burns, Timothy Kelly, Damian Thompson and Elias Dietz, while simultaneously becoming the abbey's representative and principal spokesperson on Merton matters. He also worked as

founding editor of *Monastic Exchange*, a periodical for the Trappist communities in the United States, and the first American editor of *Cistercian Studies* (now *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*) from 1981 through 1991; after returning briefly as interim coeditor in 2002, he then became the journal's book review editor from 2003 to 2010. He was also the founding editor of the Monastic Wisdom series of volumes on monastic spirituality issued by Cistercian Publications, serving in that capacity from 2004 through 2010, and edited the collection of essays *A Monastic Vision for the Twenty-First Century: Where Do We Go from Here?* (2006) for the series.

Br. Patrick was editor or coeditor of numerous posthumous books by Thomas Merton, beginning with *The Asian Journal* (1973), and including *The Monastic Journey* (1977), *Love and Living* (1979), *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton* (1981), *The School of Charity: Letters on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, the third volume of Merton's collected letters (1990), *Survival or Prophecy? The Letters of Thomas Merton and Jean Leclercq* (2002) and *Run to the Mountain: The Story of a Vocation. Journals, vol. 1: 1939-1941* (1995) and *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey. Journals, vol. 7: 1967-1968* (1998), the first and final volumes of the edition of Merton's complete journals, for which he served as general editor, as well as the one-volume compendium *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals* (1999); his final edition of material by Merton was *In the Valley of Wormwood: Cistercian Blessed and Saints of the Golden Age* (2013). He also edited three collections of essays on Merton: *Thomas Merton/Monk: A Monastic Tribute* (1974; enlarged edition 1983), which received the 1974 Catholic Press Association award for outstanding spirituality volume, along with *The Message of Thomas Merton* (1981) and *The Legacy of Thomas Merton* (1986). He also published the brief memoir *Thomas Merton: First*

and *Last Memories* (1986) as well as *Patmos Journal: In Search of Thomas Merton with Robert Lax* (1996) and *Israel Journal: A Trappist Pilgrim in the Holy Land* (2000). In addition he was the author of dozens of articles on Merton along with numerous Prefaces, Introductions and Afterwords to various Merton-related works.

Along with his friends Robert Daggy and Msgr. William Shannon, Br. Patrick was one of the principal figures in the foundation of the International Thomas Merton Society in May 1987, and served on its initial Board of Directors from 1989 through 1993. He coordinated the visit to the Abbey of Gethsemani at the first ITMS General Meeting in May 1989 and was a featured speaker at the panel of Merton friends at the ITMS Second General Meeting in 1991, at the roundtable discussion on the editing of Merton's letters at the ITMS Fourth General Meeting in 1995 and at similar programs on the editing of the Merton journals at the ITMS Fifth General Meeting in 1997 and Sixth General Meeting in 1999. He received the ITMS "Louie" award at the 1999 conference for his work as general editor of the journals. He was a founder and early coeditor of *The Merton Annual* (1988-2002), for which he introduced and edited a number of previously unpublished shorter Merton works. He also served as interim editor of *The Merton Seasonal* in 1996 during the final illness of longtime *Seasonal* editor Robert Daggy.

Br. Patrick's funeral was celebrated at the Abbey of Gethsemani on February 28, 2019, followed by burial in the abbey cemetery. In the memorial notice of his death his community expressed its appreciation of his contribution to life at Gethsemani during his 68 years of religious life there in the following words: "Surely one of the reasons why Br. Patrick served with such distinction under such a variety of abbots was his gentle and flexible nature. He never had a bad word to say about anyone. He was universally kind and generous with his attention and time. Our community is surely the poorer for his passing, but we now have another intercessor in heaven." The same tribute could be made by those who encountered him personally through his hospitality to visitors at Gethsemani and through his contributions to the field of Merton studies and to the International Thomas Merton Society. The Summer 2019 *Merton Seasonal* will be a memorial issue dedicated to Br. Patrick's life and work.

Merton Prayer at Congressional Service

The multi-faith, bipartisan prayer service held at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Washington, DC for members of the US Senate and House of Representatives on January 3, 2019, preceding the formal swearing of the 116th Congress later that day, included a passage from a prayer by Thomas Merton along with selections from the Book of Genesis, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Psalms, the New Testament and an Islamic invocation. The prayer, an excerpt from Merton's closing words at the Temple of Understanding Conference in Calcutta on October 26, 1968, was read by Rep. Rodney Davis, Republican congressman from the Thirteenth District of Illinois who was beginning his fourth term in Congress. The text is a prayer recognizing and celebrating a unity transcending all differences: "O God, we are one with You. You have made us one with You. You have taught us that if we are open to one another, You dwell in us. Help us to preserve this openness and to fight for it with all our hearts. Help us to realize that there can be no understanding where there is mutual rejection. Oh God, in accepting one another wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept You, and we thank You, and we adore You, and we love You with our whole being, because our being is in Your being, our spirit is rooted in Your spirit. Fill us then with love, and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, united in this one spirit which makes You present in the world, and which makes You witness to the ultimate reality that is love. Love has overcome. Love is victorious" (*Asian Journal* 318-19).

Merton Anniversary Commemorated

On December 10, 2018, the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton was commemorated at a memorial Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville, KY. In his homily, Fr. Lawrence Morey of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Merton's home for the last 27 years of his life, focused on Merton's role in his own monastic community and in the wider religious and spiritual community Merton nurtured through his published writings and correspondence. He likened the experience of the burial of monk in which the community participates to the gospel story of the paralyzed man lowered through the roof of a crowded house in order to reach Jesus. In both instances the support of the

community is needed to encounter Christ. Though Merton's relationship with his monastic brothers at Gethsemani was complex, Fr. Morey noted, he recognized the importance of community life and "the community provided him with the opportunity to write, gave him a solid perspective from which to see the world and eventually constructed his hermitage for him." Merton in turn recognized and nurtured community in the wider world, most memorably expressed in "one of Merton's most famous pieces," the Fourth and Walnut epiphany in downtown Louisville, not far from the cathedral, where "he described seeing ordinary people going about their business on an ordinary day as 'walking around shining like the sun.' He said, 'It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation.' He saw himself and others as they truly were, fellow members of a race in which 'God himself became incarnate.'" Merton's gift to others, according to Fr. Morey, was that he "helped many people to see their own true face"; he was able "to show them who they truly are. To show them the face of Christ in themselves and others." Those who have been touched by Merton's life and writings are drawn together, Fr. Morey concluded: "He makes people seek others out to form various kinds of communities. We've only to look around this very church to see this," in the wide variety of people gathered to remember Merton and his legacy a half-century after his death. Fr. Morey's sermon is available in its entirety at: <http://www.merton.org/50th/Lawrence-Morey-OCSCO-12-10-18.pdf>.

Anniversary Message from Dalai Lama

As part of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, the Drepung Gomang Center for Engaging Compassion, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation center in Louisville, KY, and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, cosponsored the construction of a sacred Tibetan sand mandala by the monks of Drepung Gomang monastery at the Merton Center on December 3-6, with a closing ceremony held on December 10, the date of Merton's death. In connection with this event, on October 29 the Dalai Lama sent a message recalling his own encounters with Merton a half-century before. The message reads:

"I am happy to know that Drepung Gomang Center for Engaging Compassion (DGCEC) in Louisville is

to hold an event commemorating the unforgettable meetings that took place between my spiritual brother Thomas Merton and me fifty years ago in Dharamsala. Merton and I did not know each other very long, but in his large-hearted faith and burning desire to know, I felt the inspiration of a kindred spirit. Not only in his conversations with people like me, but also in his writings he contributed immensely to a closer understanding between the Christian and Buddhist monastic traditions. Although he is no longer physically with us, his spirit, his hope and determination live on. I remember vividly the three days during which he visited me in 1968. We sat together for 2-3 hours on each occasion, drinking tea and holding serious discussions about Christianity and Buddhism, as well as the monastic way of life. I remember his big, heavy boots, his strong leather belt and that the top of his head was shiny – but above all I remember how his face was radiant. He was a wonderful person, a strong bridge between the Buddhist and Christian traditions, and his untimely death was a great loss. As a result of our discussions I came to understand how he would delve into other faith traditions, until he could, as it were, taste the flavor of the teachings that other traditions represent. I took real inspiration from his engagement with Buddhism because I recognized the great courage it reflected for him to explore traditions beyond his own. He was one of the first persons I met who propounded harmony amongst the followers of the world's great religions, based on a deep understanding of each other's profound spiritual teachings. As a monk, like me, he led a life dedicated to celibacy and service to others. But in his own example he demonstrated that it may be possible for someone to remain perfectly faithful to a Christian and Western monastic commitment and yet to learn in depth from, say, a Buddhist discipline and experience. I am convinced that the same is true from the Buddhist side too. Indeed, I have come to think that the essence of genuine interreligious dialogue must be founded on such a conviction. A key point in our discussions was how central compassion is to the message of both Christianity and Buddhism. In my readings of the New Testament, I find myself inspired by Jesus' acts of compassion. His miracle of the loaves and fishes, his healing and his teaching are all motivated by a desire to relieve suffering. It is my hope that participants in the

forthcoming commemorative event in Louisville may find in it inspiration and understanding of compassion that contributes to their own inner peace. And I pray that through that inner peace they too will become better human beings helping to create a happier, more peaceful world.”

ITMS Vision and Mission Statements

At its June 2017 meeting, the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society decided to embark on a process of strategic planning. President Mark Meade formed a committee led by Vice President David Golemboski, which engaged a facilitator, Sharon Bidwell, for a half-day session on vision held during the June 2018 board meeting. One of the outcomes of that process was a decision to draft vision and mission statements to guide the work of the Society and to give a brief explanation of the aims of the Society for visitors to the ITMS website and social media platforms. After deliberation by the Strategic Planning Committee, with feedback from the ITMS board, the following statements have been formulated:

- Vision: To encounter the world, our neighbors and ourselves in the spirit of Thomas Merton.
- Mission: To encourage exploration of Thomas Merton's life and thought to build knowledge, cultivate community, foster contemplative awareness, encourage interfaith encounters and inspire just living.

ITMS President Mark Meade invites ITMS members to contact him with any comments or feedback on these proposed formulations at mmeade@bellarmine.edu. After incorporating any further revisions, the statements will be presented at the Town Hall assembly during the June 2019 ITMS General Meeting at Santa Clara University.

ITMS Board Elections

Elections for the International Thomas Merton Society Board of Directors will take place in the coming weeks by both online and paper voting. The members of the Nominations Committee for the 2019 elections are David Golemboski, chair, Robert Grip and Monica Weis, SSJ.

Twelve candidates have been nominated for the six positions on the board. Three of the nominees are current board members: Deborah Kehoe, Oxford, MS; Theresa H. Sandok, OSM, Greenfield, WI and Judith Valente, Normal, IL. Other nominees include:

Jacqueline Chew, Berkeley, CA; Daniel P. Horan, OFM, Chicago, IL; Alan Kolp, Cleveland, OH; Sarah Kothe, New York, NY; Gray Matthews, Memphis, TN; Emma McDonald, New Haven, CT; Paul Pynkoski, Toronto, ON; Leia Tijou, New York, NY; and Julianne Wallace, Alvernia, PA. Complete biographical profiles of each of the nominees can be found at <http://merton.org/ITMS/ballot> and will be included in the voting information to be sent to each ITMS member.

Members whose email addresses are on file will receive an invitation to vote electronically no later than April 1. Members with no available email address will be sent a paper ballot. Any ITMS members who would prefer to vote by mail may request a paper ballot by contacting ITMS president Mark Meade prior to April 29 by email at mmeade@bellarmine.edu or by calling 502-272-8099.

Merton Quoted on CNN

On November 1, 2018, CNN commentator Chris Cuomo quoted and endorsed an extensive passage from Thomas Merton's essay "Christianity and Totalitarianism" on his nightly program "Cuomo Prime Time" as an appropriate response to the current American political situation. The passage, which first appeared on social media in the preceding days, reads as follows: "A mass-movement readily exploits the discontent and frustration of large segments of the population which for some reason or other cannot face the responsibility of being persons and standing on their own feet. But give these persons a movement to join, a cause to defend, and they will go to any extreme, stop at no crime, intoxicated as they are by the slogans that give them a pseudo-religious sense of transcending their own limitations. The member of the mass-movement, afraid of his own isolation and his own weakness as an individual, cannot face the task of discovering within himself the spiritual power and integrity which can be called forth only by love. Instead of this, he seeks a movement that will protect his weakness with a wall of anonymity and justify his acts by the sanction of collective glory and power. All the better if this is done out of hatred, for hatred is always easier and less subtle than love. It does not have to respect reality, as love does. It does not have to take account of individual cases. Its solutions are simple and easy. It makes its decisions by a simple glance at a face, a colored skin, a uniform. It identifies the enemy

by an accent, an unfamiliar turn of speech, an appeal to concepts that are difficult to understand. And then fanaticism knows what to do. Here is something unfamiliar. This is not ‘ours.’ This must be brought into line – or destroyed. Here is the great temptation of the modern age, this universal infection of fanaticism, this plague of intolerance, prejudice and hate which flows from the crippled nature of man who is afraid of love and does not dare to be a person. It is against this temptation most of all that the Christian must labor with inexhaustible patience and love, in silence, perhaps in repeated failure, seeking tirelessly to restore, wherever he can, and first of all in himself, the capacity of love and understanding which makes man the living image of God” (*Disputed Questions* 133-34). Cuomo credited his father, former New York governor Mario Cuomo, with first introducing him to Merton’s work many years earlier. The full text of Cuomo’s commentary is available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbKJdIP9dz8.

Award Winner Cites Merton

In his acceptance speech at the Independent Spirit Award ceremony on February 23, 2019 as Best Male Lead for his performance in the film *First Reformed*, Ethan Hawke included a quotation from Thomas Merton, whose work was mentioned in the film itself and whom Hawke had previously cited as an important influence on his own life. The Merton text was read by Hawke’s co-star, Amanda Seyfried, at the Santa Monica, California ceremony, which the actor was unable to attend in person. The passage comes from a November 17, 1962 letter from Merton to Nicaraguan poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal, a former novice at the Abbey of Gethsemani, abridged by Hawke as follows: “As to politics and the world situation, a little news comes through [our monastery] sometimes and then long periods of silence. . . . Yet I wonder if I really know less than those who get the papers. [It’s obvious] that the world is full of great criminals with enormous power, and they are in a death struggle with each other. . . . What can come of it? Surely not peace. . . . [We] must pray and be joyful and simple because we do not after all understand most of it. . . . But let us avoid false optimism, and approved gestures. And seek truth.” (The full text can be found in *The Courage for Truth* 138). A video of Amanda Seyfried reading Hawke’s statement is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Tc—siazLw>.

John P. Collins (1931-2019)

John P. Collins, longtime member of the International Thomas Merton Society, frequent presenter at Merton conferences and “Louie” award winner, died on January 31, 2019 (Thomas Merton’s birthday) at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Shrewsbury, MA, after a brief illness. He was born to John H. and Agnes (Buckley) Collins on January 21, 1931 and grew up in Salisbury, MD and Martinsville, VA. After graduating from St. John’s Prep in 1949, he attended the University of Notre Dame, then enlisted in the military and served with the 8th Army during the Korean War. His book on this experience, *A Korean War Memoir*, was published in 2015. He subsequently attended Boston University and graduated from Providence College in 1957, then went on to receive a master’s degree in history from Boston College in 1958, a master’s in education from Bridgewater State College in 1961, and a doctorate in education from Boston College in 1963. He worked as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent in various school districts in Massachusetts and New York, and was superintendent of schools in Shrewsbury, MA from 1978 through 1994. After retiring from this position he served as an adjunct professor at Framingham State University and Anna Maria College, as Director of the Professional Development Center at Worcester State University, as Director of the Teacher Certification Program at the College of the Holy Cross, and as professor of education with the International Education Program Inc. at Framingham State University. Among his numerous honors are the president’s award for outstanding leadership from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents; outstanding leadership and service awards from the Massachusetts State Commissioner of Education; election to the Boston College Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa; the Outstanding Educator Award from the Worcester County Superintendents Association; and an Outstanding Service Award from the US Congress. The Shrewsbury Education Foundation established the annual John P. Collins Award for Excellence which honors exemplary efforts of those whose work reflects the values and vision of Dr. Collins.

For over a decade he contributed a monthly column on Thomas Merton to the Worcester, MA *Catholic Free Press*, more than 120 in all, and served a similar length

of time as facilitator of the Shrewsbury, MA ITMS chapter. In July 2013 he began a chapter of the Merton Society at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Shirley, MA, which he continued to lead until this was no longer possible due to declining health. His work at the prison was featured in the special Merton Centenary section of the December 5, 2015 issue of *The National Catholic Reporter*. Between 2002 and 2016 he also wrote more than two dozen scholarly articles, in *The Merton Seasonal*, *The Merton Annual* and elsewhere, on various aspects of Merton's thought, and was a frequent presenter at ITMS General Meetings and other conferences, including the College English Association annual meeting. He was awarded the ITMS "Louie" award for outstanding service to the Society at the 2015 ITMS General Meeting. He also received the John Cardinal Wright Award from Worcester, MA Bishop Robert McManus on April 21, 2016 for his years of service bringing the message of Thomas Merton to the diocese and beyond, through his newspaper columns, his leadership of the Shrewsbury ITMS chapter, and particularly his work in founding of the ITMS chapter at the Shirley prison, whose members spearheaded the movement for the award and enlisted the support of ITMS members throughout the country. The award, named after Cardinal Wright, former Bishop of Worcester, with whom Merton had corresponded about issues of war and peace at the time of the Second Vatican Council, marked the culmination of Dr. Collins' long active service on behalf of the Merton community.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife Pauline, who died in 1979. He is survived by his sister Patricia Fisher and her husband Dan, of Chelmsford MA; his children Jack Collins and wife Nancy of Shrewsbury, MA; Mary Brennan of Pembroke, MA; Patrick Collins and his wife Angela of Shrewsbury; and Erin Hruskoci and her husband Dave of Shrewsbury; and seven grandchildren: Shawna Messinger, Patrick, Meghan and Haley Collins, and Paulina, Holly and Theodore Hruskoci. His funeral Mass was celebrated on February 7 at St. Mary's Church in Shrewsbury, followed by burial at Mountain View Cemetery in Shrewsbury.

Harold Talbott (1939-2019)

Harold Talbott, Thomas Merton's companion and guide during his 1968 trip to India and a scholar of

Tibetan Buddhism, died February 7, 2019 at the age of 79 from complications due to Parkinson's disease. He was born, along with his twin brother John, on February 21, 1939 in New York City, son of Harold E. Talbott, Jr., later Secretary of the Air Force during the Eisenhower administration, and Manhattan socialite Margaret Thayer Talbott. He completed his secondary education at St. Paul's School in Concord, NH in 1958 and graduated from Harvard University in 1962. While in college he converted to Catholicism and was subsequently confirmed at the Abbey of Gethsemani, where he first came into contact with Thomas Merton. Through his acquaintance with Alan Watts, best-selling author of books on Zen, he was introduced to the Benedictine monk Aelred Graham, author of *Zen Catholicism* (1963), who became a mentor and close friend, and invited him to serve as his secretary and assistant during a year-long trip to Asia in 1967 to engage in dialogue with Buddhist religious leaders, as related in Dom Aelred's book *Conversations Christian and Buddhist* (1969). Among those encountered during this time was the Dalai Lama, who responded positively to Talbott's request that he might return to India to study Buddhism under his direction, which he did in 1968. Consequently he was in Dharamsala at the time of Merton's visit to India in the fall of that year. He met Merton in New Delhi and accompanied him to Dharamsala, where he hosted Merton at his bungalow. He made the arrangements for Merton's three visits to the Dalai Lama and was present for their conversations, as described in *The Asian Journal* and *The Other Side of the Mountain*. Talbott then accompanied Merton to Darjeeling, where they travelled and met with other Tibetan lamas until Merton's departure on November 24. Talbott subsequently described his time with Merton and their friendship in "The Jesus Lama: Thomas Merton in the Himalayas – An Interview with Harold Talbott" by Helen Twerkov (*Tricycle* 1.4 [Summer 1992] 14-24), in "The (Almost) Final Days of Thomas Merton," a filmed interview in 2000 with Bonnie Thurston (available on YouTube) as well as in the podcast "Harold Talbott: Remembering Thomas Merton's Encounters with the Dalai Lama" (<https://learn.wisdompubs.org/podcast/harold-talbott>).

Heeding the advice of Merton to immerse himself in the Tibetan meditative practice of Dzogchen, Tal-

bott shortly thereafter became a student in the oldest tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma lineage, and a disciple and friend of Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, professor of Tibetan at Lucknow University, a respected scholar in that lineage, who made possible contacts with other key figures in the Nyingma tradition including Lama Gyurdala, Talbott's principal teacher in Dzogchen, and Dudjom Rinpoche, titular head of the Nyingma Buddhism. After the death of Lama Gyurdala in 1975, Talbott returned to the United States and with Michael Baldwin co-founded the Buddhayana Foundation in Marion, Massachusetts, dedicated to promoting and disseminating Tibetan Buddhist wisdom. He edited and published numerous works on Tibetan Buddhism, particularly those of his mentor Tulku Thondup, who came to America as a visiting scholar at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions and eventually became a permanent resident and US citizen, working closely with the Buddhayana Foundation. At the time of his death Talbott had just completed *Tendrel: A Memoir of New York and the Buddhist Himalayas* (Buddhayana Foundation, 2019), in which he relates the story of his journey from "the sophisticated worlds of New York and Europe" of his parents and their friends to his lifelong commitment to the wisdom of the Tibetan lamas whose teachings he did so much to communicate to a Western audience.

Call for Papers for Oakham 2020

The 2020 Residential Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be held April 2-4, 2020 at Oakham School, Rutland, England. The theme of the conference is "Contemplation and Fruitful Action," based on Merton's declaration in his essay "Contemplation in a World of Action" that a contemplative orientation, a special dimension of personal development and inner discipline, is "a necessary ground for fruitful action." Proposals are invited for papers and workshops on this theme, in the light of Merton's life, work and witness, and should be submitted by July 20, 2019 on the proposal form available for download on the society website: www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk. Papers should be 20-25 minutes in length, to be followed by 5-10 minutes for comments and questions; workshops are presentations which are more participatory in style, inviting audience participation through reflection, meditation, extended

discussion and/or creative projects, with a time-frame of 45 minutes. Applicants will be notified whether their proposals have been accepted by August 31, 2019.

Recording Inspired by Merton

Point Vierge: Thomas Merton's Journey in Song is a CD album of recorded music, chant, songs and spoken word by songwriter Alana Levandoski, with the collaboration of author James Finley. Part album, part audio book and part meditation, the project is a mixed-media reflection on Merton's life and works. The lyrics of the sixteen selections are drawn from the words of Thomas Merton, along with Finley's reflections on Merton's teachings. Beginning in Merton's childhood and evolving through his life story, this is a musical journey that mirrors the seeker's path. Author and centering prayer teacher Cynthia Bourgeault calls the work "a masterpiece both in the spiritual and artistic arenas." Writer and social critic Brian D. McLaren notes: "Beautiful vocals, rich music, profound meditations from the life and work of Thomas Merton . . . Alana Levandoski has woven a contemplative musical tapestry for all who want to deepen their spiritual lives." Merton scholar Daniel P. Horan, OFM calls it "an inspiring soundtrack for meditation, renewal, and insight!" Author and Merton editor Jon M. Sweeney describes *Point Vierge* as "a luminous work, filled with spiritual darkness and light. It is inspiring as well as sobering. One hears Merton's voice, literally, at times, but throughout, singing to us. Many of us miss that voice, that witness, but here we have it once again." Further details on the project and ordering information are available at AlanaLevandoski.com.

ITMS Authors

Daniel P. Horan, OFM has recently published *Reading, Praying, Living Pope Francis's Rejoice and Be Glad: A Faith Formation Guide* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019 [\$12.95 paper]), a discussion of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, including commentary, additional context, suggestions for prayer and reflection questions, creating a helpful resource for adults, students and faith formation groups interested in learning more about this teaching and exploring their own spirituality.

Jon Sweeney has recently published *Margaret's First Holy Week*, the third book in his "The Pope's Cat"

series of children's books, illustrated by Roy DeLeon (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2019 [\$9.99 paper]).

Of the initial volume in the series, *The Pope's Cat* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2018 [\$9.99 paper]), Christopher Lamb, Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*, writes: "*The Pope's Cat* is a heartwarming tale, which gives the papacy a human touch, along with a taste of life in Rome. Sweeney has done an excellent job in opening up the world of the Vatican to youngsters. I read it to my two children and they both loved it!" Historical theologian Massimo Faggioli comments: "As a self-professed gelateria Catholic, fascinated by Rome, the papacy, and cats, I cannot wait to read this story to our children and the cats we have at home." Author and blogger Lisa M. Hendey writes: "Young readers and the young at heart will surely fall in love with Margaret, the spirit-filled pet at the heart of *The Pope's Cat!* Accompanied by fanciful illustrations from Roy DeLeon, Jon Sweeney's first book for children invites us to peek inside the Vatican and discover a Pope who loves sugar cookies and early morning walks and adorable cats just like the rest of us. I can't wait for more Margaret the cat and her adventures in Rome!"

Of its sequel, *Margaret's Night in St. Peter's (A Christmas Story)* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2018 [\$9.99 paper]), author and Merton commentator James Martin, SJ writes: "This beautiful book is a love letter to the church, to Christmas, to Rome, and to St. Peter's Basilica – and not just for children!" Author Brenda Repland comments: "This series about Margaret, the cat and her best friend, the Pope, may be intended for young readers but the gentle stories will delight any adult. Margaret has free rein in the Vatican and through her eyes we can enjoy the Christmas celebrations taking place there, in the middle of Rome."

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Rose Marie Berger, editor at *Sojourners* magazine and plenary speaker at the ITMS Sixteenth General Meeting in June 2019, has recently published *Bending the Arch* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2019) a volume of poetry with a foreword by Dana Greene (106 pp. [\$14.00 paper]). Author and social activist Ched Myers writes: "In St. Louis for a baptism during the great flood of 1993 (both themes prominent in these poems), Berger looked through [Eero] Saarinen's Arch and saw all the way to the Farallon Islands. . . . This is 'decolonizing poetry':

literate, theologically rich, and densely annotated." Retired Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston comments: "Rose Berger is doing poetic alchemy in her new book She does it right before us. She is mixing vision with insight, words with symbol, and hope with common sense . . . and coming up with gold." Poet and professor Linda McCarriston calls the book "a beautiful, moving, challenging read, a poetry at once personal, historical, spiritual, and political. Drawing in voices from all of these facets of knowing, Berger creates a truly visionary text, one that feels like a discovery, a codex, and returns to the reader by its conclusion both responsibility and power. Berger's *Bending the Arch* is extraordinary in both its lyric power and intellectual reach."

Merton at CEA

On March 28-30, 2019, the College English Association held its Fiftieth Annual Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Orleans, LA. The conference theme was "Vision/Revision." Eight presentations on Thomas Merton were included in the program. On March 28, two sessions on Merton were presented. The first, entitled "Prefaces, Visuals, & Contemplation," was moderated by Monica Weis, SSJ, and included the following: Christine Bochen: "Revisiting His Own Work: Thomas Merton's Prefaces"; Joseph Marren: "Merton's View"; Zachary Garrett: "Autobiographical Forms in Thomas Merton's *Day of a Stranger*." The second, entitled "Thomas Merton: Listening Ear and Mystical Vision," was moderated by Matthew Boedy and included the following: Paul M. Pearson: "Listening to the World – The Social Revisioning of Thomas Merton"; Deborah Kehoe, "Thomas Merton's Contemplative (Re)vision"; Monica Weis, SSJ: "Early Irish Hermit Wisdom: Insights for Merton and for Us"; Maryann DiEdwardo, "The Significance of the Writing of Thomas Merton: Visionary, Social Critic, and Supporter of Human Rights." On March 29, the session entitled "Religious Visionaries in Literature and Rhetoric," moderated by Monica Weis, SSJ, included a presentation by Matthew Boedy entitled "Kenotic Rhetoric in Thomas Merton's Writing." The International Thomas Merton Society is an affiliated society of the College English Association.

Lax-Inspired Exhibit at SBU

From March 25 through June 2, 2019, an exhibition entitled "The Light/The Shade: One-a-Day Paintings"

by Abbey Ryan, a collection of work completed during the artist's 2017 visit to the Greek island of Patmos, will be held at the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY. The paintings, twenty-one landscapes and still-life oils, were made in response to the book-length poem "the light / the shade" by Robert Lax, who served as an early inspiration for Ms. Ryan, associate professor of art at Arcadia University, and continues to be a strong influence on her work; his singular form of minimalist poetry and seemingly solitary existence prompted the artist to start the series in 2012. Lax (1915-2000), a close friend of Thomas Merton and an Olean native, lived on Patmos during the final decades of his life; his archives are housed at St. Bonaventure. A gallery talk by the artist will take place at the Quick Center at 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 11. Her work can be viewed at: <http://www.abbeyryan.com>. For background on the series and the friendship of the artist and her family with Lax, see: <https://www.arcadia.edu/arcadia-exhibitions/exhibitions/abbey-ryan-light-shade>; further information on the exhibition itself can be found at: <https://www.sbu.edu/about-sbu/sbu-campus-maps-directions/quick-center-for-the-arts/exhibitions#Light>. Abbey Ryan's portrait of Merton was featured on the cover of the Winter 2001 issue of *The Merton Seasonal*.

Merton Titles on Sale

Current sales by two publishers include six books by or about Thomas Merton. Cistercian Publications is selling the following titles for half-price or less: *In the Valley of Wormwood: Cistercian Blessed and Saints of the Golden Age* (paper: list price \$39.95; sale price \$19.98); *The Life of the Vows: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 6* (paper: list price \$44.95; sale price \$22.48); *Survival or Prophecy? The Correspondence of Jean Leclercq and Thomas Merton* (paper: list price \$21.95; sale price \$5.49). These books can be ordered online at: <https://cistercianpublications.org/Products?pageSize=15&sortBy=category&sortReverse=True&onSale=True&start=0>; there is no deadline listed for the sale, so any orders should be placed as soon as possible. Paulist Press Merton titles include the following at discounts of 40% or more: *Ishi Means Man: Essays on Native Americans* (paper #4911-7: list price \$9.95; sale price \$4.98); *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* (paper #3314-8: list price \$24.95; sale price \$14.97); *Spiritual*

Masters for All Seasons (Merton, Nouwen, de Mello, O'Donahue) by Michael Ford (paper #0550-7: list price \$18.00; sale price \$10.80). Sale ends May 31, minimum order \$25.00; for further information or to obtain a complete catalogue of sale items, call 800-218-1903.

Merton Happenings

On October 3, 2018, Bonnie Thurston gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton's Basic Presuppositions" to the Society of the Sacred Cross at Tymawr Monastery, Wales.

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On October 13, Ron Dart gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton: Inward Odyssey, Outward Bound" at Queen of Peace Convent, Squamish, BC, Canada.

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On October 16, Katharine Bubel, Leah Cameron, Ron Dart and Lynn Szabo spoke at a conference entitled "Thomas Merton – A Monk for Our Time: Marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death" at Trinity Western University, Langley, BC, Canada.

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On October 28, 2018, Richard Sisto led a retreat day on Thomas Merton's teachings on Zen and the poetry of Gary Snyder at the Passionist Earth & Spirit Center in Louisville, KY.

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On November 10, Kathleen Tarr gave a reading and led a discussion on her book *We Are All Poets Here: Thomas Merton's 1968 Journey to Alaska* at the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh, PA.

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On November 13, Ron Dart gave a presentation entitled "Transcending Ideological Tribalism: Thomas Merton, Dr. Zhivago and Boris Pasternak" as part of a multidisciplinary forum at the University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, BC, Canada, focused on Pasternak's novel *Dr. Zhivago*, commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Pasternak.

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On November 17, "A Day with Merton and Friends" was held at Baldwin Wallace University, Berea, OH to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, cosponsored by the Cleveland Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, with

the assistance of a grant from the ITMS. Presentations included: Rachel McDonald: “Living Monastically in Modern, Secular Times”; Donna Kristoff, OSU: “Monastic Life: History and Contemplative Implications”; Alan Kolp and Baldwin Wallace students: “Contemplative Spirituality: Method and Meaning”; Thomas Snyder: “Thomas Merton: The Man and His Times”; and a panel discussion on Social Justice.

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On November 26-28, Christine Bochen and Bonnie Thurston spoke at events in Belgium commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton. On November 26, Bonnie Thurston gave a presentation entitled “Brothers in Prayer and Worship: The Merton/ Abdul Aziz Correspondence,” and Christine Bochen gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton: Created for Joy,” at the St. Ignatius University Center in Antwerp. The following day they led a retreat focused on three of Merton’s essays recently translated into Dutch: “The Contemplative Life in the Modern World,” “Apologies to an Unbeliever” and “Learning to Live.” On November 28, they gave short talks to the community at the Cistercian Abbey of Nazareth in Brecht. The programs were arranged by Dominiek Lootens, who also served as moderator, translator and commentator.

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On December 7, Hugh Turley gave a presentation entitled “Why What You Think You Know about Thomas Merton’s Death Is Wrong” at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House in Washington, DC.

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On December 9-10, Fr. Kevin Gillespie gave presentations entitled “Thomas Merton: A Fifty-Year Perspective” at Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown, Washington, DC.

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On December 10, Christopher Pramuk led a day of reflection to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton entitled “The Night Face of Sophia: Thomas Merton’s Awakening to the Feminine Divine” at St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, IN.

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On December 10, Donald Goergen, OP gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton: Messages for Our Times” at the De Smet Jesuit High School Chapel in St. Louis, MO.

On January 24, Paul M. Pearson gave a lecture entitled “A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton,” at the Fred M. Rogers Center of St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA.

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On January 31, 2019, a reflection session to commemorate Thomas Merton’s birthday, entitled “Merton, Music and ‘the More,’” was held in the Linehan Chapel at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY, directed by Monica Weis, SSJ with music by Nazareth student Emma Clive.

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On February 20, Daniel P. Horan, OFM delivered the Thirteenth Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture entitled “Racism Is a White Problem: Thomas Merton, Whiteness and Racial Justice” at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY.

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On February 23, Thomas Snyder gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton and Pope St. John XXIII: Twentieth-Century Apostles of Nonviolence” at the Fifth Annual John Stratton Conference at Ashland University, Ashland, OH, sponsored by the Ashland Center for Nonviolence.

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On February 23, Peter Tyler led a retreat day on “Thomas Merton – Master of Contemplation” at The House of Prayer, East Moseley, Surrey, UK.

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On March 7, the Forty-first Annual Merton Lecture, sponsored by the Columbia Catholic Ministry, was given at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan, through a grant from the Hugh J. and Catherine R. Kelly Endowment. Astronaut Mike Massimino spoke on “The View from Space,” preceded by a blessing by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York.

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On March 9, Virginia Ratigan led “A Morning with Thomas Merton” on the theme “‘We Are Already One’: Reflections on Childhood & Recovering Our Original Unity” at Daylesford Abbey Spirituality Center, Paoli, PA.

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On March 11, Monica Weis, SSJ gave an adult education lecture on Thomas Merton entitled “Seeing the World with Rinsed Eyes” at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Rochester, NY.

On March 19 and 26 and April 2, Paul Pynkoski has coordinated three sessions of “Meditations on Mercy,” using the writings of Thomas Merton and Jim Forest and the songs of Jon Brooks, at the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto.

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From March 21 through April 18, Ellison Banks Findly has led a weekly series of sessions entitled “Gandhi and Merton” at the West Hartford Senior Center, West Hartford, CT.

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On March 22, Ajit Pyati gave a presentation entitled “Merton’s Critique of Higher Education” at the Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre, in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

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On March 22-24, Susan Yanos led a retreat on “Desert Spirituality” at Bethany Spring Retreat Center in New Haven, KY, one mile from the Abbey of Gethsemani. For further information on the center’s programs see the Bethany Spring website: www.bethanyspring.org; or email: rick@bethanyspring.org; phone: 502-507-8576.

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On March 27, Gregory Hillis gave a presentation entitled “Letters to a Black Catholic Priest: Thomas Merton and the Civil Rights Movement” at the University of Kentucky Alumni Association Auditorium in the William T. Young Library at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

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On March 30, Daniel Horan, OFM led a retreat day entitled “Thomas Merton on Violence and Racism” at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, MO.

Upcoming Events

The Spring 2019 Road Scholar “Week with Thomas Merton” Program will take place March 31-April 4 at the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY. The Fall 2019 program is scheduled for October 20-25. For further details contact Linda Bailey at: lbailey@bellarmine.edu or 502-272-8161.

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On April 4, Monica Weis, SSJ will lead a mini-retreat entitled “Merton, Music and ‘The More’” at 7 p.m. at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse in Rochester, NY, as part of the sisters’ Fresh Winds series. The program will focus on five different periods of the life of Thomas

Merton, inviting attendees to reflect on their own personal development while expanding their knowledge of Merton. Also featured will be cellist Hilda Grace.

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On April 27, Paul Pynkoski will give a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton, Poetry and Resistance,” exploring peacemaking and artistic imagination through Merton’s poetry and essays, as well as music from three Canadian songwriters, as part of the second Voices for Peace conference at the Cardinal Flahiff Center in Toronto. Other presentations include Kathy Kelly on “Courage for Peace, Not for War” and Fr. Bob Holmes on “Peacemaking in Canada and Palestine.” Tickets are available at: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/voices-for-peace-tickets-54653345628?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>. For further information on the conference, contact Paul Pynkoski at: paul.pynkoski@hotmail.com or by phone: 647-388-4932.

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On May 14, the Thomas Merton Children’s Art Show, featuring Merton-inspired artwork by fifth- and sixth-grade students at St. Agnes School in Louisville, will take place from 4 to 7 p.m. in the McGrath Art Gallery, Wyatt Hall, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY.

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On May 18, Stephen Dunhill will give a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton – Contemplative Poet,” with musical settings by James D’Angelo, at Colet House, Hammersmith, London, UK.

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On June 10-14, Robert Grip will teach a course entitled “Spiritual Discernment in Time of Crisis: Thomas Merton in the 1960s” in the Summer Institute of Christian Spirituality of the Spring Hill College Graduate Programs in Theology & Ministry, at Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL. For further information see: <http://departments2.shc.edu/graduatetheology/summer-institute>; or email: theology@shc.edu.

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On June 16-21, Christine Bochen will present a course entitled “Traveling the Road to Joy with Thomas Merton and Friends” at the Maryknoll Mission Institute, Maryknoll, NY; for further information see the institute website: <http://maryknollaffiliates.org/news/not-so-far-afield/item/1821-maryknoll-mission-institute-%E2%80%93-2019.html>; or email: missinst@mksisters.org.

Chapter and Affiliate News

On January 26, the New York City ITMS Chapter hosted a presentation by Fr. Michael Holleran entitled “Thomas Merton’s Spiritual Arc,” followed by the chapter’s annual Merton birthday celebration. On April 27, the Chapter will sponsor a presentation by Kathleen Witkowska Tarr on her book *We Are All Poets Here: Thomas Merton’s 1968 Journey to Alaska* at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. The chapter’s Merton Reading Group discussed *The Inner Experience* during its fall term and *Disputed Questions* in the winter sessions; the discussion book for the spring is *Ishi Means Man*. For further information visit the chapter website at: <http://www.thomasmertonnyc.org>, or contact: cchristinyc@gmail.com.

At its 2019 monthly meetings, the Belmar, NJ Chapter of the ITMS has been discussing Merton’s journal *Dancing in the Water of Life*, and will continue to do so at its April and May meetings. The June meeting will focus on James Finley’s book *Merton’s Palace of Nowhere*. For further information contact Greg Ryan at: GJRyan@wccm.org or 732-681-6238.

On December 8, the Thomas Merton Society of Washington, DC sponsored a Mass to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton at St. Anselm’s Abbey Chapel in Washington. The celebrant and homilist was Abbot James Wiseman, OSB, one of the chapter’s original founders. The chapter’s monthly reading group is currently discussing Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain*. For further information, contact Maryle Ashley at tmsociety@fastmail.fm.

On January 20, the Chicago Chapter of the ITMS hosted a presentation by David Orberon on his recent book *Thomas Merton: Evil and Why We Suffer – From Purified Soul Theodicy to Zen* at the Rectory Assembly of Immaculate Conception Parish in Chicago. On February 17, Barbara Mahany spoke to the chapter on “The Book of Nature: First Text of the Creator; Holy Way amid the Modern-day Melee.” For further information contact Chapter Coordinator Mike Brennan at cc.itms@gmail.com or 773-447-3989.

On January 27, the Northern California Chapter

of the ITMS began its discussion of Merton’s book *Ishi Means Man* at the St. Francis Parish Center in Sacramento; on March 31 the chapter continued its discussion of *Ishi*. Its next meeting will take place on Palm Sunday, April 14, at the Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, CA. For further information contact Chapter Coordinator John Berger: 916-482-6976.

On March 28, the Thomas Merton Society of Canada hosted a presentation by Mary Jo Leddy entitled “Merton and the Post-Secular Search for a Good Country” at the Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre, in Vancouver, BC, cosponsored by SFU’s J. S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities. On March 30 Ron Dart gave a presentation entitled “Thomas Merton: Alaska and His Final Conferences” at the Canadian Memorial Centre for Peace in Vancouver, BC. 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.

On December 10, at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption of the Saint Benedict Monastery, Sao Paulo, the Brazilian Sociedade dos Amigos Fraternos de Thomas Merton (SAFTM) sponsored a pontifical Mass commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton, celebrated by Abbot Dom Mathias Tolentino Braga, OSB. The Mass featured Gregorian chant sung by the St. Benedict monks, accompanied by the abbey’s historic organ, followed by the launch of the Portuguese translation by Fr. Nélio Barcelos, OFM of the Merton biography *Living with Wisdom* by Jim Forest. For further information contact SAFTM coordinator Fernando Paiser: 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>.

Send all Merton-related news to:

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The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:

www.merton.org/ITMS