

THE THOMAS MERTON COMMEMORATION

at Bellarmine College

December 3 — 10, 1978

under the auspices of the Thomas Merton Studies Center

and the Abbey of Gethsemani

On December 10, 1968, Thomas Merton was accidentally electrocuted in Bangkok, Thailand, while attending an international conference on monasticism. Ironically he died twenty-seven years to the day after he had entered the Abbey of Gethsemani near Bardstown, Kentucky and during the first extended trip he had made outside the Abbey. Born in France in 1915, Merton's journey, which ended so quickly and unexpectedly in Asia, led him through schools in France, England, and the United States, to conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1938 and to entrance into the Cistercian Order in 1941. He was already a published poet of some note when the publication of his phenomenally successful autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, in 1948 brought him fame and international recognition as a writer. His writings during the next twenty years, writings on spirituality and monasticism, on renewal and ecumenism, on peace and social justice, made him as one observer noted, "probably the most famous monk of the twentieth century."

In commemorating this, the tenth anniversary of his death, we reprint here reflections written by his friend, Fr. John T. Loftus, O.F.M. Conv., then Academic Dean of Bellarmine College. Fr. Loftus himself died in January 1969, less than one month after Merton's death.

Now Tom Merton is dead.

Say it as often as I may the phrase is hollow.

I don't know how he died save that it was a gloriously stupid, splendidly absurd way for Merton to meet God.

An incongruously bad wire conducting inefficiently a power placed in God's world to serve man --- not to destroy him. I have no words for that absurdity.

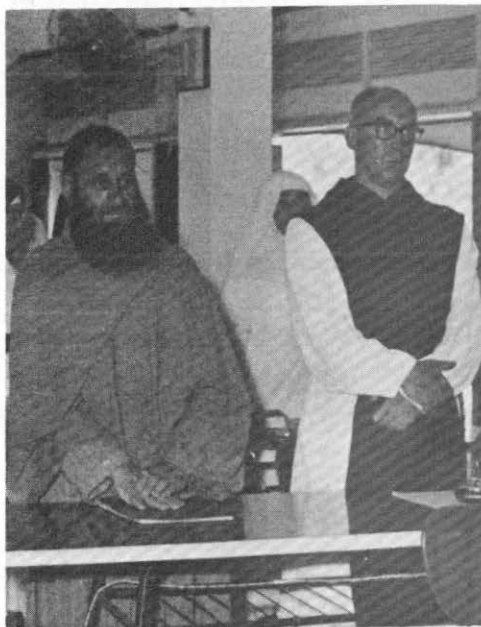
But I hope the fault produced a blaze. It would be terribly right for Thomas Merton to enter eternity with a bright blue flame.

For a few brief years he brightened the earth as God wanted him to be. How splendid that the quest ended in a human horror, a flaming gesture of the humor of God to whom men must come in His way, no other.

Tom Merton is dead.

God has blessed him.

And us!



Fr. Francis Acharya and Thomas Merton
Bangkok, December 9, 1968.

PROGRAM
MERTON MEMORIAL WEEK

December 3–10, 1978

**BELLARMINE COLLEGE
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

LECTURE

December 3, Sunday, 4:00 p.m.

Large Science Theater, Pasture Hall

"The Consciousness of God and His Purpose in the Life and Writings of Thomas Merton"

Reflections presented by the Rt. Rev. Flavian Burns, O.C.S.O. (Retired Abbot) of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Trappist, Ky.

READINGS

December 5, Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.

St. Robert Chapel, Bellarmine

"Vital Voices: Thomas Merton"

A student originated and presented program featuring quotations from Merton's writings which capture his message to the world.

Directed by the Rev. Clyde Crews, Ph. D., Bellarmine College Theology Faculty

LECTURE

December 6, Wednesday, 8:00 p.m.

Knights Hall, Bellarmine

"The Importance of Mysticism for Today's Catholic"

The Reverend Andrew M. Greeley, Ph.D., Chicago, Director of the Center for the Study of American Pluralism.

Admission: \$2.00

SEMINAR

December 7, Thursday, 8:00 p.m.

Large Science Theater, Pasture Hall

"The Christology of Merton's Poetry"

Presenter: The Rev. George A. Kilcourse, Ph.D. Bellarmine College Theology Faculty

Panel of Respondents: Sr. Mary Madeline Abdilnour, S.C.N.
Director, Bethany Springs Retreat Center
The Rev. Harold P. Nebelsick
Professor, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary
Mr. Ronald Seitz
Division of Humanities, Bellarmine College
Fr. Gregory C. Wingenbach
Pastor, Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Greek Orthodox Church

OPEN HOUSE

December 8, Friday, 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Thomas Merton Studies Center
Bonaventure Hall, Bellarmine

Display of Thomas Merton's manuscripts,
journals, and art work

Wine and Cheese Reception
4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

MEMORIAL MASS

December 9, Saturday, 7:00 p.m.

Cathedral of the Assumption
443 South Fifth Street
Louisville, Ky.

Memorial Mass in observance of the tenth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton.

Celebrant and Homilist: The Most Reverend Jean Jadot, D.D.
Apostolic Delegate to the United States

Concelebrants: The Most Reverend Thomas J. McDonough, D.D., J.C.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

The Most Reverend Charles G. Maloney, D.D.
Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Louisville

Choir: The Bellarmine College Singers

Director: Mr. Gus Coin, Chairman Department of Music, Bellarmine College

THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL THE ABOVE EVENTS

A private commemorative observance will be held Sunday, December 10, at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, with Archbishop Jadot presiding, assisted by Archbishop McDonough and Abbot Timothy Kelly of Gethsemani.

This Merton Week Program has been made possible through the cooperation and generous support of the Abbey of Gethsemani, and is jointly sponsored by Bellarmine College and the Abbey of Gethsemani.

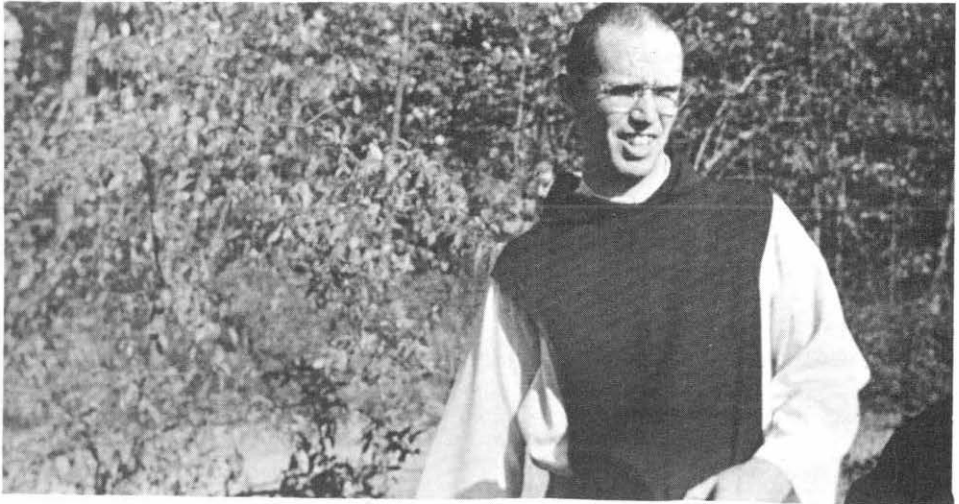
Father Andrew Greeley

*Father Andrew Greeley is a priest of the archdiocese of Chicago. His syndicated column is in more than 80 newspapers. He is the best known interpreter of the American Catholic scene. A prolific writer, his recent catechism, *The Great Mysteries*, has become a best seller. His other recent books include *The Mary Myth: On the Feminity of God and The American Catholic: A Social Portrait*.*

Father Greeley is internationally recognized as a research scholar. He is the director of the Center for the Study of American Pluralism. He has directed many studies for the National Opinion Research Center. Currently he is teaching sociology at the University of Arizona.

Reverend Flavian Burns

The Rt. Rev. Flavian Burns, O.C.S.O., is a former abbot of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, Kentucky. Born in New Jersey, he was educated at the Abbey of Gethsemani during Thomas Merton's tenure as Novice Master and spent a year at the Gregorian University in Rome. He served as Prior at the Abbey from 1962-1965. He was elected Abbot January 13, 1968 and was blessed March 21, 1968. Fr. Flavian retired as Abbot in 1973.



Fr. Flavian Burns, photograph by Thomas Merton. c Thomas Merton Legacy Trust

The seminar, *The Christology of Merton's Poetry*, might have as an alternate title, "Pieces of the mosaic, earth" from one of Merton's early poems, *Song for Our Lady of Cobra*. This seminar will disclose Merton's debt to Eastern Christology, the Greek Father. This impact is the undergirding for Merton's confidence in the project of a Christian poetry. Merton's Christological consciousness offers insights into how his poetry is a unique and more systematic corpus than his electric efforts as "essayist."