

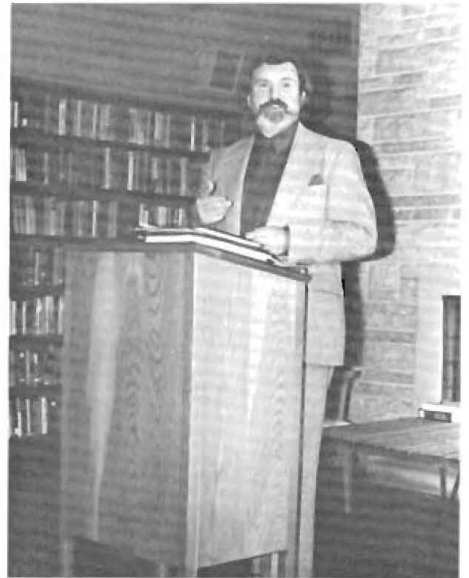
AN ENCOMIUM FOR RAYMOND TREECE; REVIEWS BY AND ABOUT VICTOR KRAMER; & A HUZZA FROM MICHAEL MOTT

—by **Robert E. Daggy**

On March 15, 1985, the Rev. Msgr. Raymond J. Treece died. Priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville and co-founder of Bellarmine College, Father Treece played a strong role in the Thomas Merton Studies Center from its inception. He was for many years Director or Acting Director of the Center, charged with supervising programming under the auspices of the Center to express the religious and Catholic nature of the College. He staunchly supported the *Merton Seasonal* and encouraged its expansion from a short, folksy newsletter into a review of Merton studies. It is altogether fitting that we dedicate this issue of the *Merton Seasonal* to Father Treece.

Better and more qualified encomiasts than I could give a complete picture of Father Treece whose humor, dry wit and general “laid-backedness” (if there is such a word) still occasion stories at the College. He had known Thomas Merton for years and had met him on a number of occasions and, to say the least, he never lost a sense of objectivity about Merton, his objectivity sometimes expressed with an offhandedness which Merton himself would have appreciated. Always a little baffled by the upsurge in Merton studies in the 1970s, he tended to answer questions in his frequently tongue-in-cheek way. On one occasion I remember that a visiting female asked Father Treece if he considered Merton a great writer and asked for his suggestion as to what she should read first. He replied: “Oh, I don’t know, honey, read whatever you want — I don’t read that stuff myself.” Another time, when asked how good a writer he thought Merton was, he answered: “I never thought he was any better than *he* thought he was!” Last year, after his retirement, I ran into Father Treece and asked him if he planned to attend our ELDERHOSTEL “Week with Thomas Merton.” He said: “Well, Bob, I don’t think I can since I’m too young to qualify as a Senior Citizen [he was then 72]. Let me know when you’re having one for Junior Citizens and I’ll think about it.” We shall miss Father Treece and the no-nonsense approach he had — he was often like a gust of air clearing the Center when things threatened to become too stuffy or too heavy. Godspeed, Father Treece.

Victor Kramer, long a significant figure in Merton studies, is featured in this issue in a unique way. It is the first time that the *Merton Seasonal* has included a review by an author whose own book is also reviewed in the issue. Professor Kramer reviews Paul Wilke’s *Merton, By Those Who Knew Him Best* on pp. 14-15. Abbot Emeritus Flavian Burns and Professor John Leax then review Kramer’s *Thomas Merton* from the Twayne United States Authors Series on pp. 16-19.



MICHAEL MOTT
Reading Poetry at Bellarmine College

For the third consecutive year, the Thomas Merton Studies Center will host an ELDERHOSTEL “Week with Thomas Merton” — this year an intensive study of Michael Mott’s authorized biography, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*. I will be General Co-ordinator and Dean of Instruction this year. Guest speakers will include Dr. Thomas A. Greenfield, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Bellarmine College and an authority on American dramatic literature [Dr. Greenfield’s review of Anthony Padovano’s one-man play *Winter Rain* is on pp. 12-13]; Mr. Gregory J. Ryan, Oblate of the Benedictine Priory of Montreal; and Msgr. William H. Shannon, General Editor of the Merton Letters, the first volume of which, *The Hidden Ground of Love: the Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience & Social Concerns*, is scheduled for publication in May. Dr. Don R. Osborn and Mr. Ron Seitz join the ELDERHOSTEL faculty for the third straight year, speaking respectively on meditation and poetry.

Michael Mott, whose best-selling biography is the focus for the “Week with Thomas Merton,” has written an open letter to Hostellers — a cheerful huzza — which follows these remarks.

TO ALL THOSE TAKING THE “WEEK WITH THOMAS MERTON” COURSE THIS SUMMER

I am delighted to have this chance to tell each of you how pleased I am that such a course is being held this summer and that you are taking it. You honor Thomas Merton with the careful attention you will be giving to his life and to his writing. But I am honored, also, that you will be making such use of my biography, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*. Of course I hope you will find my book helpful. And I hope you will apply your scholarship to judge mine.

I know you will enjoy the same hospitality—the same sensitive direction—from Dr. Robert Daggy and his staff that I enjoyed. And your intellectual curiosity will enjoy the same riches of research material there at the Thomas Merton Studies Center. It is wonderful that you will be able to make a trip to Gethsemani. In many ways I wish I were going to be with you.

May this be for each of you, a week *with* Thomas Merton. May you experience something of his incredible range. May you be surprised (as I am after six years) by discoveries — above all by discoveries of how human and how approachable he is (never an idol, always an unpredictable friend). And may he set your own spiritual journey straight—without doing what he never intended to do for anyone, taking it over.

All good wishes,

Michael Mott