

# MERTON & HIS FRIENDS

by **Robert E. Daggy**

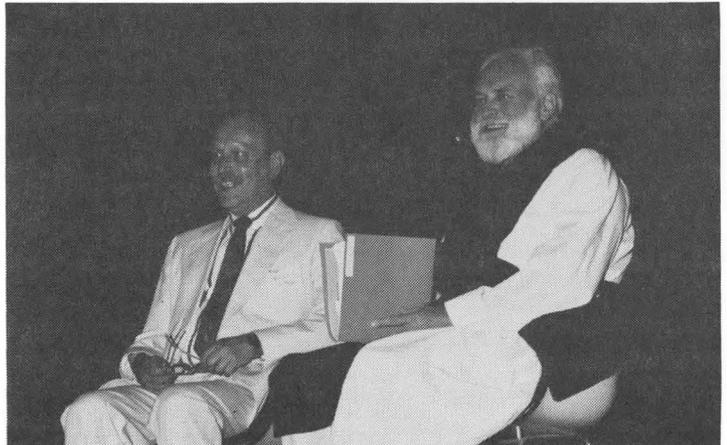
The Second General Meeting of *The International Thomas Merton Society* (ITMS) — held at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, from 13 to 16 June 1991 — is now over. This issue of *The Merton Seasonal* is dedicated to Merton and his friends, those at the meeting and those who were not able to attend.

The Meeting was well attended and was as successful as the First General Meeting in 1989. One thing became apparent almost immediately (as Geoffrey M. Robarge points out in this issue) — this was truly a meeting of Merton’s “friends.” People from several United States and Canadian provinces with many from other countries, including Belgium, the Republic of China, England, and Papua New Guinea, gathered, not only as friends to Merton but as friends to one another. It was, in many ways, a celebration as evidenced at the banquet, in the smashing song recital by Phil Koonce and Ivan Griffin, and in the provocative Saturday evening program presented by Nina David and her friends. The four general sessions, the twelve concurrent sessions, and the four workshops gave meat and substance to the “Huge Chorus.” It would be hard to single out any single moment, but one memorable one for me was John Wu, Jr.’s discussion of the friendship between Merton and his father, noted Chinese scholar John C. H. Wu.

Some who gathered were friends who met Merton in the flesh and one highlight (moderated by Bill Shannon) was the “Panel of Merton Friends,” composed of Donald Allchin, Jim Conner, “Ping” Ferry, Bob Giroux, Patrick Hart, and Mary Luke Tobin. Another such friend — Basil Pennington — gave the keynote address on Friday night.

Our cover drawing is taken from a photograph by Merton’s friend and literary agent, Naomi Burton Stone, one of those unable to attend. The painting was done by former Gethsemani novice, Damien Garrylee McCormick who now lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The feature article is an interview with Merton’s old friend and Columbia classmate, Robert Lax, who still lives

on a Greek island. The interview was conducted by his niece and her husband, Marcia and Jack Kelly, during Lax’s visit to the United States in the fall of 1990. Marcia Marcus Kelly is the daughter of another old friend, Gladys Lax Marcus, who figures in *The Seven Storey Mountain* and in Merton’s letters as “Gladio.” The Kellys’ new book, *Sanctuaries*, a unique guide to lodgings in monasteries and retreats, is reviewed in this issue by Bill Biddle. In keeping with the playful language used by Merton and Lax, we have two fanciful poems by J. S. Porter and R. B. Lasco. Three



**BOB DAGGY & BASIL PENNINGTON**

Photo by Don Sheehan

features from the General Meeting are included: Bob Daggy's "Presidential Address" and Bill Shannon's and John Eudes Bamberger's homilies from the two masses. Bonnie Thurston, new president of the ITMS, reviews two tapes from lectures by his "friend" Mary Luke Tobin. Another "friend," Brother Patrick Hart, reviews an unusual music tape with Merton readings, and Barbara Sonnenberg reviews a recent mystery novel by William Kienzle in which Merton figures prominently. We also announce the new officers and board members of the ITMS who will conduct Society affairs until the Third General Meeting in 1993.