

“ALREADY ONE, BECOMING WHAT WE ARE” —The Way to Go

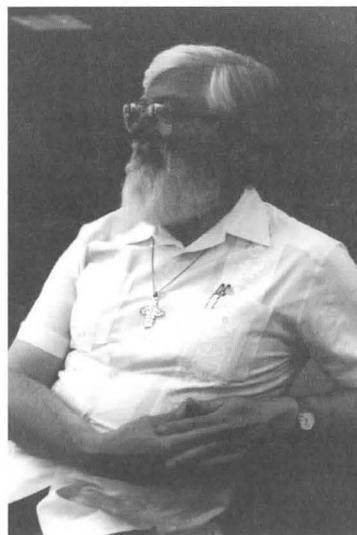
by **Patrick Eastman**

Tuesday, June 8th. The day has arrived for us to travel to Colorado Springs for the Third General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society. Maureen and I are driving there with Margaret, a friend whom we had met at Osage Monastery. Margaret had never been to a Merton Meeting. So, as we left Tulsa at 7 a.m., it was with a great sense of adventure.

Wednesday, June 9th. By this time I was beginning to get a little anxious. Was my paper suitable for presentation? How would it be received? And then there was the concluding liturgy—what should I say in my homily? Plagued with this anxiety we soon reached the wonderful city and the college of our destination nestling deliciously under the shadow of the magnificent towering of Pikes Peak. What a spot for a meeting: thanks Tom.

Thursday, June 10th. The meeting begins. People have gathered from all over the world and a good crowd it is. Many new faces but lots of old friends to shake hands, slap on the back and hug. It was exciting being there. (It was all so new for Margaret and the mountains were so “awesome” I think her inner circuits went into overload.)

There is no way I can give a synopsis of the whole meeting, so we will only look at the highlights that remain with me from Thursday until Sunday noon. Bonnie Thurston, the retiring president in her address began by startlingly admitting she was not very interested in Merton—but she was passionately interested in the things that so interested Merton and that he wrote about so eloquently. There were presentations and sessions all about Merton’s interests. It was rich fare indeed and when choices of session had to be made, how hard they were to make. The theme of the meeting was very real in the light of the rich variety of people who were there. Thanks to the wonderful organization of Rev. Kelby Cotton and all his staff, things went so smoothly that we were able to relax together. “Already One” was easier to experience in a place where we all had some common vision. Merton was not the vision but he pointed us all towards it and each in our own way have perhaps glimpsed that vision. How refreshing it was to be with people, old friends and new, who spoke the same language. It was very supporting to be with people who appreciated the contemplative and monastic tradition, who were committed to justice and equality for all regardless of race, color, creed, or gender. Our worldwide struggle to become what we are was symbolized in the sacred dance session we had. Drawing from Buddhist, Sufi, Judaic and Christian traditions, we falteringly but joyously moved as we enthusiastically circled and stepped, bowed and reached to word



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and melody that expressed the sacredness of God, of creation and ourselves. If I dare say it, if the grandfather, in the person of Fr. William Shannon, with so much wisdom to share was there, so was the wonderful grandmother, in the person of Sr. Mary Luke Tobin. Small of stature she may be, but a giant in terms of her prophetic voice. She challenged us all to an authentic contemplation that engages prophetically in a broken world.

Saturday, June 12th. At first sound it may have seemed as if the experience of “Already One” was broken by the marked disagreement over a statement prepared by the Board of the ITMS concerning Amendment 2 of the Colorado State Legislature. But surely our unity is not just a cozy conformity. I am hoping that the members of the ITMS will follow this up and become much more knowledgeable on issues such as were raised at the meeting. The impetus abroad to divide and condemn is powerful. I guess the impulse is always to seek for scapegoats rather than face the problems we create for ourselves.

Sunday, June 13th. The feast of Corpus Christi was a wonderful day to have a concluding liturgy for the meeting. Over the time we had been together I had worked out two homilies in my head but the turmoil of the Saturday meeting provided the basis for the third. For it is not in the words but in the sacred and dramatic action of the Eucharist that we see who we really are. “Already One.” As St. Augustine said holding the Eucharistic Body of Christ, “See who you are, become what you see.” Merton himself writes

. . . we will never really appreciate the Eucharist or the Church if we conceive them to be two entirely different “bodies of Christ.” There are not really two bodies of Christ. It is in a sense quite true to say that there is only one *Corpus Mysticum*. There is one Body which is made present substantially at the words of consecration. It is the Body of Christ with Whom we, being joined in Communion, form one mystical Person.