

## **Complementary Approaches Illuminate Merton's Continuing Relevance for Today's Broken World**

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*Dewey Weiss Kramer*

The 2005 General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society in San Diego at the University of San Diego was excellently planned by President Erlinda Paguio and her Program Committee chaired by Jonathan Montaldo. The range of speakers, both for the plenary addresses and the invited contributions through proposals, was impressive. There were many stimulating addresses by prominent speakers including persons of other faiths, for example, Rabbi Michael Lerner and Editor Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*. These talks suggest the continuing importance of Merton's work for today's society.

The interaction of all the planned ingredients for this meeting which worked so well to make the program memorable seem, in retrospect, to be held in place by the two most prominent Catholic speakers who were invited to this meeting. Both of these speakers emphasized Merton's contributions to today's society as something always grounded in his consistent and prayerful contemplative stance. In the quite different addresses given by Fr. John Dear, S.J. and John Eudes Bamberger, O.C.S.O. we were reminded that no contemplative ever acts to avoid connections with society, but rather through a balance of prayer and action the contemplative always keeps the wider society's needs in a certain focus.

We were graced to have these two speakers help establish the tone for a meeting which has stimulated our thinking about the continuing contribution of Merton and his Cistercian charism. All this continues to be breathed into our society so full of a need to be grounded in the selflessness of the Holy Spirit.

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