

AFTER BONAVENTURE: KEEPING PEACE IN OUR HEARTS

by **Robert E. Daggy**

The Fourth General Meeting of The International Thomas Merton Society is now history, but what a wonderful memory that history is. It wasn't just that Thomas Merton had once been at St. Bonaventure University and in Olean (though that added a dimension that no other General Meeting has had). It wasn't exactly the "field trip" to the Cottage where Merton, Bob Lax and Ed Rice banged out novels on their typewriters, or the hikes to the unlikely heart-shaped pasture on the mountain above Bonaventure now called "Merton's Heart," or the walks up Mount Irenaeus, or the quick peek into Devereux Hall where Merton once lived. It wasn't only that the weather was glorious—bright, sunny days, just warm enough, almost unbelievably peaceful with the brilliant green of the mountains around us. Nor was it simply that this General Meeting featured some of the best talks of the four Meetings and generated amazingly good "vibes" (I hate that word, but it works here). No, it was everything which made it and will make it a memorable event for those of us who were there. A sense of peace permeated the campus, a peace I should think which Merton must have felt with a certain wistfulness while teaching there as he did on the very eve of the Second World War. The Meeting somehow called us to keep that peace in our hearts.

A highlight—some said a highlight of any General Meeting—was the talk by Merton's friend, the Argentinean poet Miguel Grinberg. Grinberg personified Merton's concept of "poetic innocence" in "Message to Poets" (which Merton wrote for him) and charmed us all with the brotherly peace that is his person. We then moved, appropriately enough, to Lawrence S. Cunningham's excellent "Springboard Address" on that very "Message to Poets." I urge ITMS members who weren't there to order both tapes.

In this issue, Christine Jensen Hogan contributes a poem expressing her reaction to the Fourth General Meeting. Thomas Del Prete, long interested in Merton's role as a teacher, has conducted interviews with several of Merton's students from St. Bonaventure. He incorporated some of these into his paper at the Meeting and we feature excerpts from these interviews. James Conner, OCSO, gave a provocative presidential address, exploring in his own heart themes of peace and social justice which he feels would certainly engage Merton were he alive today. His address sounds a theme of "peace in our hearts" for the issue.

Elsie F. Mayer reminds us of the fiftieth anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with her variations on Merton's *Original Child Bomb*. Daniel J. Adams reports to us on what the Buddhist monk, Merton's "brother" Thich Nhat Hanh, is doing twenty years after the end of the Vietnam War. Gerard Carrigan, OSB, contributes two poems: one on Auschwitz and one on Merton himself resting in peace. Our review section starts off with Richard Weber's review of William H. Shannon's new edition of Merton's essays on peace and social justice, *Passion for Peace*. Our cover features the drawing of Merton done for the jacket of this "peace" book. Three other new books are reviewed by Paul Ruttle, CP; Jonathan Montaldo; and Erlinda G. Paguio. We list the new Officers and Directors of the ITMS and report on the ITMS Recognitions awarded at the Meeting. Finally an unusually large number of "Publications By and About Merton" are listed.

The Fourth General Meeting may be history, but the ITMS moves on. The Fifth General Meeting will be held at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, in June 1997. Retiring President James Conner appointed the following Program Committee: Robert Grip, *chair*; Genevieve Cassani; Robert E. Daggy; Patrick F. Guyton; Patrick F. O'Connell, *ex officio*; Bonnie B. Thurston; Christopher J. Viscardi, SJ, *site coordinator*; and Monica Weis, SSJ.

After Bonaventure, let us all keep peace in our hearts!