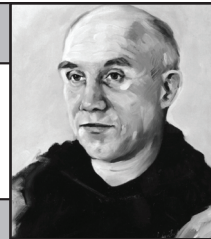


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 31, No. 1

Spring, 2024



## Legacy Trust Transition

On January 1, 2024, the Abbey of Gethsemani and the Thomas Merton Legacy Trust announced the resignation of Anne H. McCormick as a member of the Trust, effective immediately. Dr. David W. L. Golemboski has been named as her replacement, joining current trustees Peggy L. Fox and Mary R. Somerville.

The Merton Legacy Trust was established on November 14, 1967 to oversee Merton's literary estate, to arrange all copyright matters, and to take responsibility for future publication of Merton's work. The original trustees were Merton's friend and longtime agent Naomi Burton Stone, his friend and publisher James Laughlin, founder of New Directions, and Mrs. Thomasine (Tommie) O'Callaghan, a local friend of Merton and of the monastery. When Mrs. Stone retired in 1982, her place was taken by Robert Giroux, a Columbia classmate of Merton and editor of Merton's autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* and numerous subsequent Merton works, who served through 2007, when Ms. Fox, former editor at New Directions, succeeded him. In 2009, Mrs. O'Callaghan retired and Ms. Somerville, former president of the American Library Association, joined the Trust.

Anne McCormick began working with the Merton Legacy Trust in 1975 as its secretary, at the invitation of Naomi Burton Stone, and was subsequently named as a Trustee after the death of James Laughlin in 1997. In 2013 the International Thomas Merton Society presented her with its "Louie" award for her significant contributions to Merton studies through her work as a Trustee. She has now assumed the role of Trustee Emerita.

David Golemboski, Associate Professor of Government & International Affairs at Augustana

University, Sioux Falls, SD, is a former president of the International Thomas Merton Society and current co-editor of *The Merton Annual*. He formerly worked as a lobbyist for NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby. He completed his Ph.D. at Georgetown University in 2016, and also holds a B.A. from the University of Louisville and an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School.

The complete collection of Anne McCormick's Merton Legacy Trust files, covering the history of Merton publication from its early days to the present, has been donated to the Bellarmine Thomas Merton Center.

## Victor A. Kramer (1939-2023)

Victor A. Kramer, a founding member of the International Thomas Merton Society and longtime co-editor of *The Merton Annual*, died after a brief illness on December 1, 2023 at the age of 84. Born October 21, 1939 in Youngstown, OH to Edward and Leota Kramer, he grew up in Waco, TX where his family moved in 1942. After graduating from Reicher Catholic High School in 1957, he received a B.A. degree from Saint Edward's University in 1961, an M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1963 and his Ph.D. from that university in 1966, with a dissertation on James Agee. He was a member of the faculty at Marquette University, Georgia State University and Spring Hill College, Atlanta, where he also completed a two-year program for Certification as a Spiritual Director, and subsequently served in this capacity for the rest of his life. Following his retirement from Georgia State, he served as the director of the Aquinas Center at Emory University.

The 14 books he wrote or edited include works on Agee, Walker Percy and the Harlem Renaissance, and his research also dealt with important Southern writers such as Andrew Lytle,

Peter Taylor and Flannery O'Connor. But he is best known for his pioneering work on Thomas Merton, especially his groundbreaking 1984 volume on Merton in the Twayne's United States Authors series, reissued in a revised edition as *Thomas Merton, Monk and Artist* by Cistercian Publications in 1988. In 1996 he edited *Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years: 1960-1963*, the fourth volume of Merton's complete journals.

In 1987, along with his wife Dr. Dewey Weiss Kramer, he was a founding member of the International Merton Society, and he served on the ITMS Board of Directors during the period 1997-2003. In 2005 he received its "Louie" Award for Outstanding Contributions to Merton Scholarship. The Kramers were also founding co-editors of *The Merton Annual*, for which Victor was the primary initiator and its longest serving co-editor, continuing in that role until 2008.

He was a member St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Decatur, GA, and was a frequent visitor to and speaker at Holy Spirit Monastery in Conyers, GA.

His funeral mass was celebrated on December 18 at St. Thomas More. He is survived by Dewey, his wife of sixty years, their children Jerome and Sarah and their families.

#### **Edward K. Kaplan (1942-2023)**

Edward K. Kaplan, longtime member of the International Thomas Merton Society and preeminent scholar of the relationship between Merton and Jewish thought, died February 7, 2024 in Dedham, MA. He was born and raised in Newton, MA, son of businessman and noted early civil rights activist Kivie Kaplan and his wife Emily. He was educated at Brown University, graduating in 1964, followed by graduate study at Columbia University where he received an M.A. in 1966 and a Ph.D. in French Literature in 1970. After beginning his teaching career at Amherst College, he joined the faculty at Brandeis University in 1978, becoming the Kevy and Hortense Kaiserman Professor in the Humanities in 2003 and retiring in 2015. He served as Chair of the Department of Romance Studies, Chair of the Program in Religious Studies and Research Associate in the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry. His research interests

included French language and literature, particularly French Romanticism, U.S. religious history and thought, focusing on the work of Thomas Merton among others, and especially the life and work Abraham Joshua Heschel, on whom he published four highly regarded volumes. He was also author of eleven other books and more than a hundred and fifty articles and reviews. He was a visiting professor at the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris (2006) and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (2012).

He was a frequent presenter at ITMS General Meetings, and his articles and reviews on Merton appeared in *Journal of Religion*, *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal*, *Spiritus*, and the volumes *Thomas Merton: Pilgrim in Process* (1983), *Merton and Judaism: Holiness in Words* (2003) and *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton's Message of Hope* (2015). He was the principal organizer and chair of the conference on Merton and Judaism held at the Adath Jeshurun Synagogue in Louisville, KY in February 2002, which served as the basis for the *Merton and Judaism* volume, for which he provided the Introduction.

His memorial service was held at Temple Sinai in Sharon, MA on February 9, 2024. He is survived by his wife Janna (Eugenia Lipmanov) Kaplan; their children Jeremy, Aaron and Sima and their families.

#### **Russo Chapter Grants**

The International Thomas Merton Society invites applications for grants from ITMS chapters and affiliates to provide financial support, up to a maximum of \$500 each, for chapter/affiliate events, including but not limited to inviting visiting speakers. These grants honor the memory of Anthony (Tony) Russo (1941-2022), founder of the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky ITMS Chapter, longtime ITMS Chapters Coordinator, and frequent conductor of Chapters Workshops at ITMS General Meetings. They are funded through the generosity of his wife Josie. Applications must include a detailed proposal of the project for which the grant will be used, a statement of how the project will contribute to the work of the chapter, and a proposed expense budget, including disclosure of any other sources of funding awarded or applied for, with amounts received or requested. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2024. Applications will be

reviewed by an appointed committee and approved by the ITMS Board. Awards must be used between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Following the event, award recipients are required to submit by July 31, 2025 an accurate expense account and a report on the implementation of the project. Completed applications for grants, or requests for further information, should be sent for forwarding to the committee chair to ITMS Resident Secretary Dr. Paul M. Pearson, International Thomas Merton Society, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville KY 40205; e-mail: [merton@bellarmine.edu](mailto:merton@bellarmine.edu).

### **Tuesdays with Merton Series**

The Tuesdays with Merton webinar series, cosponsored by the International Thomas Merton Society and the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, takes place on the second Tuesday of each month on Zoom. Recent presentations include Leslye Colvin: "Merton: An Invitation to Unbind Him and Ourselves" (February 13) and Sophronia Scott: "Courageous Conversations on Death with Thomas Merton" (March 12). The April 9 presentation will be given by Robert Ellsberg entitled: "'It's the Direction that Matters': How Sister Wendy Beckett Changed Her Mind about Merton." On May 14, David Odorisio will speak on "Lessons from the Lost Coast: Exploring Thomas Merton in California." After a summer hiatus, Julie Leininger Pycior will give the September 10 presentation entitled: "Despite Everything and Because Everything Is at Stake: Bearing Witness with the Help of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day." Gray Matthews' October 8 presentation is entitled "Contemplative Mayhem." All presentations take place at 8 p.m. EDT/EST. For further information and to register for these programs, see: [merton.org/TWM/](http://merton.org/TWM/). To view past presentations in the series see: [merton.org/ITMS/TWM/TWM-Archive.aspx](http://merton.org/ITMS/TWM/TWM-Archive.aspx).

### **Merton Happenings**

In January 2024, Christopher Pramuk taught a 4-day graduate course at Lexington Theological Seminary entitled "Thomas Merton: Witness to Peace."

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 2, Dr. Jacques Soulié of the Suriyakantha Centre for Art & Culture in Kandy,

Sri Lanka, held a bilingual (English/French) musical program entitled "Le Moine Foudroyé" ("Meditating with Fireflies") to celebrate the life and work of Thomas Merton, in association with the opening of a photographic exhibition on Cistercian Art by Janaka Samarakoon, to run until July 31, 2024; for further information see: [suriyakantha.org/en/article/thomas-merton-meditating-with-fireflies](http://suriyakantha.org/en/article/thomas-merton-meditating-with-fireflies).

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 9, Hugh Turley spoke on "Thomas Merton's Betrayers," to students at St. Anselm's Abbey School in Washington, DC.

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 10, Monica Weis, SSJ led a day of reflection entitled "Exploring the World of Thomas Merton" at Linwood Spirituality Center, Rhinebeck, NY.

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 20, Ramond Carr delivered the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture at Bellarmine University entitled "Thelonius & the Monk: The Musicality of Thomas Merton & Its Meaning for Our Moment."

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 22, Douglas Hertler presented his one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity" at the Church of the Incarnation in New York City.

\*\*\*\*\*

On February 24, Douglas Hertler presented his one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity" at the Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford, CT, as part of a day-long retreat.

\*\*\*\*\*

On March 7, Fernando Beltrán Lavador gave a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton y 'La paciente arquitectura de la paz'" ("Thomas Merton and 'The Patient Architecture of Peace'") at the Pontifical University of Salamanca, Spain, part of a celebration of the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas.

\*\*\*\*\*

On March 11-13, Mark Meade led a retreat entitled "A Lenten Visit to Merton's Gethsemani" at the Nazareth Retreat Center, Nazareth, KY. The program, which included a session at the Abbey of Gethsemani, was repeated March 13-15.

### **Upcoming Events**

On April 18, 2024, David Odorisio will give a

presentation on his new book *Thomas Merton in California* at Bart's Books, Ojai, CA; for further information see [bartsbooksojai.com](http://bartsbooksojai.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

On April 20, Fernando Beltrán Lavador will make a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton: 'The Eye Which Opens to His Presence'" as part of a symposium organized by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Philip Neri at their Casa d'Espiritualitat Sant Felip Neri in Barcelona, Spain.

\*\*\*\*\*

On April 30, David Odorisio will give a presentation on his new book *Thomas Merton in California* at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, CA.

\*\*\*\*\*

On May 2 David Odorisio will give a presentation entitled "Thomas Merton in California: Contemplative Christianity and the Transformation of the Self" at St. Columba's Episcopal Retreat Center, Inverness, CA; for further information see: [www.stcolumbasinverness.org/iona-lecture-series-david-odorisio](http://www.stcolumbasinverness.org/iona-lecture-series-david-odorisio).

\*\*\*\*\*

On May 3, David Odorisio will give a presentation on his new book *Thomas Merton in California* at The Alembic, Berkeley, CA; for further information see [berkeleyalembic.org](http://berkeleyalembic.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

On May 18 & 19, David Odorisio will give a presentation on his new book *Thomas Merton in California* at Christ Episcopal Church, Eureka, CA; for further information see [christchurcheureka.org](http://christchurcheureka.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

On May 31-June 2, Rev. Bill Sheehan, OMI, Douglas Hertler and Sr. Susan Zemgulis, OP will lead a weekend retreat entitled "A Window into Thomas Merton" at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, Niskayuna, NY, that will include a performance of Douglas Hertler's one-person play "Merton and Me: A Living Trinity." The retreat is offered both in-person and virtually via Zoom. For further information, see: <https://www.mychurchevents.com/calendar/57658696/event/270063464/2024-05-31>; or call: 518-393-4169; or email: [dslcny@nybiz.rr.com](mailto:dslcny@nybiz.rr.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

On June 7, David Odorisio will give a virtual presentation on his new book *Thomas Merton in California* at Kansas City Friends of Jung, Roeland Park, KS; for further information see [kcjung.org](http://kcjung.org).

### Chapter and Affiliate News

On January 21, 2024, the Chicago Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society hosted a presentation by chapter member Dr. Pauline Viviano, discussing "The Trials and Tribulations of Contemplative Prayer with a Moment or Two of Joy." On February 18, Steven Denny spoke to the chapter on "Praying with Authenticity: The Merton Prayer." For further information, contact chapter coordinator Mike Brennan at 773-447-3989; email: [cc.itms@gmail.com](mailto:cc.itms@gmail.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

On January 27, the Corpus Christi, New York City ITMS Chapter hosted a presentation by Jonathan Montaldo entitled "Thomas Merton: Wisdom's Voice for Our Time?" at Corpus Christi Church, in celebration of the birthday of Thomas Merton. The meeting also included reflections from members Julie Leininger Pycior and Jim Robinson on their own journeys with Merton, and a discussion of the future of the chapter. For further information see the chapter website: [www.thomasmertonnyc.org](http://www.thomasmertonnyc.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

On April 9, Kathie O'Callaghan, eldest child of Frank and Tommie O'Callaghan, will address the Belmar, NJ ITMS Chapter by way of Zoom at 7 p.m. EDT. She will talk about her childhood memories when her parents hosted Merton many times at their family home in Louisville, as well as going on picnics at the monastery with Merton and several other monks. This virtual presentation is open to all. Those wishing to attend should contact chapter Coordinator Gregory Ryan at: [GJRyan@WCCM.org](mailto:GJRyan@WCCM.org) to receive the Zoom link on the day of the presentation.

Send all Merton-related news to:

**Pat O'Connell**  
**Box 3219**  
**Gannon University**  
**Erie, PA 16541**  
**[oconnell001@gannon.edu](mailto:oconnell001@gannon.edu)**

*The ITMS Newsletter is also available online at:*  
**[www.merton.org/ITMS](http://www.merton.org/ITMS)**