

## Envoi

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*George A. Kilcourse, Jr*

This sixteenth volume of *The Merton Annual* calls to mind the rites of passage that a sixteenth birthday symbolizes in North American culture. In this case, we celebrate a marked maturity in Merton scholarship and related 'Studies in Culture, Spirituality and Social Concerns' (as our subtitle heralds). *The Merton Annual* affords students of Mertoniana a unique record and assessment of developments in what is often described as 'the Merton industry'.

Since my first contributions, 'The Monk as a "Marginal" Person' and 'A Shy Wild Deer': The "True Self" in Thomas Merton's Poetry', appeared in Volumes 2 and 4 of *The Merton Annual*, my involvement in this publication has rewarded me in unexpected ways. As co-editor, I enjoy friendships with an ever widening network of diverse authors who submitted their work for consideration. Perhaps the most rewarding experience is to serve as midwife, encouraging scholars to refine, revise, and 'tweak' their contributions into original and articulate essays. I sincerely thank each of them for their patience and perseverance.

To edit *The Merton Annual* means to rely upon the expertise of recognized scholars who ensure our integrity and reputation as a refereed journal. Each has been generous with timely and careful evaluations of submissions; I thank them for alerting us to various lacunae in manuscripts and for recommending revisions that improved the quality of every volume. In a similar manner, book reviewers brought special skills and learning to their task of appraising both Merton studies and related titles of interest. In the case of both referees and reviewers I have often relied heavily on distinguished members of The Catholic Theological Society of America to improve the quality of *The Merton Annual*.

If there is one most memorable part of my role as editor, it has been my interviews with persons who knew Merton and offered their

reflections about that relationship. Each of these friends opened their minds and hearts by intimating the significance of Merton's place in his or her own life. In the interviews we stood on sacred ground as each voiced interpretations that offer our readers a fresh perspective and a living context.

When negotiating with The Liturgical Press to publish the new series of *The Merton Annual* (volumes 6-10), Mrs Elizabeth ('Lib') Simon, a Louisville Catholic philanthropist and friend, rescued our efforts. She contributed the services of her family-owned Publishers Printing Company, a generous subvention that made possible the production of those volumes. I sincerely thank Lib Simon for her kindness and grace.

Bellarmino University has supported my work as an editor of *The Merton Annual* by granting me course-release time during the semesters when I served as primary editor of a volume (6, 9, 11, 13, and 15). This is another genuine but quiet expression of President Joseph J. McGowan's support for Merton studies at Bellarmine.

Finally, I thank my co-editor Victor A. Kramer for eleven fruitful years thus far of collaboration. To play on the 'advice' that Merton gave to his book, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, 'Well, Merton scholarship, you're grown up now. It's time to go out and meet people' -- to try out your place in the forum that is less insular, more genuinely catholic.