

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

**Eighteenth General Meeting
International Thomas Merton Society – June 22-25, 2023
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana**

“Sophia Comes Forth, Reaching”

“Now the Wisdom of God, Sophia, comes forth, reaching
from ‘end to end mightily.’”

Thomas Merton, *Hagia Sophia*

In his poem *Hagia Sophia* and other writings, Thomas Merton wrote of divine wisdom, often personified as Sophia. Representing both the Holy Spirit and the mystical idea of divine wisdom, the figure of Sophia played an important role in Thomas Merton's spirituality and writing. This mystical image represents the divine in active terms, reaching into our souls and challenging us to new ways of living, of loving our neighbors, of standing for justice. Moreover, in Sophia Merton recognized an experience of God rendered in a feminine face. The significance of the divine feminine in Merton's life and work connects aptly to the location of our gathering in 2023. Saint Mary's College, a Catholic women's liberal arts college, has long been a pioneering institution in women's higher education, and intersected with Merton's life in important ways. Merton corresponded with members of the Saint Mary's community, including then-President Sr. Madeleva Wolff, and it was Saint Mary's that first published Merton's 1948 book *What is Contemplation?* More generally, Merton was shaped in important ways by women in his life — from his mother to the Baronness Catherine de Hueck Doherty to his longtime literary agent Naomi Burton Stone — and through his writings and correspondence engaged in extensive dialogue with women writers.

We invite proposals for presentations related to the conference theme on topics such as (but not limited to): contemplation and mysticism; mysticism and prophecy; Merton and images of the divine; the divine feminine and feminine images of God; Merton's relationship to Saint Mary's College; the 75th anniversaries of *The Seven Storey Mountain* and *What is Contemplation?*; intersectional issues of justice and gender; women's leadership in social change; and Merton's relationship to and/or work on women writers such as Simone Weil, Dorothy Day, Denise Levertov, Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Joan Baez, Hannah Arendt, Victoria Ocampo, Raissa Maritain, Sister Mary Luke Tobin, Naomi Burton Stone, Rachel Carson, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Carolyn Hammer, Faith Andrews, Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, Julian of Norwich, and Angela of Foligno, among others.

Session formats include:

- 1. Scholarly Papers** designed for presentation in twenty minutes for an audience of academics and non-academics (8-10 double-spaced pages, maximum).
- 2. Workshops** designed for presentation in ninety minutes to involve interactive participation incorporating adult learning strategies and/or small group discussion.
- 3. Creative/Dramatic Presentations** designed for presentation in ninety minutes using music poetry, dance or other media to provide insight into aspects of Merton's life or work.
- 4. Guided Meditation/Prayer Sessions** designed for presentation in ninety minutes, particularly those using Merton's writings as a framework for prayer and meditative reflection.

Proposals of no more than 250 words and a short biographical statement (one to two sentences) should be submitted by **October 15, 2022** by e-mail attachment to itms2023@merton.org or by mail to: ITMS 2023, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, Kentucky 40205 USA.