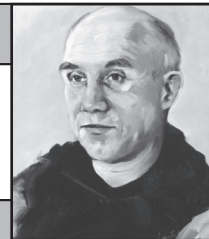


INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

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## Virtual Conference Plans Set

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Seventeenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society, originally scheduled to take place at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, will instead be held virtually. The theme of the conference is: "Thou Inward Stranger," taken from Merton's poem "Stranger" (*The Strange Islands*, 1957), with presentations focusing both on the inward journey of contemplation and on the outward encounter with the stranger and outcast in society. The online conference will take place June 23-26, 2021, with sessions scheduled for 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. (US Eastern daylight time) each day. The conference will include four plenary sessions, 33 concurrent session presentations, 10 workshops, guided prayer and special presentations, the ITMS presidential address and a prayer service.

The conference will begin on Wednesday June 23 with a general welcome and an interfaith prayer service from 1-2:30 p.m. Five concurrent sessions of papers, workshops and prayer sessions will be held from 4-5:30, and at 8 p.m. there will be a plenary session featuring a presentation by **Bonnie B. Thurston**, founding member and past president of the ITMS. On Thursday, five concurrent sessions will be held both at 1 p.m. and at 4 p.m., and at the 8 p.m. plenary session the presentation will be given by **Andrew L. Prevot**, associate professor of theology at Boston College. Friday's schedule will be similar to that of the previous day, with concurrent sessions at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. and the evening plenary session given by **Marie Dennis**, former co-president of Pax Christi International. On Saturday, the final series of concurrent sessions at 1 p.m. will be followed at 4 p.m. by the presidential address by ITMS President David Golemboski and presentation of the 2021

"Louie" awards, followed by a moderated conference discussion. The conference will conclude with a joint presentation from 8:00-9:30 p.m. by singer, songwriter and author **Carrie Newcomer** and writer, speaker and activist **Parker Palmer**.

The fee for the conference will be \$40 dollars plus a \$2.50 processing fee. Further information and access to the conference registration form can be found at: <http://merton.org/2021/default.aspx>.

## ITMS Board Elections

As provided in the Bylaws of the International Thomas Merton Society, officers and directors of the society serve for two years. Terms run from General Meeting to General Meeting. Officers are elected by the Board of Directors, and board members by the membership at large. Elections for the Board of Directors will take place in the coming weeks by both online and paper voting. Members whose email addresses are on file will receive an invitation to vote electronically no later than April 1. Members with no available email address will be sent a paper ballot. Any ITMS members who would prefer to vote by mail may request a paper ballot by contacting the ITMS prior to April 22 at [merton@bellarmine.edu](mailto:merton@bellarmine.edu) or by calling 502-272-8177. Six directors are selected from a slate of twelve candidates assembled by the Nominating Committee: Judith Valente, chair; Christine M. Bochen; Deborah P. Kehoe; Emma McDonald; and Paul Pynkoski.

The following are candidates for the board:

**Rose Marie Berger** is a poet and peace activist who is poetry editor and senior editor for *Sojourners* magazine, for which she writes a regular column. She presented the keynote address, "Direct Transmission of Faith," at the ITMS Sixteenth General Meeting in 2019. She is co-editor of *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and World* (2020) and author

of the poetry collection *Bending the Arch* (2019).

**Elizabeth Burkemper** is a graduate student at Yale Divinity School, pursuing a Master of Arts in Religion with a concentration in religion and ecology. She earned her undergraduate degree in Peace Studies and Sustainability at George Washington University. A former Daggy Scholar (2017), she will be a presenter on “Countering ‘Strangeness’ in Late Capitalism” at the ITMS Seventeenth General Meeting in June 2021.

**Raymond Carr**, formerly Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics at Pepperdine University, has also taught as visiting faculty in Germany, Switzerland and China. A member of the Merton Society since 2013, he has published and presented papers at ITMS conferences, and has taught Merton in his classes as well as in the ENGAGE program, a Lilly-funded initiative to interest high school students in religious topics.

**Douglas Hertler** is the author and performer of the one-man play *Merton and Me: A Living Trinity*, inspired by the 2015 ITMS conference at Bellarmine University. He is a member of the Corpus Christi ITMS Chapter in New York City and debuted his play there in September 2018. He guides frequent retreats on the contemplative life, using the works of Merton and other spirituality writers.

**Alan Kolp** is a college and seminary Professor of Historical and Spiritual Studies at Baldwin Wallace University in Cleveland. A member of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and a Benedictine Oblate, he currently serves on the ITMS Board of Directors. He teaches, speaks and writes about Merton, publishing in *The Merton Seasonal*, *Merton and the Protestant Tradition* (2016) and elsewhere.

**Thomas Malewitz**, a philosophy and theology teacher at St. Xavier High School in Louisville, KY, also teaches at Bellarmine University, St. Meinrad School of Theology and Spalding University. He earned a Ph.D. in Education and Social Change from Bellarmine University and is the author of *Authenticity, Passion, and Advocacy: Approaching Adolescent Spirituality from the Life and Wisdom of Thomas Merton* (2020).

**Gray Matthews**, Assistant Professor of Communications at the University of Memphis, is a current member of the ITMS board of directors. He

has served as coordinator of the Memphis Chapter since 2001 and was site coordinator of the 2007 ITMS General Meeting in Memphis. He has also served as co-editor of *The Merton Annual*. He has been a frequent presenter at ITMS conferences and has published numerous essays on Merton.

**Emma McDonald** is currently a Ph.D. student at Boston College, where she studies bioethics, Catholic moral theology and women’s health. She holds a Master of Arts in Religion degree from Yale Divinity School. A Daggy Scholar in 2017, she presented a paper at the 2019 ITMS General meeting on Merton, Robert Lax and Fanny Howe. While at Yale, she coordinated a monthly Merton Reading Group.

**Bernadette McNary-Zak**, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, TN, received a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto with a focus on monastic behavior in the later Roman Empire. She was a presenter at the ITMS Sixteenth General Meeting in 2019 and is author of *Humble Aspiration: Constructing an Early Christian Ideal* (2020). She is currently working on a study of the Poor Clares Monastery in Memphis.

**Joseph Q. Raab**, Professor of Religious Studies and Theology at Siena Heights University in Adrian, MI, has served as co-editor of *The Merton Annual* since 2011. He has been a frequent presenter at ITMS conferences, and his essays have appeared in *Theology Today*, *The Merton Annual*, *The Merton Seasonal* and elsewhere. He is author of *Opening New Horizons: Seeds of a Theology of Religious Pluralism in Thomas Merton’s Dialogue with D. T. Suzuki* (2021).

**Kathleen Witkowska Tarr** is the founder of the Alaska Chapter of the ITMS and author of *We Are All Poets Here: Thomas Merton’s Journey to Alaska – A Shared Story about Spiritual Seeking* (2018). Her essays have appeared in *We Are Already One: Thomas Merton’s Message of Hope* (2015) and *Merton & Indigenous Wisdom* (2019). She is a former Mullin Scholar at the University of Southern California Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies.

**Peter Vale** is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at Boston College with an emphasis on the Hebrew Bible. He formerly taught theology at St. John Neumann High School in Naples, FL,

and has studied at the North American College in Rome and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He was a participant at the 2019 ITMS conference, and has given presentations on Merton to various diocesan groups.

### Quenon Anniversary Celebrated

On August 28, 2020, the monastic community of the Abbey of Gethsemani celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the first vows of Br. Paul Quenon as a Cistercian monk. He entered the monastery in 1958 at the age of seventeen and received his initial monastic training from Thomas Merton as his novice master. In his informal remarks to the community to mark the occasion at the weekly chapter meeting on August 23, he recounted some of his many experiences over these decades at the monastery, commenting: “I spent the first ten years thinking I wasn’t good enough for the monastery and then the next ten years thinking the monastery wasn’t good enough for me!” He noted his service as a master of juniors both at Gethsemani and in Nigeria, his love for poetry and for photography, and his role in preserving the legacy of Thomas Merton. Br. Paul has served on the Board of Directors of the International Thomas Merton Society, spoken at Merton Society conferences, coordinated the ITMS chapter that meets at the abbey and hosted numerous groups visiting the monastery and Merton’s hermitage, particularly during the retreats for Daggy Scholars and General Meeting presenters held biennially at Gethsemani. Samples of both his photography and his poetry are available on the Abbey of Gethsemani website (<https://monks.org/monks-pages/br-paul>), which includes the 149-page volume *Exquisitely Small: A Mad Monk’s Haikus through the Seasons* (2020), available for free download. At the ITMS Seventeenth General Meeting he and ITMS Board Member Judith Valente will present a workshop entitled “Thomas Merton and the Art of Letter Writing,” based on their forthcoming book *How to Be: A Monk and a Journalist Reflect on Living & Dying, Purpose & Prayer, Forgiveness & Friendship* (2021).

### Merton Center 2020 Report

Like virtually every institution nationally and internationally, the functioning of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University was adversely

affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic in 2020. From late March until August the center was closed to visitors and subsequently open to researchers by appointment only. The daily staffing level was kept at 50% according to university regulations, with director Paul M. Pearson and assistant director Mark Meade alternating working from home.

However the work of the center in preserving and developing its collection was able to continue throughout the year, according to the annual report compiled by Paul Pearson. Highlights of the year’s work include:

- progress in refiling the center’s 20,395 pieces of correspondence between Merton and over 2,100 correspondents in archival hanging files;
- ongoing digitization of materials, especially as part of a project of developing digital collections available over the internet;
- digitizing of the center’s correspondence from Dorothy Day at the request of investigators working on her cause for canonization, as well as the center’s materials relating to Mother Teresa, for the Missionaries of Charity’s Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center;
- addition of over 260 items to the center’s digital collections, with over 1,100 publicly viewable and over 5,650 viewable at the center’s “self-service” kiosk;
- continuation of a project to provide digital access to the center’s collection of books used by Thomas Merton containing his marginalia and underlining, now including scans of selected pages from more than 240 books;
- addition to the collection of twenty masters and doctoral theses as well as numerous new publications, including foreign translations;
- acquisition of the papers of Tommie O’Callaghan, including books, correspondence and secondary materials, as well as artwork and photographs depicting Merton, three calligraphies by Merton and two paintings – “City Skyline” and “Long Island Shoreline” – by Owen Merton;
- correspondence of Thomas Merton and other monks with Peter Geist concerning the publication of the photo book *Monastic Life at Gethsemani*;

- addition of about forty pieces of Merton correspondence, with Maria Braz Chaves, Louise Goshu, Sr. Mary Madeleva Wolff, CSC and Bruno Paul Schlesinger;
- purchase of signed letter from Merton to Lewis Mumford;
- acquisition of signed copy (#22 of 50 numbered copies) of *What Ought I To Do? Sayings of the Desert Fathers*;
- acquisition of empty Mateus Rosé wine bottle from a November 1967 picnic at Gethsemani with Sr. Thérèse Lentfoehr;
- acquisition of mimeograph copy of “Peace in the Post-Christian Era” with handwritten dedication by Merton;
- gift of t-shirt worn by Merton bearing his laundry number.

The complete report can be accessed at: <http://merton.org/annualreport.aspx>.

#### **Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919-2021)**

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet, social activist, mentor to the Beat movement and correspondent with Thomas Merton, died on February 22, 2021 at the age of 101 of interstitial lung disease. Son of Carlo Ferlinghetti and Lyons Albertine Mendes-Monsanto, Ferlinghetti was born March 24, 1919 in Yonkers, NY, the youngest of five sons. His immigrant Italian father died before Lawrence was born, and his mother suffered a nervous breakdown shortly thereafter and was institutionalized. His early life was unsettled, as he was sent as a two-year-old to live with his mother's brother, Ludovic Monsanto, and his wife Emily; he was taken to France by his aunt when the marriage broke up, and after returning with her to New York spent some time in an orphanage before moving with her to live in the Bronxville household of the wealthy Bisland family, where Emily worked as a governess until her mysterious disappearance. Subsequently he was raised by the Bislands themselves. After graduating from the Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts, he attended the University of North Carolina, graduating in 1941.

Just prior to the entry of the United States into World War II, he joined the navy, commanded a subchaser and participated in the allied invasion of France and the American occupation of Japan, visiting

Nagasaki in the wake of the atomic bombing there, which led him to a strong anti-war stance. Returning to the United States, he earned a master's degree at Columbia University in 1947, and subsequently a doctorate in literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. He moved to San Francisco in 1950 and the following year married Selden Kirby-Smith, a graduate of Swarthmore and Columbia, a union that lasted until 1976. He taught briefly at the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco, but his controversial opinions led to his resignation after one year there. (Ironically, the university now sponsors a Lawrence Ferlinghetti Fellowship program for young poets of minority backgrounds.)

In 1953, he and partner Peter Martin opened City Lights Bookshop, the country's first all-paperback bookstore, in San Francisco's North Beach district, which became a gathering place for the growing bohemian movement that became known as the Beats and continues to be a cultural beacon today. When Martin left a year later Ferlinghetti became sole proprietor of the shop. Soon City Lights began operating its own publishing arm, including work by poets Kenneth Rexroth, Kenneth Patchen, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, Philip Lamantia, Denise Levertov, Diane diPrima and Ferlinghetti himself. In 1956 City Lights published Allen Ginsburg's controversial poem *Howl*, which led to Ferlinghetti's arrest and trial for violating obscenity laws, at the conclusion of which he was found innocent of the charges due to the “redeeming social significance” the judge considered the poem to possess, a landmark ruling in First Amendment law. Ferlinghetti himself was a prolific poet, best known for his 1958 volume *A Coney Island of the Mind*, a New Directions publication that has sold 1 million copies since it was first published. He was also a prominent social activist, calling himself a populist and philosophical anarchist, getting arrested in a 1967 antiwar protest. In 1998 he was named the first poet laureate of San Francisco. He received the Poetry Society of America's Frost Medal in 2003 as well as the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award from the American Civil Liberties Union, among numerous other awards. His final work was the autobiographical novel *Little Boy*, published by Doubleday in 2019, his

centennial year. He is survived by his son Lorenzo, his daughter Julie Sasser, and three grandchildren.

Ferlinghetti and Thomas Merton, who shared a common publisher and friend in James Laughlin of New Directions, first came in contact in June 1961 when Ferlinghetti wrote to Merton about publishing his prose poem *Original Child Bomb*, which James Laughlin had lent him, in the first issue of *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, a new publishing venture of City Lights. Instead Merton suggested printing “Chant to Be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces,” which subsequently appeared as the opening piece in *Journal 1* (5-7). Six letters from Merton to Ferlinghetti, four from 1961 and two from 1968, are included in Merton’s *The Courage for Truth: Letters to Writers* (1993); ten unpublished letters from Ferlinghetti to Merton, eight from 1961 and two from 1968, are in the archives of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University. On his spring 1968 trip to the west coast, Merton visited San Francisco and met Ferlinghetti, staying overnight at the City Lights apartment on May 16, as he relates in his journal entries for that day and for May 21 (*Other Side of the Mountain* 101-102, 120). Ferlinghetti was interviewed by Paul Wilkes for his 1984 *Merton: A Film Biography*, and appears in that film talking about Merton’s visit and reading from Merton’s “Chant.” The transcription of the interview is included in slightly abridged form in Wilkes’ book *Merton by Those Who Knew Him Best* (1984) 28-31, and in complete form in *The Merton Annual 22* (2009) 220-26. Robert Inchausti’s article “‘Have You Read the Old Testament Prophets Lately?’: Merton, Ferlinghetti, and the (Near) Remaking of a Counterculture” in *Thomas Merton and the Counterculture: A Golden String* (2016) 70-80 examines the relationship. Following Ferlinghetti’s death senior editor James T. Keane wrote an online article entitled “Farewell Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the non-conforming Catholic poet who inspired Bob Dylan and Thomas Merton” on the *America* magazine website (<https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2021/02/25/ferlinghetti-catholic-poet-thomas-merton-bob-dylan-240101?>), citing the Wilkes interview extensively.

### John Giuliani (1932-2021)

Father John Battista Giuliani, artist, founder of a contemplative community and portraitist of Thomas Merton, died January 2, 2021. Son of Italian immigrants, he grew up in Greenwich, CT and was drawn early in life to artistic pursuits. After earning an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, inspired by his reading of Thomas Merton’s *Seven Story Mountain* he began seminary studies and in 1960 was ordained for the Diocese of Bridgeport, CT. With master’s degrees in classical literature and art, theology and American Studies, he taught Latin, Humanities and American Film for fifteen years at the Bridgeport diocesan seminary, as well teaching and serving as chaplain at Fairfield and Sacred Heart Universities. He was founder of the Thomas Merton House of Hospitality in Bridgeport and of three other houses of hospitality/soup kitchens in the diocese.

In 1976 Father Giuliani founded Benedictine Grange, a small contemplative community in West Redding, CT. In 1990 he undertook a year-long study of Eastern Christian iconography with Russian icon master Vladislav Andreyev at the School of Sacred Art in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, and subsequently began painting modern icons with images depicting Christ and Christian saints with the faces and imagery of Native Americans, in order to recognize their original spiritual presence on this land. His works have been exhibited in churches and museums across the country, and his icon of Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American saint, was presented at the Vatican to Pope Benedict XVI.

After 9/11, Father Giuliani spent nine months volunteering at the Ground Zero morgue in New York City, praying over and blessing the human remains recovered from the World Trade Center. Fr. Giuliani founded the Amalia & Nicola Giuliani Foundation for Religion and the Arts to honor his parents and to support organizations working in the areas of religion, the arts and education.

He served as principal liturgical celebrant during the Seventh General Meeting of the Thomas Merton Society in 2001. Three of his portraits of Thomas Merton have appeared on the covers of *The Merton Seasonal*: in Spring 1988 (13.2); Summer 2015 (40.2)

– the Merton Centenary Icon; and most recently in Spring 2020 (45.1), a detail from his mural in the Nouwen Chapel at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT. They can be viewed online on the Merton Society website at: <http://merton.org/ITMS/Seasonal/Covers/13-2.jpg>; <http://merton.org/ITMS/Seasonal/Covers/40-2.jpg>; and <http://merton.org/ITMS/Seasonal/Covers/45-1.jpg>.

On February 2, an on-line evening of remembrance in honor of Fr. Giuliani was celebrated, sponsored by the Kathleen Deignan, CND Institute for Earth and Spirit at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY; it can be accessed at: <https://www.facebook.com/MusicBySound/videos/10158408022474011>.

#### **Mary Louise Stewart (1937-2021)**

Longtime ITMS member Mary Louise (Bunny) Stewart died peacefully at her home in Toronto on January 12, 2021. Born March 26, 1937, daughter of the late Norman Allan and Margaret K. (Peggy) Stewart, she worked as an organizational counselor in the areas of volunteer services and pastoral services. She drew on her long experience in this field for her 2016 book *The Church as a Volunteer Organization: Common Sense Approaches to Creating Structure*. A parishioner of the Anglican Church of St. Aidan in Toronto, she was an oblate of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine and a Cistercian Lay Contemplative Associate. A member of the Merton Society since 1991, she served for many years as coordinator of the Toronto chapter of the ITMS. She facilitated workshops at ITMS General Meetings in 1999 and 2005, as well as at conferences of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Her poetry appeared in *The Merton Seasonal* 30.3 (Fall 2005), 34.3 (Fall 2009) and 37.1 (Spring 2012) as well as in *The Merton Journal* in Great Britain 11.2 (Advent 2004), in which her article “Growing a Merton Workshop Within” also appeared. She is survived by her sister Judith Carpenter, two nephews and four great-nieces and -nephews. A celebration of her life is planned for a later date at the convent of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine in Toronto.

#### **Richard V. Croghan (1935-2020)**

On October 26, 2020, longtime Merton Society member Richard V. Croghan died shortly after suffering a stroke. Born August 2, 1935, he entered

the Society of Jesus and served as a Jesuit missionary in the Philippines; he was the editor of the anthology *The Development of Philippine Literature in English (since 1900)* (1975). After leaving the priesthood and marrying his wife Lillian he entered academic life and worked for many years as Associate Dean of Continuing Education at the University of New Mexico, where for nearly twenty years he taught courses on Thomas Merton at the Division of Continuing Education. A serious competitive runner until almost the end of his life, he also mentored young people as a track and field coach. For three decades he lectured and gave retreats on Merton for various New Mexico groups, churches and spiritual centers. His article “Mahanambata Brahmachari and Thomas Merton” appeared in the Summer 2018 issue (43.2) of *The Merton Seasonal*. His former student D. Noyes has written of him: “Dick was a wonderful teacher. I took his class on Thomas Merton and his class taught me about Merton but more about generosity. Dick was a scholar with wonderful materials that he shared with us. But his attitude of kindness, of deep listening to our questions, of a sense of wonder about his material was truly inspiring. . . . That one class and what I learned inspires me to this day with my own students – to give, to be generous, to have wonder with what you teach but also to have wonder with life itself. May he rest in peace.”

#### **Tuesdays with Merton Series**

On March 9, the “Tuesdays with Merton” series will feature Fr. Bryan Massingale on the topic “Merton, Malcolm X and Catholic Engagement with Black Lives Matter” at 8 p.m. Future presentations include: Kathleen Deignan, CND – “Overshadowed: Thomas Merton and *The Cloud of Unknowing*” on April 13; Michael W. Higgins – “Merton and David Jones: Visionaries Both” on May 11; “Jim Forest – “An Army That Sheds No Blood: Thomas Merton’s Response to War” on June 8; Lynn R. Szabo – “Poetry as Spiritual Direction with Thomas Merton and Denise Levertov” on July 13; and Judith Valente – “Why We Still Read and Need Thomas Merton: A Personal Journey” on August 10. For further information see: <http://merton.org/ITMS/TWM/default.aspx#BNM>. To view past presentations in the series see: <http://merton.org/ITMS/TWM/TWM-Archive.aspx>.

### Call for Papers for Oakham 2022

The Thirteenth General Meeting and Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland is scheduled to be held April 6-8, 2022 at Oakham School, Rutland, England, the alma mater of Thomas Merton. The theme of the conference is “Where Is Our Hope?” based on Merton’s journal entry of April 15, 1965, and on his circular letter of Lent 1967, where he wrote: “the real root of Christian hope is the presence of the Risen Lord among us.” The conference will explore how this hope may be worked out in our lives, our communities and our world. Proposals are invited for papers and workshops on this theme, in the light of Merton’s life, work and witness, and should be submitted by July 24, 2021 on the proposal form available for download on the society website: [www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk). Papers should be 20-25 minutes in length, to be followed by 5-10 minutes for comments and questions; workshops are presentations which are more participatory in style, inviting audience participation through reflection, meditation, extended discussion and/or creative projects, with a time-frame of 45 minutes. Applicants will be notified whether their proposals have been accepted by August 31, 2021. Booking details will be available on the Society website in September 2021.

### ITMS Authors

Lucian Miller, scholar of Asian religions and Roman Catholic deacon, is the author of *The Hidden Side of the Mountain: Encounters with Wisdom’s Poor and Holy* (Fons Vitae, 2021 [\$17.95]), a memoir of his sabbaticals and research trips to Asia with his wife Bonnie that revealed themselves to be pilgrimages, influenced by the Eastern journey of Thomas Merton, to spiritual sites and spiritual insights amidst the poor and marginalized, “guided by a divine providence that would bear me more securely to become a citizen in an unexpected, more invisible world.” Poet and biographer Paul Mariani writes: “Reading Lucien Miller’s *The Other Side of the Mountain* can be a profoundly moving experience. It’s a game-changer, really, an extended meditation in line with Thomas Merton’s Asian Journals.”

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Jon M. Sweeney has recently published *Nicholas Black Elk: Medicine Man, Catechist, Saint* (Liturgical Press, 2020 [\$16.95 paper]), a volume in the “People of God” series of inspiring contemporary Catholics, the biography of the Lakota spiritual leader and Catholic catechist (1863-1950) who has been declared a servant of God, the initial stage in the process for canonization in the Catholic Church. Damian Costello, author of *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism* and vice-postulator of the cause of canonization for Nicholas Black Elk, writes: “Sweeney harnesses his gifts as a storyteller and puts Nicholas Black Elk where he belongs: with the greatest saints and mystics of the Christian tradition. A book for everyone, whether those looking for an introduction to Black Elk’s life or experts looking to see unseen facets of his witness.”

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Daniel P. Horan, OFM wrote the introduction (v-xxxix) for the most recent encyclical letter of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship* (Orbis, 2020 [\$20 paper]) in which he emphasizes that the allusion to the words of St. Francis of Assisi in the title points toward the Pope’s Franciscan lens for reading the gospel and the world. He highlights the Franciscan themes of *fraternitas*, poverty as rejection of possessiveness, a culture of encounter, and peacemaking and reconciliation as they appear in the pope’s text; he then traces the key elements of the document’s eight chapters that speak to numerous contemporary social issues, mentioning Merton’s “We are already one” presentation in Calcutta as having a similar message. He situates this document in the tradition of Catholic social teaching, particularly the principles of human dignity, the common good and solidarity, especially with the marginalized, and touches on the absence of women as examples and authorities in the text before returning to the Franciscan perspective of the encyclical as providing encouragement and challenge to its contemporary readers.

### New Merton Website

Albert Romkema, Lutheran pastor and noted collector of publications and memorabilia of Thomas Merton, which has been called “one of the finest [privately owned current] spiritual literary archives,”

has recently set up a “Merton Archives” website that features descriptions of each of the more than 2500 items in the collection, along with a gallery of images of covers and related illustrative material as well as a blog. The collection has recently expanded to include material by related figures including Dorothy Day, Robert Lax and Henri Nouwen. The site can be accessed at: [www.merton-artifacts.com](http://www.merton-artifacts.com).

### Merton Happenings

On October 14, 2020, Peter Savastano led a Scholars Forum presentation at Seton Hall University on his edited volume *Merton & Indigenous Wisdom*; it can be accessed at: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8EH7AjTXyPY>.

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Kathleen Tarr presented a four-week webinar entitled “Thomas Merton: Spiritual Explorer for Our Times” October 28 through November 18 for Opportunities for Lifelong Education, affiliated with University of Alaska Anchorage.

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On January 31, 2021, Douglas Hertler, Judith Valente and Paul Quenon, OCSO led an online retreat entitled “Heart Speaks to Heart: Thomas Merton’s Witness to Friendship,” sponsored by the ITMS and Mepkin Abbey; further details are available at: <http://merton.org/ITMS/retreat.aspx>.

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On February 20, Bonnie Thurston made a presentation via Zoom on “Thomas Merton’s Monastic Wisdom for These Times” for the Ninth Annual Symposium on Benedictine Spirituality, sponsored by the ecumenical group Friends of St. Benedict.

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On February 21 the Fifteenth Annual Thomas Merton Black History Month Lecture at Bellarmine University, entitled “‘Lead Me, Guide Me’: The Gift of Black Catholics to the Universal Church” was presented by ITMS Vice President Christopher Pramuk of Regis University. The recording of this lecture is available online and can be viewed at: <http://merton.org/Events/TMBHM15.aspx>.

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A recent TEDx talk by 2019 Daggy Scholar Anne Pearson exploring Merton’s writings on racism in the light of the Black Lives Matter

movement is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fFwi3T5xMU>.

### Upcoming Events

On March 2, 9, 16 and 23, Vanessa Hurst will lead a Bellarmine University continuing education class via Zoom entitled “Merton’s Last Message”; for further information see: <https://www.bellarmino.edu/ce>.

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On May 15, a webinar entitled “‘Where We Actually Are Is Where We Belong’: Thomas Merton on the Ethos of Stability” with James Cronin and Jim Forest, hosted by Anthony Purvis and sponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, will take place from 10:30 to noon, British time. For further information and Zoom access codes, email: [webinar@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk](mailto:webinar@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk).

### Chapter and Affiliate News

The Thomas Merton Contemplative Initiative, a program of the Kathleen Deignan, CND Institute for Earth and Spirit at Iona College, has sponsored “A Vow of Conversation” programs via Zoom on January 28 with Mary Margaret Funk, OSB and on February 10 with James Martin, SJ, on his new book *Learning to Pray*. For further information and to access past presentations, see: <https://www.iona.edu/academics/schools-institutes/kathleen-deignan-cnd-institute-earth-and-spirit>; or email: [kdeignan@iona.edu](mailto:kdeignan@iona.edu).

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On October 14, a dialogue on Thomas Merton’s *Woods, Shore, Desert* with Ron Dart and volume editor Joel Weishaus was presented via Zoom, sponsored by the Thomas Merton Society of Canada. On December 10, the Society sponsored a Zoom presentation by Michael W. Higgins entitled “What Would Thomas Merton Think of Donald Trump: A Justice Reflection.” For further information email: [tmsc@telus.net](mailto:tmsc@telus.net).

Send all Merton-related news to:

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