

**THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY
OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND**



**FACING THE
LIFE-AND-DEATH
ISSUES**

6-8 APRIL 2018 OAKHAM SCHOOL, RUTLAND

Twelfth General Meeting & Conference

Creative arts at Oakham 2018

Exhibition of Contemporary Artwork

Throughout the conference there will be an exhibition of artwork by Ric Stott in the foyer to the Wilson Auditorium. Ric will be creating some conference specific work as well as speaking about his art during our Saturday evening reception. He is participating in the Sunday Eucharist.

Cover image: ***Into Resistance***

Facing the Life-and-Death Issues

During 1961 Merton faced increasing opposition from the Trappist censors to his outspoken writings on the Cold War. It brought into sharp focus Merton's inner conflict between his monastic vow of obedience and his own conscience. In a letter to Dorothy Day of August 1961 he wrote that:

I don't feel that I can in conscience, at a time like this, go on writing about things like meditation, though that has its point. I cannot just bury my head in a lot of rather tiny and secondary monastic studies either. I think I have to face the big issues, the life-and-death issues.

And face them he did throughout the 1960s, most importantly the issues of war and of race, until his death in Bangkok. Indeed, on the day he died, 10th December 1968, in his final lecture 'Marxism and Monastic Perspectives', he saw the monk as not only one seeking transformation of consciousness, but also, leading on from such a liberation, as 'essentially someone who takes up a critical attitude towards the world and its structures'. As he saw it, one could no longer rely on structures as they may be destroyed at any moment by a political power or force. For us, fifty years later, Merton's concerns seem ever more prescient.



Image: *Into Unknowing*
by Ric Stott

Welcome to the twelfth Conference and General Meeting for the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the tenth to be held at Oakham School.

You will find here all the information you will require to navigate your way around the conference, including a comprehensive outline of our programme and biographical information about each of our speakers.

Keynote & Concurrent Sessions

The location of all sessions is shown in the programme timetable. Last minute alterations will be clearly indicated. Please note that a short period of **quiet meditation** will precede and follow each of the keynote addresses. It would be appreciated if you could make every effort to be in the *Wilson Auditorium* a few minutes before the start time.

Meals and Refreshments

All our meals and refreshment breaks will take place in the dining hall in **Barraclough**.

Bar Area

In the **Merton Room**, upstairs in **Barraclough**, you will find a comfortable area where you are free to relax during the conference. The bar will be open in this area before and after dinner on Friday and Saturday.

Conference Bookshop

In Barraclough the **Christian Resources Bookshop** from Leicester will be providing a conference bookstall which will be open on Saturday.

Prayer times and Worship

Morning meditation and prayer and Evening prayer and reflection are offered as part of the programme. The worship will be very simple based on silence, a short Scripture reading and reflection with some intercessions. The Sunday morning Eucharist is traditional and you are welcome to participate as fully as you wish.

Security

Please note that access to your accommodation is by door entry code. **The codes needed for the conference are listed on the inside flap of your conference pack.** Doors **must** be closed at all times. It is advisable to try to keep ground floor windows closed. Individual bedroom doors do not lock so valuables should not be left unattended.

If you have any questions at any time please look for someone wearing a coloured badge who will help you.

Before you leave the conference please complete and post your evaluation form (included in your conference pack) in the box which will be available in the Dining Hall on Sunday, or give it to a member of the committee.

We hope you enjoy the conference and have a comfortable stay while at Oakham.

Conference Programme

Friday 6th April

10.30am onwards
Registration
Barraclough

1.00pm
Buffet Lunch
Barraclough

2pm
General session I
Wilson Auditorium
Welcome to the conference

2.15pm
Keynote Address
Pat Gaffney

**Revitalising the tools of
active nonviolence and the
Catholic Nonviolence
Initiative**

4.00pm **Tea**

4.30pm
**12th Biennial General Meeting of
the Thomas Merton Society of
Great Britain and Ireland**
Merton Room

5.30pm
Evening Reflections & Prayer
Rushbrookes Common Room

6:15pm bar open for drinks

7.00pm
Conference Dinner
Barraclough

8.30pm
Merton Juke Box
Merton Room

Saturday 7th April

7.30am
Morning meditation & Prayer
Rushbrookes Common Room

8am
Buffet Breakfast

9.00am

Concurrent Sessions I

A Wilson Auditorium

James G.R.Cronin

Burn his books: American opposition to Thomas Merton in 1968

Fiona Gardner

Towards Crisis and Mystery: Merton and the Vietnam War

B Rushbrookes Common Room

Stephen Dunhill

Thomas Merton & Christian de Chergé
–a shared interfaith vision

Daniel P. Horan

Beyond Bystanding: Merton's Guidance
In the Age of Trump and Brexit

10.30am **Coffee**

11am

Concurrent Sessions II

C Wilson Auditorium

Farai Mapamula & Gary Hall

From Birmingham, Alabama to Birmingham, UK. Merton's Prophetic and Contemplative Stance on Racism

Sonia Petisco &

Fernando Beltrán Llavador

Unseen until words end: Rethinking language with Thomas Merton

D Rushbrookes Common Room

Peter Ellis

Merton and the deep Amerindian past

David Golemboski

The Familiar Perspectives of American History: Thomas Merton on Black and Indigenous Oppression in the United States

12.45pm **Buffet Lunch**

2pm

General session II

Wilson Auditorium

**Showcasing
Contemporary
Merton work**

3.30pm **Tea**

4pm

Sessions III

E Wilson Auditorium

Mario I. Aguilar

Merton, Life and Death: The Hermitage Years

Paul M. Pearson

Contemplation in a World of Violence: Thomas Merton's Monastic Approach to the Life-and-Death Issues.

5.30pm

General session III

Wilson foyer and Auditorium

**Wine Reception with
our conference artist
Ric Stott**



*Image: **Into Beginning**
by Ric Stott*

7.00pm **Buffet Dinner**

8.30pm

Visit to a local hostelry for
refreshment and fellowship

Sunday 8th April

8.00am

Morning meditation & Prayer

Rushbrookes Common Room

8.30am **Buffet Breakfast**

9.30am

General Session VI

Wilson Auditorium

Keynote Address

Gordon Oyer

**Interior Freedom and an
Activist Conscience:
Thomas Merton's Journey
with Social Movements**

11am **Coffee**

11.30am

Conference Eucharist

Wilson Auditorium

Celebrant: Rev'd Reuben Preston
assisted by Rev'd Ric Stott

12.45pm

Buffet Lunch and depart

Keynote Speakers

Pat Gaffney

Pat Gaffney has been General Secretary of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, since 1990. Her work involves lobbying and campaigning within the church and political networks on peace and security-related issues, support and facilitation for church-related groups on Christian peacemaking, and co-ordinating the day to day running of Pax Christi in Britain.



Between 2005-2006 Pat was on the core group that raised awareness and undertook advocacy work on behalf of Norman Kember, the Baptist peace worker who was kidnapped and held in Iraq for 118 days. In 2012 she was involved in a project entitled 100 days of Peace, an education programme to bring the Olympic Truce ideal into the 2012 Olympics. Currently her campaigning involves work on drone warfare and attempting to engage the Church in critical thinking on the morality of drones. Pat is on the UK working group for Global Day of Action on Military Spending. In 2002 she was given the first Peacemaker Award of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace at their international Chapter in London, and in July 2005 she was nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize in the 1000 Women for Peace Project. In April 2012 Pat was listed in the Independent on Sunday's Happy List (in contrast to the Sunday Times Rich List) of people who make useful contributions to society.

Gordon Oyer

Gordon holds an MA in history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He recently retired from his administrative position with the University of Illinois system, and currently researches and writes about the life and thought of Thomas Merton. His book *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemaker Retreat* received the 2015 International Thomas Merton Society “Louie” Award. His life-long participation in the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition, encouraged his interest in faith-based dissent and raised questions about priorities that drive Western society. Gordon currently lives in Louisville, Kentucky.



Image: *Into Abundance*
by Ric Stott

Concurrent Session

Presenters

Mario I. Aguilar is a hermit in the Camaldolese Benedictine tradition who resides at Arunachala Hermitage in Anstruther, Scotland, and a Professor of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews. His works include *Contemplating God, Changing the World* (2008), *Thomas Merton: Contemplation and Political Action* (2011), *Pope Francis: His Life and Thought* (2014), and *The Way of the Hermit* (2017).

Fernando Beltrán Llavador is a senior lecturer and teacher trainer within the Department of English Philology at the University of Salamanca. He completed his thesis on the topic of solitude and society in Thomas Merton. He was International Advisor for the Thomas Merton Society for over two decades. A translator of works by and about Thomas Merton, he has published three books on Thomas Merton and articles in national and international journals. He was keynote speaker at the Fifth Conference of the TMS, co-directed with Paul Pearson an International Thomas Merton Conference in Ávila, the birth town of Saint Teresa in 2006, and was the recipient of a Louie award in 2007.

James G.R.Cronin is a member of the School of History and Adult Continuing Education at University College Cork, Ireland and Honorary Research Associate in Information Studies, University College London. He is researching discourses of resistance in the social writings of Thomas Merton.

Stephen Dunhill is a retired teacher living on the Northumbrian coast. Merton has been his Christian guide for over 30 years. He has been a committee member of the TMS since 2006, and is currently Chair of the Society and co-editor of *The Merton Journal*.

Peter Ellis has time spent abroad teaching English as a foreign language, a spell living in a radical community committed to gospel ideals, and then many years working in archaeology. His interest in Merton has brought him to recent Oakham conferences as well as two in the States.

Fiona Gardner was earlier a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and is now a spiritual director and writer. Her latest book is *The Only Mind Worth Having, Thomas Merton and the Child Mind*. She was the recipient of a Louie award in 2015.

David Golemboski is a postdoctoral fellow at the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri. His writing has appeared in the *Merton Annual*, *Merton Seasonal*, and the *Merton Journal*, as well as other publications including *America* and *Commonweal*. He is Vice-President of the International Thomas Merton Society.

Gary Hall is a Methodist Minister and theological educator at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, UK. An editor of the *Merton Journal*, he has regularly written and presented on Merton, and was a keynote speaker at the 2014 Oakham Conference.

Daniel P. Horan OFM is a Franciscan friar from Boston, USA, a columnist for America magazine, and a member of the ITMS Board of Directors. He is the author of six books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*, as well as dozens of scholarly and popular articles. He is currently editing the correspondence of Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton Stone, his agent and editor, for publication.

Farai Mapamula is a Methodist Minister in the Birmingham Circuit of the Methodist Church, presently serving three churches while doing her probationary studies. She has lived in this country for the past 17 years, most of which have been spent in the City of London. She is widowed with grown up children.

Sonia Petisco is a researcher in the fields of Applied Linguistics, Literature and Translation. She completed her Ph.D. on the poetry of Thomas Merton. She has been visiting researcher at the Thomas Merton Center of Bellarmine University (in Louisville, KY), Harvard Divinity School (in Boston, Massachusetts) and the Institute of Ecumenical and Interreligious Research at Tübingen University (Germany).

Paul M Pearson is Director and Archivist of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, resident secretary of the ITMS and chief of research for the Merton Legacy Trust. He edited *Seeking Paradise: The Spirit of the Shakers, Thomas Merton on Christian Contemplation* and *Beholding Paradise: The Photography of Thomas Merton*.

2018 Conference Artist

Ric Stott

Revd Ric Stott is a painter and pioneer Methodist minister based in Sheffield UK. Over the last 8 years he has founded a city centre artspace at 35 Chapel Walk which draws in a diverse group of people to explore creativity, community and spirituality. Ric's art is enriched by his experiences in medical science, theology and art psychotherapy and he explores ideas in his work around sexuality, embodied spirituality and how place impacts on our sense of self.

He is currently studying for an MFA in fine art at Sheffield Hallam University.

Ric's blog can be found at www.iaskforwonder.com



Image: *Into Falling*
by Ric Stott

Oakham School in Rutland

In one of his earliest attempts at autobiography Merton explains that Rutland is the smallest county in England and that Oakham School, set in the ancient county of Rutland, is surrounded by some of the most attractive countryside to be found in England. Built over 400 years ago by Robert Johnson, Archdeacon of Leicester, the original schoolroom of 1584 remains in use today. The buildings of the school, both traditional and modern, together with its extensive playing fields, blend naturally with the town, spreading over 60 acres. Thomas Merton attended Oakham School from 1929 to 1933 and is probably still its most famous pupil.

THE THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

aims:

- to promote interest in, and study of, Thomas Merton and his concerns
- to encourage the formation of local groups or chapters of the Society
- to organise national meetings of the Society
- to encourage publication of works by or about Thomas Merton in the Great Britain and Ireland
- to issue twice a year the *Merton Journal*.

www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk