

Merton Gave New Vitality To Our Spiritual Literature

By MSGR. WILLIAM H. SHANNON

Historians, when they evaluate the influential writers of the twentieth century, will have to award a place of high importance to Thomas Merton. A gifted poet and a writer of strong prose, he gave a new tone and a new vitality to the literature of Christian spirituality in our century. His more than fifty books (a number of them translated into several languages) and hundreds of articles opened new possibilities of spiritual growth for countless numbers of people whose surrogate spiritual guide he became.

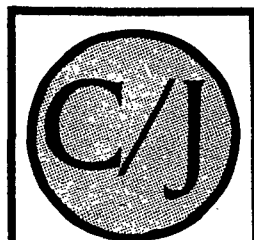
During the unsettling period of the 1960s he developed into an incisive critic of the social scene in America, commenting on that scene in words that were deeply perceptive and often prophetic. From the solitude of his monastic cloister, he prodded the consciences of his fellow-Americans in a time of great social and economic upheaval.

He also led those who were disposed to follow him on a spiritual pilgrimage to the East, unlocking the treasures of oriental wisdom, making it available and intelligible to the western mind and thereby enriching the western tradition of prayer and contemplation. It is symbolic of this aspect of his life's work that he met his untimely and tragic death while he was on a journey to the East. He died — accidentally electrocuted by a faulty electric fan — in Bangkok, Thailand.

His death on Dec. 10, 1968 came exactly 27 years after his



THOMAS MERTON



Special

English for a year and a half at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, N.Y. In the middle of his second year of teaching he left the classroom to become a Trappist monk. This was the end of his wandering. He had found his home at last; yet, paradoxically, it was not his home. In the Preface to the Japanese edition of "Seven Storey Mountain" he writes:

My Monastery is not a home. It is a place where I am rooted and established in the earth. It is not an environment in which I become aware of myself as an individual, but rather a place in which I disappear from the world as an object of interest in order to be everywhere by hiddenness and compassion.

"Hiddenness" (with God) and "compassion" (for his fellowmen) capsule the Merton story and will continue to make it relevant for years to come.

Nazareth College is committed to many of the values that Thomas Merton stood for. It is for this reason that the College has chosen to reserve a special section in the Library for its growing Merton collection. It is hoped that this collection will serve the needs not only of the students of the College but of all those in the community who share an interest in Thomas Merton and the perennial value of what he has to say to us. Through this collection he will continue to speak to all of us, helping, as he would want to do, to understand ourselves better. As he writes — again

quotation is from the Preface to the Japanese edition of the "Seven Storey Mountain":

It is not as an author that I would speak to you, not as a story-teller, not as a philosopher, not as a friend only: I seek to speak to you, in some way, as your own self. Who can tell what this may mean? I myself do not know. But if you listen, things will be said that are perhaps not written in this book. And this will be due not to me, but to the One who lives and speaks in both!

(Editor's Note: Msgr. Shannon is director of the Thomas Merton Society of Rochester, which invites the public to a Memorial Mass Sunday noon, Dec. 10, at the Shults Center and dedication of the Merton Collection in the Nazareth College Library.)

entrance into the Trappist monastery of our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky. The 26 years that preceded his entrance into the monastery were years of wandering: He was born in Prades in southern France on Jan. 31, 1915. His early schooling was in France and England. In 1934 he left Cambridge University in England to study at Columbia in New York City, where he received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in English.

During his time of study at Columbia he became a Roman Catholic. He taught

1750 Children Enroll In CYO Basketball

The diocesan Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) this year opens its 30th basketball season with 119 teams of boys and girls of elementary and high school age.

More than 1750 children are involved in the

CYO Board Names Treasurer

The Catholic Youth Organization Board of Directors has appointed T. Timothy Tehan as treasurer replacing Jose J. Coronas who resigned the post as officer but remains on the board and Executive Committee.

Tehan is vice president of Commercial Loans at Security Trust Company. As CYO treasurer, Tehan assumes the chairmanship of the CYO Finance Committee.

Coronas continues as chairman of the Project Poder Committee responsible for reviewing programs and setting direction for Hispanic youth in Rochester.

The board also elected four new members: Donna Agostinelli, Mary Gilbert, W. Gerald Norton and Jane Wilson.

program as are 200 adults who act as coaches. This year 46 parishes around Monroe County have entered one or more teams.

According to Tom Cotterill, chief of the CYO, the allied cheerleading program is expected to attract more than 700 children and 80 adult coaches.

Cotterill observed that "basketball and cheerleading coaches have a treasured opportunity to associate very closely with team members as role model, friend and guide."

"We believe that these programs are successful because the volunteer coaches realize the tremendous influence they have with the young people they coach," he said.

Music Therapy

Nazareth College has been authorized by the State Education Department to grant an undergraduate degree in Music Therapy, the college announced last week. The program is designed to train students to use music in the treatment of children and adults with physical, mental or emotional handicaps.

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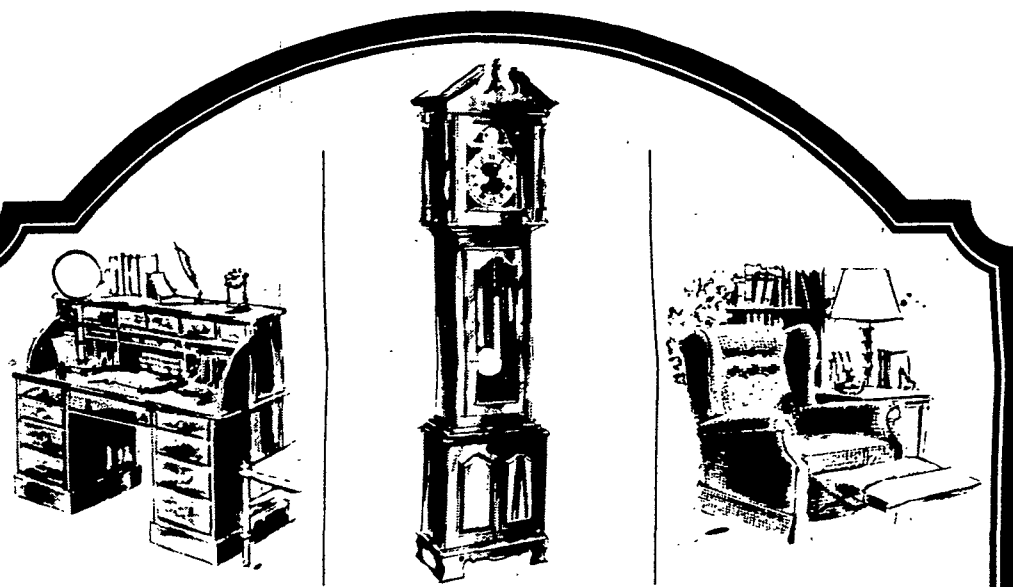
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