



CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 105 No. 7

Thursday, November 18, 1993

75¢

16 pages

CTNA for all

The Catholic Telecommunications Network of America is attempting to expand service into parishes by offering lower-priced subscription fees. The change is part of a marketing strategy to make CTNA not only self-sufficient, but relevant to parishes. Page 3.

'Hermitage' at Nazareth honors monk

ROCHESTER — For most of his monastic career, Thomas Merton dreamed of living as a hermit — a dream he finally realized just a few years before his death in 1968.

Thus it seems appropriate that the Thomas Merton Room at Nazareth College of Rochester is almost hidden away like a hermitage in a corner of the college's library.

The Thomas Merton Room was dedicated on March 19, 1985. The small room houses a collection of Merton's books in English and in translation, a small collection of Merton's letters and books about the Trappist monk. On the walls hang a painting of Merton and several of Merton's own calligraphies.

And in a glass case is the typewriter on which Merton wrote many of his more than 50 volumes of essays, autobiography, letters and poetry. The typewriter was a gift to Nazareth College from the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, where Merton lived from Dec. 10, 1941 until his death.

Monsignor William H. Shannon, whose picture also graces the wall of the room, was the force behind its creation.

"I guess I always thought that we should have a Thomas Merton Room at Nazareth since we had one of the few Thomas Merton societies at that time," noted Monsignor Shannon.

The priest served as the impetus behind the creation of that society, the Rochester Thomas Merton Society at Nazareth College, which grew out of courses he taught about the Trappist monk in the mid 1970s.

One of Monsignor Shannon's dreams was for the room to serve as a site for classes and meetings of the local Merton society. However, he observed, the room is too small for those purposes. And its location in the library means that it does not receive the attention that it should.

"It's nice and romantic to have it as a hermitage, but we'd like to have something where people can find it more easily," Monsignor Shannon said.

Thus Monsignor Shannon hopes that if and when a proposed expansion of the library takes place, a larger, more visible room will become available.

But for now, the room provides a quiet, out-of-the way place for reflection — perhaps an appropriate memorial for a monk who longed for such isolation in his own life.

— Lee Strong



Oil painting by Jim Cantrell, photographed by S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Merton's words still touch many

By Lee Strong, Senior staff writer

In the epilogue to his 1948 autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Thomas Merton wrote:

"But then there was this shadow, this double, this writer who followed me into the cloister.

"He is still on my track. He rides my shoulders, sometimes, like the old man of the sea. I cannot lose him. He still wears the name of Thomas Merton."

That "writer" who followed Merton into the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Ky., on Dec. 10, 1941, remained with him until his death on Dec. 10, 1968.

That writer produced more than 50 volumes of autobiography, essays, spiritual writing, poetry and even a novel. And since his death, four volumes of his approximately 4,000 letters — with a fifth due out in the fall of next year — have been published. Meanwhile, plans are under way to begin publishing his previously unpublished journals.

Without his writings, Merton might have died an unknown Trappist monk; a convert who came into the church in 1938 when he was 23; an immigrant who was born in France, lived in England and did not become a U.S. citizen until 1951.

But because of those writings — beginning with his best-selling autobiography — he touched the lives of

countless people around the world.

And his books continue to sell, 25 years after his death. As do books and essays and even plays about Merton.

A number of biographies and memoirs have been written about the Trappist, including Monsignor William H. Shannon's *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story*. (1992)

outside the abbey the bird in the sycamore falls silent

(in memory of Thomas Merton)

Father Charles J. Healy, SJ, included Merton in his 1989 book, *Modern Spiritual Writers: Their Legacies of Prayer*. Various other writers have studied Merton's poetry and social teachings, as well as his role as a "spiritual master."

Moreover, Mitch Finley, a Spokane, Wash.-based reviewer and free-lancer who writes frequently about

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