

DIOCESAN NEWS

Merton society gala honors Msgr. Shannon

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

ROCHESTER - The Rochester Thomas Merton Society's annual meeting Nov. 3 brought together two passionate Merton scholars. One was the speaker, Michael W. Higgins of St. Jerome's University at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, and author of the 1999 book *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*; the other was Msgr. William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of Nazareth College.

It also brought together nearly 200 Merton devotees from across the state and Pennsylvania. The meeting, which took place at Nazareth, was billed as "An Evening Honoring (Msgr.) William H. Shannon."

In particular, Richard Matzek, director of Nazareth's Lorette Wilmot Library, thanked the monsignor for his support of the Thomas Merton Room, which houses the popular monk's manual typewriter, numerous books, letters and other memorabilia.

Msgr. Shannon noted that Higgins was co-organizer of the first international meeting of Merton scholars in Vancouver in 1978. Out of that developed the International Merton Society, of which Msgr. Shannon became founding president in 1987. He recalled that he had invited himself to



Mike Mergen/Photo intern

Joyce Parker greets Msgr. William H. Shannon after a presentation on the life of Thomas Merton at Nazareth College Wednesday, Nov. 3.

the Vancouver meeting to give a paper on Merton's exploration of true self versus false self. "I am still struggling with this whole question of the true self and the false self," Msgr. Shannon said.

"My false self tells me you all came here because of me," he told the audience, to some laughter. "My true self tells me you didn't come here to see me primarily or even Michael primarily. You came here because Thomas Merton has drawn you, this person who has had a tremendous influ-

ence on people ... deepening their spirituality and constantly challenging them to new depths of faith and Christian experience, religious experience."

Merton was a Trappist monk from 1941 until his death in 1968. But he maintained contact with the world - and became a popular figure who crosses religious, ethnic, age, geographical and historical boundaries - through volumes of letters and writings that today are published in an estimated 70-75 books. He wrote candidly of

his spiritual journey, the ecumenical movements, civil rights, war and more.

Msgr. Shannon, who has written and edited numerous books on Merton, is co-authoring a Thomas Merton encyclopedia due out in December 2001.

The audience drawn to Nazareth Nov. 3 were "people whose lives have been touched not only by Merton, but by William Shannon," Christine Bochen, Nazareth professor and president of the International Thomas Merton Society, said.

Msgr. Shannon spoke of a talk Merton had given in Calcutta shortly before his death - by electrocution from a fan - in Bangkok on Dec. 10, 1968. Merton's Asian tour - to meet with Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems and Christians - was his first extended trip away from Kentucky's Abbey of Gethsemani in 27 years.

"It's almost the 31st anniversary of his remarks at the Temple of Understanding Conference in Calcutta where he said we're all one, but we think we are not," the monsignor said. "And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."

Although he considers Merton to have been "clearly a conservative Catholic thinker," Higgins observed Merton was like many others who have "a measure of heresy in their orthodoxy ... just as there is great doubt in all true belief."

Obituary

Father James R. Cosgrove at 72; known for care of elderly

Father James R. Cosgrove, a 48-year diocesan priest and pastor, died Nov. 2, 1999, at his sister's home in Chili. Father Cosgrove, who had colon cancer, was 72.

Father Cosgrove grew up in Hornell and attended both St. Ann's and St. Ignatius Loyola parishes. He was a student at St. Ann's School, and seminarian at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1951 and served as assistant pastor at the following parishes: St. Helen's, Rochester (1951-56); St. Michael's, Newark (1956-60); Holy Rosary, Rochester (1960-64); St. Francis of Assisi, Rochester (1964-66); and Blessed Sacrament, Rochester (1966-70).

Father Cosgrove's first pastorate was at Holy Angels, Nunda/Holy Name, Groveland, where he served for eight years. He was then pastor for seven years at St. Gabriel's, Hammondsport/St. Patrick's, Prattsburg.

Sandy Dressing, Father Cosgrove's housekeeper during his 12-year pastorate at St. Mary's Waterloo, said he had a special concern for the elderly, making numerous house calls.

Fittingly, when Father Cosgrove retired from St. Mary's in 1997, he became a hos-

pital chaplain, serving at St. Mary's and Park Ridge hospitals in Rochester.

"That was something new for him, and he wasn't sure if he could do it," recalled his brother, Father William J. Cosgrove, pastor of St. Dominic's Church, Shortsville. "I said, 'Listen you've been doing this for 45 years, visiting people.'"

"He almost put in full-time work on a part-time job. He was very concerned about seeing the people, especially in admissions, and making sure he gave them the sacrament of the sick," added Father

William Cosgrove, who was ordained four years after his brother.

"He showed me that I could do it, the priesthood," he remarked.

Father William Cosgrove described his older brother as "very traditionalist. He wore black all the time; in fact, he didn't even wear a sports shirt or sports coat. He was very committed to church authority. Whatever the bishop said, that was it."

Other survivors are his sister, Patricia (Robert) Dunning; nieces and nephews; grandnieces and grandnephews; and

aunts and uncles.

Mass of the High Priest for Father Cosgrove took place Nov. 5, at St. Pius X Church in Chili, where many of his relatives are parishioners. Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided, and Father Thomas D. Hoctor was homilist. Interment was to be at St. Ann's Cemetery in Hornell.

Donations may be made to St. Pius X Church, 3032 Chili Ave., Rochester, 14624; or the diocesan Propagation of the Faith, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, 14624.

- Mike Latona

East Rochester pastor cites health concerns as reason for seeking leave from bishop

Father Albert L. Delmonte, pastor of St. Jerome's Church, announced at Masses Nov. 6 and 7 that he has requested and received an administrative leave from Bishop Matthew H. Clark. He had been pastor of the East Rochester parish since 1994.

"There are some life issues I need to deal

with and I can no longer put off dealing with them," said the priest, 64.

"The issues I need to deal with ... have to do with my health," Father Delmonte told parishioners, emphasizing that neither concerns about priestly ministry nor his relationship to the parish were the cause of his

resignation. "I can no longer delay attention to these issues without certain peril to my well-being," he added.

According to a statement, the diocese is identifying temporary leadership for the parish until a new term appointment can be made.

Priest sentenced in Steuben

Father Eugene Emo was sentenced in Steuben County Court Nov. 8 to a jail term of one to three years for violating probation in connection with a 1997 case.

According to Steuben County Assistant District Attorney Michael McCartney, Father Emo will serve his sentence in a state correctional facility.

The priest has been held at the Steuben County Jail since his Aug. 26 arraignment. At that time, the Steuben County Probation Department said it had received two depositions alleging that Father Emo had violated his probation.

McCartney said Father Emo admitted on Sept. 27 to violating one of the probation's terms, which was to stay away from people under the age of 18.

Father Emo was serving five years probation stemming from a 1997 case involving first-degree sexual abuse of a mentally handicapped adult male. He has been on administrative leave from the Rochester Diocese since January 1996.



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