



**The International Thomas Merton Society
18th General Meeting**

**Saint Mary's College | Notre Dame, IN
June 22-25, 2023**

**The International Thomas Merton Society
extends its gratitude for its 2023 Conference Major Co-Sponsors**

*The Center for the Study of Spirituality
at Saint Mary's College*



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

*The Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism
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and

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Cover art by Jane Pitz | Photo to right by John Lyons

SOPHIA COMES FORTH, REACHING

In his poem *Hagia Sophia* and other writings, Thomas Merton wrote of divine wisdom, often personified as Sophia. Representing both the Holy Spirit and the mystical idea of divine wisdom, the figure of Sophia played an important role in Thomas Merton's spirituality and writing. This mystical image represents the divine in active terms, reaching into our souls and challenging us to new ways of living, of loving our neighbors, of standing for justice. Moreover, in Sophia Merton recognized an experience of God rendered in a feminine face. The significance of the divine feminine in Merton's life and work connects aptly to the location of our gathering in 2023. Saint Mary's College, a Catholic women's liberal arts college, has long been a pioneering institution in women's higher education, and intersected with Merton's life in important ways. Merton corresponded with members of the Saint Mary's community, including then-President Sr. Madeleva Wolff, and it was Saint Mary's that first published Merton's 1948 book *What is Contemplation?* More generally, Merton was shaped in important ways by women in his life — from his mother to the Baroness Catherine de Hueck Doherty to his longtime literary agent Naomi Burton Stone — and through his writings and correspondence engaged in extensive dialogue with women writers.



THE INTERNATIONAL THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In an essay published almost 60 years ago, Thomas Merton cited the famous German physicist Werner Heisenberg's observation that the global human community now finds itself "in the position of a captain whose ship has been so securely built of iron and steel that his compass no longer points to the north but only towards the ship's mass of iron." The moral and spiritual peril of the "ship's captain" can be allayed, says Heisenberg, only "if he recognizes what has gone wrong and tries to navigate by some other means—for instance, by the stars." To navigate by the stars, suggests Merton, is to go beyond the limitations of a scientific and technological worldview and recover our sense of sacred story and symbol.



The power and pregnancy of sacred symbols and stories, suggests Merton, lay in their capacity to recover our primordial human dignity, to "open the believer's inner eye, the eye of the heart, to the realization that he must come to be centered in God because that, in fact, is where his center is." But that is not all. The religious symbol "also speaks to many believers in one: it awakens them to their communion with one another in God" and in the natural world. Such an awakening, Merton adds, is not a matter of knowledge, nor of technical mastery, but of love. *Sophia?*

In organizing this Eighteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society around the image of Wisdom-Sophia in Merton's writings, it seems the program committee is inviting us to discern together what it might look like to learn, or re-learn, how to navigate by the stars – indeed, to trust that we are still capable of doing so, even from the deck of this ill-fated, man-centered vessel of iron and steel. For it is precisely when we are most helpless and afraid, says Merton, that gentleness comes to awaken us, refreshed, beginning to be made whole.

The Wisdom of God, Sophia, comes forth, reaching from "end to end mightily." Do not be afraid, she says, for you bear in your very selves the spark of the divine, the dignity and co-creativity of God. *Love takes us by the hand, and opens the doors of another life, another day.*

It is my great pleasure to welcome you and wish you all fullness in these days of fellowship!

Christopher Pramuk
ITMS President, 2021-2023

PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE

Key to Important Program Sites

(numbers refer to location on campus map)

Madaleva	Madaleva Hall (#6)
Carroll Auditorium	Located in Madaleva Hall (#6)
Vander Vennet Theatre	Basement level of Student Center (#3)
Le Mans	Le Mans Hall (#1)
Stapleton Lounge	In Le Mans Hall (#1)
Belle's Corner	Outdoor space West of Le Mans Hall (#1)
Dining Hall	In Student Center (#3)
Church of Loretto	Map Location E

On/Near-Campus Housing

Le Mans Hall (#1)	Hilton Garden Inn	<i>(Both hotels located near</i>
Opus Hall (#14)	Inn at Saint Mary's	<i>North campus entrance)</i>

Conference Offerings

This gathering of the ITMS encompasses various kinds of experiences, including scholarly presentations, participatory workshop, creative presentations, and prayerful meditation. Throughout this program, you may find the following symbols useful in identifying sessions to build the experience you desire:



Scholarly/Academic Presentation



Participatory Workshop



Prayer/Meditation

Other Information

- Wireless internet is available on campus by using the 'Guest' network.
- The campus bookstore will be selling new titles by and related to Merton, and Thomas Merton Books of Bardstown, KY, will be selling used and out-of-print titles outside of Carroll Auditorium in Madaleva Hall.
- For transportation off-campus, South Bend Taxi: (574) 383-6767
- In case of emergency, dial 911. For non-emergency assistance, contact Campus Safety at (574) 284-5000. Also, Saint Mary's College staff will be available at the registration desk in Le Mans Hall from 7am-10pm each day.

THURSDAY, JUNE 22

1:00-2:15pm OPENING SESSIONS

First-Timers' Orientation Session Madaleva 206
Kathleen Witkowska Tarr (*facilitator*)



Emerging Scholars Paper Session Madaleva 207
Monica Weis (*presiding*)

- Laurin Ernst, “Sing about me, I'm dying of thirst.’: Kendrick Lamar through the Lenses of Thomas Merton and Johann Baptist Metz.”
- Oliver Mesmer, “Interspirituality, Contemplation, and Social Action: The Practices of Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh as Guide Stars for Present-Day Communities of Faith.”
- Ethan Strouse, “Sacramental Listening: Exploring the Church as Feminist, Sacramental, and Synodal.”

Creating a Community of Merton Scholars Madaleva 210
Patrick F. O’Connell, Paul M. Pearson, and David Golemboski

2:30-4:00pm CONFERENCE OPENING Carroll Auditorium
David Golemboski & Daniel Horan OFM (*presiding*)

- Conference Welcome
- Presidential Address: Christopher Pramuk, “By Bowing My Ear a Little, I Have Received Her.”
- Opening Prayer Service






4:15-5:45pm GENERAL SESSION Carroll Auditorium
Jessica Coblenz (*presiding*)

Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer: “Women in Merton’s Life: Notes on His Experience with the Feminine.”

6:00-7:30pm DINNER Dining Hall

7:00-9:00pm COCKTAIL RECEPTION Belle’s Corner
Drinks and light fare. Music by Starheart. (outdoor space
Sponsored by the Center for the Study of West of Le Mans Hall
Spirituality, Saint Mary’s College.)

FRIDAY, JUNE 23

- 7:30-8:15am MORNING PRAYER** **Madaleva 205**
Paul Dekar, “Praying in the Way of the Madonna House Apostolate.”
- 7:30-8:45am BREAKFAST** **Dining Hall**
- 8:45-10:15am GENERAL SESSION** **Carroll Auditorium**
Judith Valente (*presiding*)
Sophia Park, SNJM: “Dancing with Thomas Merton in the Borderland.”
- 10:30-11:45am CONCURRENT SESSIONS**
-  **Humanity and the Human Condition** **Madaleva 206**
Christopher Pramuk (*presiding*)
- Mary Frances Coady, “Waking from a Dream of Separateness’: Thomas Merton and Caryll Houselander.”
 - Jason Taylor, “Merton’s Use of Arendt’s *Human Condition* in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.”
-  **Merton at Redwoods** **Madaleva 254B**
Kathleen Witkowska Tarr (*presiding*)
- Ellyn Crutcher, “Merton’s 1968 Retreat at Redwoods Lets ‘Some Fresh Air In.’”
 - Dominiek Lootens, “Gracie M. Jones and Thomas Merton at the Redwoods: Spirituality and Ecowomanism.”
-  **Merton’s Prophetic Monasticism** **Madaleva 210**
Alan Kolp (*presiding*)
- R. Zachary Karanovich, “Thomas Merton, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Misunderstanding Monasticism.”
 - Paul M. Pearson, “From One Wise Master to Another: St. Benedict’s Influence on Thomas Merton’s Prophetic Spirituality.”
-  **Workshop** **Madaleva 211A/B**
Brother Paul Quenon & Judith Valente, “‘Like Hugging An Angel:’ Merton, Emily Dickinson & Mary Oliver.”
-  **Workshop** **Madaleva 254A**
Paul Pynkoski, “Merton and Levertov: Art, Poetry, and Contemplation.”

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**Meditation****Madaleva 207**

Bernice Marie-Daly, “She Who Is.”

Audio/Visual Presentation**Madaleva 208**

Zvony Nagy, “Dialogues with Silence”

*This pre-recorded musical composition, with accompanying video, will play during each of the concurrent session periods throughout the conference.***12:00-1:15pm LUNCH****Dining Hall****12:00-2:00pm****FILM: “Day of a Stranger”****Vander Venet Theatre***Director Cassidy Hall will present three screenings of the film, which runs approximately 35 minutes, at 12:00, 12:40, and 1:20pm.***2:15-3:45pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS****Literary Explorations****Madaleva 207**John Collins (*presiding*)

- Thomas Malewitz, “*My Argument with the Gestapo: Exploring Merton’s Traumatic and Imaginative Narrative Through the Lens of Magical Realism.*”
- Patrick F. O’Connell, “‘A Character and Beauty of Its Own’: Merton and the Wisdom of Chartres.”

**Merton and Flannery O’Connor****Madaleva**Judith Valente (*presiding*)**211A/B**

- Mark Meade, “An Unpublished Merton Poem on Flannery O’Connor’s ‘Good Country People’ and Christian Existentialism in Her Fiction.”
- Janie Harden Fritz, “Flannery O’Connor and Thomas Merton: Dialogic Spirituality.”

**Reality, Relationality, and the Self****Madaleva**Theresa Sandok (*presiding*)**254A**

- John Gillespie, “A Hidden Wholeness: Merton, Rilke, and the Reconceptualization of the Divine.”
- Gray Matthews, “Dialogue with Reality: Reimagining the Contemplative.”
- Huili (Kathy) Stout, “Merton’s *Sophia* and the Chinese *Tao*: A Dance of Two Names.”

**Workshop****Madaleva 210**

Jeff Kiernan, “A Mighty Hunger in My Soul: A Prayer Service of Silence, Music and Words Inspired by the Correspondence of Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton.”

Theatrical Presentation

Vander Vennet Theatre

Doug Hertler, "Merton and Me, A Living Trinity."



Meditation

Madaleva 254B

Vincent Pizzuto, "Wisdom's Born In Secret: The Birth of the Divine Feminine in Everything."

4:00-4:45pm ITMS TOWN HALL MEETING

Carroll

Christopher Pramuk (*presiding*)

Auditorium

5:00-5:30pm EVENING PRAYER

Stapleton Lounge,

Hagia Sophia Vespers

Le Mans Hall

5:30-7:00pm DINNER

Dining Hall

7:00-8:45pm GENERAL SESSION

Carroll

David Golemboski (*presiding*)

Auditorium

**Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS: "Hunger for Hope:
Contemplation and Political Action."**

This talk is open to the public as a separately ticketed event. ITMS conference registrants will find a ticket in their registration packet.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

7:30-8:15am **MORNING PRAYER** **Madaleva 205**



Robert Hesse, "Centering Prayer's Healing Effects: Interfaith Prayer Practicum, Medical Research, and Resulting Ministries."

7:30-8:45am **BREAKFAST** **Dining Hall**

8:45-10:15am **GENERAL SESSION** **Carroll Auditorium**

Emma McDonald (*presiding*)

A Panel: "Women Who Helped Us Know Merton"

- Christine M. Bochen
- Kathleen Deignan
- Lynn Szabo
- Bonnie Thurston
- Monica Weis

10:30-11:45am **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**



Merton's Influence on His Readers **Madaleva 206**

Joseph Raab (*presiding*)

- Alan Kolp, "The Mertonian Influence on Ilia Delio: From Monk to a Dancing Star."
- Patti Sayre, "Alone Together: The Solitary Ties that Bind Thomas Merton and Elena Malits."



Merton, Drugs, and Counterculture **Madaleva 210**

Paul M. Pearson (*presiding*)

- Jim Robinson, "Both 'Hippie Monk' and Distanced Critic: Thomas Merton and the 1960's Counterculture."
- David Odorisio, "'Not Drugs but Night': Thomas Merton on LSD and the Psychology of Religious Experience."



Merton, Poetry, and Photography **Madaleva 254B**

Paul Pynkoski (*presiding*)

- Kevin Burke, "The Beginning of Wisdom: Theological Assonance between Merton and Levertov."
- Julia Prinz, "Sophia Reaching: What Do You See?: A Study in the Photography of Thomas Merton."



Workshop **Madaleva 254A**

Brian Harnetty, "Words and Silences: From the Thomas Merton Hermitage Tapes."

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Workshop

Madaleva 211A/B

Robert Ellsberg, “‘It’s the Direction that Matters’: How Sister Wendy Beckett Changed Her Mind about Merton.”



Meditation

Madaleva 207

Jennifer Trently, “Creative Response to Merton’s *Hagia Sophia*.”

11:45am-
1:15pm

LUNCH

Dining Hall

1:30-2:45pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Self-Discovery, Sanctity, and Mystical

Madaleva 207

Mutuality | Michael Brennan (*presiding*)

- Vaughn Fayle, “Merton, Weil and Duncan: Sophia’s Mystical Mutuality that Displaces Us.”
- Callie Tabor, “‘Fully Functioning’ in Holiness: Women and Sainthood in Conversation with Thomas Merton and Sr. Thea Bowman.”



Healing Divisions

Madaleva

Dominiek Lootens (*presiding*)

254B

- Susan Mancino and Natalia Tapsak, “Dialogic Welcome in Communities of Difference: Lessons from Day and Merton.”
- Anne R. Pearson, “Solutions to Systemic Racism: Thomas Merton in Conversation with Women of Colour.”



The Contemplative Lens

Madaleva 210

Mark Meade (*presiding*)

- Aaron Godlaski, “Neither This, Nor That: Merton’s Non-Dual Communion with Nature.”
- Megan Way, “Supply, Demand, and the Sacred: Applying Thomas Merton’s Wisdom to the Principles of Economics.”



Workshop

Madaleva 211A/B

William Hart McNichols, John Dadosky, & Christopher Pramuk, “Icons as Living Portals to the Divine Feminine.”



Meditation

Madaleva 254A

Carol Lenox, “Reflections on Rachel Carson’s Influence on Thomas Merton.”

3:00-4:30pm GENERAL SESSION **Carroll Auditorium**
Christopher Pramuk (*presiding*)

**Shannen Dee Williams: “America's Real Sister Act:
Illuminating the Hidden History of Black Catholic Nuns
in the African American Freedom Struggle”**

5:00-6:00pm Closing Eucharist **Church of Loretto**

- Sr. M. Catherine Hilkert, OP, University of Notre Dame, Preacher.
- Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM, Saint Mary’s College, Presider.

6:00-9:00pm ITMS Banquet **Hilton Garden Inn**

Including presentation of 2023 “Louie” Awards.

Conference attendees are invited to move to the hotel at their own pace. The cash bar will open at 6:00, and hors d’oeuvres will be served beginning at 6:30. A plated dinner and program will follow. Following dinner, guests are invited to enjoy the adjoining patio space for continued conversation.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25

7:30-8:45am Breakfast and Departure