

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

19th General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society

June 19-22, 2025

Regis University, Denver, Colorado

“The Calligraphy of Snow and Rock and Sky” Thomas Merton and the Spirit of Place

“A sign of snow on a mountainside as if my own ancestors were hailing me.”

~ Thomas Merton, *Woods, Shore, Desert*

Flying over the Rocky Mountains on his way to California, May 6th, 1968, Thomas Merton described the view as “one of the most lovely calligraphies I have ever seen.” To “be a mountain diviner” is to acknowledge that “we are all secrets,” writes Merton, and yet, opening our whole selves to the deep memory and revelatory spirit of place, we can divine a message of truth, and perhaps a way forward, in the calligraphy of snow and rock and sky. In his journeys in California, New Mexico, and Alaska, and in Asia, gazing on Kanchenjunga, Merton found himself increasingly “on the edge of great realization.” What is the essence of that realization, and what messages might be divined in the spiritual landscapes of Merton’s final year of life? Who are the “ancestors” – human, animal, mineral, cosmic – whose stories provide a word of hope in this moment of reckoning for the human community and the suffering planet? Such questions are especially fitting as we gather at Regis University at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

We invite proposals related to the conference theme on topics such as (but not limited to): Merton and Indigenous Wisdom; *Ishi Means Man*, etc.; contemplative ecologies and poets; Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* and *Laudate Deum*; Nature writing on “Place” (US and International). The role of “place” in contemplation, the discovery of the True Self, communion with nature. Merton’s 1968 books: *Faith and Violence*, *Geography of Lograire*, *Journals*; encounters in Alaska, California, New Mexico, and Asia (e.g., Native American communities; Our Lady of the Redwoods; Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the Beats; Czeslaw Milosz; Ping Ferry; Chatral Rimpoche; the Dalai Lama; Kanchenjunga). Monasteries in the US West and Southwest; Merton and the Sisters of Loretto; Merton and the Jesuits. Merton’s witness to interfaith dialogue and ongoing efforts today. Merton’s calligraphy and photography; Merton and visual-liturgical art.

Session formats include:

1. **Scholarly Papers** designed for presentation in twenty minutes plus interactive Q/A with an audience of academics and non-academics (6-8 double-spaced pages, maximum).
2. **Workshops** designed for presentation in 75-90 minutes to involve interactive participation incorporating adult learning strategies and/or small group discussion.
3. **Creative/Dramatic Presentations** designed for presentation in 75-90 minutes using music poetry, dance or other media to provide insight into aspects of Merton’s life or work.
4. **Guided Meditation/Prayer Sessions** designed for presentation in 75-90 minutes, particularly those using Merton’s writings as a framework for prayer and meditative reflection.

Proposals of no more than 250 words and a short biographical statement (one to two sentences) should be submitted by May 20, 2024, by e-mail attachment to itms2025@merton.org or by mail to: ITMS 2025, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, Kentucky 40205 USA.