

**Thomas Merton:  
Poet, Monk, Prophet.**

Dr. Paul M Pearson  
July 9-11, 2015  
Vancouver School of Theology

In this centenary year of the birth of Thomas Merton (1915-1968) this course will provide participants with a broad general overview of Merton's life and thought. The number of new publications, special features on Merton, news items etc. is just snowballing and, as Merton comes to the attention of many either for the first time, or renewing the interest of others, this course will provide an overview of Merton's life and thought exploring the key themes in his writing and teasing out the reasons Merton became such an important spiritual writer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and asking key questions about his continued relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through PowerPoint, recordings etc., incorporating a lot of images and other materials from the archives the life and thought of Merton will be brought to life for participants.

**Objectives:**

1. To give participants a broad overview of Thomas Merton's life and thought.
2. To help participants understand the monastic life that became central to Merton's life and thought.
3. Through a broad selection of the writings of Thomas Merton to explore the reasons why Merton became one of the major spiritual writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and his relevance for us now.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July:**

2.00 – 3.30 – introductory session for course participants.  
6.00 pm – Merton Reception  
7.00 – 9.00 pm – Merton Public Lecture:  
"I love beer, and, by that very fact, the world." -- the humor and  
humanity of Thomas Merton.

This presentation will explore Merton sense of humor over the years from his pre-monastic cartoons published in the *Columbia Jester*, through his correspondence, journal entries and recordings, to the stories told by his friends and brothers. It is often said that a sense of humor is essential to the religious life and this often overlooked facet of Thomas Merton is an important part of his humanity which makes him so attractive and accessible to his readers as we walk, with him, the Road to Joy.

## Thomas Merton: Poet, Monk, Prophet

This course will focus on Merton's thought and spirituality, in particular four major areas of his writings.

### Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July:

- 9 am – noon. Entry into monastic life and monastic spirituality. *Seven Storey Mountain* and other related text – the spirituality of Merton.
- 1 pm – 4 pm. His rootedness in monastic life. His growing sense of compassion and awareness of the world. *The Sign of Jonas* – the poet and writer.

### Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July:

- 9 am – noon. Embracing the world. Writings on social issues. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* – the artist and “activist.”
- 1 pm – 4 pm. Dialogue with other faiths and final journey to Asia. *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* – the ecumenist.

### Required Reading:

*Thomas Merton Essential Writings* edited by Christine M. Bochen. (Orbis, 2000)  
Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (Harcourt Brace, 1953)  
Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Doubleday, 1966)

### Recommended:

Paul R. Dekar, *Thomas Merton: Twentieth-Century Wisdom for Twenty-First-Century Living* (Wipf & Stock, 2011)  
Jim Forest, *Living with Wisdom* (Orbis, 2008)  
Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton: A Life in Letters* edited by Christine M. Bochen and William H. Shannon (Ave Maria Press, 2010)  
Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New Directions, 1973)  
Thomas Merton, *In the Dark Before Dawn: New Selected Poems* (New Directions, 2005)  
Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (Harcourt Brace, 1948)  
John Moses, *Divine Discontent: The Prophetic Voice of Thomas Merton* (Bloomsbury, 2014)  
Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Houghton Mifflin, 1984)  
William H. Shannon, *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (Crossroad, 1994)

**Paul M. Pearson** is Director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky and Chief of Research for the Merton Legacy Trust. He is Resident Secretary of the International Thomas Merton Society, served as President for the 10<sup>th</sup> administration, program chair for the 11<sup>th</sup> ITMS conference held in Rochester in June 2009, treasurer for the Society (2007-2013) and is site coordinator for the 2015 conference celebrating the centenary of Merton's birth. He completed his Ph.D. at Heythrop College, London and his masters in Library and Information Science at University College, London.

Paul edited *Seeking Paradise: Thomas Merton and the Shakers* (Orbis, 2011), *A Meeting of Angels: The Correspondence of Thomas Merton with Edward Deming and Faith Andrews*, (Broadstone Books, 2008 - which received an "Award of Merit" in the Kentucky Historical Society Awards for 2009), *Thomas Merton on Christian Contemplation* (New Directions, 2012), and *Beholding Paradise: The Photography of Thomas Merton* (Paulist, 2015).