

Harper San Francisco to Publish Merton Journals First Volume Releasing Fall 1995

In a spirited auction earlier this month, the Merton Legacy Trust granted world publishing rights of the Journals of Thomas Merton to Harper San Francisco, a division of Harper Collins Publishers. The journals will be published in seven volumes just as Merton wrote them, completely and chronologically. "The acquisition of Merton's final legacy represents one of the proudest moments in our division's long history," declared Thomas Grady, publisher of Harper San Francisco.

Thomas Merton, 1915 - 1968, was a Trappist monk, spiritual master, and peace activist, who for many uniquely combined the best of religious wisdom with a modern sensibility. Widely regarded as the most important spiritual writer of the twentieth century, he is the author of the best selling autobiography The Seven Storey Mountain (published in 1948) and many other spiritual classics including Seeds of Contemplation. The Journals will be the last major writing by Merton that will ever appear.

The Merton Legacy Trust was formed in 1967, the year before Merton's accidental death in Bangkok, to administer his literary affairs and to arrange for the publication of his private journals twenty-five years following his death. This seal was imposed, it is assumed, to protect Merton's friends and colleagues from his candid opinions and revelations. In the course of the Journals, Merton writes openly about his controversial ideas, conflict with his abbot, the strictures and tedium of monastic life, and his heart's longings. Merton was an inveterate diarist and his journals offer a complete picture of his rich and fascinating spiritual odyssey, from his premonastic life as a young writer through his final years at the monastery of Gethsemani and his last fateful trip to Asia. General Editor Patrick Hart says "Perhaps his best writing can be found in the Journals, where he was expressing what was deepest in his heart with no thought of censorship. With their publication we will have as complete a picture of Thomas Merton as we can hope to have."

The members of the Merton Trust, Robert Giroux, James Laughlin and Thomasine O'Callaghan, appointed Brother Patrick Hart of the Abbey of Gethsemani the general editor of the Journals in 1990. He was Merton's last secretary and has acted as the Abbey's representative on Merton affairs since his death in 1968. Hart began studying the journals in 1990, successfully locating volumes considered lost and contacting Merton scholars to verify the authenticity of certain other articles thought to be part of the journals, such as poems and drawings given to friends and fragments of unpublished novels. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton occurred on 10th December 1993, and the journals could be offered for publication.

The first volume of the journals, **RUN TO THE MOUNTAIN**, will be published in Fall 1995 and will cover Merton's premonastic years, from 1939-1941. It is being edited by Patrick Hart and includes Merton's time in Greenwich Village (after his graduate work and teaching at Columbia), a stay in Cuba, and his teaching at St. Bonaventure's. This was the crucial period during which Merton transformed from being a bohemian writer to an ardent spiritual seeker, who soon after would become a monk.

Other volumes will be as follows:

"Early Gethsemani Journals, 1942 - 1951" to be edited by Jonathan Montaldo. Includes the period of Merton's novice years and the period during which The Seven Storey Mountain was written;

"Student Master Years and Novice Master I, 1952 - 1960" to be edited by Lawrence S. Cunningham;

"Novice Master Years II, 1960 - 1963" to be edited by Victor A. Kramer;

"Novice Master Years III, 1963 - 1965" to be edited by Robert E. Daggy;

"The Hermitage Years, 1966 - 1967" to be edited by Christine M. Bochen;

"The Last Years, 1967 - 1968" to be edited by Patrick Hart. Includes Merton's discussion of the election of the new abbot and his Asian journey.

Titles and publication dates will be announced as they are assigned.

Brother Patrick Hart.