

RaiderLife

Kentuckians honor forward-thinking monk

Thomas Merton of the Abbey of Gethsemani was ahead of his time

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If someone were to ask who is Kentucky's most famous Trappist monk and why this year is a milestone in his legacy, few people would know the answer. The answer to that question is Thomas Merton, or Father Louis as he was called while at the Abbey of Gethsemani located south of Bardstown. Jan. 31 marked his 100th birthday.

In his book *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, Paul Elie says that Merton was born in France in 1915 to "Owen Merton from New Zealand, [and] Ruth Jenkins from New York." He grew up in France, New York, and London.

After Merton "lived a full and worldly life" (as he says on the cover of his autobiographical book *The Seven Storey Mountain*), converted to Catholicism, and then decided to join a monastery, circumstances eventually led him to the Abbey of Gethsemani. On the Trappist monastery's website (monks.org), Brother Patrick Hart says that Merton joined on Dec. 10, 1941. He was 26 years old.

"During the next 20 years, Merton wrote prolifically on a vast range of topics, including the contemplative life, prayer, and religious biographies," Hart says. "His writing would later take up controversial issues (e.g., social problems and Christian responsibility: race relations, violence, nuclear war, and economic injustice) and a developing ecumenical concern."

Merton developed many profound ideas before and during his time at the Abbey of Gethsemani. In regards to "race relations," he was apparently ahead of his time in being accepting and loving towards

African-Americans.

Before joining the monastery, Merton spent some time in Harlem helping Baroness Catherine de Hueck serve the poor residents of the Harlem slums. In his book, Merton recalls the emotional pain he felt seeing the conditions the people had to live in and how they wanted to live in and fit in with the white culture that he ridiculed.

This compassion continued after Merton joined the monastery. In *Conjecture of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton talks about a revelation he had on a street corner in Louisville about loving everybody. In a recent *Letter to the Editor* for the Courier Journal, Ben Ruiz of Louisville commemorated Merton's revelation, among other things, because of how it was about people of every color.

"Merton experienced his epiphany and saw the large crowd of people for the first time as individual rays of light, rich for their diversity. That epiphany turned Merton to a life dedicated to compassion for people and diversity," Ruiz said.

But this love for people of every color was not the only thing that was different about Merton. He also found that Eastern religions, especially Zen, could offer a lot to Catholicism.

According to goodreads.com, "Merton was also a proponent for inter-religious dialogue," and Elie mentions some of the relationships Merton formed with other monks.

Merton found that the theology of these religions did not have much to offer, but the philosophy of love and connection between human beings did.

Merton served at the Abbey of Gethsemani for 27 years to the day, and he was buried there after he died. He died accidentally at the relatively young age of 53, almost 54.

"Merton died by accidental electrocu-



Phil Hanna, director of library services at the Katie Murrell Library, browses through the Thomas Merton section of the Abbey of Gethsemani's gift shop.

tion in Bangkok, Thailand, while attending a meeting of religious leaders on 10 December 1968," Hart says.

Merton's legacy still lives on. His books are still widely read and goodreads.com says that he is still "the ongoing subject of many biographies."

The street corner in Louisville where Merton had his epiphany has been named Merton Square and people visit it to remember him. Bellarmine University, where Merton established his trust, has a collection and website (Merton.org) dedicated to him.

At the Abbey of Gethsemani, the gift shop has a large section full of books, CD's, and DVD's by and about Merton. To commemorate his 100th birthday, Library Assistant Wade Daffron set up a Thomas Merton display next to the New Books area in the Katie Murrell Library using some of the many Merton books from the library's collection.

It has been 100 years since Merton was born and 46 since he died, but he is far from forgotten and his influence is still strong.

Love

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Each department had one representative from SACS working with them and each department had to pass its own test.

"It was an exciting time, but it was loaded with anxiety to make sure that we were where we needed to be in order to satisfy SACS that we were ready to become a full four year college," Love said.

All of the stress, anxiety and work paid off.

"The whole college passed with flying colors," Love said.

Lindsey Wilson College was a four year school.

Prior to his time at LWC, Love was a pastor. Following his time at LWC he was pastor of a church in Greensburg for three years. He was also appointed as District Superintendent of the Madisonville District. After two years there, he was offered a position as senior pastor at the Methodist church in Owensboro – a position which he held for 10 years. This led to his appointment as District Superintendent to the Columbia district – his current position.

Love relishes his job. Not only does he enjoy the sometimes stressful duties of District Superintendent, but he also enjoys the connection he has with the school through this position.

One advantage is that Love's office space is located in the Sumner building on campus. His office is set in the main hallway, allowing him to interact with students and faculty during everyday activities.

Love also has a heart for LWC. His eyes light up and his voice is proud when he talks about it. Interestingly, he did not

even attend the school. For Love, there are two main things that create this heart for the school and give it the respect that it has.

"First of all, I would say that Lindsey is aggressive in developing the possibility for a good education for people that might not otherwise have the opportunity for a college education," Love said. "That's an important thing for Lindsey to be able to do and they have pursued that down through the years to the point that it's caused them to see that we can do a better job of this by having satellite campuses in other places."

Love said one of the largest aspects and purposes of LWC is to provide a solid education for people who might not be able to otherwise receive one. That is not to say that all students who come here would be unable to go elsewhere if they wanted. Instead, it is just a very feasible option for first generation college students and others who might not normally be able to otherwise get a college degree.

"That really touches a note with many, many people," Love said.

Also, a major part of LWC is the relationship the college has with the UMC.

"Another thing in a different category (is) in relationship with the church itself – Lindsey is noted in the United Methodist church as being proud of its heritage and relationship with the church," Love said. "Other colleges (...) have either formally or informally pulled away from their church relationship, their church heritage. Lindsey has always been proud of it, and always makes that known, so that the church is just proud of Lindsey and proud to lift it up as being a good college that's related to the church."

Love feels that LWC has a strong Christian ministries area. He said that the



Photo by LWC Public Relations

department is good about helping students understand the basics of the Christian faith and allowing students to consider this aspect of life. However, he believes they do not cross the line and end up simply indoctrinating students.

Love also believes that critical thinking is an important part of a student developing and discovering who they are.

"I think a college education must open the door of critical thinking in all areas for students," Love said. "My belief is that the church-relatedness does not need to be so heavy handed that students are discouraged from thinking for themselves and learning to think for themselves."

The way the school incorporates its foundational faith into the general education classes gives an exposure to Christianity that students would not get elsewhere.

"The part of a church-related college is to provide opportunities for a good well-rounded education where students come to think critically for themselves, but also to have available and presented to them the basic values that are inherent in a college being church-related," Love said.

This, in Love's opinion is what makes LWC unique among colleges – even unique among private Christian colleges.

"Our world today is steadily and consistently pulling away from values where people value other people and respect other people and care for and help other people," Love said. "I think a church-related college in laying out the basics of Christian values helps to try to keep some of that in our world."

SPC graduate students take home top prize at National Ethics Competition

By Zac Oakes
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Recently, a group of Lindsey Wilson College (LWC) School of Professional Counseling students attended the 2014-2015 American Counseling Association (ACA) Graduate Student Ethics Competition, taking home the national award over 39 other schools.

The LWC team, comprised of students Carson E. Economy, Corinne B. Mattingly and Antoinette G. Lee, as well as the Lexington/Danville Resident Faculty Supervisor Dr. Mona Gallo took home the top prize for the Masters' Program Competition.

Gallo has practiced counseling in three different states: Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois. She has been a full-

time faculty member at LWC since January 2011 as the Resident Faculty Supervisor at the Lexington Campus, as well as being an Associate Professor.

The team placed first over second place Plymouth State University (NH) and third place Salem College (NC).

For the competition, the team was given a case study to write a written response where they provide a comprehensive response to a scenario. The students were tasked with providing the best course of action to take while also taking into account various ethical concerns.

Teams also had to justify the proposed actions they were taking within the case, as well as define the model they used to make the decision.

The group members were only allowed to consult with other members of the group. While they were allowed to consult resources such as written articles, the only communication they could have about the study was with

members of the team. Contact with professors or faculty members was prohibited.

As a reward, the group was given free attendance to the conference and will have an article published about them in an upcoming issue of an ACA publication. They will also receive individual letters of recognition.

According to the ACA, the purpose of the Ethics Competition is "... to educate members of the association regarding ethical issues and to engage graduate students (Masters and Doctoral level) in critically analyzing a potential ethical case and creating an appropriate ethical decision making plan to respond to the ethical situation."

The ACA is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1952 and is the world's largest association "that exclusively represents professional counselors in various practice settings," according to the ACA website. The ACA has 56 branches with locations throughout the United States, Europe, and Latin America.