

the catholic peace fellowship

An educational service conducted by Catholic members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation

5 BEEKMAN STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10038, WG 4-8367

December 22, 1965

Dear Editor:

Thomas Merton, a founding sponsor of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, has asked that we release the attached statement concerning his present status as a Trappist monk.

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As you may be aware, there have been more than the usual number of rumours recently concerning Father Merton -- that he has returned "to the world", that he has been seen working on the staff of a Harlem poverty project, that he has joined the Catholic Worker staff, that he has "disappeared to somewhere in Mexico."

Father Merton is in fact living, as he has for some months, in a small hermitage on the grounds of the Abbey of Gethsemani, in the farmland of Kentucky. His small cinder-block dwelling is about a mile from the monastery's central buildings and is located atop a wooded hill, looking out over a cow pasture towards a valley.

As Father Merton says in his statement, despite his new and more contemplative status, and the limitations his situation imposes upon his awareness of the details of news, he has decided, after considerable thought on the matter, to remain a sponsor of the Catholic Peace Fellowship.

His main reason for this decision is his desire to support "all forms of Catholic Action, especially those which seek to implement the decrees and teachings of the Second Vatican Council."

As several members of the Catholic Peace Fellowship have on their personal initiative undertaken actions which are not encouraged or sponsored by the Catholic Peace Fellowship, nor its parent body, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Father Merton wishes to make clear, as would we, that neither he nor we can accept responsibility for such actions by members and friends.

It is especially true, as Father Merton points out, that draft card burning is in no way part of the program of the Catholic Peace Fellowship.

As far as the Catholic Peace Fellowship is concerned, the fact that we do not endorse such actions has little to do with our assessment of the value of such manifestations of concern; it is simply our function, as Father Merton states, to function along more pastoral lines. The Catholic Peace Fellowship, as an educational endeavor, will continue to leave the field of public demonstrations to those better qualified to undertake such projects.

more

Thomas Cornell
Publications Director

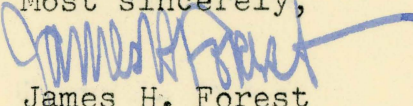
Christopher S. Kearns
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(We assume detailed biographical data on Father Merton is not needed. His most recent book, Seeds of Celebration, has just been published by Farrar Strauss & Giroux. New Directions recently published his Gandhi on Nonviolence.)

Most sincerely,

James H. Forest
National Secretary

JHF:ee