A LETTER TO MOTHER LAETITIA ABOUT THE FUNERAL OF FR. LOUIS

Easter Friday, 1969
Gethsemani

Dear Mother Laetitia,

Christ is risen, alleluia! Your letter of mid-December was one of many hundreds asking for details about the death and burial of our Father Louis. I hope that you won't mind helping me out. It's all but impossible for me to answer fully the many letters asking for more specific details about Fr. Louis' funeral; and I find it equally impossible to write an account of a general nature addressed to no one in particular. So I hope that you'll agree to my writing you a personal letter which, though addressed to you, can be shared by anyone who, like you, wishes to know something about Fr. Louis' funeral Mass and burial.

At the time you wrote me last December, there were still many unsettled questions about Fr. Louis' death by accidental electrocution in Bangkok. Most of these questions have long since been settled, and a number of periodicals have already published or soon will publish accounts about Fr. Louis' trip to Asia, his visit with the Dalai Lama, his other contacts in India, and his last days in Bangkok. So my purpose here is simply to supply you with a few details about how our community here at Gethsemani celebrated the final homecoming and burial of a man whom many had known as a spiritual father, and whom all had known as a brother.

I had a rather curious experience the day we received news of Fr. Louis' death. I was up to my neck in work connected with the texts and music of the Christmas season, and felt more than a bit uncomfortable at being several days behind schedule in the various projects. I was working as usual in the trailer hidden behind a knob a bit less than a mile from the monastery, where I have most of the tools of the musical trade I need for my work — including a somewhat battered but still serviceable spinet piano. I had been working all morning, felt worn out, but felt no less the need for pushing on with the work at hand. I was a bit surprised, then, suddenly to find myself at the piano with the Kalmus ur-text of the Mozart sonatas open on the music rack and my fingers moving over the keys. Here I was, playing Mozart, and thinking about the opening pages of Fr. Louis' Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, where he
writes so wonderfully well about Karl Barth and Mozart. A few minutes later the phone rang. It was our cantor, Br. Chrysostom, calling to tell me that Fr. Flavian had just announced to the brethren the news about Fr. Louis' sudden death in Bangkok. A few hours later I learned that Karl Barth had died the same day.

Like most of the rest of the brethren, I was in something of a mental daze for the next few hours, and had considerable difficulty in thinking concretely about the shape our celebration of Fr. Louis' funeral liturgy was to take. We were, in point of fact, particularly well favored by the ordo. December 11th called for an Office for the Departed. Thanks to our loi-cadre indul, we have the possibility of celebrating the canonical Office with texts and antiphons especially chosen for the occasion. Thus, we were able to use as a second nocturn reading a passage from one of Fr. Louis' own works, where he speaks about the mystical experience of the contemplative and the mystery of death, and where he writes in part:

The soul stands on the bank of another Jordan—the bright calm river of death. It looks across the river and sees clear light upon the mountains of the true promised land. It begins to be ravished to the depths of its being by the clean scent of forests full of spice and balsam. It stands upon the riverbank with the wonderful soft wind of the New Word playing upon its cheeks and upon its eyelids and in its hair. And now it knows that the country it once took to be Canaan, the poor indigent earth of early contemplation, was nothing more than a desert—a waste of dry rock to which it had escaped, at great cost, from the vain wisdom that is Egypt.

But here is God. He is the Promised Land. Nothing is lost in Him. The whole word shines in His bosom. Creatures of all kinds spring forth without end from the bright abyss of His Wisdom. The soul itself sees itself in Him, and Him in itself, and in them both, the whole world. It sees all things, all men living and dead, the great souls and the little souls, the saints, the glorious Mother of God, and it is one with them all for they are all One, and Christ, God, is this One. He is the Promised Land, He is the Word, He is the Beloved.

Here, in Him, all the articles of faith have converged their rays and have burst open and showered the mind with fire. From Him they came, through Him they came, to Him they return, bringing with them the minds they have raised up in radiance from the sepulcher of vain learning. In Him the articles of faith have disappeared. He is their substance. There is no further need for them to prophesy in part, for when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.
And so the soul, transformed in God and waiting at the threshold of heaven, sings its desire for His theology. (The Ascent to Truth)

As the day wore on, we began receiving a few more details about Fr. Louis' death. It seemed fairly certain that the body would be home in Gethsemani sometime Saturday. We could accordingly think in terms of a Monday morning funeral Mass and burial.

In the meantime, there was a great deal to be done. Fr. Louis belonged not just to Gethsemani, but to practically everyone. For many days, telephone lines were constantly busy, and stacks of telegrams and letters of condolence rolled in. A number of persons especially close to Fr. Louis were notified about the funeral arrangements; but it was taken for granted from the very beginning that the funeral Mass and burial would be a simple, family affair, as free as possible from the distractions of reporters and photographers.

It would be true to say that the liturgy which surrounded Fr. Louis' return to us and his burial differed in no important respect from the liturgy for the death and burial of any of us. Yet, almost everything received a special character which set off this funeral liturgy from any other funeral liturgy: and this is surely as it should be. It is quite true that, for all of us, the final realities are the same, and that one can perhaps make out a good case for a uniform funeral liturgy which differs little from one celebration to another. But it is also true that a living liturgy springs from the experience of a concrete community, and is shaped in part by the particular circumstances ordained or permitted by God's providence. Basically, the funeral liturgy we celebrated for old Br. Leo, who had died the week before, was the same as the funeral liturgy celebrated for Fr. Louis; yet each celebration had its own special "physiognomy" determined by particular circumstances, by the personalities and vocation of the departed, and by a host of "imponderables" which escape classification.

Wednesday evening, December 11th, we celebrated a special Office at the time of Compline. This might require a word of explanation. It was not an Office in place of Compline; nor an Office really very different from Compline in any essential respect. It was simply a very special form of Compline in which traditional values received new light and emphasis. Thank God for our loi-cadre indulg, which makes such celebrations possible!
You'll find a copy of this evening Office of Prayer in the pocket at the end of this issue of Liturgy.

The General structure is fairly simple:

V. and R. (with paschal Alleluia)
Introductory Hymn
Reading - Silence - Psalm
Reading - Silence - Psalm
Reading - Silence - Psalm
Short Litany - Commemoration of Our Lady ("Hail, holy Queen") - Final Collect

Do you know the opening hymn? The translation draws from several sources, but the original German text, "Nun ruhen alle Wälder," is by a German hymn writer, Paulus Gerhardt (d. 1676), for whom Fr. Louis would have a special sympathy. The unbelievably brutal Thirty Years' War broke out when Gerhard was just twelve; and his own home town was burned to the ground by Swedish soldiers in the course of the action. Many of Gerhard's poems reflect the horrors of the war. His vocation as a poet was a bit like that of Fr. Louis; writing seemed an essential component of his pastoral ministry, just as for Fr. Louis, the poet-priest per excellence, writing was at the heart of his priestly vocation. Like Fr. Louis, too, Gerhard adopted a strongly "non-violent" pacifism as his personal position in the various controversies in which he was involved (he was dismissed from St. Nicholas' church in 1666; the Elector had taken exception to Gerhard's position in the then current theological controversies). I hesitate to write the next few sentences, because I'm afraid you'll feel that even the quietest sort of humor is out of place for the moment, if so, you simply don't know Fr. Louis. You see, the incredibly beautiful melody is not without its light aspect. The German title, "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen," is serious enough — "O World, I Now Must Leave You;" and it appears in its present form, as a matter of fact, as a funeral hymn written by Johann Hesse around 1555 (Bach uses the tune in his St. Matthew Passion). But the original text would have pleased Fr. Louis, our hermit-globe trotter, immensely: it was once a traveling artisan's song, "Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen" — "Innsbruck, I Now Must Leave You." (Incidentally, this is a good example of a secular melody put to splendid use in our Christian musical tradition!)

I had to think long and hard about the question of the readings. I've recently had occasion, in the course of meetings of several different liturgy commissions, to enunciate the principle that biblical readings should be given
the preference if one has to choose between a biblical reading and a reading by an ecclesiastical writer; and the reason is, of course, that the non-biblical writer has as his function the task of helping us penetrate deeper into God's word revealed in Scripture. I certainly believe that this principal holds good, but I would not wish to be overly absolute about its application. In the present instance, our community was celebrating a specific event in the life of our local church — the fulfillment of the priestly and monastic vocation of one of our brethren, the definitive passage of one of our own from our assembly to the assembly of the Church in heaven; and the particular individual who was the object of our attention had had as his particular charism the gift of speaking and writing about the deep realities of our life in Christ with an immediacy and insight shared by few others. In these particular circumstances, I thought it would be best to let Fr. Louis himself speak to us. Thus, all three readings were from his own writings.

The first reading was excerpted from a page of _No Man Is an Island_, which Fr. Louis might have written, one would almost think, with a clear foreknowledge of the circumstances of his death in the silence and solitude he loved so well, because they were filled for him with the presence of Christ.

If, at the moment of our death, death comes to us as an unwelcome stranger, it will be because Christ also has always been to us an unwelcome stranger. For when death comes, Christ comes also, bringing us the everlasting life which He has bought for us by His own death. Those who love true life, therefore, frequently think about their death. Their life is full of a silence that is an anticipated victory over death. Silence, indeed, makes death our servant and even our friend. Thoughts and prayers that grow up out of the silent thought of death are like trees growing where there is water. They are strong thoughts, that overcome the fear of misfortune because they have overcome passion and desire. They turn the face of our soul, in constant desire, toward the face of Christ.

If I say that a whole lifetime of silence is ordered to a final utterance, I do not mean that we must all contrive to die with pious speeches on our lips. It is not necessary that our last words should have some special or dramatic significance worthy of being written down. Every good death, every death that hands us over from the uncertainties of this world to the unfailing peace and silence of the love of Christ, is itself an utterance and a conclusion. It says, either in words or without them, that it is good for life to come to its appointed end, for the body to return to dust and for the spirit to ascend to the Father, through the mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

A silent death may speak with more eloquent peace than a death punctuated by vivid expressions. A lonely death, a tragic death, may
yet have more to say of the peace and mercy of Christ than many another comfortable death.

For the eloquence of death is the eloquence of human poverty coming face to face with the riches of divine mercy. The more we are aware that our poverty is supremely great, the greater will be the meaning of our death: and the greater its poverty. For the saints are those who wanted to be poorest in life, and who, above all else, exulted in the supreme poverty of death.

The meditation psalm is also by Fr. Louis, and from the same No Man Is an Island. In the section entitled "My Soul Remembered God," Father, in commenting on the words of Psalm 76, "This is the change of the right hand of the Most High," spoke about our passage from death to life effected in the Holy Spirit, through whom all things are made new. This passage ends with this wonderful psalm which would be ideal for Compline even in a more ordinary context.

The second reading was a conflation of two passages straddling the extremes of Sign of Jonas, where Fr. Louis meditates on the mysteriousness of his vocation, writing in part:

A Monk can always legitimately and significantly compare himself to a prophet, because the monks are the heirs of the prophets. The prophet is a man whose life is a living witness of the providential action of God in the world. Every prophet is a sign and a witness of Christ. Every monk, in whom Christ lives, and in whom all the prophecies are therefore fulfilled, is a witness and a sign of the Kingdom of God. Even our mistakes are eloquent, more than we know.

The sign Jesus promised to the generation that did not understand Him was the "sign of Jonas the prophet" — that is, the sign of His own resurrection. The life of every monk, of every priest, of every Christian is signed with the sign of Jonas, because we all live by the power of Christ's resurrection. But I feel that my own life is especially sealed with this great sign, which baptism and monastic profession and priestly ordination have burned into the roots of my being, because like Jonas himself I found myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox.

Like the prophet, Jonas, whom God ordered to go to Nineveh, I found myself with an almost uncontrollable desire to go in the opposite direction. God pointed one way and all my "ideals" pointed in the other. It was when Jonas was traveling as fast as he could away from Nineveh, toward Tharsis, that he was thrown overboard, and swallowed by a whale who took him where God wanted him to go...

The hand lies open. The heart is dumb. The soul that held my substance together, like a hard gem in the hollow of my own power, will one day totally give in.
The Funeral of Father Louis

You, Who sleep in my breast, are not met with words, but in the emergence of life within life and of wisdom within wisdom. You are found in communion: Thou in me and I in Thee and Thou in them and them in me: dispossession within dispossession, dispassion within dispassion, emptiness within emptiness, freedom within freedom. I am alone. Thou art alone. The Father and I are One.

The Voice of God is heard in Paradise:

"What was vile has become precious. What is now precious was never vile. I have always known the vile as precious: for what is vile I know not at all.

"What was cruel has become merciful. What is now merciful was never cruel. I have always overshadowed Jonas with My mercy, and cruelty I know not at all. Have you had sight of Me, Jonas My child? Mercy within mercy within mercy. I have forgiven the universe without end, because I have never known sin.

"What was poor has become infinite. What is infinite was never poor. I have always known poverty as infinite: riches I love not at all. Prisons within prisons within prisons. Do not lay up for yourselves rapturies upon earth, where time and space corrupt, where the minutes break in and steal. No more lay hold on time, Jonas, My son, lest the rivers bear you away.

"What was fragile has become powerful. I loved what was most frail. I looked upon what was nothing. I touched what was without substance, and within what was not, I am."

The antiphon for the meditation psalm was taken, of course, from the preceding reading. And what other psalm would have been so appropriate as the Song of Jonas in the belly of the whale?

For Reading III I conflated several passages from Father's commentary on Psalm 90, in Bread in the Wilderness. Psalm 90 is, of course, the Compline psalm; it was also, for Fr. Louis, one of the psalms which best expressed the deepest aspect of the contemplative life. The careful reader of the original passage, "The Shadow of Thy Wings," will easily note that Fr. Louis is actually writing about the mystical death and the darkness and silence through which God leads us to the fullness of our life in Christ. Read in the context of Fr. Louis' death, the passage takes on an even deeper meaning, and one realizes how our monastic life is truly a continual dying and passing into God, and that our physical death should ideally be the final seal on the life of a person who has already passed from death to life.
Evidently, the meditation psalm could be only Psalm 90. Rather than use our familiar text, we used instead the lovely paraphrase by James Montgomery (d. 1854), a man after Fr. Louis' own heart. The son of a Moravian minister, Montgomery was sent to a school at Fulneck, near Leeds, England. Poor James did miserably, and was finally expelled: he spent too much time writing poetry! He later assumed editorship of a paper in which his strong convictions and freedom of thought were much in evidence. On one occasion he was fined and even jailed in York Castle for printing a poem celebrating the fall of the Bastille. He collaborated in many humanitarian endeavors, but it was particularly in his opposition to the slave trade that he was at his most characteristic. I think that Fr. Louis would have found Montgomery a singularly attractive personality. There is nothing of particular note about the hymn tune, except that it is a good one ("Stuttgart," composed or arranged by C.F. Witt, and published in Gotha in 1715), and that the same melody is used for one of our favorite Advent hymns, "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus."

The final section of the Office followed our usual Compline structure: a short litany (but with petitions for Fr. Louis, instead of the usual series), the antiphon of Our Lady, "Hail, holy Queen," with a concluding collect either adapted from or inspired by (if I remember aright) one of Br. Max Thurian's beautiful Marian prayers:

O Father of mercy and compassion,
you willed that your Son be born of a poor Virgin,
that, in her poverty and simplicity,
the power and riches of your love might be made plain.
Make us poor and hidden,
even as Mary was poor and hidden,
so that we may share in her closeness to you,
and praise you by our lives of joy and adoration.
Through Jesus Christ...

By Thursday I had a fairly clear idea of the shape the actual funeral Mass and burial were to take. There was still a good chance, however, that there might be some last minute revisions. Several weeks earlier, we had been designated by our Archbishop and by Fr. McManus of the U.S. Bishops' Liturgy Commission as qualified to implement the Consilium's revised funeral rites. Unfortunately — or fortunately — the official U.S. translations promised by Washington failed to arrive. Meanwhile, I had a copy of the Consilium Latin project, so I was able to have a solid point of reference, while being relatively free with regard to the choice and translation of texts. Evidently,
there was no question of simply taking the Consilium project as it stands, but of adapting it in the light of our particular circumstances and of our own traditional funeral liturgy. But I was just as happy that the official English texts never arrived, thus leaving me a bit more free to use "ad hoc" texts. There was also a bit of uncertainty as to who would be Presiding Celebrant. It looked as if several bishops might be present. If one of them were to co-concelebrate, he would automatically assume the role of President. At the same time, there was a special fittingness in Fr. Flavian's being Principal Celebrant, and for obvious reasons.

By Friday (I think — my memory is already a bit hazy) I had finished the booklet for the funeral Mass and burial. Then we learned that the body would probably not arrive till sometime Sunday...till sometime after midnight or early Monday morning...till early Tuesday morning. It was, in fact, around a half-hour after Compline on Monday that Fr. Flavian phoned me in my trailer to tell me that it looked as if the funeral would have to be postponed till sometime Tuesday afternoon. It was clear, then, that the Mass would have to be integrated with Vespers, and that the booklet finished the preceding Friday would have to be re-done. It was all for the best, however, since the elements of the Vespers celebration provided ideal material for the funeral liturgy.

First, however, came reception of the body. When it became clear that this would more or less coincide with the Office of None, it seemed best to adopt a special form of None similar to the Compline Office celebrated a few days earlier. This sort of thing should always be done with caution, since there is danger of trying to combine two types of Community Office, each with its own function and spirit. The result can easily be a mish-mash of ill-ordered, merely juxtaposed elements; but this was a danger avoided (I think) in the present instance.

Our usual rite for the transfer of the body of a deceased brother from the infirmary to the church was substantially retained. This rite consists chiefly of two stations — one in the cloister and one in the church, with a procession linking the two stations. In the case of the reception of Fr. Louis' body, the station in church took the form of None.

A series of telephone calls had alerted us as to the imminent arrival of Father's body. We gathered in the cloister (chapter room wing) for the station which marked the actual reception of our departed brother. I do not know how
it is in other communities; but in ours, this is not the moment for the chanting of a long responsory of the "Libera me, Domine" type. Instead, the Cantor reads a series of selected biblical texts on death and resurrection, while the funeral bier is carried to the place of the first station, where the brethren are already assembled in silent prayer and meditation. The first station consists of 1- an invitatatory by the Superior, 2- a litany led by the Cantor, and sung during the incensation and sprinkling of the body, and 3- a collect which marks the end of the station and initiates the short procession into church.

1- Invitatory

DEAR Brethren,

it was the Lord Jesus himself who said,

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Let us pray, then, for our Father Louis, that, having lived and died in the Lord, he may rest now from his labors, and enter into the light and glory of God's eternal Sabbath Rest.

This is the text we use for all the brethren, but it seemed especially appropriate for Fr. Louis, who had a particular love for the introductory "comfortable word" from St. Matthew. I remember his commenting once on this text, which we have in our Corpus Christi invitatatory antiphon for Vigils. He told us that the text was a wonderfully "Cistercian" one, because it summed up the whole meaning of the monastic life as he understood it — an ever deepening response to the Lord's invitation to enter into his own peace and rest. I liked, too, the specific mention of the Sabbath Rest. Fr. Louis had once intended to do a book on St. Aelred, for whom the contemplative life meant a sharing in the Sabbath Rest of God. It was a concept about which Fr. Louis wrote more than once; and the title of the book was to have been "Aelred's Sabbath."

2- The Litany involves only a simple refrain on the part of the entire community. The individual petitions I salvaged from one of the Latin prayers currently assigned to be prayed during the washing of the body, i.e., "Suscipe, Domine... reverentem ad te." Anyone who has studied the Latin text know how tangled it is in its present state. A comparison of ms. sources shows that our present text is really a clumsy fusion of what was originally a litany with invitatatory formula.
The litany we now use runs as follows:

R. Into your hands, O Lord, we commend our brother N.

1- Receive, O Lord, your servant, for he returns to you.

2- Clothe him in his heavenly wedding garment, and wash him in the holy font of everlasting life.

3- May he hear your words of invitation, "Come, you blessed of my Father!"

4- May he gaze upon you, Lord, face to face, and taste the blessedness of perfect rest.

5- May angels surround him, and saints embrace him in peace.

3- The Collect both terminates the first station and, with its evident allusions to Psalm 83, initiates the procession to church, during which we chant Psalm 83.

ALMIGHTY God, our Father in heaven, before whom all live who die in the Lord who died for us, receive our Brother N. into the courts of your heavenly dwelling place. He has longed and yearned for your courts, O Lord; let his heart and soul now ring out his joy to you, O God, the living God, the God of those who live!

This we ask through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Psalm 83 makes an ideal processional chant to the place of the final station in church, and it would be difficult to find another psalm more suitable for its present purpose. As for the manner of chanting this psalm, we’ve adopted the stanza (by schola) - refrain (by everyone) form as being the most practical and prayerful in the concrete situation. It provides a minimum of technical difficulties so far as the community at large is concerned, and this is important. One of the several reasons for a rather widespread disenchantment with processions is the sad fact that, for centuries, we have been forced to chant a repertory of music in large part either unsuitable for processions, or else negotiable only by a rather competent schola. I am certainly not suggesting that we adopt trivial texts or music for processions. It is rather a question of texts and music which are simple, profound, beautiful, and functional. Nor is there any need to forswear the use of "difficult" music, so long as the musical resources are at hand, and the use of such material makes for a more meaningful community experience. Whatever may be able to be said for Cistercian simplicity, it would be fatal to reduce our chant to a monoto-
nous sameness of style and structure; just as it would be fatal to indulge in musical extravagances ill-suited to a monastic context marked by sobriety and simplicity. One simply has to know how to utilize cantor, schola, and community at large in such a way that the chant contributes to a vital, positive community experience, without the brethren being unduly distracted by the material demands of overly difficult music.

The station in church followed our usual structure for a Little Hour. The daily None hymn would have served admirably for the purpose: "...but let a holy death accord eternal glory with the Lord." Instead, we sang a hymn authored by one of the 17th century metaphysical poets to whom Fr. Louis was so attracted — George Herbert's lovely "Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life," from his posthumous collection The Temple, published the same year as his death in 1633. The year before he died, Fr. Louis gave a series of conferences on Milton and the classical tradition. I'm not sure that he dealt with the metaphysical poets as a group; but most of his enthusiastic comments about the classicism of Milton would apply equally as well to most of the metaphysical poets of 17th century England, if it is true that "metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence." Herbert, by the way, was, like Fr. Louis, a Cambridge man; he became a major fellow of Trinity College the same year he took his master's degree, 1615. Perhaps you might want to read the text of the poem.

COME, my Way, my Truth, my Life:  
Such a way as gives us breath;  
Such a truth as ends all strife;  
Such a life as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:  
Such a light as shows a feast;  
Such a feast as mends in length;  
Such a strength as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:  
Such a joy as none can move;  
Such a love as none can part;  
Such a heart as joys in love.

The melody — "Oundle" — is by another Cambridge man, the Elizabethan organist and composer, Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625). It was in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, that Gibbons began his professional career at the age of 12.
For the psalmody we retained Psalm 125 of weekday None, but sang it with
the antiphon, "The Lord delivers from bondage! What marvels the Lord works
for us!"

I forget which text we used for the short reading. After the litany with
a commemoration of Our Lady, the Office concluded with a collect based on
Psalm 125:

O LORD, who place upon our lips the songs of redemption,
and make us joyful with the sure expectation of deliverance from bondage,
grant that we who now sow in tears,
may one day, with our departed brother,
come into our heavenly homeland,
full of song, and carrying sheaves of glory:
Through Jesus Christ...

In the meantime, most of the invited guests had arrived for the funeral
which was to begin in mid-afternoon. Our Archbishop was with us, but did not
concelebrate. This was to make it possible for Fr. Flavian to be Presiding
Celebrant. After consultation with the Archbishop, Fr. Flavian decreed a tem-
porary change in the enclosure limits, which allowed the invited guests and
friends of Fr. Louis to share in the liturgy from a place in the nave, and
even to take part in the actual burial in our cemetery. This is as it should
have been. After all, the assembly is itself a sign of the Eucharist. By its
very nature, the assembly should manifest the reality of the living Church.
There is something profoundly wrong, then, if a portion of the assembly gath­
ered for the Breaking of the Bread is kept segregated in a distant rear tribune,
and excluded from any kind of active participation in the celebration. Evi­
dently, the Eucharist as celebrated within a monastic context will have to
express this context; and it would be wrong if the presence of guests or
retreatants were to militate effectively against this context and the con-
templative orientation of our way of life. But it remains nonetheless true
that, unless our assemblies concretely realize (in the Newman sense of the word)
the sign of the Eucharist, there is something missing. The genuine contemplative
is the first to realize this. I do not mean the would-be contemplative,
who substitutes speculation or day-dreaming for the contemplative intuition
of Truth. I mean, rather, the man whose deepest being responds to the presence
of God in an experiential contact, wherever God is present. Thus, it was Fr.
Louis himself who (unsuccessfully) adopted the position rejected by our local building committee several years ago, when the question of the re-building of our church was discussed; namely, that the people of God hitherto sequestered in our high and distant tribune should be allowed to participate more directly in our community Eucharist. I'm quite sure that Fr. Louis must now feel no little satisfaction in the special arrangements made for his funeral Mass.

You'll find a copy of the booklet for the Mass and burial in the pocket at the end of this issue of *Liturgy*.

Since the Mass was not to be preceded by an Office, we used the organ to prepare for the beginning of the Mass. I chose one of the quietest and deepest of the Bach chorale preludes from the *Orgelbüchlein* — his setting of the Passion hymn, "Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund." By the time I finished, things were still not quite ready in the sacristy, so I had time for the greater part of a no less deep Ricercare by one of J.S. Bach's co-evals with a reputation even greater (at one time) than Bach's own, i.e., George Philipp Telemann (d. 1767).

Do you know the Easter Eucharistic hymn we sang for the processional? It contains practically the entire paschal mystery in its full cosmic dimensions. The Latin text is in our Cistercian hymnal, "Ad oenam Agni providi." Its presence there is due to St. Bernard and his board of chant reformers, who reworked the Order's earlier hymnal around 1147, and added a number of our best hymns. The translation, "At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing," is by the Scottish lawyer, Robert Campbell (1868), who modulated from the Presbyterian Church through the Episcopal Church of Scotland into the Roman Catholic fold (in 1852), and was known for his work for the education of poor children. The joyful melody, dubbed "Salzburg" in some sources, appears just as often under the title "Allen Menschen müssen sterben," i.e. "All Men Must Die;" but the jubilant character of the tune make clear the Christian character of the text with its somewhat stoic-sounding first line.

I have already mentioned that our particular circumstances called for an integration of Vespers with the Mass. The Consilium project places the Vespers psalmody after the Communion; but this would have been a rather poor structure with the further addition of the burial rite. So we followed the normal structure for Lauds-Mass, with the psalms at the beginning.
And what beautiful psalms they are — two of the New Testament canticles adopted by the Consilium for the reformed Roman Breviary. It would be difficult, I think, to find texts better suited our purpose, or more universal in scope. The booklet doesn't indicate the melody for the Apocalypse verses sung by the Schola (p. 5): it was the paschaltide short responsory melody.

Needless to say — and perhaps I should have said it before — the vestments were white!

The Mass prayers were those prescribed by our Cistercian sacramentary.

We used three readings, each one suitable for any Christian celebration of death, but eminently suitable in the case of our Fr. Louis. It was almost inevitable that we choose the account of Jona in the belly of the sea beast for the Old Testament reading; inevitable, too, that we use Jona's Song of Deliverance as the matching responsorial psalm, and in such a way that the reading led directly into the psalm. (In such instances where a reading leads directly into a responsorial psalm with which it forms a single whole, the psalmist for the responsorial psalm is also the reader for the preceding lesson). For our purposes, we used only 6 verses of Jona's psalm. The second reading was the magnificent Ephesians hymn about the eternal plan of the Father, realized in the Son, and fulfilled through the Holy Spirit in the Church — Ephesians 1,3-19a. I defy you to find a more trinitarian, more christological, more ecclesiological, more cosmological and eschatological text!!! It is surely one of the greatest of the Pauline hymns in praise of the Mystery of Christ, and provides the ideal context for the life and death of a Christian. The Gospel, John 17, 24-26, was also ideal in its own way. The text is, of course, the conclusion of our Lord's high priestly prayer, in which he prays that his disciples may be with him, and behold his glory, and share in the love between Father and Son. This is contemplation. It is also the vocation of the monk, the vocation of every Christian. And, in a particular way, it was Fr. Louis' vocation both to enter into this experience and to prepare others to enter into it.

But now I must backtrack for a moment in order to say a few words about the acclamation chant. For some time our Sunday and feast day Masses have had, instead of the florid, meditative alleluia chants we know so well from the Gregorian repertory, an alleluia chant of the processional type, with the verse (or verses) sung by the schola or cantor. Thus, the chant at last
becomes what it originally was and should be — a processional chant sung in acclamation of Christ present in the proclamation of his word. Because of the time needed for the imposition of incense before the Gospel procession, I provided an additional verset (which turned out to be unnecessary, though its presence did no harm). The texts chosen were all from St. John, and served well to prepare for the short Gospel text itself. As for the melody — when I set it down, I thought that I was simply re-working and extending some material I had used earlier for a feast of Our Lady. It was only afterwards that I noted a suspicious similarity between the chordal structure of the initial descending passage and the "architecture" of the lament written by George Gershwin for Serena, the widow who so movingly ritualizes her mourning in Act II of Porgy and Bess.

A note about the homily, which was preached by our Fr. Dan Walsh. Anyone familiar with Fr. Louis' writings knows how close "Dr. Dan" was to Fr. Louis, and knows how strong an influence he was in Fr. Louis' conversion and eventual entrance into monastic life. Fr. Louis himself had given the homily for Fr. Walsh's Mass celebrated at Gethsemani only a few days after his still recent ordination. (When Dr. Dan retired from Columbia University and came to Gethsemani, he probably didn't realize that he would be entering into a much broader field of teaching and lecturing here in Kentucky, and would even be ordained at the special invitation of our late Archbishop Floersh!) At any rate, there was a special propriety in Fr. Walsh giving the homily. I have to admit, however, the "homily" was the one element rather out of proportion in the overall celebration. I put "homily" in quotes, since it was rather more a eulogy than an intimate person to person reflection on the meaning of Fr. Louis' life and death in the light of the sacred texts just read. It was unduly long, too; though I think that the ones more liable to feel this would have been those less well acquainted with Fr. Louis and Dr. Dan. At any rate, this might be the moment to stress the need for proportion between the various elements in our celebrations, so that everything unites to form a balanced, harmonious whole. It is quite possible to combine elements which, in themselves, are utterly admirable; but unless they are combined so as to lock together in a higher unity, the result can be something disjointed and complicated. It's especially important that the homily flow so directly out of the scripture texts and immediate context, that it forms part and parcel with the whole.
For the universal prayer we used a series of petitions markedly paschal in character, since each petition began with the acclamation, "Christ is risen from the dead!"

There was something a bit unusual about our offertory procession chant, which was sung (as the custom here a Gethsemani is) by the schola. We used two offertory chants, with a transitional text to link the two. The first chant was the exile-song, "By the waters of Babylon," with a single verse in the same mood: how often Fr. Louis felt the situation — the mystic asked to sing the songs of Zion, when Jerusalem is so far away, and the conditions of exile so bitterly felt. Then came a transitional text from the Apocalypse — about the New Jerusalem, the new order of things, in which tears are wiped away and pain is no more. The modal transition matched the change of texts, and led into the Easter season "Praise the Lord, O my soul."

About the rest of the Mass little need be said. We settled on Psalm 33 for the Communion psalm, which was accompanied with guitar as well as organ. Psalm 33 is another song of the poor man which Fr. Louis loved. And the refrain — "Taste and see how good the Lord is!" — has always been understood as expressing the essence of the contemplative experience.

After our period of silent thanksgiving we sang the Vespers Song of Mary, with the paschal tide antiphon, "I go to prepare a place for you; but I shall come to you again, alleluia, and your heart shall rejoice, alleluia, alleluia." Like all the other texts, the Song of Mary took on a very special resonance when sung in the context of Fr. Louis' life and death. It should, of course, take on something of the same meaning in the context of the life and death of each of us; but this is an experience which becomes vivid for most of us only from time to time.

At the end of the Mass, the concelebrants returned to the sacristy to resume their cowl or clerical garb (there were a number of visiting diocesan priests and religious). Some sort of functional music was needed, and a hymn seemed the obvious solution. I had thought at first of a hymn based on Sirach 44, 1-7 — "Now Praise We Great and Famous Men," not because of the opening line (which Fr. Louis would have regarded as particularly fulsome if applied to him), but because of lines such as "And praise the Lord, who now as then reveals in man his glory." or "Praise we the peaceful men of skill, who... rich in art, made richer still the brotherhood of duty." or even the whole of
stanza 3:

Praise we the great of heart and mind,
The singers sweetly gifted,
Whose music like a mighty wind
The souls of men uplifted.

But the text, as it stood in my source material, was not even remotely Christian in its specific orientation (as a matter of fact, the author, William G. Tarrant, d. 1928, was a Unitarian minister). It was our Br. Paul (he had been a novice under Fr. Louis) who provided the solution. A few phrases of the original can still be discerned; but Br. Paul's text is substantially a new creation which expresses with beauty and dignity many aspects of Fr. Louis and his vocation as spiritual father, as a man destined to serve as a link between Eastern and Western traditions of contemplation, as a poet endowed with the charism of making tangible the deep realities of God and man, as a monk whose calling was essentially prophetic (i.e., a witness to the presence and action of God in the world), as a man thirsting for peace and justice in a civilization in which war, social injustice, and racial hatred have become endemic.

We had now reached a point in the structure of the celebration which posed something of a problem. It seemed clear that there would have to be at least a 3-minute "slack" period in which little or nothing happened, in order to give the concelebrants time to unvest and return to the nave. A period of silence and reflection suggested itself; but this would have followed rather soon after our silent thanksgiving; and the prospects for a really meaningful silence were dim when one considered the fact that 30 or more priests would be slipping back into the nave in rapid succession. Mozart came to the rescue. Have you read the opening section of Fr. Louis' Conjectures of a Guilty Bes-tander, where he analyzes a dream Barth once had about Mozart? For both Barth and Fr. Louis, Mozart's music stood for an innocence and a wisdom which go beyond the natural order of things. I've quoted part of the passage in the brief note at the top of page 15 of the booklet, but the original passage from Conjectures should be read in full. I thought, then, that a page or two of Mozart might fit in well at this moment. It would leave everyone free to think and pray if he so wished; it would help disguise the fact that for three minutes nothing significant was happening; and it would help draw attention away from the inevitable though slight distractions caused by the returning concelebrants. (By the way, I personally am very much an enthusiast for
sacred silence in the celebration of the liturgy — particularly in monasteries. But the conditions must be such as to ensure a truly sacred silence. I don't believe that occasional "dead spots" during which nothing happens really provide the occasion for truly meaningful periods of silence — at least, not for the community as a whole.) As for the choice of the composer, Mozart really had no competition. Fr. Louis' musical tastes were enormously eclectic. He loved Bach (or at least, much of Bach), waxed ecstatic about Gabrieli, had a passion for Kansas City Jazz; and though I do not wish to accuse him of really liking Richard Strauss, he did once ask to borrow a recording I had of Elektra (his uncle used to like this opera, he told me.) But in the final analysis, Fr. Louis = Mozart. I think, indeed, that, true though Barth's and Merton's remarks about Mozart are, they're necessarily incomplete. The "divine" Mozart could be at times as earthy as the most earthbound of us. If he sometimes seems to soar above man's condition, there are times when he also seems to plunge into the very depths. Mozart teems with paradox, just like Fr. Louis.

So far in the funeral liturgy, many texts had spoken eloquently of Fr. Louis and his vocation; but no texts by Fr. Louis himself had been used. We selected a rather long passage to mark the beginning of the last part of the afternoon liturgy — the final paragraphs of a book about which he had many reservations, but which (even he realized) will surely be one of his most durable contributions: The Seven Storey Mountain. Mercy, joy, anguish, communion, solitude, love...almost all of the deepest "mertonian" themes are touched on in this last section of his autobiography. I sometimes think most of his later writings can be seen as simply spelling out in more detail the more important of his earliest experiences and intuitions. (I realize, of course, that he evolved and developed, and that he often seemed to think of his earlier writings as a bit naive. But I guess that my chief awareness is of a certain unity in his literary output: though if I had to choose between some of his more "sophisticated" mature writings and his earlier "naive" works, I would probably opt for the latter.) At any rate, the final paragraphs of Seven Storey Mountain took on a resonance in the context of Fr. Louis' funeral such as they shall never have for the one who merely reads the book:

--- But you shall taste the true solitude of my anguish and my poverty and I shall lead you into the high places of my joy and you shall die in Me and find all things in My mercy which has created you for this end and brought you from Prades to Bermuda to St. Antonin to Oakham to London to
Carribridge to Rome to New York to Columbia to Corpus Christi to St. Bonaventure to the Cistercian Abbey of the poor men who labor in Gethsemani:

That you may become the brother of God and learn to know the Christ of the burnt men.

The final stage of Fr. Louis' journey to his last resting place now began with an invitatory by Fr. Flavian:

LET us pray, my brethren,
that the Lord of mercy and compassion,
who has taken our brother to himself,
may bring him at last into the never-failing splendor of his kingdom
in light inaccessible,
wherein eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
nor has it entered into the heart of man,
what things have been prepared for those who love the Lord.

During the sprinkling and incensation of Fr. Louis' mortal remains, we sang a version of the Trisagion we use here during Lent and on a few other special occasions. I don't know the original source of the complete text, which I first heard a few years ago in French, when I was passing through Fribourg, Switzerland. I did a quick transcription of the melody and Englished the texts sung by the Cantor as follows:

1- O holy God, O holy Mighty One, O holy Immortal One!
   Lord have mercy. iij.
2- O you, who have suffered for us on the Cross!
   Christ, have mercy. iij.
3- Remember us, O Lord, when you come into your Kingdom!
   Lord have mercy. iij.

(If you happen to have a copy of our local Mass Book handy, you can find the complete musical text on p. 104. It's also included in the Appendix to our Kyriale booklet, Chants of the Mass Ordinary.)

Then the following collect, which both concluded the final station in the church and marked the beginning of the procession to the cemetery:

O GOD, your mercies cannot be numbered.
Accept, then, our prayers on behalf of our Father Louis,
and grant him an entrance into the land of light and joy,
in the fellowship of your saints:
Through Christ our Lord.

Since the recent re-building of our church, our burial processions are quite brief, for the west transept door leads directly into the cemetery. Accordingly, there is little need for the ample psalmody provided by the present Ordo for the burial of the brethren. Further, though alternating psalmody often makes for ideal processional music, I've found from experience that, for
outdoor processions, a simple refrain by the community answering to strophes sung by a schola seems to work best for us here at Gethsemani.

Of the three processional chants provided by the booklet (pp.16-17), we had time only for the verses on baptism and resurrection, and for Psalm 115 (I forget whether we even had time to sing the latter in its entirety). The first processional chant, with the Alleluia-refrain, was already familiar to us from our paschal liturgy, where it appears as a Communion psalm. It makes an ideal chant for a funeral procession — and not just because of the beautiful texts. There is inevitably a bit of hesitation at the beginning of any funeral procession: ministers have to form ranks, pall bearers take their proper places, community fall in line. A series of fast-changing psalm verses sung by the entire community would be, in our context here at Gethsemani, less good than what we now have. Once a procession is under way, and most of the material distractions of the beginning are over, alternating psalmody of our standard kind poses no real problem. But for the beginning of a procession, it seems best to leave the real work to the schola, and provide the brethren at large with a simple refrain. Psalm 115 was also familiar to us. We use it as a Vespers responsorial psalm; we use it, too, for solemn professions. And the text is so magnificently suitable for the funeral of a monk or a priest, that it will probably become part of our local repertory of funeral chants.

The station at the graveside begins with an inaccurate title (booklet, p. 17): the "Blessing of the Grave" was no real blessing, but simply a suitable prayer to bring out the significance of the burial rite.

LORD Jesus Christ,
who rose in the glory of your resurrection
from a tomb in which,
obedient to the Father's plan for our salvation,
you had lain in death for three days,
let your mercy enfold our brother whom we lay now in this hallowed earth,
that he may sleep in peace until the trumpet,
sounding on the last Great Day,
raises our bodies to life with you in resurrected glory:
You who live...

The incensation of the grave and the final incensation of the body were accompanied by a short litany patterned on death-resurrection episodes from the Gospel: Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, the widow of Naim, the daughter of Jairus...

Neither psalmody nor any other type of chant has ever seemed very suitable during the actual internment of the body. Psychologically, this is always an
emotion-charged moment; while the psalmody we've sung in the past only partially fits the context, and diverts attention between our psalters and the action at the graveside. I think that we've found an excellent solution for our local situation. The cantor simply reads a series of carefully selected biblical texts: "I am the resurrection and the life...I know that my Redeemer lives...Though the body be destroyed, yet shall I see God...etc." The biblical background is infinitely richer than that provided by any single psalm, and the impact is more telling because there are fewer material distractions involved for the community.

Contrary to our usual practice, Fr. Louis was buried in the coffin in which he had travelled from Bangkok home to Gethsemani. His body was already well on the way to its return to the dust from which it came, and there could be no question of his burial in an open bier. It is just as well. He had always wanted to die without fuss and publicity; and the unopened coffin helped to preserve the reserve and natural "modesty" so characteristic of him when there was question of something touching him at a really deep level.

In spite of all the preceding resurrection texts, there was a brutal finality in the handful of earth cast on the coffin by Fr. Flavian. The silence was absolute, and the sudden noise made by the falling earth rang like a thunder clap. Even the elements reflected something of the pain of the moment. A few drops of rain fell. Not enough even to dampen one's clothes; just enough to serve as a commentary on one aspect of this leave-taking. But if there was sorrow, there was joy, too; and a deep peace and experience of abiding fellowship. What W.H. Auden said in his elegy for J.F. Kennedy is true. I don't have the text at hand, but I think that the first line runs something like: "When a great man dies, sorrow and joy are one..." I think this is true of the brethren who are not "great" in the sense in which Auden uses the word — the simple monk who lives his vocation with honesty, faith, and gratitude. Fr. Louis' particular vocation certainly had its spectacular aspects. But in the essentials of his vocation, he was very much like all the rest of us.

While the grave was being partially filled in, the schola sang select stanzas from the paschal Psalm 117. I provided an extremely simple refrain on purpose (p. 17 of the booklet); but I erred, I think, on the side of too much simplicity. The refrain wasn't sufficiently defined melodically to make it really singable, and I had the impression of something merely being sung to "fill in" time, or sung because the booklet said to sing. Even music meant
chiefly to accompany another action should be able to stand on its own; and if there's a refrain, it should be so structured that the stanza demands the answer which the refrain supplies.

Now we came to the final rites. First, an invitatory by Fr. Flavian.

LET us pray to the Lord, brethren,
that he may give to our Father Louis,
who rests now from his labors,
the peace and blessings prepared for those who finish their course in faith.

We retained our traditional triple "Have mercy, Lord, have mercy on a sinner.", sung kneeling. Then came a final collect with a last blessing of all assembled:

O LORD God, unto your gracious mercy we have committed our brother.
Make your face to shine upon him;
be gracious unto him, lift up your countenance upon him,
and give him peace, both now and evermore:
Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

AND may Almighty God, who has given us peace and strength in the risen Savior, bless all of you here gathered +, and bring you to the fullness of eternal life. R. Amen.

In a rite as simple as this one, something a bit more than the final blessing was needed to mark the end. So we used the Alleluia-acclamation on p.18 of the booklet.

Well, Mother Laetitia, this is my last page describing the details you asked for. I realize even more than I did at the beginning how poor a description this has been. Actually, I had no intention of speaking about a whole category of details: who came to the funeral, reactions of people, "dramatic" elements, etc. Neither did I have any intention of saying very much about Fr. Louis himself. I intended simply to tell you about some of the material elements of the celebration: the texts, the music, the problems raised and the solutions found. But even if I had given you a vivid description of absolutely everything, and written at length about Fr. Louis and his spiritual physiognomy, I don't believe I could have conveyed to you very much of the real spirit of our funeral liturgy. Photos wouldn't help, or tape-recordings. I know that you understand this, and that you won't look to this meagre account for more than I want to say, for more than I can say.

So I'll simply close by repeating the lines from Fr. Louis's poem quoted on the last page of the booklet:
BUT look: the valleys shine with promises,
And every burning morning is a prophecy of Christ
Coming to raise and vindicate
Even our sorry flesh.

Then will your graves, Gethsemani, give up their angels,
Return them to their souls to learn
The songs and attitudes of glory.
Then will creation rise again like gold
Clean, from the furnace of your litanies:
The beasts and trees shall share your resurrection,
And a new world be born from these green tombs.

In the Lord Jesus,

b. Chrysogonus