

**Excerpt from Dan Walsh's HOMILY FOR THE FUNERAL MASS OF FATHER LOUIS  
MERTON, O.C.S.O., December 17, 1968**

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In the following excerpt from the unpublished homily, Walsh comments on the reasons for Merton's Asian trip and his anticipation of the possibility of death.

On Dec. 10th, 1941 a young man of 26, comparatively unknown entered this Trappist Cistercian monastery of Gethsemani. Thomas Merton entered a monastery whose reputation as a house of prayer, silence, solitude and sacrifice, was known somewhat throughout the Catholic world but relatively unknown to the American public or the world-at-large.

On Dec. 10th, 1968 that same man, now 53 but just as young at heart-- Trappist monk, priest, world-famous author of some 40 books, not to mention the hundreds of articles, reviews, paintings and photographic studies, departed this life as Father Louis Merton in far-away Bangkok while on a mission for the Church -- the Church he loved so well and served so faithfully both here at Gethsemani in his monastic commitment, and in the world through his writings. After he left on his mission to Asia -- a mission which was finally to take him to the eternal dwelling of his heavenly Father, he wrote frequently of how much he missed what he left behind -- the mind and heart of his love here in this House of God. Nothing short of the call to serve God in the unselfish cause of monasticism in the East could have taken him away from his beloved Gethsemani.

When we talked the night before he left on this mysteriously providential journey, he said to me: "Of course I will come back but only if God wills it, and if He doesn't, what better place and time to leave this world." We heard a beautiful echo of all this in the touching words which Father Flavian addressed to us at the requiem Mass on last Wednesday when he said: "The possibility of death was not absent from his mind -- we spoke of this before he set out at first jokingly, then seriously. He was ready for it. He even saw a certain fittingness in dying over there amidst those Asian monks who symbolized for him man's ancient and perennial desire for the deep things of God. And though he died away from us in body he did not die away from us in spirit."

When Maritain came here to Gethsemani he said to me as he was leaving that he asked God for the special grace to come to Gethsemani before departing this life so that: "I may have the experience of God's Truth in personal encounter with Tom Merton."



*Jacques Maritain, Fr. Stanley Murphy, Dan Walsh, and Thomas Merton in the woods at Gethsemani, 1965*