

## TWO HOMILIES

### From the ITMS GENERAL MEETING

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#### I.

“Do This In Memory of Me”:  
 Homily for the Feast of Corpus Christi  
 Commemorating Thomas Merton,  
 Abbey of Gethsemani, 28 May 1989

By **Flavian Burns**, O.C.S.O.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today's Feast of Corpus Christi honors in a special way the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, a sacrament so rich in symbolic meaning that a homilist does well, I think, to choose one theme, out of the many, to highlight. For today's special occasion I think it good to highlight the memorial nature of the Holy Eucharist: "Do this in memory of me."

Each celebration of Holy Mass is a remembrance of Christ and His saving action, just as the Passover Feast of old was the yearly remembrance of Yahweh's saving action for the Jewish people. It is no accident, of course, that Jesus chose to institute His own memorial within the context of that great Jewish feast. It is no accident either, then, that when Christians wish to remember one of their own in a special way they do so within the context of Christ's memorial, at Holy Mass. And so we gather here this morning, precisely in this manner, to honor the memory of our Father Louis, Thomas Merton.

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□ **Flavian Burns**, O.C.S.O., was Abbot of Our Lady of Gethsemani from 1968 to 1973. He currently lives as a hermit at Gethsemani. He is the author of "The Consciousness of God in the Life and Writings of Thomas Merton" in *The Message of Thomas Merton* and "Homily at the Mass for Father M. Louis (Thomas Merton)" *Thomas Merton / Monk: A Monastic Tribute*."

□ **Paul J. McGuire**, S.C.J., was Campus Minister and Professor of Theology at Bellarmine College until June 1989. He is currently residing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is the author of "Your Own Self," *Merton Seasonal* 13 (Winter 1988): no. 1, pp. 18-20.

During the past week many of you have participated in lectures and discussions on various aspects of his thought and writings. It is a great consolation to me and to many here at Gethsemani, to see the interest Father Louis still attracts twenty long years after his untimely death. Believe me, you do not waste your time. You have a long way to go before you will exhaust his thought and the deeper you go into it the more you will profit spiritually. At least that is my perhaps somewhat biased opinion.

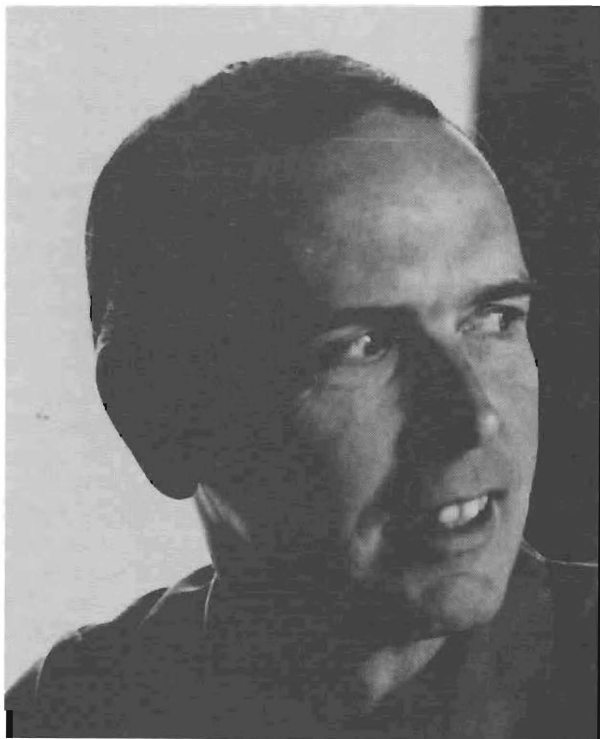
In an early letter to Mark Van Doren in March of 1948 (which will soon be published in the second volume of Merton's letters, *The Road to Joy*, edited by Robert E. Daggy, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1989), Father Louis tells his friend that he can no longer see the ultimate meaning of a person's life in terms like being a poet, or a contemplative, or a monk or hermit, or even a saint. Instead he says, he sees his personal destiny as an encounter with God, the God who chose this particular way for him alone, a unique and irreplaceable call from God to be this particular person, living in this particular time and place.

It is a theme that continues throughout his whole life. He saw his life as a divine mystery unfolding in time and, I believe, he also tried to see every other human person in this same light. Those of us who had him as a teacher and guide heard this from him often, and it appears in his writings from *Seeds of Contemplation* to *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, not to mention his autobiographical writings and journals where it is spelled out in more dramatic detail.

So, today, as we celebrate together this memorial of the Lord in His Holy Eucharist, and honor the memory of our brother and friend, Thomas Merton, let us also remember who we are and what we are meant to be in God's holy plan — each of us in our own personal and unique encounter with the God who made us and who calls us daily to be who He wants us to be — a great and wondrous destiny indeed.

Each of these three remembrances: the memory of Christ and His saving action; the memory of Thomas Merton and his helpful teaching, and the remembrance of our own personal call; each of these can be for us efficacious grace. May God grant this grace to each of us today.

*Amen.*



FLAVIAN BURNS, O.C.S.O.

Photo by Brother Patrick Hart