

## The Blessing of Father Louis

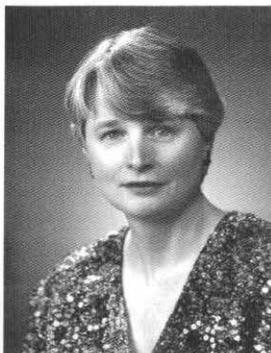
By Anne Bingham

The ones I feel sorry for are his abbots,  
 all of them, even the bad guy,  
 even the current one guarding his bones:  
 elected to raze mountains smooth  
 broken highways make ready  
 the ancient dependables violet gold white  
 green violet gold red green  
 flame-crowned wax  
 the rising and falling tones at dawn and before the dawn

and to balance this sacredness with another:  
 gas for the tractor, hay before rain, shots for the cows,  
 new-minted novices delirious with God  
 in love with The Rule and missing the point entirely,  
 the cheese operation, the hellbath of summer,  
 stopped drains in the guest house,  
 saint-chasers trooping out to the graveyard.  
 Solomon in his glory arrayed had not the wisdom.

Shouldering Father Louis is grounds for canonization  
 right there, what with vetting his manuscripts  
 visitors all that damn mail books and more books  
 and the never-ending procession of journals  
 arranging the hermitage, and then when he gets it,  
 continual journeys and sojourns. Cenobite – ha!  
 He didn't even have the courtesy to die at home.

Among abbots, smiles are deep as the frond  
 of a crosier in thanks that the blessing of Father Louis  
 descended on the choir of Gethsemani  
 and not their own. Dead or alive,  
 prophets are a lot easier to live with  
 when you're not their religious superior  
 and know it.



**Anne Bingham**

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**Anne Bingham**, a journalist and author of non-fiction books on topics ranging from religious education to pension negotiations, lives in Wauwatosa, WI with her husband and two teenage sons. She contributes reflections on spirituality and family life for the *Living Faith* devotional, and has published fiction and poetry in *Notre Dame Review* and *Rosebud*.