

BROTHER LAWRENCE (1605-1691)

Best known for the little and muc published book "The Practice of the presence of God". Nicolas Herman was a soldier who became a hermit, and in 1649 joined the carmelite community in Paris as a lay brother in charge of the kitchen.

His maxims were collected after his death and published for he himself never wrote a book.

Brother Lawrence practiced a simple but profound mysticism which consided in , as the book title suggests, the practice of the presence of God at all times and in all places and activities. This is something similar to what Frank Laubach practiced while a missionary in the Philipines.

His prayer was simply "a sense of the presence of God" as he worked.

During the day he talked with God as he went about the duties of the kitchen. At the end of the day "He examined himself, how he had discharged his duty." If he felt he had failed, "without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the presence of God as if he had never deviated from it."

He said: "the time of business does not with me differ from the time from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

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ANGELUS SILESIUS (1624-77)

this is the poetic Nom de plume of Johann Scheffler, a Lutheran who converted to Catholicism because the Lutheran's rejected the Christian's highest wisdom, the the mystical theology.

He was himself influenced by an admirer of Boehme and his own verses show the impact of the Song of Songs and of Eckhart.

Angelus writes pithily and epigrammatically and seeks to startle his reader.

He will begin a verse "God is a sheer Nothing" or "God foresees nothing" or "I disbelieve in Death" or "I am myself eternity." He is concise:

Go out--God goes in/ Die to yourself--live to God/ Be not--He is
do nothing--His bidding's done.

It would be hard to find a finer compendium of mysticism. and in the numerous verses of short compass he explores the whole gamut of mystical experience.. memorable phrases ring from his page:

"I am not I nor Thou: Thou art the I in Me"

"all you would have lies already within you:,"

"the password is love" , "the Knower must be one with the Known,"

"a single light and a single Splendour", "I must be pregnant with God"

Angelus's mysticism is explicitly Christian:

In Christ is God God/ In angels, angelic form/ In men, Man/ In all, All.

His most familiar couplet:

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
Unless he's born in you, then are you still forlorn.

Sometimes he reaches profound depths of mystical insight:

Who in this mortal life would see
the Light that is beyond all light,
Beholds it best by faring forth
Into the darkness of the Night.

in addition to his poetry Scheffler was in his day a formidable controversialist.

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MADAME GUYON--(1648-1717)

married at the age of 16 to a man more than twice her age, she was an emotional person. Her emotionalism, her husband's invalidism and the unhappiness of her marriage drove her on to her inner resources and after her husband's death in 1676 she entered a life of religious devotion.

she wrote voluminously and most important of her works were a Brief and very easy means for praying (1685) and The Song of Songs (1688).

Madame Guyon lived the devotional life in such a way that mystical experience became for her almost a normal occurrence.

Typical is her declaration that "My spirit disenthralled became united with and lost in God. And this was so much the case that I seemed to see and know God only and not myself."

her type of prayer was known as QUIETISM and she taught complete indifference, not merely to the external world, but even to eternal salvation; and the annihilation of all distinctions, even among the revelation of God in the life of Christ. The highest mystical experience she called the Apostolic state.

QUIETISM

was the movement which held that the road to perfection consists in suppressing our own direct action and leaving all to God.

it has been traced to the 13th cent. but spread most widely in the 17th when its leading exponents were Miguel de Molinos and Madame Guyon.

prayer was a totally passive reception of the presence of God. Outward acts, whether of charity or religious observance, were superfluous, even distracting and offensive to God.

Divine action superseded human altogether. The soul became sinless. But the lower part of the soul might still be tempted, and resistance to this temptation would be a distraction from the state of contemplative perfection.

these views were condemned by Innocent XI in 1687.

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FRANCOIS DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTHE FENELON (1651-1715)

one of the greatest of all French thinkers, writers and educators, he met Madame Guyon in 1688 and defended her against attacks from the church.

in 1695 he became Archbishop of Cambrai and two years later brought out Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints, 45 articles designed to distinguish true mysticism from false.

Fenelon uses two cardinal principles of analysis: disinterested love and passive contemplation.

there are five kinds of love for God : the servile love of God's gifts rather than Himself; the covetous love directed to God for the sake of happiness; the love which springs from hope (as distinct from desire); "interested" love in which the pure love of God is still mixed with self-regard; disinterested love.

he takes the three familiar ways of the mystics. In the purgative way, love is mixed with the fear of Hell;

in the illuminative way, with the hope of Heaven;

only in the highest state is pure and unadulterated love found.

but the lower loves are not to be repudiated as sinful; they are stages on the way, and the highest stages which many reach in this life.

"Pure contemplation is negative, being occupied with no sensible image, no distinct and nameable idea; it stops only at the purely intellectual and abstract idea of being"

yet at the same time Fenelon maintains with seeming inconsistency that pure contemplation includes all the attributes of God as distinct objects.

the contradiction perhaps arises from his concern for Christian orthodoxy.

"Pure contemplation is never unintermittent in this life."

Fenelon sums up his distinction between true and false mysticism under 7 heads.

1. the idea that man can live in a permanent state of complete union with God is "a poisoned source of idleness and internal lethargy."
2. the practice of each particular virtue is a necessary part of the Rel. Life.
3. Perpetual contemplation is impossible
4. Passive prayer, w/o the co-operation of the free will, is impossible.
5. there can be no quietude except that which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who works in such a way that His distinct acts may seem to the unenlightened to be a continuous state of union with God.
6. If hope is always with us, we are not in a permanent state of pure love.
7. pure love in its perfection is seldom found and always intermittent.

Fenelon thus does justice to the genuine character of mystical experience without allowing it to lead to the neglect of other aspects of life. it has been called a "modified quietism"

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LUCIE-CHRISTINE' (1858-1916)

pen-name of a French mystic, Outwardly she led an ordinary life in the enjoyment of her children and friends but in solitude, she wrote "My soul found itself transported into the Infinity of God; not merely as into some new region, but as if, having lost its own life, it was living in the Infinite itself."

she was an ordinary orthodox catholic, had never read anything about the great mystics. she was in her late twenties when she suddenly had a vision of the words GOD ALONE, and with it a "Light, an attraction and a Power. A light which showed me how I could belong completely to God alone in this world; an attraction, by which my heart was subdued and delighted; a Power which inspired me with a generous resolution, and in some way placed in my hands the means of carrying it out."

from this, tho there were periods of darkness and desolation, she came to a vigorous, joyous sense of the presence of God.

Her spiritual experiences center on Christ, but they range also into the absolutely other", the timeless and eternal, the ultimate.

her Spiritual Journal is one of the most important mystical documents of this century.

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THERESE DE L'ENFANT-JESUS (1873-97)

one of today's most popular saints, sometimes called the little flower, who died at age 23. A catholic friend of mine said to me, "how could she be a saint, she never went through the midlife crises".

Theresa Martin was born in Alencon to a devout family who destined their five girls for the convent. Therese's development was conditioned, but none of her sisters had her experiences.

She was certain of her vocation, and, tho she did not dare to say so at the time, certain of the direct hand of God on her life, w/o intermediary.

She had a sense of special destiny and special relationship to God.

the language in which she speaks of this sometimes seems arch; she describes herself as Jesus's 'doll' or 'little flower' or 'girl-friend'; but it would be a mistake to dismiss the experience she is trying to express.

her determination on her vocation led her to persuade the authorities

to accept her as a Carmelite long before the normal age, and the last nine years of her brief life were spent in a convent at Lisieux.

they were not years of easy self-delusion. On the contrary, she passed thru desiccating periods of spiritual aridity, which she faced with simple heroism.

Through this she found her vocation-love-and poured out affection and practical help for birds and animals, her fellow nuns and the world outside.

It is a simple story of a simple girl;;but her simple profundity made a tremendous impact on the outside world, and Therese the dove of Lisieux has been an inspiration in the same way as Teresa the eagle of Avila.

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Now we are lapping over into the 20th century.

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN (1881-1955)

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a dedicated priest, a prophet of an emerging new world, a faithful member of the Jesuit order, a world-famous geologist and paleontologist, a philosopher, and a poet and Christian mystic. Because he was ahead of his time in seeing the possibility and the necessity of bringing science and the Christian faith into a mutually supporting, philosophically and theologically grounded relationship, most of his books were banned by the Roman Catholic Church and were little generally known until after his death in virtual exile in New York in 1955.

born in France with a devout mother to a close-knit family.

at 18 he entered the Jesuit novitiate, and this was his principle study for many years. However, he had an insatiable interest in rocks and at 21 took his ifrst geological field trip to Jersey.

this was followed by many others, and made him an outstanding paleontologist.

He did his required 3 years of Jesuit teaching in a college in Cairo. He continued to study theology interspersed with geological field trips and was ordained a priest.

with WW I he was called up for service in the medical corps as a stretcher bearer and at the war's end completed his studies for a doctorate in geology.

this was not by happenstance, for the conviction was taking shape in his mind that since the material and spiritual worlds are both God's handiwork and belong to God, there should be no such separation between them as had often been assumed.

To bring together in a closer synthesis the physical realm and the world of the spirit, with humans as the bond of connection between the two, was henceforth to be his major concern.

the next great event was a trip to China with a group of geologists and paleontologists, during which an important discovery was made, an uncrushed adult *Sinanthropus* skull, the first of its kind to be located.-Peking man.

this was followed by numerous other expeditions to China and to Africa. It was during these trips that he wrote The Phenomenon of Man, often considered to be his most important book, which was proscribed by his church because of its clear affirmation of the long history of man through the evolutionary process.

While Teilhard was distressed at this rejection, as a loyal Jesuit he accepted it and continued to write for his own satisfaction and because he felt led to do so.

Among other books of major importance written by Teilhard are : The Future of Man, the Making of a Mind, The Divine Milieu and Hymn of the Universe.

HIS Church permitted some other scientific treatises to be published, but it is upon those of a philosophical or mystical nature that his fame rests.

Teilhard's system centers in a Christian evolutionary world view, whereby the cosmos progresses continually, though not w/o opposition, toward and ultimate "Omega point."

the omega point is the unity toward which all levels of existence converge, through the personal design of God the Creator Spirit. The omega point is also epitomized in the universal Christ, for "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:17)"

what is man in this onward-moving process? The highest element in the cosmos is the Noosphere, the realm of mind and spirit, and in this, man in spite of all his sinfulness and incompleteness stands supreme.

humans represent the highest level of consciousness in the total cosmic system, though God is the ultimate arbiter of human destiny.

Teilhard refuses to despair in spite of the evil of the times, for his hope is grounded in the Incarnation and the ultimate response of humans to the divine love which the Incarnation makes concrete and universal as the focus of salvation.

Teilhard had a clear conviction that "Christ is all and in all." He felt the presence and activity of God to be basic to human's effort in the forward movement toward the Omega point, and this gave to his entire life a deeply religious foundation.

The Hymn of the Universe is the most distinctly mystical of his books. Here he tells of a vision in a chapel which has the marks of a mystical illumination such as most scientists would hesitate to narrate, and the book radiates with a poetic beauty in the author's adoration and praise to the Lord of the universe.

but, the Divine Milieu he deals in more formal language with the difference between true and false mysticism.

In the general rhythm of Christian life, development and renunciation, attachment and detachment, are not mutually exclusive. . .from this 'dynamic' point of view the opposition so often stressed between asceticism and mysticism disappears. . .of course as God takes possession of man, the creature finally becomes passive (because it finds itself newly created in the divine union). But that passivity presupposes a subject that reacts and ~~xxx~~ an active phase. The fire of heaven must come down on something: otherwise there would be nothing consumed and nothing consummated.

Elsewhere the author makes it clear that no vague sense of the presence of the resurrected Christ, apart from the Incarnate Christ of the gospel story, will suffice for true mysticism.

"the mystical Christ, the universal Christ of St. Paul, has neither meaning nor value in our eyes except as an expansion of the Christ who was born of Mary and who died on the cross."

to recognize this, he says, is the antidote to visionaries and the "illuminate" who want to have their divine illuminations w/o their being grounded in the firm realities of the world we live in.

in other words, any mysticism not grounded in reality of the world is suspect.

in his last writing he said there are two components most needed for our times they are love of God and faith in the world.

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SIMONE WEIL (1909-1943)

a French philosopher and mystic. In a letter to a priest she outlined her 'spiritual autobiography'.

In youth she held Christian concepts, especially neighbourly love, unconsciously. At the age of 14 she went through a period of despair, emerging after some months to the faith that every human being can penetrate to the kingdom of truth, beauty, goodness, if they long for it and concentrate all their attentions on it.

but she avoided churches, and was agnostic about God.

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH (1889-1930)

brought up a Sikh, he says he was a seeker after Truth, seeking Peace in the sacred books of the hindus, Sikhs, and Moslems.

he thruned to the bible and it repelled him but at 4:30 am on Dec. 18, 1904 he was praying, and suddenly the room was filled with a blaze of light and he saw a vision of Jesus Christ in glory and love, saying to him in Hindustani:

"How long will you persecute me? I have come to same you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?"

With that he became a Christian and renounced all possessions, taking Francis of Assisi as his model, but felt no impulse to form an order.

His life was passed in prayer and preaching. He had a continuous sense of the presence of God, as well as a succession of vivid Christ-centered visions.

"wherever i go there it is the same. Christ is always in the center, a figure ineffable and indescribable. His face shining like the sun, but in no way dazzling, and so sweet that w/o any difficulty I can gaze at it--always smiling a loving glorious smile."

Christ, he said 'is not the supreme mystic. He is the Master of mystics, the saviour of mystics."

he never sought ecstasy; when it cme it overwhelmed him. In it he experienced three heavens, Heaven on earth, the intermediate state of paradise, and the true heaven.

He described ecstasy: "there are pearls in the sea, but to get them you have to dive to the bottom. Ecstasy is a dive to the bottom of spiritual things. it is not a trance; but it is like a dive, because, as a diver has to stop breathing, so in ecstasy the outward senses must be stopped."

he insisted that every person has the capacity for prayer and meditation, it is for God to grant ecstasy. He also insisted that visionary experiences should lead to active service.

Sundar Singh is of particular importance, partly as a 20th cent mystic, who was able to discuss his experiences with a high measure of objectivity, partly because of the way in which he bridges Hindu and Christian mystical experience, and partly because he seems never to have experienced the Dark Night of the Soul.

in 1929 he disappeared into the Himalayas.

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PADRE PIO (1887-1968)

baptized Francesco Forgione, he was born on may 25, 1887 of poor country people at Pietrelcina in Southern Italy.

In 1902 his father entered him in the monastery of Morcone where he was to prepare for the novitiate. he studied theology and philosophy but in 1909, because of poor health, he was sent back to Pietrelcina, in the hope that his home environment would help him.

he remained there for several years, till 1916, having been ordained a priest in 1910. In 1915 he was drafted into the Italian army but because of his precarious health, he was discharged after a short time.

In sept. of 1916 he went to San Giovanni Rotondo where he remained the rest of his life.

STIGMATA

Beginning Sept. 7, 1910 the stigmata would appear and disappear alternate weeks until 1918

on Aug. 5, 1918 while in the confessional, the wound in his left side appeared

then on Sept 20, 1918 visible wounds appeared making him the first stigmatized priest in the history of the church. as a result of this he was subject of endless and often painful medical examinations, and he underwent every kind of supposedly healing treatment, but the wounds remained open and completely free from infection.

in 1921 the first rebellion of the people broke out to impede an eventual transfer of Padre Pio from San Giovanni Rotondo. In 1923 they actually tried to transfer him and it resulted in a lively manifestation by the people.

those manifestations were repeated during the successive years up till 1931 when the Holy Office intervened and limited the pastoral duties of Padre Pio. Then in 1931 he was isolated from the remainder of the world until July 1933 when he was reinstated in all his priestly functions.

in 1940 he decided to use money coming because of him to build a hospital near the monastery and he originated the movement of prayer groups all over the world. The hospital was begun in May, 1956 and the prayer groups didn't receive official blessing till July 1968.

1945- soon after the war, people from every country began pilgrimage to San Giovanni but Padre Pio continued his life of prayer and ministry of the confessional from daybreak usually far into the night.

1968 saw the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the stigmata and on the 20th thru the 22nd of Sept, 1968, an international convention of Prayer groups assembled at San Giovanni. Padre Pio died the morning of Sept. 23rd

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no A mystic like Padre Pio, as like the next mystic I will speak of, is not known so much for what they say or do, but for what they are. Padre Pio gave advice to many people but there is no truly original thinking. He has been called the last of the spiritual Franciscans, much like the poet, Jacopone di Todi of the 14th cent. What I do want to share is his letter of Sept 22, 1918 concerning the stigmata: - *Most complete description I know of*

"...What can I tell you in answer to your questions regarding my crucifixion? Dear God! What embarrassment and humiliation I suffer explaining what you have imparted to this poor creature!

On the morning of the 20th of the last month, in the choir, after having celebrated Mass, I yielded to a peacefulness similar to a sweet sleep. All my internal and external senses, and even the very faculties of my soul, were indescribably serene.

During this time an absolute silence surrounded and invaded me; I was suddenly filled with great peace and abandon which effaced everything else and became a lull in the turmoil.

It all happened in a flash, And while this was taking place, I saw before me a mysterious Person, similar to the one I had seen on August 5th, differing only because His Hands, Feet and Side were dripping blood.

The sight of Him frightened me; what I felt at that moment is indescribable. I thought I would die, and would have died if the Lord hadn't intervened and strengthened my heart which was about to burst out of my chest.

the Person disappeared and I became aware that my hands, feet and side were pierced and were dripping with blood.

Can you imagine the agony that I experienced and continue to experience almost every day? The wound of the heart bleeds continually especially from Thursday evening until Saturday.

Dear Father, I am dying of pain because of the wound and because of the resulting embarrassment which I feel deep within my soul! I fear bleeding to death if the Lord does not hear my heartfelt supplication to relieve me of this condition.

Will Jesus who is so good, grant me this grace? Will He at least relieve me of the embarrassment which these outward signs cause me?

I shall raise my voice and shall not stop imploring Him until in His mercy He takes away, not the wound, not the pain, because that is impossible since I wish to be indrriated with pain, but these outward signs which embarrass me and are an indescribable and unbearable humiliation.

The person of whom I spoke is noe other than the One I mentioned in my letter of August 5th. He pursues his mission relentlessly causing me extreme spiritual agony. I feel a continual internal rumbling resembling the gushing of blood.

Dear God! Your punishment is just and your judgement is right but grant me Your mercy. Lord, with your poophet I shall always repeat, Lord do no punish me in your rage or reprove me in the heat of anger.

He became reconciled to what had happened and in fact is known to have a great sense of humor and was always likely to tell a joke. He evidently went through the dark nights after receiving the stigmata for it is told

he went through much spiritual suffering afterward. He showed many gifts including perfume, bilocation, discernment and seeing t future.

TERESA NEUMANN (1898-1964)

maybe if true Teresa is german, raised in a devout family, she had a bad fall that paralysed her and she was virtually bedridden from 1918 - 1926.

in mid lent, 1926 she recieved the marks of the five wounds. The marks of the crown of thorns, of the shoulder and scourging at later dates.

her vocation seemed to be that every friday she would bleed and in ecstasy, while seeing the passion before her in vision, would endure it.

people began coming in droves to see her, so there was a special pre dñeu built for her so she could attend mass w/o being in the crowd. This did not

always work as people would seek her out.

she is probably best known for the fact that she never ate anything except Holy communion. This she received every day and, when followed around to see if she was cheating, they could only document that she neither ate nor drank anything.

most the phenomena centering around her, besides going through the passion every week, but especially during lent, have to do with the communion.

after receiving Communion, if she does not suffer for someone, which she did at times, then she would remain vigorous. If she did go through suffering for someone, then she would become languid and only regain strength upon receiving communion again.

there are a number of well-authenticated cases of persons who have lived for several years w/o food or drink but who during their fast have received Holy Communion. They are found chiefly among the stigmatists.

Nicholas von Flu (+1487) lived for 20 years on the blessed sacrament alone which he received once a month.

St. Ledwina (+1433) lived for 20 years ; Catherine Emmerich for 12 years, and St. Catherine of Siena, for 8 years. there are some others but this gives you the idea.

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THOMAS MERTON (1915-1968)

born in France of an English father and American mother, he converted to Roman Catholicism from the Episcopal church in 1938 because he found the Episcopal church to be shallow.

he became a Cistercian monk (trappist) in 1941.

his account of his life and process of conversion comes from his best selling book The Seven Storey Mountain. After that book, his writings were widely and deeply influential.

THOMAS MERTON (1915-1968)

Merton was born in Southern France to artist parents. His English father was not affiliated with any church and his American mother was a Quaker. His mother died when he was only 6.

His father died when he was 16 of brain cancer. Before he died, his father, in one of his few lucid moments before he died, was drawing byzantine icons with 'enormous halos'.

in Rome he became haunted by Icons in Roman churches and realized he had become a pilgrim.

He had an intense feeling of his fathers presence which caused him to weep and begin thinking about his life and choices.

One day at mass he had an experience in a church with a russian crucifix. these crucifixes don't show the suffering as in the west and he realized it was love that held him there.

Christ of the icons became his view of Jesus. Not the historical person but the presence within himself of the transfigured Christ.

his Christ was the Christ of direct experience, light, life and prayer.

Icons have little to do with illustration but rather lead people to pray.

his most precious gifts were icons--he could percieve the taboric light (shekinah) coming from the virgin and child which he received in 1965.

In 1941 he became a trappist monk. His book The Seven Story mountain was a best seller when published in 1948 and as a result his writings became very influential.

He was very concerned with the unity of the various branches of Christianity, but also with what was held in common with other world religions.

His ideas were all based on mystical experience.

He treasured the Eastern Orthodox church because all theologians of that church are mystics. In fact, all are supposed to experience the reality of their faith.

all statements Merton makes are invoked with becoming a believer, a follower of Jesus. He did not live with Jesus memory, but with Him.

the Eucharist was for him a love making event with Jesus as the lover.

Jim Forrest said that Merton was the most Christocentric person he had ever known.

He believed that Eastern Christianity's way of spreading the gospel was the one to follow. one communicates christianity by acting like Christ and thru the liturgy. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads people to Christ.

The most profound thing people can do, he says, is to live the spiritual life as passionately as possible.

Much of his attraction to the spirituality of the East was not doctrinal but rather the intensity and seriousness with which the various eastern monks took their vocation, their spirituality.

He said what humans need most is to know our need.

Prayer and contemplation is the way to relevance in the world thus "quietism" is a complete contradiction of Christian contemplation since Christian contemplation will seek the perfection of love which inevitably leads to action.

His last book was Contemplative Prayer and was published in 1969 after his death. In it he says:

There is no contradiction between action and contemplation when Christian apostolic activity is raised to the level of pure love. On that level, action and contemplation are fused into one entity by the love of God and of our brother in Christ. But the trouble is that if prayer is not itself deep, powerful and pure and filled at all times with the spirit of contemplation, Christian action can never really reach this high level.

W/o the spirit of contemplation in all our worship--that is to say, w/o the adoration and love of God above all, for his own sake, because he is God--the liturgy will not nourish a really Christian apostolate based on Christ's love. . . .

W/o this contemplative orientation we are building churches not to praise him but to establish more firmly the social structures, values and benefits that we presently enjoy.

w/o true, deep contemplative aspirations, w/o a total love for God and an uncompromising thirst for his truth, religion tends in the end to become an opiate."

In 1968 he was elecrtocuted by a faulty fan while in Bankok, Thailand meeting with other monks of various faiths.

When he died he had with him an icon of the virgin and child with a quote from the Philokalia concerning the courtship of holy wisdom by acquiring the Holy Spirit.

The one that
~~this~~ had been given to him by a Buddhist Scholar in 1965.

he also had a timex watch, his brevery, and a broken rosary.