

## The Pool of Siloam

By **William J. Bly**

*In Memoriam: Fr. Bede & Br. Sylvester of the Abbey of the Genesee*

*“the waters of Siloe, that flow in silence (Isaias 8:6)”*  
Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe* (xxix)

1  
Father Louis would rest beside  
The pool of Siloam,  
Gazing at reflections  
Of the heavenly Madonna,  
His spiritual Mother, whose presence was seen  
Whether by imagination or vision,  
Within the walls of Gethsemani;  
Within his cinder-block hermitage.

In gardens he grew roses;  
Their thorns and prickles  
Drew blood from his hands,  
Hands that knew work;  
Connected to a pained body.  
And a heart pierced by loneliness.  
The abbey walls stood as sentinels or fortress  
Like a castle built for Tudor Kings,  
These granite blocks covered with vines  
Its ivy running in undefined patterns  
Across the face of rock, softening the stones,  
Allowing philosophers and photographers,  
Maritain and Griffin  
Access and entry;  
To dip themselves into his solitude  
Like swimmers in a holy lake.

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2

Home is the place of a heart unchained;  
 Unfettered and free to roam. Though Trappists  
 Rarely travel, the Rule of St. Benedict  
 Encourages one place,  
 One authority,  
 One heart  
 Devoted to Christ alone  
 And the Salvation only He provides.  
 Here prayer, fasting and humility rule.  
 Only then was permission granted  
 In the Summer of '68  
 Bangkok beckoned;  
 The invitation received. He was to depart  
 Home, if only for a few months.  
 Kentucky to New Mexico; New Mexico to San Francisco;  
 Our Lady of the Redwoods to Alaska;  
 Alaska to India; India to Bangkok.  
 The final city, ocean-side, its bay  
 Overwhelming him.  
 After a lecture he retires to his room;  
 A faulty electrical connection surges power  
 Through him  
 Like incandescent revelation –  
 He dies with a floor fan over his torso.

3

He reclines again beside pools of effervescent water,  
 Heaven's domain,  
 Paradise found as glorious treasure  
 Fountains like Eden's own.  
 Yet the garden grounds of Gethsemani  
 Become his resting place;  
 Where prayer, like incense, ascends from the Chapel,  
 Atoning his death  
 And the English woman he rarely mentioned.