

Taizé founder buried in service led by Catholic cardinal: 12,000 attended funeral

by [John Dart](#) in the [September 20, 2005](#) issue

An estimated 12,000 Christians from many denominations attended the funeral of Brother Roger, the Protestant founder of the Taizé community in the picturesque Burgundy region of France. Presiding over the funeral Eucharist was Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Vatican's top ecumenical officer. The hymns and chants of Taizé, well known around the Christian world, were sung throughout the liturgy August 23 at the Church of Reconciliation.

At an emotional moment, the new community leader, Brother Alois Leser, asked in many languages for God's forgiveness for the woman who mortally stabbed the 90-year-old spiritual leader August 16 as he celebrated evening prayers with young pilgrims. The 36-year-old Romanian woman was said by police to be mentally ill.

Paying homage to Brother Roger were representatives of Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches and dignitaries such as German president Horst Koehler and French interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy. A giant video screen was erected outside for thousands of mourners unable to squeeze into the vast church.

"He believed above all in the ecumenism of holiness, that holiness which changes the depths of the soul and which alone leads towards full communion," said Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

"Yes, the springtime of ecumenism has flowered on the hill of Taizé in this Church of Reconciliation, where members of different Christian traditions meet in respect and dialogue, in prayer and fraternal sharing, inspired by the presence and the example of Brother Roger."

According to Ecumenical News International, a number of Protestant clergy were seen taking the sacrament of the Eucharist during the service, something the

Catholic Church normally opposes.

In the liturgy, readings were given by Anglican bishop Nigel McCulloch of Manchester, England, representing the archbishop of Canterbury; Bishop Wolfgang Huber, leader of the Evangelical Church in Germany; and Reformed minister Jean-Arnold de Clermont, head of the French Protestant Federation. The prayer for the deceased was said by Archimandrite Marc Alrich of the Romanian Orthodox Church and by Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev of the Russian Orthodox Church.

At the end of the ceremony, the brothers of the 100-member international community marched in procession to bury their founder in the small cemetery of the Roman church in the village.