

Taizé disputes claim founder 'converted' to Catholicism Describes "originality of Brother Roger's search": Describes "originality of Brother Roger's search"

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The Taizé community in eastern France has denied claims reported in the French newspaper *Le Monde* that its Swiss-born Protestant founder, Brother Roger Schutz, who died last year, had made a secret conversion to Roman Catholicism.

"This article gave credence to and reproduced the claims of a small newsletter issued by Catholic traditionalist circles that misrepresents Brother Roger's true intentions and defames his memory," Brother Thomas of the Taizé community told Ecumenical News International by e-mail.

Le Monde reported that a Catholic historian, Yves Chiron, had received confirmation from the Vatican that Schutz had become a Catholic. This had been corroborated by the former bishop of the Catholic diocese of Autun in France's Burgundy region, where Taizé is located, who said that Schutz had been received into the Catholic Church in 1972, the newspaper reported.

But the Taizé community rejected the claim. "Whoever speaks of 'conversion' in this respect has not grasped the originality of Brother Roger's search," it stated.

"From a Protestant background, Brother Roger undertook a step that was without precedent since the Reformation: entering progressively into a full communion with the faith of the Catholic Church without a 'conversion' that would imply a break with his origins," it asserted.

“In 1972, the bishop of Autun at the time, Armand Le Bourgeois, simply gave him communion for the first time, without requiring any other profession of faith from him besides the creed recited during the Eucharist, which is held in common by all Christians. Several witnesses were present and can attest to this,” the Taizé statement noted.

Schutz was stabbed to death at the age of 90 in August 2005 while celebrating evening prayer at the community. His funeral was conducted by Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Several months earlier, at the funeral of Pope John Paul II, Schutz had received communion, something normally reserved for Catholics, from the hands of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI.

“There was never anything hidden about this undertaking of Brother Roger’s,” the Taizé community stated, citing remarks he made in 1980 during a meeting in Rome: “I have found my own identity as a Christian by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone.”

The head of the Protestant Federation of France, Jean-Arnold de Clermont, called the speculations “scandalous,” saying that Brother Roger moved in advance of the churches. Added de Clermont: “We need these kinds of prophets.” -*Ecumenical News International*