

Marcus Lasken

*August 20, 1947 – November 10, 2024*

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Funeral Service

Minister: Jeanne

November 30, 2024

## Minister's Introduction

Welcome friends, and a special welcome to Marcus' brothers Doug and Roger, and to Doug's wife Susan, who are watching with us today.

We have gathered here to honor the life of our beloved friend, Marcus Lasken.

Once again, we witness a great mystery: our friend, who moved through this lifetime, playing the role of his name, is no longer visible among us. He has transcended his role to become once more what he always was, an invisible, immortal soul.

A few years ago, Marcus said, "To me the most exciting thing is to have something that one has not mastered. Something beyond our being is offered, the next step, and we have to grow into it. Uncreated light is here, and it does not want to fall back."

Let us stand and remember Marcus in silent presence.

*(Silence)*

Thank you.

Walt Whitman wrote, "All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses, And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier."

Marcus takes with him the presence and being that he has gained in this lifetime, and his connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, "That is all we can take with us, but it is more than enough."

**[Reading: Sonnet 115, by William Shakespeare]**  
(Reader: Conrad)

Those lines that I before have writ do lie,  
Even those that said I could not love you dearer,  
Yet then my judgement knew no reason why,  
My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.  
But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents  
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of Kings,  
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,  
Divert strong minds to th' course of alt'ring things:  
Alas why fearing of time's tyranny,  
Might I not then say now I love you best,  
When I was certain o'er in-certainty,  
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest:  
    Love is a Babe, then might I not say so  
    To give full growth to that which still doth grow.

**[Music: "Chaconne," by Bach]**  
(Musician: Justin, harpsichord)

## [Eulogy: Maurice]

Robert said, “Marcus is a part of the foundation of the school.” And if we could distill his life’s journey on earth, we would find his unconditional love for Robert and his relentless devotion to the work, in himself and in his fellow students.

Marcus was born in Los Angeles in 1947 and lived with his brothers Doug and Roger in Beverly Hills. His father, Leonard, later became a student himself, joining 35 years after Marcus.

He studied classical piano, and in the late 60s – when he was very much a part of the hippie culture – he began working in nightclubs and bars in Los Angeles as a jazz-rock pianist. He was a gifted musician and composer, but he turned down an offer to tour with the famous singer Al Jarreau because his magnetic center had already set him on a different path. He experimented with different teachings, but none of them felt right. Then a friend told him about the Fellowship, and he attended his first prospective student meeting in Los Angeles. Guinevere, who was the director, said he was quite young and cocky. He asked her, “What’s so different about your school?” But when she calmly told him that he didn’t have to believe anything, but just try to verify it, he realized that it was indeed different.

He joined in 1974 at the age of 27. As soon as he could, he visited Apollo, exchanging his more comfortable lifestyle for a sleeping bag on the floor. (He said that three days later he woke up at night wondering what he was doing here.) But as soon as he met Robert, he knew with absolute certainty that Robert was his teacher. He said, “I knew that I had found a conscious teacher who is breathing, walking, teaching in the divine present.” And, for the next fifty years, he devoted his entire being to serving Robert and the school.

While still in Los Angeles, Marcus began working for the wealthy entrepreneur and art collector Norton Simon as a personal assistant. Later he worked as a security guard at the Norton Simon Museum and the Getty Villa. When Norton Simon learned that Marcus was a member of the Fellowship, he said that it was a conflict of interest because Mr. Simon and Mr. Burton were often bidding on the same works of art!

Early on, Robert said to Marcus, “Influence C hold one responsible to pass on to others what one has received.” It turned out that teaching was, in fact, Marcus’ gift, his role. He was eager to share his knowledge and being at every opportunity.

He was a frequent traveling teacher, staying for long periods in different centers – Athens, Auckland, Campinas, New York City, Sydney, Taipei, and more – and he directed the centers in New York, Miami, Dublin, and Los Angeles. With his joyful and ebullient ability to communicate the work, he touched students throughout the school, sharing what seemed an unending fount of stories about Robert, transmitting the energy of the teacher to those who had never met him. His valuation was contagious. His legendary prospective student meetings could easily last for hours, but they attracted many students to the Fellowship. Those whom he had brought into the school he called his “ducklings.”

In 1984, he opened the center in Dublin. Soon there were thirty students, some of whom now live at Apollo. Once the landlady of the Dublin teaching house called, complaining that there was too much activity, and saying that she would be over in ten minutes. The students were having a meeting, but Marcus quickly turned it into a concert hall with Tony Fitzsimmons playing Bach’s *Chaconne*. When she came in, Marcus quickly invited her to stay for the concert – totally transforming the situation.

Marcus never stopped loving to play the piano. One of his co-directors recalls that, whenever there was a difficult situation, she would ask him if he would sit down and play Bach’s “Three-Part Inventions” – and he did it readily every time. Another co-director said that she once told him, “Marcus, you drive me crazy!” He replied, “I know. I drive me crazy, too.”

Marcus was always ready to welcome someone, to make them feel that they belonged. A student recalls that, as she was sitting alone during her first visit to Apollo, Marcus came up to her and said, “Hello dear, is this your first visit? Welcome!”

His guiding light was his unwavering devotion to Robert. He tried to spend as much time with Robert as he could. They traveled together to more than forty cities in ten countries. It was in front of Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son* at the Hermitage that Robert told Marcus that Influence C would eventually give us the keys to the Bible. Marcus was also a constant presence at Robert's meeting and dinners, often jotting down every word Robert said.

Robert worked very closely with Marcus during much of his time in the school and Marcus wholeheartedly placed himself under his will. Over the years, he received numerous personal exercises and tasks – from changing his diet to limiting his love of talking – which he accepted without reservation.

In 2015 he met Aniuta, who was visiting Apollo from London. At first, she found him unapproachable, but when he showed her his rings, and she named every stone in them, her hesitation dissolved. Their romance blossomed, initially through letters, which they began to sign with the word "love." When Aniuta returned to Apollo, Marcus proposed to her immediately. Robert noted that it was the fastest courtship at Apollo. Aniuta said, "Marcus was my spiritual inspiration – leading me in the right direction. He spent so much energy explaining ideas; he was gracious, generous, kind, and fun. He set a standard in so many areas."

Six years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer. Although he struggled with his illness through a long series of unsuccessful therapies, he remained unfailingly cheerful. He called it, "bowing to the unknown." He said, "For 47 years every morning I opened my eyes, and my first impulse was, 'What can I do for C influence, Robert or the school?' And then I would say, 'Well they will show me what to do by what is in front of me.' And that was my compass, that was my guiding star. But with the cancer, that all changed." As his health worsened, he found that his work shifted from the second and third line to the first line. Robert worked with him to go deeper into presence, insisting that Marcus keep focusing on his higher possibilities.

Nearly every day, he attended lunch at Apollo d'Oro, surrounded by a large circle of friends. Whenever the conversation wandered, he always gently guided it back to the present. At one of his last lunches, he said to the others, "Grateful that the Absolute created a present for us to be in."

In the last six weeks of his life, he was in great deal of pain, but he was determined to rise above it. He called a friend each evening simply to share presence. He was laser-focused on uncreated light, wanting only to talk about that and what was in the present moment. He did not wish to hear anything that was not related to higher centers – nothing at the level of the machine.

Even then, Marcus continued to contribute to the school. He participated actively in the Worldwide Meetings, sharing his being with students. The last meeting he attended was just days before his death. Speaking on his phone from his hospice bed, he said, "Robert has said that we transform suffering to reach the third state. Once we are in uncreated light, there's no more transformation; it is transcended. We reach the state that transcends the role of Marcus or John or Linda."

Marcus was fully ready to face the completion of his role. He had spent a lifetime preparing for it, all his work now distilled into a quiet and clear awareness. As Dorian noted, a star that is dying gives off its brightest light at the end. So, too, did Marcus. When he died at 5:15 in the morning at the Lincoln Care Center, his nurse, Gabriel, was attending him.

In his last letter to Robert, he wrote, "When all is nothing – nothing is All. Thank you, Robert. Love, Marcus." Followed by two hearts.

Some of his final words were to students who visited him at Lincoln. As they departed, he sweetly said, "Goodbye, darlings." When Robert was told this, he said, "No. *Hello, darling.*"

Dear Marcus, we thank you for your ever constant love for Robert, Influence C, and the school, and for your lifetime lived so beautifully in service.

[Music: "Panis Angelicus" by Cesar Franck]  
(Musician: Zoila, mezzo-soprano; Justin, piano)

[Reading: From Rumi]  
(Reader: Rowena)

*From Rumi:*

Don't mistake me for this human form.  
The soul is not obscured by forms.  
Even if it were wrapped in a hundred folds of felt  
the rays of the soul's light would still shine through.  
Beat the drum, follow the minstrels of the city.  
It's a day of renewal.  
...Shine like the star of victory.  
Shine like the whole universe is yours!

How should the falcon not fly back to his king from the hunt  
When from the falconer's drum it hears the call: "Oh, come back"?  
...Oh fly , oh fly, my soul-bird, fly to your primordial home!  
You have escaped from the cage now; your wings are spread in the air.  
O travel from brackish water now to the fountain of life!  
Return from the place of the sandals now to the high seat of souls!  
Go on! Go on! we are going, and we are coming, O soul,  
From this world of separation to union, a world beyond worlds!



### Minister's Conclusion:

The death of a friend reminds us that our bodies are fragile; our period on this earth temporary. Only the realm of uncreated light – which unites us and is us – is boundless and eternal.

Marcus once said, “Serve while you can, so ye may serve forever.” May his unwavering, loving, and joyous service to his teacher and the school help us to find a similar joy in our own work;

May his cheerfulness and lack of self-pity during a long illness give us courage; and

May his unswerving focus on the living reality of uncreated light remind us of our highest priority.

Dear Marcus, we thank thee.

The task of this lifetime has been fulfilled. The role of Marcus is complete, and the soul that played that role is released to continue its divine journey.

### Candle Ceremony

Minister signals urn bearer (Ruslan).

**Minister:** Please rise.

## At the Cemetery

### Minister's Introduction:

Here in this sacred place, we gather to release Marcus to his, and our, true home. Words fade in the face of a great reality. We, too, arrive at this simplest of moments—our friend Marcus showing us the way.

### [Reading: From Petrarch] (Reader: Benjamin Y.)

*From Petrarch:*

Weep not for me, for at my death,  
my life became eternal,  
and when I seemed to close my earthly eyes  
I opened them to Light Divine.

Minister gestures to urn bearer.  
Urn is placed in the grave. Minister scatters rose petals into the grave.

The earth returns to the earth, and a divine spark returns to its divine source. The circle of this life is now complete, and the next step begins for the soul of Marcus Lasken. Let us join in raising a glass to our friend, and then depart, with gratitude for the gift of having known him, and with renewed love for one another.

Participants scatter rose petals, then gather for the toast.

### [Toast: Denis]

Dear friends,

Marcus gently and profoundly touched each of our lives.  
The light that shone through him brightened many of our moments and made them happier.  
That light will continue to spread, passing through us to others – both known and unknown.  
And who knows what soul will one day twinkle brighter because of his (now invisible, anonymous) Light?  
Shine on, baby angel, shine on!