



THE DESERT CHRONICLE

XXVIII, No. 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

Fr. Kenneth Hein, OSB: Fifty Years of Priestly Service, 1969-2019

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB



VISITORS TO ONE OF THE HOURS OF THE OFFICE OR THE COMMUNITY MASS

will be treated to the sight of seven or eight balding monks amid whom is one with a fine head of white hair. That monk with the is Fr. Kenneth, who is, among many, many other things, a barber. In 82 years on earth, and 50 years as a priest, he has done an astounding variety of tasks. There is, for example, his translation from Hebrew of the Psalms, all 150 of them. He worked long and hard on the project, but when he finished it a few years ago, he was not able to find

a publisher. However, his work was not in vain. When he decided to add a fourth week to our three week-cycle of Psalms for the liturgy of the hours, he employed his translation of the Psalms and we use it still. The Psalms express just about every human emotion in many circumstances of human life. They can provide the subheads for this tribute to Fr. Kenneth.

See "FR. KENNETH", cont. on page 7

INSIDE

Fr. Kenneth Hein, OSB: Fifty Years of Priestly Service, 1969-2019
page 1

From The Prior's Pulpit
page 2

Monastery Chronicle
page 3

Peacemaking
page 4

Perserving History and Solving Mysteries...at the Monastery
page 4

Upcoming Events
page 8

From the Prior's Pulpit



Simple Gifts

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

We recently finished a week-long program we host each summer.

The participants enjoyed the week and were very positive in their evaluations. We always invite them to let us know if there are things that could be done to improve the offering. And we ask them to report things that need repair. So along with the list of compliments, we received a list of “to do’s”. It was a very helpful list. I’m sure future guests will also be glad.

Coincidentally, the other evening we listened to Chapter 61 of the Holy Rule: *The Reception of Visiting Monks*. “He [the visiting monk] may, indeed with all humility and love make some reasonable criticisms or observations, which the abbot should prudently consider; it is possible that the Lord guided him to the monastery for this very purpose.”

Now Benedict was probably not talking about replacing shower heads or installing small mirrors in the guest house. He was

reminding his followers that observations about doing something new or different should not be readily dismissed. Many of us do not automatically seek advice; we can do it ourselves. However, in our more lucid moments most of us have to admit that we do not always have the answer. If someone cares enough to make helpful suggestions, that can be a gift. Such “gifts” are not always graciously received. However, Benedict reminds us that such suggestions may be gifts from the Lord, so we should be grateful for them.

We are grateful for your friendship, suggestions and support. Please keep us in your prayers. Be assured of ours for you.

Peace and good things.

Fr. Boniface Lautz, O.S.B.





Monastery Chronicle

By Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB

JUNE

Educational programs loom large on the calendar as we begin the Summer months. The Road Scholars attending the Geology of the Snake River Plain filled all the available rooms. The Room to Learn quilters spent a week. They will return in October. A week on Medieval Mystics was well attended. It was the first of the programs that we offered on our own apart from Road Scholar.

Our visitation began Sunday, June 16 and concluded June 19. It is something that we have every four years.

The vegetable garden thrives. At this point it is mostly a matter of weeding and watering. The overall supervision is in the capable hands of our good friends John and Joan Doerr.

Pentecost Sunday was extra special. We hosted some of the Marshall Family for a very nice dinner prepared by LuAnn and Adam. Four generations were represented making it a festive occasion.

Heating and cooling in the chapel continued to occupy our attention. Our new heat pump needed repair. A problem was the lack of air space to circulate around the machine, because the roof cover was too close to the machine. Solution ... remove the roof and repair the pump. Now all is well. We will have to provide an additional cover to keep the snow off, but not right away.

On June 28 we had a chapter meeting to consider Br. John's request for an extension of his temporary vows. This was granted readily.

JULY

Wind buffeted us this month. A strong wind burst broke large branches from two trees close to the building. Those trees now look a bit lop-sided. One limb on a heavily laden apricot tree in the garden broke. The fruit was close to ripe and was saved.

The Council met to approve a budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. After it was approved, further review made another revision necessary. Fortunately, our capable business manager, Diane Sparks, was able to do some trimming and rearranging so that final version ended in the black. We hope it turns out that way.

On July 10, Br. John renewed his monastic vows. On July 11, two Oblates, Diane Holley and Fr. Stephen MacPherson, made their oblations. It was a nice way to celebrate the Solemnity of St. Benedict.



On July 23 we hosted the annual picnic of the local 4th degree Knights of Columbus. We've been doing that since the early 1980's. It used to be held out of doors and was labor-intensive. The transfer to an air-conditioned dining room was a major improvement.

We've reduced our fleet of cars by two. The insurance cost more than they were worth. We have acquired a used trailer that we can use to haul things to the transfer station or to the repair shop. Prices for transporting small things like mowers and 4-wheelers are such that the trailer will pay for itself by summer's end.

AUGUST

August began in the middle of a Medieval Mysteries Road Scholar program. This had been a favorite for many years. It ended on Aug. 4. Fr. Hugh spent the next week disposing of materials collected for that program since it was the last time it would be presented.

August 3 was Foundation Day, the 54th anniversary of our beginning in Idaho. We had a celebration on Sunday, August 4th.

August 7 was devoted to reviewing materials connected with the safe-environment program conducted by the Diocese of Boise. We were also required to do a safe driving review as part of our insurance program. While we were being educated, the grain harvest was completed.

August 10 was our annual "clean up" day. We had about 30 volunteers who helped with projects inside and outside. They did a marvelous job.

Much of the work outside was for things that would otherwise not get done. The day was coordinated by John Wasko. Our helpers came from local parishes. We were blessed indeed.

August 12 to 18 was our final Road Scholar program: Quilting. Many of the participants had been here before. All the rooms in the guest house were taken; the heroic instructors, Marilyn Shake and Laura Pukstas, occupied rooms in the annex. We plan to sponsor a similar quilting group next year under our own auspices (see page 8).

Fr. Andrew has been attending training sessions in preparation for a Kairos retreat to be held at the State Prison. He has been involved in that ministry for many years. •





Guatemala City, Guatemala

Peacemaking

By Julie Straight

ONE HOT DAY IN 1985, A BLUE-EYED AMERICAN MAN IN HIS MID-THIRTIES SAT AT A TABLE IN A RESTAURANT IN GUATEMALA City, a crab leg hanging over the edge of his bowl of seafood chowder. At a nearby table, three women ate, laughed, and talked, their conversation just beyond both his hearing and his limited Spanish. This man, Selby Coffman, was serving as a bodyguard—an unarmed bodyguard—for one of these women, Nineth de Garcia Montenegro.

Why would a twenty-eight-year old woman with a toddler daughter at home need a bodyguard? On February 18, 1984, a government van had pulled up next to her husband, Fernando; four men dragged him away. He was never seen again. Fernando had been advocating for people's right to assemble, to form labor organizations, and to vote in genuine and free elections. Disappearances of people like Fernando were hardly unusual at the time.

But Nineth de Garcia Montenegro's response was unusual. She demanded to know what had happened to him, then joined with others to found the Grupo Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), the

Mutual Support Group for Relatives of the Disappeared. Predictably, first one and then another of the six co-organizers was murdered. A third fled the country. Then the group contacted a new organization, Peace Brigades International, to ask that they come to Guatemala.

Peace Brigades International was only a few years old, founded on a concept Gandhi had suggested: that of an international peace-making team that would prevent violence simply by its presence, without participating in either side of a conflict. Guatemala was decidedly dangerous; an estimated 200,000 people ended up being killed between 1960 and 1996, mostly at the hands of government forces. Selby, like the other Peace Brigades team members, had to decide before going that he was willing to die.

Still, the thinking was that the Guatemalan government could hardly afford the political cost of harming a U. S. citizen such as Selby or any of his American teammates, for the government's weapons and military training came from the United States. Nor would it be in its best interests to harm citizens of France, Spain, or Canada, such as Selby's other team





Nineth de Garcia

members. If anything happened to Nineth de Garcia on his watch, Selby would probably live to tell about it—and tell he would, for that was PBI's second

strategy: immediate report of any violence to an international rapid response network. By providing a witness, PBI sought to show the government that the world was watching.

A dramatic example came in November 1985. Indigenous Maya people from the mountains went without meals to afford the bus fare to Guatemala City and march with the GAM to the Cathedral, protesting the disappearance of their loved ones. As heavily-armed men stood by, the PBI team members spread themselves along the march route, armed only with five-centavo pieces to put into the public telephones should they need to report violence. Their presence, they believed, might be enough to save these people from the violent deaths met by previous protesters.

Selby was in only the second group PBI sent to Guatemala, so they really did not know if this new strategy for justice would work there or not.

It did.

No violence occurred at the march. Nineth de Garcia continued to receive death threats against herself and her daughter, but after PBI arrived, no other action was taken against her or the other organizers. Selby, after five or six months, completed his watch; other PBI volunteers came to take his place. Both PBI and the GAM persisted in Guatemala through months and years. Nineth de Garcia became a Guatemalan congresswoman; her daughter Alejandra grew up to become a lawyer. Selby became the Brother Selby we know at the Monastery of the Ascension; he looks back on his "tour of duty" in Guatemala as the "most significant thing I've done."

PBI now has over twenty years of successful interventions in situations of violence, and we know that Br. Selby lived to tell about his experience, but the outcome was far from obvious in 1985. How did he come to the point that he was willing to risk his life for people he'd never met?

Br. Selby grew up in the segregated South in the 1950s and 1960s, first in Greenville, North Carolina, then in Madisonville, Kentucky. While in high school, Br. Selby and a handful of other students, black and white together, petitioned the city council to integrate the town swimming area. At the time they felt politely brushed off, but integration did happen a few years later, and Br. Selby gained his first experience of speaking truth to power.

In college, Br. Selby joined student movements to protest the war in Viet Nam and to urge corporations to divest from apartheid South Africa. He was reading the works of Mahatma

Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. After graduating, he worked for the Virginia Community Development Organization, advancing the interests of African Americans. In the early 1980s, he received extensive training for nonviolent confrontation while working with Quakers in Philadelphia in the Movement for a New Society (MNS). Then he went to Guatemala with the Peace Brigades.

The combined boredom and tension of his bodyguard work in Guatemala, together with the strain of being a foreigner with limited language skills, were challenging for Br. Selby. He felt vulnerable when a military helicopter hovered overhead or heard that a government death squad car was circling the neighborhood. On the other hand, he lived in deep admiration of the Guatemalan people and their courage. He felt a strong sense of belonging as he lived and worked at the Peace Brigades House with his team. These people thought strategically, kept in touch with a wide range of allies, and prayed together, mostly in the form of silences, since not all the team members had a faith commitment.

In fact, our Brother Selby's own faith commitment was not yet where it would be; the Peace Brigades provided one of the social justice experiences that led him deeper into Christian faith and to the Catholic Church in particular. While in Philadelphia in the early 1980s, he had encountered a Methodist church of about forty people that ran many projects for the community's benefit. He started to think, "I can go along with this faith thing," and he joined that church. Then in his Peace Brigades team in Guatemala, he got to know a Catholic priest from France and a nun of the Sisters of St. Joseph from the United States. In their smart, strategic thinking, Sister Jean's laughter and connection with people, and Fr. Richard's effective leadership of their group, he saw "a faith that worked." The examples of activists such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton also eventually helped him to decide to join the Catholic Church.

In Guatemala, Br. Selby saw many crucifixes, frequently portraying Jesus dripping a lot of blood. At first, he says, they seemed "garish" to him. Over time, however, he saw why these images mattered to the Guatemalans: "For them, this was their blood. They shed a lot of blood, and Christ was there, shedding his blood." Today, Br. Selby understands the Crucifixion as "ultimate nonviolence." The willingness to suffer for others without inflicting harm in return is key for work such as that of the Peace Brigades, and Jesus shows us the way: "He picked up the cross and said 'Follow me.'"

While few of us will go to dangerous places with Peace Brigades or similar organizations, these heroes' work depends on ordinary people here. Their witness doesn't work without people to receive their news and contact senators and representatives. They also need funding. Each of us has our part in the same work that brought Br. Selby to Guatemala! •





Perserving History and Solving Mysteries...at the Monastery

By Julie A. Ferraro

ODDLY ENOUGH, AS SOMEONE WHO LIKES NOTHING BETTER THAN A MYSTERY, I STOPPED BY THE MONASTERY ON AUGUST 3 only to discover a conference in session on the topic of medieval murder mysteries.

I had to laugh.

My brief visit was, in fact, the conclusion of my own particular mystery quest: discovering the secrets of the monastery's phenomenal art collection.

The project started in June with a discussion between myself and Fr. Hugh. The guide to the artwork displayed within those hallowed walls dated back to 2004, and much had changed. A new version was overdue, and I suggested adding photos, so people would be able to identify what piece of art they were viewing. After all, it is said, "A picture is worth a thousand words," and when there are so many variations of the Madonna and Child, and numerous crucifixes, a photo can eliminate some of the mystery.

I learned this through personal experience. Back in 2012, I served as a full-time volunteer at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, California. With my journalism and accounting background, I was assigned the duties of museum director (yes, I chuckled, too). But, my organizational skills came in very handy when I was tasked with cleaning the detritus from the archive room and performing a new inventory of the artifacts. Taking Nikon camera in hand, I photographed all the paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the many faces of St. Francis of Assisi, and Christ crucified, risen, ascended. I commandeered the mission's retreat dining room for three days, spreading out exquisite,

colorful, embroidered vestments - pre-Vatican II - on large tables and matching them to their corresponding dalmatics, stoles, copes, chalice veils, burses, and so forth. These, too, were captured in digital form, accompanied by written descriptions in massive binders for posterity.

Traveling to Iowa, I duplicated the task for a community of Franciscan Sisters, whose archive room in the basement hadn't been touched in years.

These tasks - as with the artwork at the monastery - weren't chores. They were layered mysteries waiting to be solved. Whether in a drawer, a cupboard or hanging on a wall, the story behind each piece is its own historic tale, which future generations need to know about in order to preserve the beauty and the truth of now.

As for the monastery's artwork, the challenges couldn't always be overcome by creativity. Some of the crucifixes hang high on the wall, as in the conference room. Without a really tall ladder or a scissor lift, it's almost impossible to get a "perfect" photo. Some of the glass on the picture frames reflected everything around them, and removing the painting from the frame wasn't feasible.

What really struck me was the variety of art and sources. The "Happy Wanderer" wood carving in the main dining room may have come from Ecuador, I learned. A unique rendering of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the hall between the dining room and the reception area is metal raised above the dark background surface.



See "PERSERVING HISTORY", *cont on page 7*



"PERSERVING HISTORY", *from page 6*

The quilts... oh, the quilts! They may not be "historic" in the literal sense, but kudos to the talented hands that stitched those panels, regardless if it was with needle and thread or sewing machine.

The many Stations of the Cross sets are an insight into the artists' view of Christ's last hours. One mystery I have yet to solve: finding all the outdoor Stations by Ade Bethune. They are along the service road near the "pasture" (game preserve), and I just haven't had time to poke around and see them.

Personally, even though they are reproductions, I like the little monk figurines on the table in the north wing. The fact that some of the artwork has been "passed down" from Mount Angel Abbey is proof that all Benedictine monasteries, though independent, share close links.

Some of the art is profoundly moving, others - such as the tiles hung in the dining room done by Fr. Maur Van Doorslaer OSB at Valyermo in California - portray serious subjects in a light-hearted manner. The Lego rendering of Shrewsbury ca. 1140 is proof of that, too.

So, after many hours' effort, I now know quite a bit about the monastery's many artworks, and sharing this information with visitors will help solve the mystery for them, as well. The updated guide can also serve as an archival document, to preserve the monastery's history.

There is one unsolved mystery, however: just what is that copper sculpture in the reception area supposed to be? It's on loan from Fr. Stephen MacPherson, so maybe he'll explain it to me sometime. •

"FR. KENNETH", *from page 1*

God you have tested us, refined us like silver in the fire (Ps 66:10).

Fr. Kenneth was born in Longmont, CO, 81 years ago. His family lived in a rural area on the eastern slope of Rocky Mountains. They grew much of their own food. His father was a self-employed contractor. He was killed in an accident in 1946, leaving his widow with eleven children and a twelfth on the way. They moved into Longmont, and by grit and hard work flourished there.

Fr. Kenneth began his college work at a Divine Word Seminary in Epworth, Iowa. He wanted more community life than missionary work provided, so he joined Holy Cross Abbey in 1960, and finished college at St. Benedict's in Atchison, KS. After a couple years at Holy Cross, he was sent to Europe to study. He spent almost a decade studying in Rome and Tübingen, where Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, directed his thesis about the early Christian origins of excommunication from sharing in the Eucharist. This qualified him to write the section "On Disciplinary Measures" in *RB 80*, an important translation and commentary on the *Rule of Benedict*.

Lord give me words and I will shout you praise (Ps 51:17).

Fr. Kenneth has spent most of his life in the intermountain West. After returning to Holy Cross Abbey with his doctorate in hand, he taught in the abbey school there, and at St. Thomas Seminary in Denver, and St. Anselm's College in Manchester, NH.



He taught not just theology but also computer science. And he did more than teach; he became a tailor; he painted, and he played the organ. Then he was chaplain at Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center in Aurora, CO (1987-89), and worked in a parish in Boulder, CO. He was then elected abbot of Holy Cross Abbey in 1997, a position he held until 2002. He then served a chaplain to St. Walburga's Abbey of Benedictine Sisters in Colorado. When Holy Cross Abbey closed in 2003, he came to the Monastery of the Ascension, where he was elected prior in 2009. He served faithfully in that burdensome office until 2016, when he had to resign because his memory was slipping.



We bless you from the Lord's house (Ps 118:26).

His memory continues to be iffy, but he cheerfully accepts his limitations. A monastery is a good place for those with failing memories: so much of what we do is routine and deeply rooted in our muscle memory. So Fr. Kenneth continues to take part in the liturgy of hours, serving regularly as cantor. He says Mass and takes his turn in the scullery and in cleaning the retreat house. When he forgets, a gentle reminder is all that is required. He has taken up painting again and takes walks around the property absorbing the beauty of the place. He remains the gentle man he has always been—even when people stand in a doorway when he is trying to enter. A grateful community welcomed him in 2003, and we welcome him still—God's gift from the Rockies to the Snake River Plain. •





THE DESERT CHRONICLE

The Benedictine Monks of Idaho, Inc.
Monastery of the Ascension
541 East 100 South
Jerome, ID 83338-5655

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
P A I D
BOISE, IDAHO
PERMIT No. 849

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Programs at the Monastery

Purling a Prayer Knitting Retreats

November 8-10, 2019
March 20-22, 2020
November 13-15, 2020

To register contact: Instructor: Joanne Draper email at joanned23@gmail.com

Peaceful Quilting at the Monastery

August 10-16, 2020

Instructors: Marilyn Shake mshake1905@yahoo.com
Laura Pukstas

Send registration form and payment to:

Monastery of the Ascension
c/o Brigid Hom-Schnapp
P O Box 261091
San Diego, CA 92196-1081

For information or registration form, contact: Fr. Hugh Feiss at hughf@idahomonks.org or call 208-761-9389



The *Desert Chronicle* is available in digital form on the monastery website: www.idahomonks.org. If you would like to receive the *Desert Chronicle* in digital form and cancel your paper subscription, please email Fr. Hugh: hughf@idahomonks.org and send him your email address.