



THE DESERT CHRONICLE

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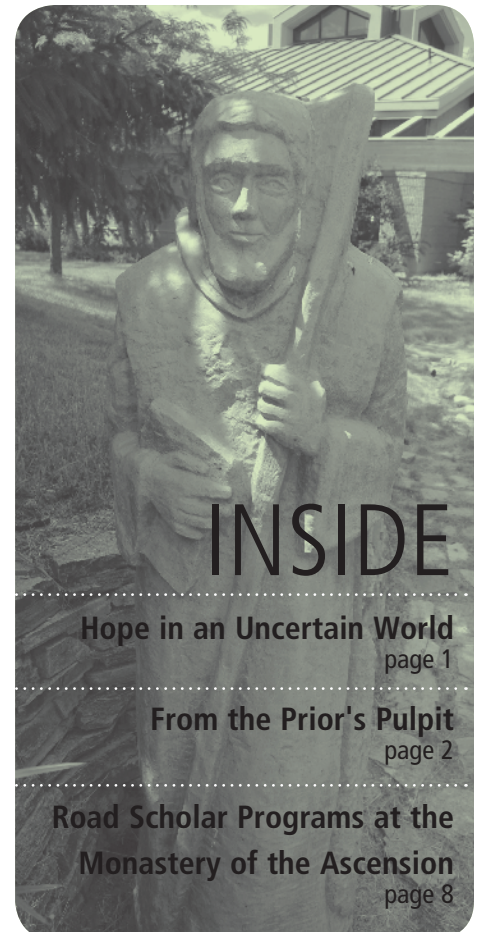
Hope in an Uncertain World

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF ADVENT. IT IS THE SEASON OF HOPE. WE HEAR MANY PASSAGES FROM ISAIAH ABOUT A TIME WHEN JUSTICE AND MERCY WILL ABOUND, THERE will be a peaceable kingdom, the sick will be healed, and the poor will prosper. However, such a vision of hope can seem quite remote in the contemporary world, where it seems political stabilities are crumbling, technological power is outrunning moral wisdom, racial tensions are rising, and economic divisions growing (newspapers report that Starbucks is going to shift its focus from the declining middle class to people of greater wealth). Individualism is ascendant and the reality of what used to be called human nature is questioned.

Youth is or should be the time of hope. What is it like to be entering adulthood in this world of ours? What follows are brief sketches about what eight Idaho State University students, haphazardly selected from the among those who have some connection with St. John's Catholic Student Center, think about their world and their future. I asked only eight students if they would be willing to be interviewed; all said yes. I don't know exactly how to measure their hopefulness (it seems surprisingly strong), but what they say and are is grounds for the rest of us to hope. Readers can draw their own conclusions, but these interviews seem to the interviewer to be very nice Christmas presents.

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From the Prior's Pulpit

By Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

Good beginnings are sometimes hard to find. What to say first and how to say it. Simplicity is probably the answer. So, “hello” ...again. On October 14, 2016, the community chose me to be Prior to succeed Fr. Kenneth Hein who served us from 2009 in that role. Dealing with some chronic health-related issues Fr. Kenneth chose to retire from that office. We are grateful for his years of generous service. “Retirement” in most monasteries means that the retiree gets a different job. Which is the case here. Fr. Kenneth’s talents will still be in demand.

This is being composed the day after Thanksgiving and in anticipation of the first Sunday of Advent. We here have much for which to be grateful both spiritually and materially. How best to show our gratitude takes some thought. The prayers of the Church for Thanksgiving Day remind us that we are to use what we have received for the benefit of others. There is no lack of needs, that is for sure.

Advent is a time of preparation for Christ’s coming. It is also true that Christ is with us here and now. So perhaps we can see Advent as a time to reflect on how open we are to the presence of Christ who is already with

us. Here in the monastery that translates into such things as our attentiveness to the Word of God proclaimed to us at Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. St. Benedict puts a lot of emphasis on monks “seeking God” not only in times of personal reading of scripture, but is seeing Christ in fellow monks and guests.

The Christmas emphasis on the humanity of Christ has far-reaching implications that surpass our ability to comprehend. But each one of them is an invitation to a deeper relationship with our loving Father. In the words of the Constitution on Divine Revelation of Vatican II: “It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will which was that people can draw near to the Father, through Christ the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature.” [Dei Verbum 2]

So may it be for all of you. Christmas and New Year’s blessings.

Fr. Boniface Lautz and Community



ALIN

Alin is twenty years old, petite and cheerful. She is a reader at Mass and often makes the announcements there. She has a twin sister named Abby, who finished a program at ISU last year and is now working as a massage therapist. They have an older sister. The family lives in Driggs, ID. She attended Teton High School

Her parents are from Mexico. They were raised Catholic and married in the Church. When they came to Idaho they drifted a bit from the Church, but they became reconnected to the church through Alin and her sisters. Alin was baptized when she was eight years old. She thinks her family waited that long because they wanted to have what they considered a proper celebration. Thereafter, she received the other sacraments and was confirmed in high school.

When she was a junior in high school Alin knew she wanted to be a nurse. Her mother, too, had wanted to be a nurse but didn't have the opportunity. Alin is a CNA and loves the work. She is a hands-on person, and a hands-on learner. She is currently in the LPN program at ISU in the school of technology and plans to work when she gets her degree. Then with experience and some saved money she wants to study for her RN.

The program she is in is very demanding. There are 28 people in her cohort and most of them are struggling. Alin worries whether she will pass her classes.

Last year, when she was a sophomore in college she had a deep religious experience. She decided she needed to take responsibility for her life and faith. There was a period of two weeks when she felt very close to and attuned with God. She tries to live like that all the time now.

Alin grew up in an area where most people were LDS; her boyfriend was Mormon and she learned as much as she could about his faith. That prompted in her a desire to learn about her Catholic faith. She went to Helena, MT, this year with a friend from St. John's and found that she liked being in a place where there were more Catholics. When she graduates she hopes to work somewhere like Helena. Her current boyfriend, though of Hispanic origin, is not Catholic (which concerns Alin) nor does he know Spanish. He is a non-denominational Christian, who prays. He is studying Spanish and hopes to be a Physician's Assistant.

Alin is president of the Catholic organization at ISU. With Valeria Juarez, she is in charge of service ministries at St. John's. Alin chairs the peer ministers' meetings. She works out about four times a week at the gym. She finds St. John's a very hospitable and supportive community. There is always someone ready to provide help when she needs it.



CONNOR

Connor's family lives in Vina, CA, just a mile from a Trappist monastery famous for the medieval chapter building reconstructed on its premises and for their winery. His family is Catholic. He has an older brother who lives in Colorado. Connor attended a public high school in Corning, CA. He likes hunting and shooting. He also likes video games, but has little chance to play them now.

He came to ISU planning to study pharmacy. He was encouraged to study for one of the health professions; pharmacy appealed to him. He has had some academic ups and downs, but he is still moving forward in spite of these bumps on the road. He has a girl friend named Sarah whom he met through the pharmacy fraternity. They started dating in February 2016.

Connor will owe a great deal of money—more than he is comfortable with—by the time he finishes with pharmacy school. Tuition for the four-year pharmacy program is about \$20,000 a year. Sarah has a mentor who is still paying \$1400 a month on her student loans eight years after graduating from pharmacy school.

Connor didn't really get much involved with the Catholic student center at ISU until 2014, when Pete Espil became campus minister. They are friends and share an interest in guns and hunting. Currently Connor is a peer minister in charge of outreach. One of his primary duties is to set up information booths in one of the union buildings every other week. He also is an acolyte at Sunday Mass and sometimes reads the announcements or welcomes people to Mass. •



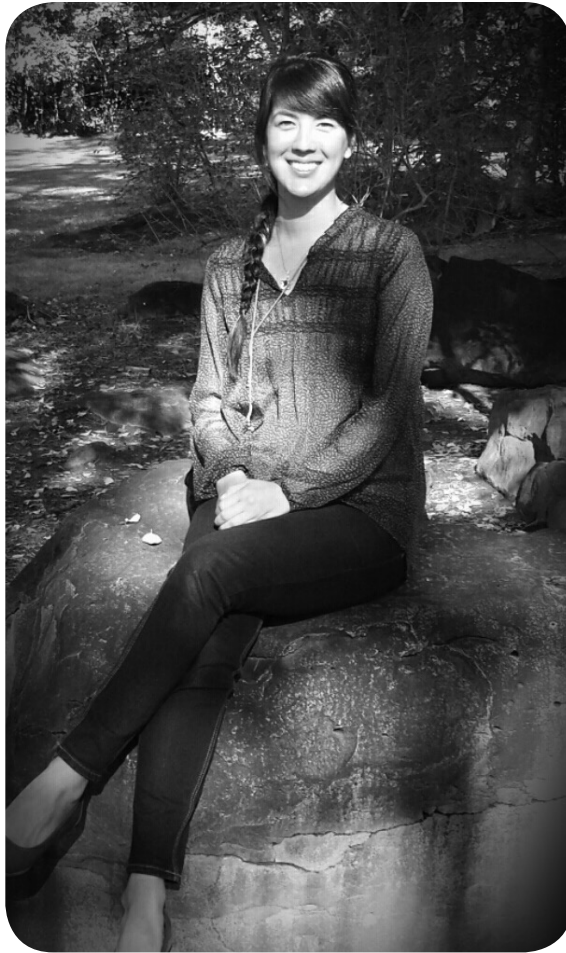
ELIZABETH

Elizabeth is 36 years old. She was born in Oklahoma on an army base. Her father's career in the military took him many places. He met Elizabeth's mother in South Korea. Elizabeth lived in Alaska, Kentucky, and England, before graduating from high school in Virginia. She earned a degree in chemical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in upstate New York. She attended there on a ROTC scholarship. When she graduated she became a military officer in the Air Force. She was stationed in Florida and New Mexico. She worked in research and development projects (her first two jobs involved blowing things up) and contract management. She was on active duty for eight and a half years. After a deployment she decided to separate from active duty and joined the Air Force reserves.

She often prayed in an adoration chapel in New Mexico, because she had a strong sense God was calling her; she wanted to find out to what. She thought about being a nurse, but then met a Physical Therapist and decided PT would be a better fit. She was accepted at a number of schools, but chose ISU. She spent three years in the PT program at ISU and graduated last May. In November that same year she married Derek, another PT student, who went through RCIA two years ago.

Derek and Elizabeth want to help people. Elizabeth believes a career in PT will give her a chance to make a difference one-on-one. She is still exploring how to do that. Currently she is working at a private outpatient orthopedic clinic. In January she will move with Derek to Washington State where he will be doing a rotation before graduation. There she is planning to provide home health therapy through a Catholic hospital.

Elizabeth became involved at St. John's Student Center when she first came to ISU. She knocked on the door and was met by Mary June, a new student from Taiwan, who was living in an apartment at St. John's. They later became roommates (and sisters) in student housing. Elizabeth sang in the choir for a while that first year, but the next year decided to be an acolyte and Eucharistic minister. While in graduate school at ISU, she found it difficult to have much time for anything else. She hopes to sing in church again, but this time with Derek.



Derek and Elizabeth have thought a lot about the future. They would like to settle down in a small town and work as Physical Therapists. They volunteered with an ISU group in Guatemala and would like to do a similar mission each year to serve God and needy people. They want a simpler, uncomplicated, Christ-like life with less consumption. They hope to be less dependent on what is provided to them ready-made.

Because she was in the military and had GI educational benefits as a graduate student, Elizabeth doesn't have any debt. She has been very blessed and feels a heavy responsibility to give back, and not just monetarily. She knows she needs God's help and inspiration to do that. •



PAUL

Paul is a twenty-year old junior, majoring in nuclear engineering. He attended public schools in Kennewick, WA, and took some community college courses before enrolling at Idaho State University. He is a bright, studious, affable young man, who is prayerful and thoughtful. He is knowledgeable about many things and helpful to others.

Paul's family is non-denominational Christians, who pray and discuss religion at home, but do not attend church regularly. When Paul attended successively two non-denominational churches in middle school and high school, his family sometimes accompanied him. He was introduced to Catholicism through a girl friend he met in high school, and he sometimes went to Mass with her. When he came to Idaho State University he started going to Mass with his cousin who was dating a Catholic young woman, but he also attended some services at a Methodist church. He had been examining his faith for sometime and began to get serious about Roman Catholicism. He was intrigued by Catholics' ability to stay united. So, in his freshman year, he joined RCIA and entered the Catholic Church at Easter.

For Paul Mass is the center of his Christian life and community. He attends daily Mass when he can. He liked the RCIA experience and has helped the priest with RCIA during the last two years. Since he became a Catholic his trust in God has become stronger and he is more at peace. He finds his faith gives



him a greater sense of purpose. He fears failure and losing that sense of purpose.

Paul is still thinking about what he wants for the future. He considers religious life as an option. He has many hopes but he is not sure where his life is going. He thinks that the United States is directionless, but he is hopeful about its future. He wants to help people of his generation develop their faith; in his estimation many have faith, but of an impoverished sort. If he continues in engineering he hopes to solve problems. He is interested in teaching and will do graduate study. •

KATHERINE

Katherine is 22 years old, a junior majoring in geology. She is quiet and appears serious, but is a willing conversationalist. She was born and raised in California. She attended a junior college there, where she had some good teachers who inspired her interest in geology.

Her parents were born in the Philippines. They are religious people, who go to church faithfully. They have taken part in Cursillo, and her father is a Knight of Columbus. Katherine and her siblings received first communion and confirmation. She attended public schools. For a time after high school, she became more sporadic in attending Mass, but now she attends regularly. To her it seems like the normal thing to do. She values the community support she finds at St. John's.

Katherine intends to pursue a master's degree in geology, but she is not sure what she will do after that. She might go

on for a doctorate. When she finishes her schooling she would like to travel outside of the country with friends or visit the Philippines with her parents. She would like to do geological exploration. Giving back is an important consideration for her. She thinks about teaching at a community college, as a way to give back for what she received in that setting. She also would like to give back to her parents by taking them on a long trip—her father would like to go to London someday. St. John's is another place to which she hopes someday to give back.

Katherine sometimes worries about being forgotten by people she knows who are far from her now, but when she went home to California at Thanksgiving she found that had not happened. Katherine rates herself at 7.5 on a happiness scale of 1 (lowest) to 10. •



TAYLOR

Taylor is a tall, thin, energetic 18-year old. She grew up in Pocatello and attended public schools there. Her mother moved to Spokane last summer, but Taylor stayed to go to college at ISU. Taylor has two little brothers; her mother's fiancé has three daughters, one of whom is seventeen. Thanksgiving vacation was the first time the Taylor had been with the whole group.

Taylor's family was not religious. Her mother went to a Catholic school when she was young, but Taylor remembers going to church only a couple of times in her life. She was a good student, and was vice president of her senior class. In high school she spent time with a group of students who had gone to grade school together at the local Catholic school. This got her interested in the Catholic Church and she joined them sometimes when they went to Mass. One young woman in particular helped spark her interest in Catholicism. So she had been going to Mass for three years, before she joined the RCIA group at St. John's, ISU, in September and invited her roommate to come with her. They both are still in RCIA. Taylor found that she already believed much of what the Catholic Church



teaches, though some things still puzzle her.

By taking Advanced Placement courses (Calculus and civics in high school) and taking part in ISU's "Bridge" program last summer, Taylor has sophomore standing. She is not sure what she will major in—mathematics, nursing, and communications are possibilities. Even being a nun is not out of the question. There are pressures on her to decide because otherwise she will miss courses she needs or take some she doesn't need and so run up her student debt unnecessarily.

Taylor likes poetry slam, for which there is little opportunity in Pocatello, but she watches poetry slam events on You-tube. She has never spoken her poetry at a slam event, but she has spoken some in class. Taylor would like to travel; she would especially like to visit the Vatican and Pompeii. This summer Taylor hopes to work for ISU's Bridge program, which helps high school students make the transition to college. •

PAUL

Paul lives in Blackfoot, ID. He is very quiet and not gregarious. He didn't think I could get a four-hundred word interview out of him. He was correct. He also may be the only person in North America who does not have a digital photo of himself.

He is the second youngest in a family of seven children. Two of his siblings graduated from ISU, and two others attended there for a while and hope to complete their education. Paul was homeschooled. He started college courses when he was sixteen, so he came to ISU with some college credits. He has been attending for several years now, seldom taking a full load, as he studies for a civil engineering degree.

Paul tries to work 30 hours a week during the school year to earn money for tuition. When he can't pay his tuition, his parents loan him the money he needs. He will not have any other debts when he graduates, probably when he is 24 years old.

He worked on a horse farm, often putting in 60 hours a week during vacations. However, the job usually ended in mid-July, so in January 2014 he started working on a ranch, where he still works whenever he can. Last summer he worked fulltime for an asphalt paving company. He also works on his family's small farm, where they grow hay to feed a few steers and raise some chickens.

Paul loves horses, dogs, work, his truck and his motorcycle. His goal is to graduate, get a job, earn money as an engineer, and then get into sheep ranching. He works with many Spanish-speaking people on the ranch where he is employed. His favorite class this year was Spanish, but he had to drop the class (an advanced reading class) because he had too many hours. He does not like going to school very much. One reason is that he does not like to sit still for long periods. However, he can pray silently in church for extended periods. He couldn't go to daily Mass at home, but he is glad that he can do so now at the student center when he doesn't have class. He likes to say the rosary. On a scale of 1 to 10, he would rate his happiness level at 8. •





VALERIA

Valeria is twenty-one years old, a junior majoring in land surveying. She was born and raised in Mountain Home, ID, where she attended public schools before entering Idaho State University as a freshman. Her father is from Mexico, her mother from El Salvador. They both have worked hard in order to help their two daughters get a good start in life. Valeria has a touchy stomach, but she is cheerful and always willing to help.

Valeria was baptized and received her first communion, but her family almost never went to church after that. She had no religious instruction, but heard about Confirmation from her classmates while she was in high school. She didn't know exactly what it was, but was interested in it. When she came to Idaho State University she happened across an information table staffed by the student center and asked about Confirmation. She was contacted by the chaplain and told him she wanted to be learn more about her faith and be confirmed. She went through the entire RCIA program and was confirmed on Easter of her freshman year.

She has gone to Mass every Sunday for the last two years. When she is home she takes her mother to Mass with her. She likes to do things in a routine way ("I'm mildly obsessive compulsive") and that is a factor in her faithful attendance.

However, the reason she has been faithful to her confirmation commitment is that brings joy to her life. She also likes the fellowship she finds at the Catholic student center.

She does not have much faith in long-range plans. She has found they seldom materialize, but that things have a way of working out. She used to worry, but it just complicates things. She is generally optimistic. She looks forward to a time when she can volunteer, perhaps at a Catholic student center. She is happy at the prospect of working as a land surveyor. She worked at a firm in Boise last summer. The job market is good right now, especially when there is new construction. She can also draft. She would like to work in the Boise area, either for a private company or a government agency.

She hopes to be married in the Church and have a chance to teach her children her faith. She would like to be successful in her field and to get surveying licenses in several states, so if need be she could travel to work elsewhere. She has a dream of someday retiring to a small town in New Zealand. She really wants to be able to do something to pay back her parents in some measure for all they have sacrificed for her. She says that on a happiness scale of 1 to 10, she is usually near the high end, a 7 or an 8.●





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May 29 – June 4, 2017 Geology of the Snake River Plain

June 12-18, 2017 Geology of the Snake River Plain

June 19-25, 2017 Benedictines; 530-1530

July 10-16, 2017 Dante's Divine Comedy

July 24-30, 2017 England's Medieval Monarchs and Mysteries Set in their Reigns

Two programs projected for 2018: Knitting; Quilting

For information contact Road Scholar or Fr. Hugh at 208-761-9389



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