

Fr. Meinrad Schallberger, OSB

April 3, 1938 – August 14, 2026

Father Meinrad grew up in Mount Angel, Oregon, in the shadow of the abbey there, and spent many years of his maturity as chaplain at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, ID.

His father came to the United States from Lungern, Switzerland, in 1920. A cobbler, he helped build St. Gertrude's and worked for many years in the press at Mount Angel Abbey. Meinrad attended Catholic schools in Mount Angel until his junior year of high school, when he entered Mount Angel Seminary. After two years in the seminary college, he entered the monastery there and, on September 8, 1958, made profession as a monk. He spent the next six years in studies for the priesthood at Mount Angel, along with his Benedictine classmates, Paschal Cheline (who had lived in Idaho), Norbert Novak (who eventually came to the Monastery of the Ascension), and Gregory Duerr (who later served as abbot of Mount Angel).

After his ordination in 1964, Fr. Meinrad did some studies at the University of Washington, but he did not continue to a degree or become a teacher. He spent a few years as a parish priest at Sacred Heart Church in Portland and 13 years as manager of the abbey's Benedictine Press, which published a German language newspaper as well as the *St. Joseph Magazine*. During those years, the abbey transitioned from being a homey and relatively self-supporting institution - with a dairy, cattle and pigs, orchards and gardens, a hop farm and a forestry operation - to a more rationalized and sedentary place.

By 1982, many of the abbey's enterprises were closed or sold. In 1982, Fr. Meinrad was assigned to what was then known as Ascension Priory. He worked as director of maintenance and bookkeeper, novice master and, for a short time, was prior. In addition, he became very active in a program called Beginning Experience, which helps people who have suffered the loss of a spouse. The program, now international, took shape in 1973 and has been helping people ever since. Fr. Meinrad's gentle pastoral manner fitted him well for the program.

For most of the last quarter century Fr. Meinrad has served as chaplain at St. Gertrude's Monastery and St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, Idaho. In both institutions, he was a well-loved presence and guide. He took an interest in the Prairie High School sports programs and made friends with people in the area. He respected the sisters' right to shape their own communal life and was respectful of their embrace of feminist concerns. At Mass, his sermons were usually short and pithy. He welcomed visitors, particularly monks from his monastery in Jerome. He loved working in the sisters' forest up the hill behind the monastery, which had once been part of a short-lived men's foundation from Conception Abbey in Missouri.

Some people, including Fr. Meinrad himself, tended to underestimate his abilities and contributions. For instance, several years ago when I had the job of cleaning out a windowless storage closet that housed Monastery of the Ascension archives, I discovered the records from the many years in which Fr. Meinrad had been archivist were in very good order, whereas the records for the years before and after his tenure in the job were in disarray. That the history of the monastery has been preserved is largely his doing. He was very frugal in his management of the archives and everything else. Sometimes, his frugality grated on some of his confreres.

The last years of his life at St. Gertrude's were probably the happiest time of his adult life. He had solitude, kind treatment from the sisters, opportunities to work in the outdoors and to minister to the sisters' neighbors and friends. He has outlived most of his family and friends, but there are many people who still remember him with gratitude, a man whose own sufferings made him sensitive and responsive to the sufferings of others. He was a devout Christian and a faithful monk. We were blessed by him in ways we probably will never sufficiently appreciate.