



Monastery of the Ascension

THE DESERT CHRONICLE

Vol. XXXV, Number 3 - SEPTEMBER 2026

FR. MEINRAD SCHALLBERGER, OSB **APRIL 3, 1938—AUGUST 15, 2026**

By Hugh Feiss, OSB

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.

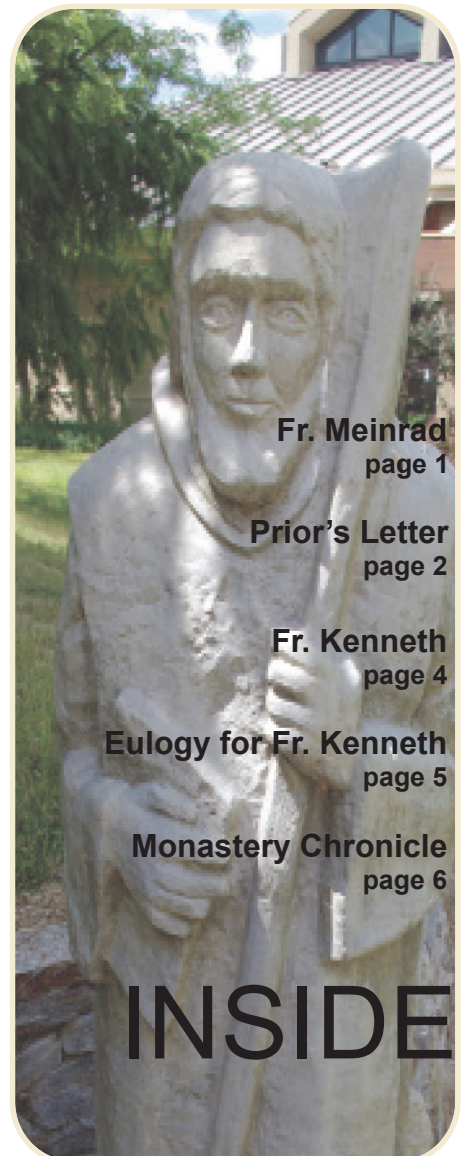
His father came to the United States from Lungern, Switzerland, in 1920. A cobbler, he helped build St. Gertrude's and worked for many years in the press at Mount Angel Abbey. Meinrad attended Catholic schools in Mount Angel until his junior year of high school, when he entered Mount Angel Seminary. 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

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Prior's Letter

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As I write this, we are celebrating the feast of the Assumption of Mary to Heaven. For some of us here at Ascension, years ago, it was our first full day living as candidates in the monastery. We were formally introduced to the Abbot, who graciously welcomed us. We got to eat in the monastic dining room and had a place assigned to us in choir. The solemn liturgical celebrations were inspiring. We participated in a procession in honor of Mary. It was a day to make memories. It was a day of inspiration.

I'm grateful for those kinds of inspirations. There are lots of people who are inspiring. People who are living and many who have gone before me. I have pictures of some of them above my desk and give thanks each day. One of the pictures is of our community. It was taken some years ago. Four of my confreres in the picture are no longer with us.

Fr. Meinrad Schallberger was the most recent one. He died on August 14 at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, where he was chaplain for the Benedictine Sisters. In his 68 years as a monk, he had a variety of assignments in the monastery requiring serious attention. His pastoral service reached many. At one point, he said that all the moves he had to make

made him feel like a pawn in a chess game. He made all the moves and gave them his best effort. His latest assignment with the Benedictine Sisters was deeply appreciated. There will be more about him in this issue of the Chronicle.

The death of a close family member or friend can put a helpful perspective on life. The time in which we live has a lot of things that preoccupy us, and rightfully so. But our experience of the loss can make us reflect on the direction of life and how to deal with our preoccupations.

The MSP community is making changes in preparation for the beginning of their classes and assignments for pastoral activity. It is another thing that inspires me, even to be a little more energetic about my own duties. We are fortunate to see the welcome response to the programs they provide. The MSPs are a source of spiritual nourishment to the local community.

I think that will be all for this time. Pray for us and be assured of our prayers for you. I hope you have many positive inspirations.

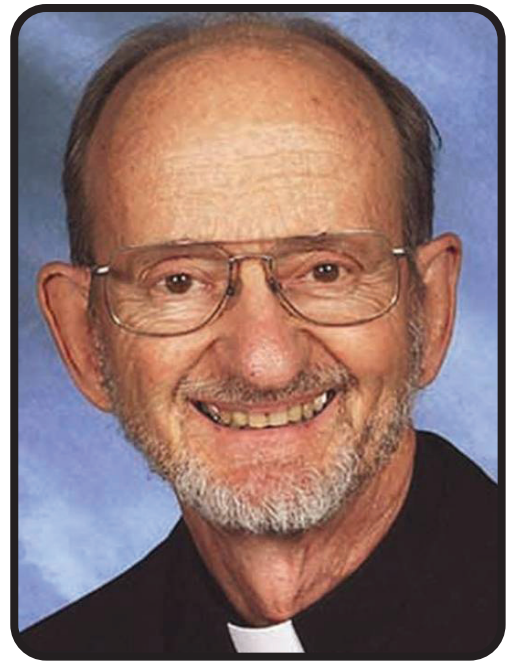
Peace and good things!

Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB, Prior

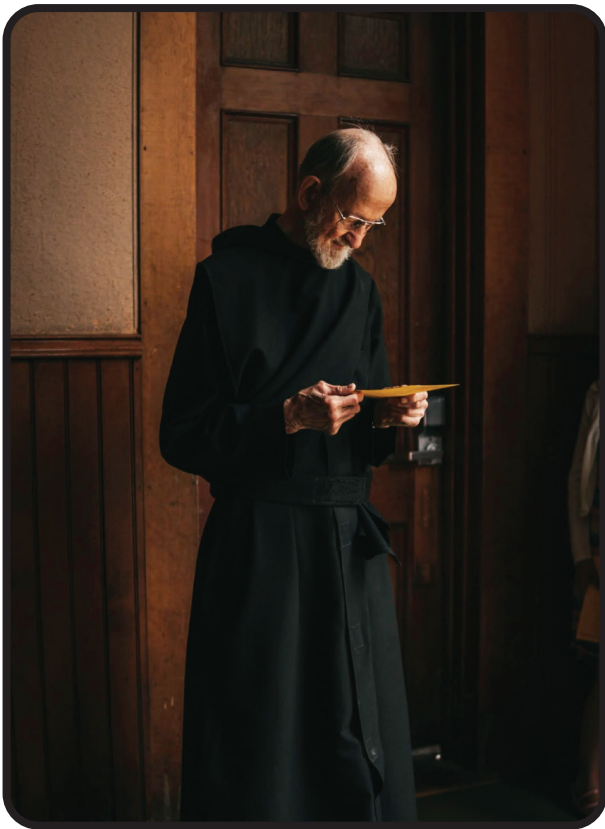


people ever since. Fr. Meinrad's gentle pastoral manner fitted him well for the program.

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.



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.



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.



FR. KENNETH HEIN, OSB

JUNE 2, 1938–JUNE 15, 2026

By Hugh Feiss, OSB

The long and varied life of Fr. Kenneth Hein, OSB, ended late in the night of June 15, in his room in the monastery where he was receiving hospice care. Several nurses and members of the community were there when he died.

He was born in Longmont, Colorado, June 2, 1938. On June 2, 2026, his 88th birthday was celebrated at the monastery with big balloons and coconut pie. He had been suffering from memory loss for many years, but he was still praying the liturgy of the hours in choir and celebrating Mass until a week before his death.

Fr. Kenneth was born into a large family. His father died when he was young, but he was able to graduate from grade school at St. John's School in Longmont and from Longmont Public High School. He spent four years studying in seminaries of the Society of the Divine Word, then entered Holy Cross Abbey in Cañon City, Colorado.

He earned a B.A. Latin at St. Benedict's College in Atchison, Kansas. He then went to Europe to study theology. He received a S.T.B. degree in theology from the Benedictine Collegio di Sant' Anselmo in

Rome and a doctorate in theology from the University of Tübingen. He returned to Holy Cross Abbey in 1972 where he taught in the abbey school and in the formation program in the abbey until 1987. He then had stints teaching religion and computer programming at St. Anselm's College in New Hampshire, serving as a hospital chaplain, working in a parish.

He was abbot administrator, then abbot of Holy Cross Abbey, 1992-2002. He then spent two years as chaplain for the nuns of St. Walburga's Convent in Colorado before coming to the Monastery of the Ascension in 2003. He was prior here from 2009-2016. He also wrote articles on the *Rule of St. Benedict* and the New Testament and made a translation of the Psalms from Hebrew.

He could do many things. He was a barber and tailor, played the organ and sang, painted (perhaps not so well), did crosswords and played Scrabble and gin rummy. Told puns. Being old and limited by his failing memory was hard for someone used to being active and productive, but he adapted to his limitations with grace. As he became older and more forgetful, he became sensitive to noise, and a bit belligerent if people



Father Boniface pays his respects to Father Kenneth.



blocked his way, but his default mode was to be gentle and unobtrusive. Sitting in the sun near the entrance or walking around the monastery, he met many people in a friendly way, but did not linger because it was difficult for him to carry on a conversation, Fr. Kenneth was a steady presence.

He had a strong sense of what was proper, whether in grammar or dress. One of the most deeply etched memories I have of him is his routine in the buffet

line. He always used a trey, took one piece of each kind of silverware whether he needed them or not, and a little of everything on the buffet. He was not fussy about what he ate, but careful how he ate it. Although he couldn't remember most things, each morning he thanked the cooks in French. If there are cooks in heaven, I am sure he is thanking them too. We are grateful for having had him in our midst, a gentleman, monk, priest, and faithful follower of Christ.



EULOGY FOR FR. KENNETH

Editor's note: This eulogy was read at Fr. Kenneth's funeral on July 15 by his sister, Donna C. Fley of Montrose, Colorado. It was written by her grandson, Daniel Lesser, who refers to Fr. Kenneth as "Uncle Larry."

As we gather here today, we mourn the passing of a monk, an abbot, a spiritual leader, a family member, and a servant of God. More than that, we mourn the passing of Uncle Larry, a man whose faith was not measured only by the prayers he offered but also by the lives he touched. He was a man who cleaned kitchens before sunrise, comforted troubled souls, listened to soldiers carrying burdens of war, and spent a lifetime serving others before himself.

We were blessed that such a man walked among us. We were blessed to hear his wisdom, witness his faith, laugh at his humor, and experience his kindness. Today, we are sorrowful because such men are rare. God does not create many like Uncle Larry.

So, let us not focus only on our loss. Let us give thanks for the gift of having known him. Let us give thanks that we witnessed such a man walking among us. While we grieve his passing, let us remember that the measure of a life is not found in the years a man lives, but in the lives he leaves forever changed.

Uncle Larry's work here is complete. His faith has become sight. His earthly labors have ended. May the angels receive him. May the saints welcome him. And may we who remain behind strive to live with a small portion of the humility, service, faith, and love that he showed to all of us. Blessed are we that we shared our lives with him. We are sorrowful that he has left us, for we shall not see his kind again.



Monastery Chronicle

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

May 2026

May 10: Fr. Hugh presided at Mothers' Day Mass. Cake and pie after Mass with balloons to mark his 60th anniversary of ordination.

May 11: Feast of Abbots of Cluny; Fr. Hugh presides at Mass.

May 12: Chapter/Corporation Meeting

May 13: Fr. Hugh departs for Medieval Conference at Kalamazoo.

May 17: Ascension Fiesta - about 400 people attend outdoor Mass. Music, food, dancing. Bishop Soto presides.

May 18: Biannual maintenance of HVAC system finds problems in chapel and conference room. Cathy visits. Cold and wind require replanting of sugar beets.

May 19: Health inspectors check out kitchen. All is well. Lawn sprinkler system fully activated. Barn swallows and hummingbirds back.

May 20: Br. Selby has second cataract operation.

May 22: Pocatello oblates here for noon prayer, lunch, and discussion.

May 23: Boise oblates meet by Zoom.

May 24: Mule deer are back. Local oblates meet. Pope Leo's new encyclical released.

May 30: Missionaries host weekend youth retreat.

May 31: Missionaries have appreciation dinner for Ascension Fiesta helpers.

June 2026

June 1-2: More people here for daily Mass this week because of diocesan priests' study days.

June 3: Fr Benito MSP comes from California to say goodbye before going to Kenya. Fr David MSP here giving retreat says morning Mass.

June 5-7: Several MSP seminarians head for Texas. Br. Selby is ill.

June 8: Fr. Hugh speaks at Interfaith meeting on faith and ecology. Nice rain overnight and into the morning of Tuesday,

June 9: The monastery has been reclassified regarding water use so need to employ someone to test our water supply. Coincidentally, water heater leaking; water softener on fritz.

June 12-14 29 ICCW members here for a gathering. They were a welcome addition to our liturgies, with their enthusiastic singing and responses.

June 14: Fr. Kenneth is put on hospice care.

June 15: Fr. Kenneth dies late in the evening with several monks and hospice nurses in attendance.



Brother Sylvester



June 18-19: Community Mass celebrated for Fr. Kenneth.

June 20: Missionaries host both theology and biblical studies groups.

June 21: First Day of Summer. We're having some hot days. Smoke pollution.

June 23: John Wasko's sister dies

June 25: Dealing with infrastructure issues – roof leaks, plumbing, HVAC, water softening/purifying system failures.

June 26: The library ceiling is repaired. Other projects around the monastery being handled.

July 2026

July 1: Home Health nurse checks up on us.

July 2: John Wasko and the Missionaries cut up a tree that fell in the refuge. Another Missionary operates a weed whacker around the monastery. Lawn is mowed.

July 4: Between Vespers and Night Prayer, Fr. Boniface and Fr. Hugh attend neighbors' cookout along with more than 100 people.

July 5: Fewer people at Mass than usual.

July 6: Burial in columbarium, Fr. Boniface presiding. Fr. Hugh to Interfaith meeting. MSP Brs. Geovany and Luis back from California.

July 7: Foot nurse here. Online oblates in evening.

July 11: Oblate potluck, discussion, bingo. Mayra becomes oblate candidate.

July 12: Fr. Hugh presides at Mass. Haustus.

July 13: Fr. Kenneth's sister and nephews arrive. Abbot President Justin Brown also here.

July 14: Fr. Boniface leads vigil service for Fr. Kenneth with talk on Prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict, for which Fr. Kenneth identified the biblical references in RB80.

July 15: Fr. Kenneth's funeral at St. Jerome's, Fr. Hugh presiding at Mass with half a dozen concelebrants, MSP, Deacon Sal from diocese, Hospice Visions, oblates and others, about 150 total. Luncheon by parish ladies. Fr. Boniface presided at interment in monastery cemetery.

July 16: Fr. Martín and Abbot Justin concelebrate. Fr. Kenneth's relatives depart for Colorado and southern Nevada.

July 19: Fr. Boniface presides at Sunday Mass. 90+ weather continues.

July 20: Fr. Martín, the superior of the North American MSP, says community Mass.

July 21: Fr. Martín again says community Mass. He departs with Br. Luis. Smoky from fires.

July 22: Fr. Boniface presides at Mass. Fr. Abrám is elected superior of MSPs. Home health here.



July 25: MSP have regular classes, attendance holding up during summer.

July 26: Fr. Boniface says Mass. Food cupboard gets heavy use and restocking. Newly ordained Fr. Luís says Mass in Jackpot. Giveaway of Fr. Kenneth's paintings begins.

July 27: Fr. Luís says morning Mass: OSB, 4; MSP: 2 priests, 4 seminarians, 5 lay missionaries.

July 30: First tomatoes of the year from the garden

July 31: Farm sale signed here, with Fr. Boniface, Title One, Marshalls, Evan Roth present. Barley harvest begins on large field to west. Hawks gather.

August 2026

August 1: Shooting with AK4 at In-and-Out in Twin Falls: 3 dead 4 wounded.

August 2: Fr. Boniface celebrates community Mass. Fr. Meinrad falls at Cottonwood monastery, hurts hip, in hospital in Lewiston. Br. Tobiah has neck brace.

August 3: Fr. Boniface celebrates Foundation Mass. Haustus. Coyotes vole hunting.

August 5: Copies of Fr. Hugh's book on Richard of St. Victor arrive from Belgium.

August 6: LuAnn's 70th birthday, ably orchestrated by Diane S.

August 8: Fr. Luís hosting lay theology. Fr. Meinrad mending some.

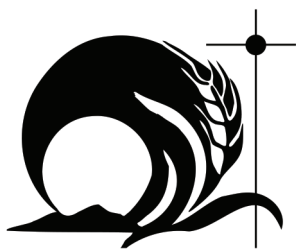
August 9: Fr. Boniface celebrates Mass to a full chapel. LuAnn cooks turkey dinner.

August 10: Fr. Luís celebrates Mass. Fr. Meinrad still in Lewiston hospital. Fr. Hugh to Interfaith meeting.

August 11: Fr. Meinrad is going to go on hospice care in Cottonwood.

August 14: Fr. Meinrad dies.





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

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Living Water

Season of Creation 2026

IMMERSION IN LIVING WATER

Ezekiel 47:9, 12

September 1 - October 4



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