

## Obituary for Fr. Kenneth Charles Hein, 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, CO, June 2, 1938. On June 2, 2026, his 88<sup>th</sup> 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, CO. He earned a B.A. Latin at St. Benedict's College in Atchison, KS. 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 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 tray, 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.

The funeral Mass will take place July 15 at St. Jerome's Parish Church in Jerome, ID.