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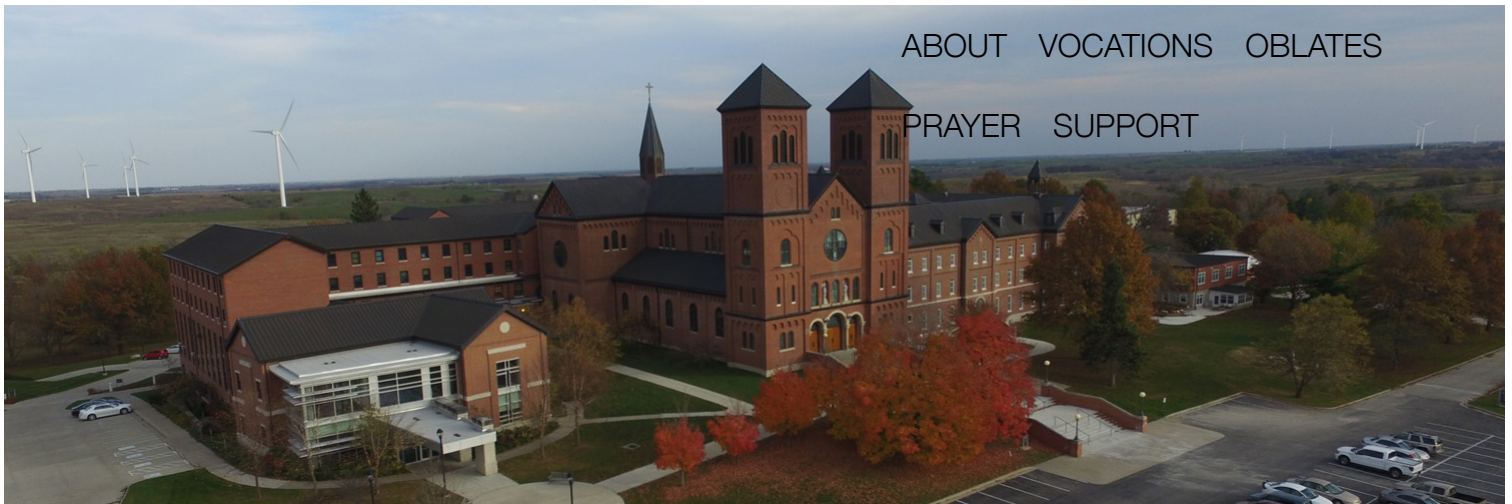


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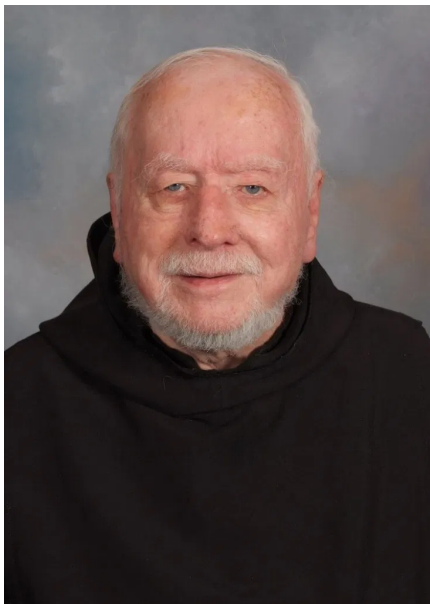
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Thursday, Jun. 29th 2017

Fr. Hugh Tasch enters eternal rest



On Wednesday, 28 June 2017, between the Hours of Vigils and Lauds, our beloved confrere, Father Hugh Tasch, OSB, laid down the cares of earthly life and entered into the joy of his lord and master. Jubilant of both priesthood and monastic life, Father Hugh had been resident in our Saint Stephen's Infirmary and Health Care Center for the last fourteen months. Over that period Father Hugh's health had undergone a gradual but constant decline. Earlier in June, his condition reached a critical point at which his doctor recommended that he be placed on hospice care. Always resigned and accepting of God's will in his life, Father Hugh acquiesced calmly to the reality of his situation. He was anointed by Abbot Benedict on Sunday 25 June in the company of his brother monks. When the end came he was prepared and ready, passing calmly and quietly through the portals of death accompanied by the prayers of his monastic confreres.

Robert Leo Tasch was born on 21 July 1930 in Chicago, the elder of two sons of Leo and Wanda (née Miklas) Tasch. He was baptized at Saint Francis Xavier Church in that city on 3 August 1930, and confirmed there on 2 December 1943. He often recalled fondly his parochial upbringing in the city famous for its ethnic parishes and their manifold expressions of religious devotion and community. As he approached entry into high school, young Robert began to discern the possibility of a call to the priesthood, and enrolled in Chicago's Quigley Preparatory Seminary in September 1944. While pursuing his education and formation at Quigley, the young Robert was able to recognize and begin the cultivation of an interest in and love for the Roman Catholic liturgy that was to play a major role in his life.

While at Quigley, Robert became familiar with the work of Father Bede Scholz, a monk of Conception Abbey involved in the Liturgical Movement, that era of study and dissemination of liturgical history, theology and practice so influential to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. When he heard that Father Bede was to give a retreat in the Chicago area, Robert sought him out, and they enjoyed the first of many conversations together. Father Bede encouraged Robert to enroll at Conception Seminary, where he could nurture his love for the liturgy under the guidance of many experts. Robert was further persuaded to consider enrolling at Conception from the presence there of Father Patrick Cummins, whose translation and commentary on Dante's Divine Comedy had been the text for course at Quigley that had stimulated Robert's interest in the great Italian poet. Upon graduating from Quigley in 1949, Robert enrolled at Conception. After a year in the seminary, he petitioned to enter the novitiate of Conception Abbey. He made first profession of monastic vows on 3 September 1951, and was given the religious name Hugh, in honor of the great Cluniac abbot. On completion of theological studies, Frater Hugh was ordained to the priesthood on 6 April 1957.

Father Hugh has served the community in many capacities. He was one of our principal organists for many years, and choirmaster at several different times. He was twice assigned monastic foundations of Conception Abbey, residing at St. Pius X Monastery in Pevely MO from 1961 to 1963, and at St. Knud's Priory in Denmark from 1963 to 1965. He served at Conception Seminary College from 1957 to 1999 as an instructor in Theology and Scripture, as well as a spiritual director. Father Hugh also contributed to the compilation of several editions of Conception Abbey's Liturgy of the Hours, composing numerous hymns and antiphons, and translating Latin texts into English liturgical use. He delivered countless lectures, retreats and workshops in liturgy, Scripture and spirituality.

For an extended period in his monastic life, Father Hugh embraced "the single combat of the desert" as a hermit. In 1984 he was granted a six-month sabbatical during which he lived at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur CA; this was followed by a year as a hermit in a small converted residence (once our beekeeper's building) on the Conception Abbey grounds. He was subsequently permitted to engage a semi-eremitical life during a year as resident chaplain for the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at Clyde MO.

Father Hugh's talents have contributed to the wider church as well. In the period after the end of the Second Vatican Council, Father Hugh gave numerous retreats and workshops to religious communities, parishes and schools to help them understand and implement the theology and liturgical reforms of the Council. In an article published in the Saint Louis Magazine in 1963, Father Hugh offered readers an understanding of the particular role played in the Council's deliberations by Joseph Cardinal Ritter with respect to the nature of the Church and her relations to other denominations.


As he began to slow down with advancing age, Father Hugh's service and ministry were more limited. He served for a time as Monastery Porter. In 2005 he was appointed chaplain to the Franciscan Sisters of Savannah MO and their charges at the LaVerna Village Nursing Home. During all this time, however, his mind and attention were strong; he was an invaluable help to our former Abbot Gregory (now Abbot Primate) in proofreading the texts of both The Revis Psalms and the new edition of Conception's Liturgy of the Hours.

Father Hugh was a man of prodigious and wide-ranging talents. He was a brilliant improviser and spontaneous composer at organ or piano, and popular tunes and even advertising jingles might occasionally surprise his hearers as they subtly emerged from his occasional music at the liturgy. He once adjusted a melody to match the idiosyncratic movements of an aged sacristan crossing the sanctuary to light the candles at the altar. One of his most delightful capacities was the exercise of his sense of humor in direct conjunction with his verbal and musical gifts: on many occasions, Father Hugh kept an audience in stitches by performing a spontaneous “opera” at the piano, taking cues from sources as unexpected as the back of a cereal box. His gifts were always at the service of others, and thereby at the service of God. “I have freely and deliberately determined to submit to God’s will for me,” he wrote in his petition to make solemn profession. That docile obedience remained the hallmark of his monastic life.

Father Hugh is survived by his cousins, Mrs. Margaret Merschel of Elko NV, Mr. Robert (Butch) Thomas of San Tan Valley AZ, and Mr. Vince Miklas of Grand Rapids MI, as well as by his monastic confreres.

Vespers of the Faithful Departed will be prayed at 7:15 p.m. on Sunday, 2 July 2017, and Mass of Christian Burial celebrated at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, 3 July 2017 in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Conception Abbey. Please join us in praying for the repose of the soul of our beloved confrere. May he rest in God’s eternal peace!

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