

# ON THE HILL

SUMMER 2020 • VOL. 59:3

## COVID-19: How Saint Meinrad has fared

Four monks  
honored as jubilarians

Alumni Reunion:  
Virtual for the first time

Cover: Archabbot Kurt Stasiak catches a ball thrown by Br. Simon Herrmann during evening recreation on May 22.



*Saint Meinrad*



# ON THE HILL

SUMMER 2020 • VOL. 59:3

## FEATURES

2-3 .....Monks' Personals and Monastery News  
4 .....CARES Act  
5 .....Retiring Overseers  
6 .....Student Profile  
7 .....Graduation  
8-11 .....COVID-19  
12 .....Photos  
13 .....Fr. Isidore Hobi

## ALUMNI

14 .....Alumni Eternal  
15 .....Alumni News  
16 .....Virtual Alumni Reunion

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You can find more photos of Saint Meinrad events at <http://saint-meinrad.smugmug.com>

## Monks' Personals

**Br. Stanley Wagner** had an article published in the June 2020 issue of *American Benedictine Review* titled “‘A Strong Sign of Unity’: The Divine Office and Community Integration at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 1870-1970.”

**Br. John Mark Falkenhain, Br. Joel Blaize** and Sr. Jeana Visel conducted a series of Gregorian Chant distance learning sessions for the National Association of Pastoral Musicians June 13-27.

**Fr. Gueric DeBona** started his sabbatical June 1 and will continue through mid-January 2021. During his absence, **Fr. Harry Hagan** was appointed pro-subprior, **Fr. Joseph Cox** was appointed acting novice-junior master, and **Br. Simon Herrmann** was appointed assistant to the acting novice-junior master.

**Br. John Glasenapp** successfully defended his dissertation and was awarded a PhD in historical musicology from Columbia University. He will offer a course titled “The History of Sacred Music from Augustine to the 21st Century” in the fall semester of the Seminary and School of Theology.

**Fr. Raymond Studzinski** had the first issue of his academic journal, *The International Journal of Evangelization and Catechetics*, published by Catholic University Press in May.

**Br. Joel Blaize** was accepted into the master’s program in Gregorian chant and ritual song at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

**Fr. Mark O’Keefe** was re-elected to the Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology Board of Trustees for a two-year term.

**Br. Jean Fish** has been accepted to the master’s program in art at the University of Birmingham in Alabama.

**Fr. Meinrad Brune** and **Fr. Bede Cisco** were elected to two-year terms on the Abbot’s Council. **Br. John Mark Falkenhain** was elected to a one-year term. **Fr. Joseph Cox** and **Fr. Luke Waugh** were appointed to one-year terms.

**Br. John Mark Falkenhain’s** book, *How We Love: A Formation for the Celibate Life*, received a third-place award from the Association of Catholic Publishers in the “General Interest” category. ✚

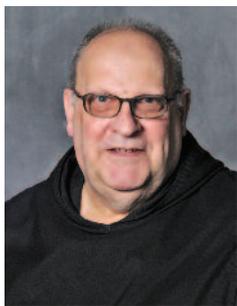
## Mass & Vespers

Join the monks for Mass and Vespers daily via livestream at [www.saintmeinrad.org/live](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/live)

# Monastery News

## Four monks celebrate jubilees

The Benedictine monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey will celebrate the jubilees of four of their confreres on July 26, 2020. The celebration will combine Br. Raban Bivins' and Fr. Colman Grabert's 60th anniversaries of monastic profession, the 25th anniversary of profession for Fr. Patrick Cooney, and Fr. Germain Swisshelm's 60th anniversary of priesthood ordination.



*Br. Raban Bivins*

### **Br. Raban**

professed vows as a Benedictine monk on May 7, 1960. A native of Owensboro, KY, he came to Saint Meinrad to attend school at St. Placid Hall in 1957.

In the early 1960s, he worked in various assignments at Saint Meinrad, including in the shoe shop, as a volunteer fireman and as house prefect for the monastery. In 1965, he was sent to Saint Meinrad's mission in Peru, where he served until 1979.

He then worked in Saint Meinrad's Physical Facilities Department, where he has been a locksmith since 1984. In 1996, he was appointed subprior (third in leadership) for the monastery. The first Saint Meinrad brother to be appointed to the position, he served as subprior until 2007.

Currently, he assists in the monastery infirmary, works as a locksmith, and is the Archabbey almoner and director of community outreach.

**Fr. Colman**, a native of Evansville, IN, professed his monastic vows on August 15, 1960. After attending Saint Meinrad High School, College and School of Theology, he was ordained a priest on September 5, 1965.



*Fr. Colman Grabert*

He earned a licentiate in sacred theology from Collegio di Sant' Anselmo in 1969. He began teaching at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in 1967, where he was an assistant professor of systematic theology until 1994.

For many years, he served as one of the Archabbey's principal organists. He also has served as secretary to the archabbot, house prefect, gardener and in the mail service. Fr. Colman is currently a director for guided retreats as well as one of the monks who offer preached retreats in the Guest House Retreat Program.



*Fr. Patrick Cooney*

**Fr. Patrick** is a native of Evergreen Park, IL. After earning a bachelor's degree in electronic technology at Purdue University, he served in the Air Force as a research and development engineer for five years.

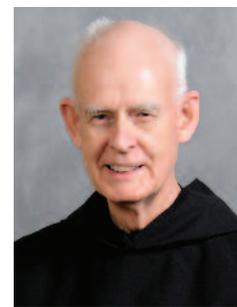
He then studied for the priesthood at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. He earned a Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in 1991 and was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Belleville, IL, on June 1, 1991. He later earned a licentiate in canon law from The Catholic University of America.

In 1994, he decided to join the monastery at Saint Meinrad Archabbey and made his first profession of vows on August 6, 1995. At Saint Meinrad, he has served as

director of academic and administrative computing, associate formation dean, director of human formation, director of pastoral formation, and assistant professor of canon law in the Seminary and School of Theology.

He also served as a chaplain (lieutenant colonel) in the Kentucky Air National Guard, retiring in 2014 after 21 years of active duty in the Air Force and Air National Guard. He served as the defender of the bond for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis tribunal from January 2005 until July 2017.

Fr. Patrick is a member of the Canon Law Society of America (CLSA), where he has served on the Board of Governors and is currently the chair of the Publication Advisory Board. He also serves as an editor for CLSA's *Roman Replies* and *Advisory Opinions*. Fr. Patrick is on the board of directors for the Resource Center for Religious Institutes and is currently the judicial vicar for the Diocese of Owensboro, KY.

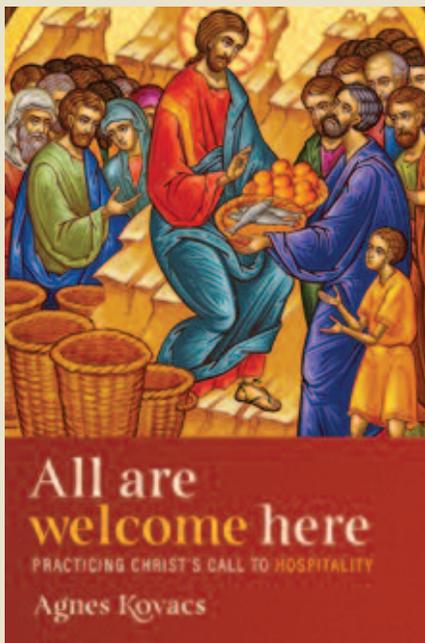


*Fr. Germain Swisshelm*

**Fr. Germain**, a native of Orrville, OH, professed monastic vows on August 15, 1957, and was ordained on September 25, 1960. He completed bachelor's degrees in philosophy and history at Saint Meinrad. He also did graduate studies at Indiana University, Oklahoma University and San Marcos University in Lima, Peru.

From 1960-62, Fr. Germain taught at St. Meinrad's Placid Hall. In 1962, he was a founding member of Saint Meinrad's mission, Los Pinos, in Peru. He taught at the seminary and high school in Huaraz

*Continued on p. 4*



## Book helps parishes focus on hospitality

Another staff member at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology has published a book. Agnes Kovacs, associate director of Graduate Theology Programs and director of Continuing Formation, has written *All are Welcome Here: Practicing Christ's Call to Hospitality*.

The 24-page book is intended as a parish resource that explores “what it takes to be able to receive people both as an individual and as a community, what concrete areas need our attention in a parish setting, and how hospitality can become a way of being in the world.”

The book is available from Twenty-Third Publications for \$2.95. ✝



*continued from p. 3*

and was an associate pastor at San Juan de Lurigancho Parish in Lima.

While in Peru, Fr. Germain undertook Quechua studies and was founder of *Estudios Culturales Benedictinos*, which produced a Quechua-Spanish dictionary and several other texts, including a nine-volume manuscript of the New Testament in Quechua.

For about 40 years, Fr. Germain has offered the weekly Saturday Mass at Monte Cassino Shrine. Since 1996, he has been in charge of preparing the readings for the Divine Office in the Archabbey Church. He has found this service especially rewarding, as it provides the opportunity to study Scripture and the works of the Church Fathers. ✝

## CARES Act offers some charitable gift incentives

In March, Congress passed the CARES Act with the goal of helping those affected by the coronavirus and the economic crisis. In addition to providing economic relief to millions of Americans, the bill provided increased incentives for charitable giving to both individuals and corporations.

As you look for ways to take advantage of these new incentives, here are a few things to keep in mind.

### **\$300 Above-the-line Charitable Deduction**

The CARES Act allows for up to \$300 in charitable contributions to qualify as an above-the-line deduction, meaning you don't have to itemize deductions to claim the \$300 as a deduction. Donations to a qualified charity such as Saint Meinrad must be made in cash or cash equivalents (as opposed to stock, for example).

### **Modification of Charitable Deduction Limitations**

Donors who itemize their deductions can now give more to charity before reaching their adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation. Formerly set at 60%, the limit for cash contributions to charities has been raised to 100% of an individual's AGI for 2020.

Any deductions beyond the 100% limit may be carried over and used in the next five years. There are factors that may limit a taxpayer's ability to use this provision. Check with your tax advisor to ensure you qualify.

### **Required Minimum Distributions Suspended**

The CARES Act suspends the requirements for required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the 2020 tax year from certain defined contribution plans and IRAs.

This provision is intended to protect the retirement plans of those who may have experienced significant market value declines, which would be negatively impacted long-term by requiring a distribution.

### **A Distribution from Your IRA May Still Be a Good Idea for You**

Making a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA is still a convenient way to make a gift while also offering tax benefits.

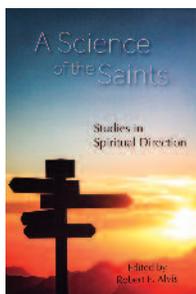
If you are over 70½ years old, you can still donate up to \$100,000 in IRA assets directly to charity annually, without taking the distribution into taxable income. So, you benefit even if you do not itemize.

As always, before taking advantage of any of these new provisions, check with your tax advisor to ensure you qualify. Saint Meinrad does not offer tax advice to donors.

However, if you have any questions about making a gift to Saint Meinrad through your IRA or funding a charitable gift annuity with Saint Meinrad, contact the Development Office at 800-682-0988. ✝

# A Science of the Saints:

## Faculty book looks at spiritual direction



Throughout the Church's long history, Christians have sought out wise mentors to guide them on the journey toward God. A new book written by Saint Meinrad faculty, *A Science*

*of the Saints: A Study in Spiritual Direction*, explores the dynamics of spiritual direction as revealed in the lives and writings of a wide array of exemplary disciples.

Spiritual guides range from the Desert Fathers and Mothers to Thomas Merton, and from St. Teresa of Avila to St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein).

This work sheds new light on an essential dimension of the Christian experience, yielding timeless wisdom to inform the practice of spiritual direction in our own day.

The book, edited by Saint Meinrad Academic Dean Dr. Robert Alvis, includes chapters by Alvis and eight

other faculty members of the Seminary and School of Theology.

The book's contributors are Sr. Jeana Visel, OSB; Fr. Christian Raab, OSB; Fr. Mark O'Keefe, OSB; Dr. Kevin Schemenauer; Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB; Dr. Keith Lemna; Fr. Gueric DeBona, OSB; and Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB.

The book was published in March 2020 by Liturgical Press. ✝

## Seven Overseers complete terms

Seven members of the Board of Overseers, which advises the President-Rector on matters relating to the Seminary and School of Theology, completed their terms this spring.

Those who have served six years on the board are James Muehlbauer, vice chair of Koch Enterprises Inc., Evansville, IN; Jay Paradis, retired CEO and chairman of Bramco Inc., Naples, FL; Maura Robinson, president of M.G. Robinson Inc., Evansville, IN; Fr. Eric Schild, pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church, Maumee, OH; Mike Schwenk, vice president of Jasper Engine Exchange, Jasper, IN; Tom Weintraut, vice president of Weintraut and Associates Inc., Zionsville, IN; and Anne Wilmes, vice president and co-founder of Wilmes Family Charitable Foundation, Indianapolis, IN. ✝



James Muehlbauer



Jay Paradis



Maura Robinson



Fr. Eric Schild



Mike Schwenk



Tom Weintraut



Anne Wilmes

## [Meet the Student]

# Loi Pham

**Hometown:** Ha Tinh, Vietnam

**Home Diocese:** Ha Tinh in Vietnam

**Affiliated Diocese:** Archdiocese of Louisville, KY

**Q.** *What attracted you to the priesthood?*

I have been inspired by the life of loving service to God and his people that is the priesthood. Serving God in others, especially the poor, with love is my motto.

**Q.** *Who or what influenced you to begin study for the priesthood?*

Two priests inspired me to respond to God's call to study for the priesthood. The first one is my former pastor. His name is Fr. Joseph Phan. He served as the pastor of my parish from 1990-1998. The second one is my spiritual father. His name is Fr. Joseph Tran. Both of these are men of faith, community, prayer and service.

They served God and people enthusiastically and faithfully; they also lived their priesthood joyfully and happily. I am also grateful to my family, parents and siblings. They have encouraged, supported and prayed for me a lot in my journey of following Jesus.

**Q.** *What were you doing before you came to the seminary?*

I haven't had any professional occupations. I have studied at different schools since the age of 7.

**Q.** *Favorite saint and why?*

My favorite saint is Our Lady. I have a deep love and passionate devotion to her. I always pray with her. She is also my beloved intercessor. One of the Marian shrines that I always love to visit is the shrine of Our Lady of Lavang in central Vietnam. I always feel peaceful, joyful and inspirational whenever I am there.

**Q.** *Favorite Scripture verse and why?*

John 3:30: "He must increase: I must decrease."  
There is always room to learn humility. My conviction is all I have has been given from God. I do what God wants me to do in his name. Things I do are not my reward. Jesus is. He is the one who receives all praise and honor. I am just like the "donkey" that He used to enter Jerusalem.

**Q.** *Hobbies?*

I was born and raised in the country; therefore, I love spending time outside with nature. I am also a big fan of soccer, swimming, fishing, traveling, and listening to instrumental music.

**Q.** *What aspect of seminary life has been most rewarding?*

For me, spending time with the Blessed Sacrament during adoration is amazing. Beholding the Lord of heaven and earth in the tiny host always inspired and challenged me to step deeper into my relationship with God. That being said, cultivating a life of prayer rooted in the Eucharist is my lifelong commitment that, in turn, I believe, will help me to become a more faithful servant of God, his people, and especially the poor.

**Q.** *What aspect of seminary life has been most challenging?*

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is always weak. Therefore, being faithful and disciplined with my personal prayer life always challenges me.



**Q.** *Best advice you've heard in seminary?*

Perhaps it is a combination of wisdom from my spiritual director and a friend. That is, "Stay humble, be grateful, and trust in the Lord at all times."

**Q.** *Other comments?*

Priesthood is not an occupation. It is a call, a vocation, a way of life. ✝



## NEW CARENOTE

By Diane Pharo, SCN, Director of the Counseling Center at Saint Meinrad.

To learn more call 800.325.2511 or visit [www.carenotes.com](http://www.carenotes.com).



# 60 earn master's degrees

## from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology

*Editor's note: The on-campus graduation ceremony, planned for May 9, was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can view a video of the virtual ceremony at: [www.saintmeinrad.edu/grad2020](http://www.saintmeinrad.edu/grad2020)*



▲ *Deacon Andrew Yun holds his diploma up to celebrate his graduation while taking portraits on the Archabbey Church steps on May 10.*

Graduates of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology were awarded master's degrees following the Spring 2020 semester.

### Receiving Master of Divinity degrees were:

Deacon Jin Yong Bark, Diocese of Masan, Korea;  
Deacon Michael Bialorucki and Deacon Peter Grodi, Diocese of Toledo;  
Deacon Peter Chineke, Diocese of Springfield, IL;  
Deacon Joseph Friend and Deacon Daniel Velasco, Diocese of Little Rock;  
Br. Theodore Haggerty, OSB, Marmion Abbey;  
Deacon JinHo Kim and Deacon Tae Sang Yun, Diocese of Busan, Korea;  
Deacon Samuel Mungai, Glenmary Home Missioners;  
Deacon Peyton Plessala and Deacon Connor Plessala, Archdiocese of Mobile;

Deacon Michaelprakasam Puthumaisavari, Diocese of Palayamkottai, India;  
Deacon Dan Taylor, Diocese of Lexington;  
Deacon Van Lal Than, Diocese of Owensboro.

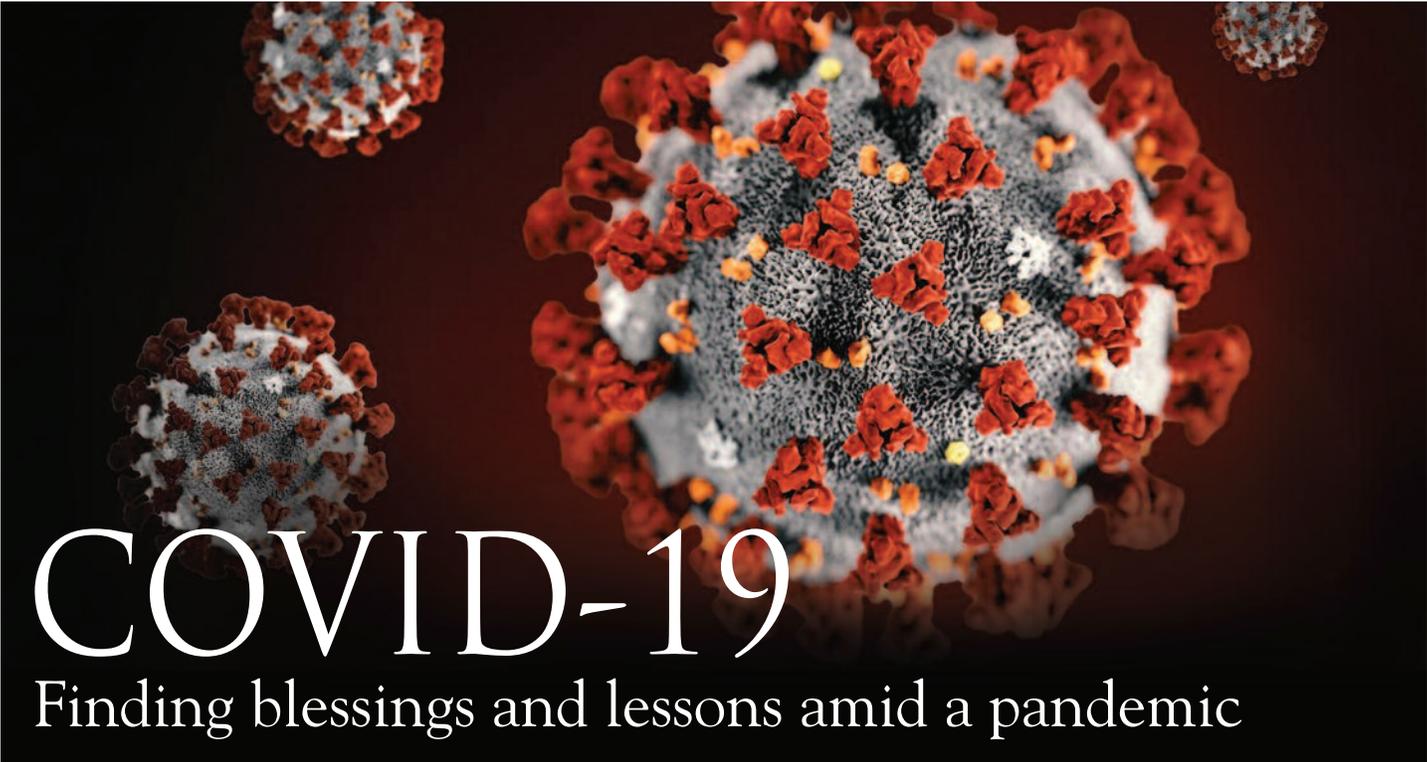
### Receiving Master of Arts (Catholic Philosophical Studies) degrees were:

Anthony Armbruster, James Huber III and Justin Bobby Vogel, Archdiocese of Indianapolis;  
Robert Bauman, Diocese of Knoxville;  
Eston Blair, Saint Meinrad Archabbey;  
Justin Farr, Diocese of Nashville;  
Kade Megaffin, Diocese of Salina;  
Matthew Millay and Kenneth Nauert Jr., Archdiocese of Louisville;  
Hung Nguyen, Archdiocese of Hanoi;  
Ethan Osborn, Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau;  
Eric Ouellette, Diocese of Manchester;  
Caleb Scherzinger and Christopher Wickman, Diocese of Evansville;

Joseph Schultz, Archdiocese of Mobile;  
Seth Slone, Diocese of Lexington;  
Jayke White, Diocese of Springfield, IL;  
Ryan Winger, Diocese of Amarillo;  
Eli Yandow, Diocese of Burlington.

### Receiving Master of Arts (Theology) degrees were:

Dr. Carolyn Berghuis, Carmel, IN;  
Craig Brummer, Edwardsville, IL;  
Deacon Matthew Coriale, Lexington, KY;  
Sister Carol Curtis, OSU, Corey Koellner, Conor Wellman and Sister Sarah Yungwirth, OSB, Louisville, KY;  
Amanda DeVries, Des Moines, IA;  
Deacon Daniel Gilbert, Diocese of Grand Island, NE;  
Sister Roxanne Higgins, OSB, Ferdinand, IN;  
Coy Hobson, Evansville, IN;  
Daniel Holland, Morgantown, WV;  
James Kauffman, Richardson, TX;  
Emily Kopff, St. Louis, MO;  
Joshua Leeuw, Aurora, CO;  
Br. Basil Lumsden, OSB, Saint Meinrad Archabbey;  
Deacon Gabriel Mills, Archdiocese of Mobile, AL;  
William Noll and Lisa Taylor, Indianapolis, IN;  
Erick Orandi, Glenmary Home Missioners;  
Sister Diem Pham, OP, St. Meinrad, IN;  
Deacon Donald Reimer, Beaver Creek, OH;  
Michael Rousselle, Elizabeth, IN;  
Jane Rush, Cambridge, OH;  
Matthew Sprauer, Piqua, OH;  
Deacon Luke Yackley, Timonium, MD. ✝



# COVID-19

## Finding blessings and lessons amid a pandemic

*As word spread about a new virus, COVID-19, that was making its way across the world, Saint Meinrad – like everywhere – suddenly had to contend with a contagious and deadly threat. On the following pages, you’ll read how some of the events unfolded during Spring 2020.*

**Late February – Early March:** Meetings and discussions were held to plan “what to do if…” Just days later, the focus changed from “if” to “when.”

**March 17:** President-Rector Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, announces that on-campus classes are over. Students return to their dioceses and religious communities and plan to finish their classes online. Some students stay on campus because it is impractical to return home (for example, international students).

**March 18:** The monks begin livestreaming their daily Mass and Vespers. Several other outreach programs begin soon afterward. The Office of Youth and Young Adult Formation partners with several Catholic leaders to offer weekly Bible study, daily Chaplet of Divine Mercy, a weekly liturgical moment and other options.

**March 21:** The rest of the school community – 46 students, 10 monks and two priests on sabbatical – begin a cloistered life. They attend Mass and prayer in the school chapel only, have a separate dining room and common areas, and do not leave the Hill.

Meanwhile, the monastic community is doing the same thing. They pray and celebrate Mass in the Archabbey Church, but otherwise stay on the monastery grounds and separate from the school community.

All retreats and public events are canceled, and the Church is open to only the monks. The Guest House and Gift Shop close. Some employees begin working from home.

Other Saint Meinrad employees remain on the job – providing essential services to the monastic and school communities. These include co-workers in foodservice, housekeeping, health service and physical facilities, as well as those at Abbey Caskets and CareNotes.

**April 9-12 (Holy Week and Easter):** Both the monastic community and the school community hold Triduum and Easter liturgies, livestreaming the services so others can participate.

**May 9 (Graduation):** Students have not even arrived home from Saint Meinrad before Academic Dean Dr. Robert Alvis begins planning to hold a virtual

graduation. Faculty and administration – isolated but in collaboration – extend their congratulations by video.

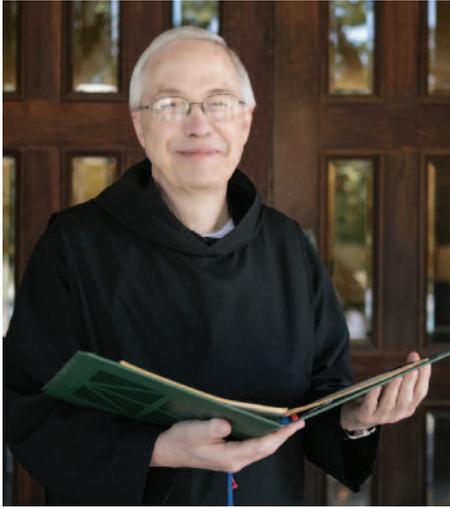
**June 1:** Much of Indiana is reopening, but Saint Meinrad continues to take a conservative approach toward returning to normal, as the average age of the monastic community puts it at a higher risk for the virus.

Assuming there is no resurgence of the virus, current plans call for the Guest House and Retreat Center to reopen August 1. Administrators in the Seminary and School of Theology are making plans for on-campus seminary classes for the Fall Semester. Restrictions will be in place, including suspension of off-campus ministry, cancellation of long weekends, and required testing and a two-week at-home quarantine before arrival.

As of June 24, there were 25 cases in Spencer County, Indiana, where Saint Meinrad Archabbey is located. No one in the monastery has tested positive for COVID-19. ✚

# Blessings: Unexpected outcome of seminary's response

*In this essay, Vice Rector Fr. Tobias Colgan, OSB, looks back at how the seminary community responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. He writes on April 17, a month after on-campus classes were suspended and most seminarians had left.*



*Fr. Tobias Colgan, OSB*

None of us could have imagined that a day which began with such sad and sudden news would become one of the most blessed days in anyone's memory. How can this be, you might ask?

During the Q & A that followed immediately upon Fr. Denis' announcement that on-campus classes were suspended, the seminarians showed great grace in receiving and responding to the news. There was even a good bit of levity and laughter, teasing and give-and-take. That was the first hint that this was going to be a very special day.

Fr. Denis presided at Mass that morning, with many faculty, staff and co-workers in attendance, and emotions ran high. The music was beautiful, the reality was settling in, and through our tears we all realized this was the best place for us to process this news together – around the altar and in the context of prayer.

That evening, as if by magic, we were able to honor our 4th-year class with a lovely valedictory meal, complete with gifts and tributes, allowing them to find a bit of closure and affording them the opportunity to say their goodbyes to those who had become such an important part of their formation and their lives. Deacon Peyton Plessala, as class representative,

left us with some heartfelt and profound thoughts to ponder and cherish.

With the dawn of Saturday, March 21, the cloister was established for the 58 residents who remained – 46 seminarians, 10 formation staff priests and two sabbatical priests.

Our schedule includes Mass together each morning and Eucharistic Adoration every afternoon, during which we pray a rosary under the mantle of Mary, Mother of the Sick.

The seminarians themselves established some "House Quiet" times during weekday mornings and afternoons, in order to foster an atmosphere conducive to reading, study and paper-writing.

Our faculty has been marvelous in making such a quick adjustment to the demands of distance learning. Some have quite a bit of experience teaching online courses. Others, not so much. All have stepped up to the plate and are helping to bring the semester to a successful conclusion.

Because our wonderful housekeeping staff is not able to come into the cloistered areas during this time, we have weekly, voluntary work details to keep our communal living spaces in good condition.

Evenings and weekends, as you might expect, have seen a variety of activities. There are frequent "movie nights," where full features or individual episodes are shown in various locations. There is the occasional campfire out by the gazebo behind Bede Hall. Some of the men regularly cook supper for themselves up in the kitchen on 4th Gertrude.

We've had one cloister-wide cookout so far and hope to have more. We've also been down to the UnStable to use up – eat and drink up! – inventory that had come in right before the cloister veil fell. All of these activities help to break up the sameness of each day – a challenge that

we share with all those who are living under quarantine.

For health reasons, the Wellness Center in the basement of Newman Hall is not accessible. That has not stopped people from exercising. There are regular soccer games, tennis matches, dog walking (Lexie) and disc golf games. There's running and cycling (only on campus). Many of the cloistered residents are regularly out on foot, exploring areas of the campus they've never or rarely been to.

One of the restrictions of our cloistered living is that we may not leave campus. What to do for daily necessities such as toiletries? In response to this need, we established a small "store" (borrowing the concept of the vestry from the monastery), which is stocked with toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc.

Fortunately, we have one or two guardian angels who live off campus and, through Walmart pickup, are able to bring us most of the supplies we need by this method. Otherwise, like everyone else, we place individual orders online, cross our fingers that the item(s) will be in stock, and hope that the delivery date will be sometime before Christmas.

One of the most outstanding experiences of the past month has been the opportunity – the need – to celebrate the Sacred Triduum in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel. (This may have been the first time ever.) With Fr. Julian's amazing knack for "pulling beauty out of thin air" (as Fr. Denis phrased it), and with wonderful music supplied by the seminarians and great preaching by Fr. Denis – suffice it to say that it was a most profound and meaningful experience.

All in all, we have been amazingly blessed. Fr. Denis has shown amazing leadership throughout and the seminarians have been tremendous. Like all of you, none of us expected any of this a month ago. Now, in hindsight, it seems like a blessing that was just waiting to happen. And the blessing continues. ✚

# Even amid a pandemic, it's important how you end

*Zachary Samples is a seminarian from the Diocese of Springfield, IL.*



*Zachary Samples*

When people prepare to begin new leadership roles, they often become overly concerned with first impressions and first days on the job. One of my professors in graduate school, who as a former university president had supervised scores of first-time employees, challenged that notion.

He told my classmates and me that how you begin is not nearly as important as how you finish – how you move on. This is obviously a principle that Christ understood. How He ended his time on earth, in a certain way, gave meaning to all that He had previously done.

Since arriving at Saint Meinrad four years ago, I have been struck by how we end. How we end the school year is marked by such events and happenings as the Deacons Black and White Dinner, Commencement Mass and ceremony, countless trips to our storage cages, Fr. Denis' annual nickname speech, post-commencement photos in the canyon, Dr. Alvis' comical reminders to fill out course evaluations, and Deb Dyko's BBQ rib music ministry appreciation dinner.

Hugs, tears, laughs and pats on the back all rule the day as we seek to make meaning

and lasting memories before we forge on with a sense of purpose to whatever our next step is. In short, how we end is among the best things we do all year.

When Fr. Denis announced to a packed Bede Theater that we would be ceasing in-person classes and given the option to stay cloistered on the Hill or return to our homes, my mind immediately turned to how we end. I knew that the ceremonies and rituals – formal and informal – would have to change or be eliminated altogether as we haphazardly moved forward in the midst of uncertain and unprecedented times. Even if we chose to stay, this would mean that the end of the year would be a mere shadow of its usual festive self.

All, however, was not lost as, in typical Saint Meinrad fashion, we came together in the hours and days that followed to make the most out of what time we had left of the 2019-2020 formation year. How we ended was abridged, but still was something to behold.

Hugs, laughs and pats on the back still ruled the day, and those of us who chose to depart did so with a sense of purpose. What would follow would prove to be equally meaningful as those of us who chose to stay settled into a new, albeit cloistered, normal.

While the majority of men in the school chose to return to their home dioceses or religious communities, roughly 50 of us chose to stay, as did all of our resident formation staff members. That meant about 60 of us would enter into a cloistered existence, where we would seek to make meaning in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty together. We each would take on roles and duties – formal and informal – to make the most out of our cloister.

We quickly elected Matthew Perronie of Indianapolis as our mayor and events coordinator – a role he faithfully fulfilled through bonfires, movie nights, and a keen ability to “work” every room. We turned to Hanoi and Burlington, with Hung Van Tran and Giang Vu, respectively, to serve as our mailmen – applause would literally erupt at their every post-lunch haul.

Matthew Millay of Louisville and his trusty sidekick from Evansville, Chris Wickman, would make sure that we maintained proper hygiene through our newly established vestry. Corey Bruns of Owensboro and his companions would assure that our liturgical music remained joyful. Joseph Nam of the Diocese of Busan, under the watchful eye of Fr. Julian, would ensure that the sacristy would remain in tiptop shape.

Indianapolis' ever-capable Anthony Armbruster would employ his keen abilities to keep our physical plant in order. Fr. Tobias, armed with his characteristic pocket notebook and in standard fashion, would make sure that all I's were dotted and T's crossed. In addition to faithfully steering our ship, Fr. Denis would begin his work as cultural attaché through a biweekly viewing of the BBC's “Call the Midwife.”

You see, all was not lost. We worshipped together, prayed together, ate together and had fun together. We all took on new roles, we all came together, we all contributed to the whole. How we ended was indeed something to behold, something to

# Virus offers insight into Benedictine vow of stability

*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB, is a monk of Saint Meinrad.*

When I professed my simple vows in 2018, I had no clue I would be putting my vow of stability into practice to such an extent that I chafed at having to postpone my vacation because of a pandemic. Yet here we are.

One of the attractions of Benedictine monastic life for me was (and still is) stability. St. Benedict wrote in his *Rule* that one of the vows a monk professes is stability (see RB 58:17), or the commitment to stay at the monastery and grow closer to God through living in community.

Before I entered Saint Meinrad, I moved 10 times in 10 years, either for work or school. It is no wonder, then, that stability – that sustained effort to plant roots – continues to speak to my soul.

Monks do need vacation, though; a monk of Saint Meinrad can take up to 14 days of vacation per year after he makes simple vows. My brother and his girlfriend are expecting a baby in July, though the baby decided to make her appearance early. With the pandemic and ensuing quarantine, along with the extra measures of safety here on the Hill, most trips away from the monastery have been cancelled.

I went to Fr. Abbot Kurt for special permission to use some vacation days to meet my new niece. He did not say no, but rather “not yet.” There is a pandemic going on, of course. His decision still bummed me out a little, but I have had time to think and to pray about that decision and what it means.

My desire for stability has grown alongside my deepening knowledge of the other two vows I professed – fidelity to the monastic life and obedience. I have come to understand my vocation as a monk to be God seeking me out where I am.

For God to find me, I need to be rooted firmly in the present moment, always listening for his voice, and willing to do what He asks of me. In the case of Fr.



*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB*

Abbot Kurt asking me to wait a little while before meeting my new niece, he asked me to remain stable here on the Hill, to listen to his prudent judgment, and to be obedient.

The Abbot’s “no” is not a rejection of my right to vacation or my desire to meet my niece. Rather, it is an opportunity to cultivate patience, to reflect on how my vows sustain me as I grow in love of God among my brother-monks, and to recommit myself to stability.

We have been blessed here at Saint Meinrad during our quarantine, though even we have had to reassess what we take for granted. I am certainly not a gym-rat, though I enjoy going to our gym to exercise. It was closed for about two months and reopened about a month ago. In this last month, I have taken advantage of our exercise equipment with a new sense of gratefulness. I have also lost five pounds.

Our summer plans have been curtailed, like the junior monks’ participation in Junior Summer School at Belmont Abbey in North Carolina. We came together here,

though, and assembled a mini version, which featured lectures on humility, prayer, monasticism in Africa, and even a tasting of monastic cuisine throughout history.

The coronavirus and subsequent quarantine have given us many challenges. Yet, it has also given us the opportunities of being grateful to God for the simpler things in life.

Most important among these opportunities is reflecting on the relationships in our lives – with God, with friends, with family members, with the people who are different than us, and with those with whom we live.

The pandemic has allowed me to see anew my vow of stability and the gift it is in my monastic vocation. God called me to Saint Meinrad Archabbey to be stable and He is calling me in the present to practice the stability that I vowed. And I am grateful for that gift. ✚



*Starting top left, clockwise: Seminarians Loi Pham and Tuan Nguyen compete for control over the ball during a soccer match on May 10.*

*Deacon Peter Grodi reads his promises during the Priesthood Promises ceremony in St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel on March 12.*

*Deacon Peyton Plessala signs his promises in front of Fr. Tobias Colgan, OSB, during the Priesthood Promises ceremony.*

*On May 1, seminarians and priests cloistered during the COVID-19 pandemic at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology were led in prayer for the Renewal of Consecration to Mary by President-Rector Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB. The prayers were concluded with chanting the Regina Caeli.*

*Graduating deacons, from left, Francisco Bark, Paul Kim, Stephen Than, Andrew Yun and Peter Chineke pose for a portrait in front of the Memorial Lobby steps on May 10.*

# Fr. Isidore Hobi

## Saint Meinrad's first rector served in many roles

*Editor's note: 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of Saint Meinrad being raised to the status of an abbey. This story features one of the pioneer monks of the time.*

Fr. Isidore Hobi was one of the first monks to join the new monastic community in southern Indiana that was founded by Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland. A Swiss native, he was born in 1830 and professed his vows as a Benedictine monk of Einsiedeln in 1855. He was ordained a priest the following year.

The abbot of Einsiedeln sent Fr. Isidore to Saint Meinrad in 1857. There he did pastoral work on Sundays and was put in charge of the mills and the school.

Fr. Isidore also helped to establish the town of St. Meinrad. To commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the death of the martyr Meinrad in 1861, the land around the abbey was surveyed and platted for 80 lots and recorded at the county courthouse by Fr. Isidore. The following year, a post office was established and Fr. Isidore was appointed the first postmaster.

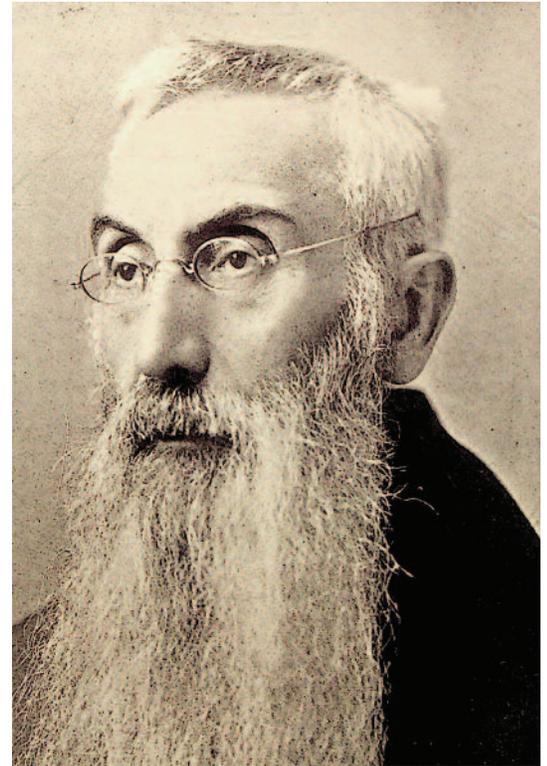
When Fr. Martin Marty was sent from Einsiedeln to either close the struggling priory or prove it viable, he asked the abbot to choose Fr. Isidore as the priory's superior. He served in that role from 1861 to 1865.

Much of Fr. Isidore's legacy comes from his work in education. He both taught and served as rector of the seminary, and he had strong ideas about how best to form future priests. To foreign-born seminarians, he offered this advice: "You must first of all learn English; you must learn to eat tomatoes; and you must learn to mind your own business. That's American."

Fr. Isidore also established the first pastoral education program at Saint Meinrad. He served as the first rector of the seminary, from 1861 until the end of his life.

Like many of the founding monks, he performed a variety of jobs as the fledging community struggled to gain a foothold in southern Indiana. At various times, he was assigned to serve at parishes in Jasper, Celestine, St. Meinrad, Ferdinand and Fulda.

Fr. Isidore was also one of two monks sent to Arkansas in 1877 to choose a site for a new foundation, which eventually became Subiaco Abbey.



*Fr. Isidore Hobi*

He died on March 12, 1895, at age 65. He had been a monk for 40 years and a priest for 39 years. ✝

***In 1985, a great-nephew of Fr. Isidore wrote a letter to Saint Meinrad to pass along an interesting story about Fr. Isidore that had been passed on to him by his father. Here is a slightly edited version of his story:***

Father Isidore awakened in the middle of the night on the urge that someone was in need of the last rites. He went into the sanctuary for the host and into the sacristy for the oils. The custodian of the sacristy asked him where he was going at this time of night. Father Isidore told him he did not know, but asked him to hitch up the blind mare. He let the mare take her way and they arrived at a house in the country.

Father went to the door and awakened the family and asked to see the sick person. The family retorted that no one was ill. Father asked if anyone else was in the house. They told him that a salesman was upstairs for the night, but he seemed in fine health as he had played cards with them before retiring.

Father asked to see him. They entered the room and found the man on his deathbed, so Father ministered to him. The man stated before he died that he had always prayed to the Blessed Mother that he would receive the last sacraments before he died. ✝

## ALUMNI ETERNAL

**Fr. John Beitans O'73 ('65-73)**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, IN, died on April 4, 2020.

**Mr. Wayne C. Cusick O'69 ('57-59)**, of Blythe, CA, died on October 30, 2019.

**Fr. William S. Griner O'61 ('57-61)**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, KY, died on February 26, 2020.

**Mr. Donald L. Kiefer O'64 ('52-53)**, of Evansville, IN, died on April 29, 2020.

**Mr. Allen B. Koch O'71 ('59-61)**, of Boonville, IN, died on March 18, 2020.

**Fr. Kevin D. McGrath, OSB, O'74 ('70-74)**, a member of St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL, died on November 23, 2019.

**Fr. Joseph M. Mills O'53 ('42-46)**, a priest of the Diocese of Owensboro, KY, died on April 4, 2020.

**Fr. William G. Munshower O'58 ('52-58), S ('93)**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, IN, died on April 14, 2020.

**Dr. Robert N. Myers O'64 ('54-63)**, of Lebanon, KY, died on June 11, 2017.

**Br. Luke Robert O'Connell, OSB, O'72 ('63-64)**, of St. Paul's Abbey, Newton, NJ, died on April 22, 2020.

**Mr. Michael F. O'Daniel Sr. O'66 ('54-56)**, of Omaha, NE, died on March 11, 2020.

**Mr. Raymond E. Orth Sr. O'56 ('44-49)**, of Evansville, IN, died on May 17, 2020.

**Deacon Levi M. Schnellenberger PD'05 ('01-05)**, of Jasper, IN, died on May 2, 2020.

**Mr. Anthony Svarczkopf O'58 ('46-49)**, of Indianapolis, IN, died on April 8, 2020.

**Fr. Herbert L. Tegeler O'53 ('49-53)**, a priest of the Diocese of Dubuque, IA, died on March 19, 2020.

**Mr. Joseph A. Zurface SPH ('59-62)**, of Indianapolis, IN, died on May 13, 2020.

### A key to the initials behind the names of alumni:

**C:** College

**GTP:** Graduate Theology Programs

**HS:** High School

**MAT:** Master of Arts (Theology)

**MAPT:** Master of Arts (Pastoral Theology)

**MTS:** Master in Theological Studies

**O:** Ordination

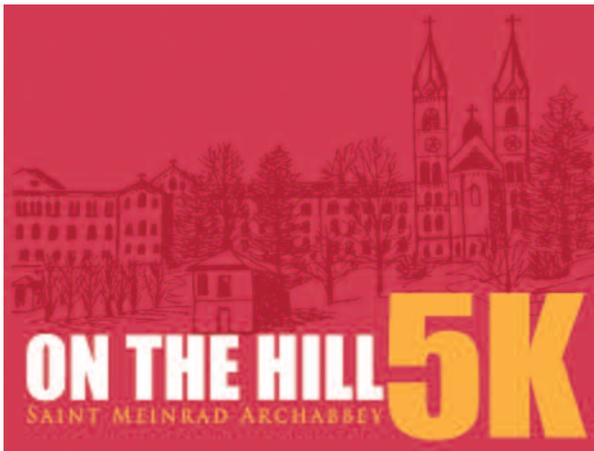
**PD:** Permanent Deacon Formation Program

**S:** Sabbaticant

**SPH:** St. Placid Hall

**SS:** Summer Session

**T:** Theology ✝



*Join us for the VIRTUAL On The Hill 5K!*

7:00 a.m. Thursday, September 10, through  
Sunday, September 13, at 11:59 p.m. All times are Central.

Get details and register online at:

[www.saintmeinrad.org/onthehill5k](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/onthehill5k)

## ALUMNI NEWS

**Fr. Adam Ahern T'15 ('11-15)**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, IN, has been serving as a chaplain in the Middle East. He is a captain in the Indiana National Guard. Before studying for the priesthood, he had served in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan and at the White House.

**Mr. Craig Brummer GTP ('18-20)**, a theology teacher at Father McGivney Catholic High School in Glen Carbon, IL, is one of five finalists for the first St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Award given by the Diocese of Springfield, IL.

**Fr. Thomas Extejt O'73 ('65-73)** has been appointed pastor of Sts. Adalbert and Hedwig Parish in Toledo, OH. He also is the dean of the St. Teresa of Calcutta Deanery, which is comprised of nine central-city parishes on the west side of the Maumee River.

**Dr. John Gillman O'75 ('63-71)**, of San Diego, CA, has published *What Does the Bible Say About Life and Death?* (New City Press, 2020). He has served for many years as a certified educator for clinical pastoral education.

**Fr. Robert J. Kus O'98 ('96-98)** has a new blog about his life as a missionary priest in Honduras. You can find it at: [missionpriest.com](http://missionpriest.com).

**Fr. Josh McCarty T'09 ('04-09)**, a priest of the Diocese of Owensboro, KY, is one of 12 Catholic entrepreneurs chosen, from among 350 applicants, to incubate a project in the University of Notre Dame IDEA Accelerator, with a chance for new investment and one of three \$100,000 prizes. His project is Pastoral Parish, a pastoral care and software tool to serve pastors and their teams.

**Fr. Aquinas Nichols O'81 ('77-81)**, a priest of the Diocese of Des Moines, IA, celebrated his 40th jubilee of priesthood on June 28. He has served as pastor of the Basilica of St. John in Des Moines for the past 20 years.

**Fr. Joel Rippinger, OSB, O'74 ('62-68)**, of Marmion Abbey in Aurora, IL, has published a history of Mount Angel Abbey in Oregon, titled *Struggle and Ascent* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2020).

**Mr. James R. Smerdell O'75 ('63-66)**, of Pittsburgh, PA, has written his first book, *Sarah: A Story of Salvation*, available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**Dr. Nick Smiar O'68 ('61-66)** of Eau Claire, WI, was elected to his fifth term as county board supervisor and second term as county board chairperson for Eau Claire County. He is professor emeritus of social work at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and an adjunct professor in the Honors Program, teaching classical languages and religious studies.

**Mr. Michael Tremmel C'74 ('70-74)** of Acworth, GA, and **Mr. Tony Stephens C'74 ('70-74)**, of Norcross, GA, have launched a nonprofit, Tonga Literacy Project Inc. The goal is to raise funds to publish four Tonga textbooks to help youth from this Zimbabwe community learn in their own language. An online silent auction of Tonga artifacts (see photo) is planned as a fundraiser in September. More details are on the website, <https://tongalp.org>.



**Sister Rita Ann Wigginton, OSU, T'04 ('98-03)** was honored for her work with deaf Catholics in January. She was named the Father David Walsh Pastoral Worker of 2020 at the annual meeting of the National Catholic Office for the Deaf held in Kansas City, KS. She is director of the Ministry Formation Program, a lay ministry training for Catholic deaf adults sponsored by the Archdiocese of Chicago.

**Msgr. Richard Zollinger O'55 ('49-55)**, a priest of the Diocese of Gary, IN, is celebrating the 65th anniversary of his priesthood ordination this year, including receiving an official blessing from Pope Francis. Cards can be sent to 301 S. Main Street, Knox, IN 46534. ✚

*Saint Meinrad*  
**DAY OF SERVICE**  
*has been set for*  
**March 13, 2021**  
*Watch for more details!*

*VOICES* from the  
**Vineyard**

*Voices from the Vineyard* is the e-magazine for Saint Meinrad alumni. It seeks to tell the stories of alumni doing ministry out in the “vineyard” where they are called. Here is just one of the stories featured in the upcoming Summer issue of *Voices*:

### First-Year Priest Reflects on ‘Unreal Times’ by Fr. Marc Bentley

“This is so unreal,” my priest mentor said to me in early April 2020. “Plan on next year being your real first Holy Week.” By then, I knew my first Holy Week as a priest wasn’t going to be anything like I had dreamt it would be.

For six years in the seminary – and, in reality, for years before that – I looked forward to Holy Week in the parish. Every year that I served as a master of ceremony, I anxiously awaited presiding at a Holy Week liturgy. And this year, I was able to preside at the Good Friday liturgy – but to an empty church with only my pastor, our deacon, his wife and our pastoral associate in attendance. Unreal, indeed.

But this year has been full of unreal moments ...

To read the rest of this story and more, go to <https://alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/voices>. ✚



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# 2020 Alumni Reunion

## ready to go virtual – and it’s free

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Alumni Reunion will not be hosted at Saint Meinrad. However, a virtual reunion is being provided for all alumni at **no charge**. Simply visit <https://alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/reunion> to register.

Participants will need to make sure they have reliable internet connection along with a device (computer, laptop, tablet, etc.) to login and view the reunion programs.

**Please note:** The virtual reunion will take place on Saturday, August 1, and Sunday, August 2. View the website above for specific times of events.

### Saturday Programming

Events on August 1 will include a live Alumni Association meeting with members of the Saint Meinrad Alumni Association Board of Directors and Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, president-rector of the Seminary and School of Theology. They will give updates on both Saint Meinrad and the Alumni Association. Participants will be able to send comments and questions during the livestream.

An Alumni Reunion Vespers service will take the place of the usual Reunion Mass. The names of the alumni who have

died since the last reunion will be read and remembered. Music and chant will be provided by the monastic community. A worship aid will be provided so alumni can pray along.

In the evening, there will be a virtual happy hour for the Graduate Theology Program alumni. A separate invitation will be sent to those who sign up during registration.

### Sunday Programming

All presentations will be livestreamed throughout the afternoon and evening. Here are the presentations that are scheduled:

- Steve Angrisano MA’19, keynote address, “Creating a Culture of Grace”
- Dr. Kimberly Baker, “Global Friendship: The Story of a Well in Togo”
- Dr. Jared Bryson C’97, “The Great Reset: The Covid-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst for Advancing the Church or Closing its doors?”
- Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, “Cardinal Newman: A Saint for our Time”
- Sr. Jeana Visel, OSB, “Praying with Icons”

All presentations will allow participants to ask questions and interact with the

presenter. Presentations are subject to change and new presentations may be added.

Tours of the grounds at Saint Meinrad and recently refurbished Monte Cassino Shrine will also be provided.

The 2020 Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient, Michael A. Ziemianski C’87, will be posthumously awarded this honor next year at the 2021 Alumni Reunion.

The Alumni Office is working with class chairs of anniversary classes to see how these classes would like to reconnect and celebrate. If you are in one of these classes and have questions, please contact Joe Oliveri at [joliveri@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:joliveri@saintmeinrad.edu).

“This is not the reunion that was originally planned, and we would have loved to have you all here at Saint Meinrad,” said Joe Oliveri, director of alumni relations. “But I hope even more alumni are able to be a part of this year’s reunion because of the virtual component.”

For all the details on this year’s reunion, please visit <https://alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/reunion>. ✝