

Marmion Abbey News

A newsletter published by Marmion Abbey in Aurora, Illinois highlighting Marmion Abbey, Abbey Farms, and the Priory of San José, Guatemala.

Good News from Guatemala

An update from Fr. Konrad Schaefer, OSB

On July 11, the Feast of Saint Benedict, the monastery here in Guatemala dressed to the nines with the flower beds in full bloom, lawns cut, shrubs pruned, and abundant flowers around the altar, an eloquent sign to the public that Marmion's 60-year-old Benedictine monastery in Guatemala is alive and well. The chorus, accompanied by the marimba, around 80 faithful attending, represented the neighboring communities to the welcome gesture of growth and openness on the monks' part to the archdiocesan communities. Since that date a growing number of groups lease our facilities (the Padre Patrick Greene Hall and Salón Padre Carlos Quintana Hall, the auditorium, and the athletic fields). Social, religious, and business groups rent the installations for day-use. We hosted activities, such as the congenial Christmas celebration of the national brewery company of 150 families, and the Holy Family parish of 2000 parishioners picnicking on the green. Youth, retreat, and pastoral groups are among those who make use our facilities.

In the tradition of our founders in Sololá, we provide occasional parish assistance, and the monks are invited to give conferences and presentations to ministerial and religious groups. Attendance by the faithful at the weekday conventual Mass at 7:00 a.m. numbers between 10 and 20 faithful, and Sunday Mass is usually packed, with up to 200 faithful filling the aisles. Confessions are available before and after the Masses. The Masses celebrated on Christmas and January 1 were well attended. From the local parish we are authorized to celebrate Baptisms, First Communions, Quinceñeras, weddings, funerals, and other special events, and we lend our halls, auditorium and sports fields for receptions and celebrations.

In September we opened the Academia Bíblica (Biblical Studies for Adults); in the months of September and November-December 2024 ninety adults studied in part or all three modules, the third studying "Prophecies, Persons, and narratives of the birth of the Messiah." This modest catechetical endeavor was an enriching experience for the lay participants and the monks involved and promoted a healthy profile of the Benedictine presence in Guatemala. The convivial atmosphere of the final evening when the participants received their



*Monks of the Priory of San José with Abbot Joel
L to R: Fr. Subprior Armando, Fr. Cristobal, Fr. Mauro, Abbot Joel,
Prior Konrad, Fr. Benedict, Fr. Juan Francisco. (November, 2024)*

certificate of attendance was enlivened by the traditional warm testimonies of the participants, the December hot fruit punch, "paches" (assorted rice or potato tamales), and Christmas music.

During Thanksgiving week in November, 2024, the monks from the four Guatemalan monasteries attended the annual Benedictine retreat. We numbered thirty from around the country, all pleasantly surprised by the signs of resurrection here in Xela. Three of the four Benedictine monasteries are from the Swiss American Congregation (Cobán, Esquipulas and Xela). The retreat offered conferences and meditations on the Psalms and the Theology of the Monastic Life.

On the evening of December 17th, we provided "posada", a "room in the inn," for Joseph and Mary, with the traditional prayers, hymns, plus refreshments and a lively piñata for children of all ages. In a lively reception at the gate to the property, we welcomed some 140 faithful with the traditional songs; enlivened by the little whistles and the clappers. We pilgrimaged up to the church where we prayed the rosary with its litanies, listened to the Advent homily, and gathered in the Padre Patrick Greene Hall for the raffle, tamales, punch, and a piñata bloated to the trim with candies and fruits that rained profusely after the last knock-out punch to the delight of all.

The Spanish language school is limping along, having suffered an eclipse in the past few years, but we continue to

Guatemala, cont'd ...

invite and receive language students, for whom the tutorial “immersion” instruction proves effective. In January we received one gentleman from Washington state, and we are processing inquiries for June, July, and August. If you know of anyone who might be interested in intensive learning Spanish, please contact Father Vincent Bataille at Marmion Abbey (vbataille@marmion.org).

After 30 years on the property, the maintenance of our buildings and property groans for attention. In January, we replaced the natural gas water boilers for electric ones, a necessary improvement to provide for the increased numbers of monks, candidates, and guests in the monastery and retreat house. We installed a new sound system in the church. We built public restrooms for women and men to serve the numerous groups and guests. We are renovating some aged equipment, purchased 2 new computers, one for the use of the retreat house and Spanish school and another for our accounting office.

On January 3, four young candidates began their experience of monastic life, joining us in the prayer and labor. Now that the monastic choir has moved from the small oratory into the church, we are adapting our prayer with new and complete liturgical books, and Brother Escolástico from Cuernavaca accompanies the chant on the organ.

During October Padre Mauro supervised clearing and grading the double-lane access road (250 lineal yards, *pictured lower right*) through the woods from the monastery entrance up to what was once the seminary dormitories, now leased to a private school, the Zeth Educational Center, serving some 240 youth from preschool to preparatory (high school), giving new life and occupancy to the buildings and playground to the north of the monastery.

The founding Marmion monks planted our forest, presently in need of management and care, the felling of dead trunks and the thinning of the dense new growth. Padre Armando has contacted the National Forest Service to begin a professional management of our woodlands and the treatment of the trees infected by the invasive grub. With the removal of 165 dead trunks on the north side of the property, the area is showing signs of new growth. Next on the agenda, we plan to clear and thin the two acres of cypress grove to the south of the monastery.

Padre Benedicto opened the "Nursia Kiosk", a display case to sell medals of St. Benedict, rosaries, candles, and other religious items. On Sundays at the entrance of the church, a beehive of people admire and acquire their modest purchases, an economic aid for a monastery that, until five months ago, showed no real income. Now, with the rent of the Intern buildings by Zeth College, the groups that rent the halls and fields, celebrations in the Church, the Bible Academy and the Kiosk, we turn our eyes to more economic responsibility in this growing monastic community, as we thank you, our readers, for your prayerful heart and generous hand, and for your confidence in God's work, through Marmion Abbey in Guatemala.



Fr. Konrad giving annual retreat (November 2024)



The new road on the property leading to Zeth College

Captions for photos on back cover:

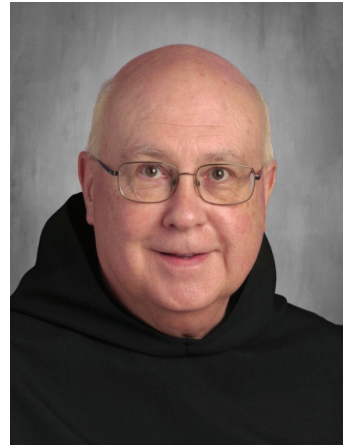
- 1. Members of Guatemalan Benedictine communities gathered for their annual retreat at the Priory (November, 2024)*
- 2. Classes at the Priory's Bible Academy*
- 3. Abbot President Justin Brown with his Graduation Certificate from the Spanish Language Academy (August, 2024)*
- 4. Prior Konrad with a graduate of the Bible Academy*
- 5. Holy Family Parish at an outdoor Eucharist at the Retreat House (December, 2024)*
- 6. Sunday Mass at the Priory Church (December 2024)*



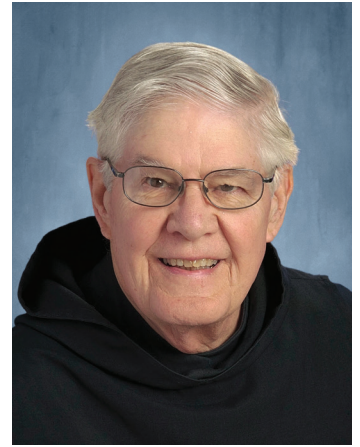
Fr. Vincent



Fr. John



Fr. Michael



Fr. Charles

Oral Interviews with Abbey Monks

In anticipation of the centennial of Marmion Abbey coming to Aurora in 1933, Oblate Jim L’Allier decided to initiate a series of interviews with the older monks of Marmion Abbey, enlisting their viewpoints and memories on their long history as monks of Marmion Abbey.

The six monks interviewed were:

- Fr. Vincent Bataille, OSB
- Fr. John Brahill, OSB
- Fr. Michael Burrows, OSB
- Fr. Charles Reichenbacher, OSB
- Abbot Joel Rippinger, OSB
- Fr. Kenneth Theisen, OSB

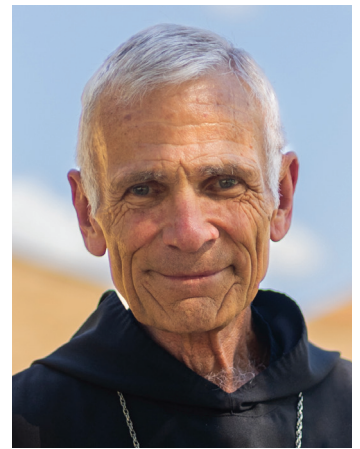
The interviews took place over several months in 2024. They were edited and introduced by Jim L’Allier, who had previously compiled a set of DVDs containing key visual and audio events in the history of Marmion.

These six interviews allow the listener to learn from the experience and unique personality of each monk and in the process learn about an expanse of Marmion’s history, as well as each person’s distinctive vocation story. The categories of Marmion’s past that surface in the course of these interviews include the challenges and changes experienced by the Academy, the various ministries of the Abbey, the stages of growth of the Abbey and its Priory in Guatemala, and the role of many of the “founding monks” and others who were instrumental in the evolution of Marmion’s history.

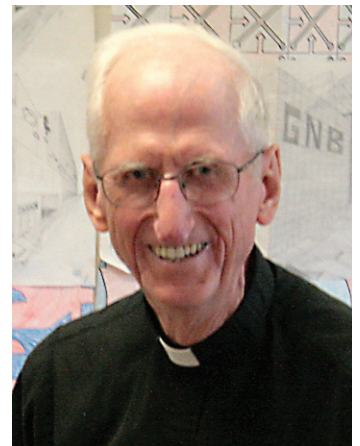


SCAN THE QR CODE TO LISTEN TO INTERVIEWS

OR GO TO: MARMION.ORG/HISTORIES



Abbot Joel



Fr. Kenneth

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Marmion Abbey News

The *Marmion Abbey News* is a free subscription newsletter published twice a year. Please send address changes to the attention of the *Marmion Abbey News* Editor at:

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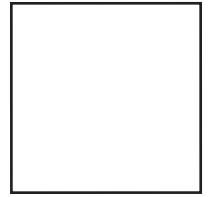
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*“I came not to do
My own will,
but the will of Him
that sent Me”*
(Jn 6:38)

Captions on page 2

