

I first met Brother Patrick on my first-ever visit to the U.S. in 1989 for the initial ITMS general meeting. On the closing day of the conference the participants were all bused out to the Abbey of Gethsemani and I was introduced to Patrick by a young scholar I'd met at the conference who'd recently completed his Ph.D. on Merton and was tapping him for potential publishers. Over the course of the few brief days of the conference I'd met many people whose names I'd come across in my reading and previously never dreamt of meeting, then in addition to visit Gethsemani, Merton's hermitage and to be introduced to Patrick Hart . . . well, what can I say! Amidst all the visitors who had descended on Gethsemani that day Patrick was the model of graciousness. Subsequently our paths would cross on numerous occasions – researching at the Merton Center in the early nineties, subsequent ITMS conferences and then hosting Patrick for the Second TMS-GBI conference held at Oakham School in March 1998. After I moved to Louisville in January 2001 to head the Merton Center at Bellarmine, Brother Patrick became a regular contact as we spoke on the phone almost daily and I got to know the monk once described to me “as that shy retiring monk at the center of everything” – a spot-on description. Three brief vignettes of Brother Patrick that come to mind from recent years. (1) Graciousness remains the word I would choose to describe him as frequently I'd turn up to Sunday Mass at the abbey with visiting researchers and other visitors and Patrick always seemed to be free after Mass to visit with us until the bell would ring for sext. (2) In 2003 I was humbled to write the citation for Patrick as he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Bellarmine, and privileged to serve as his sponsor at the ceremony. We were joined for the occasion, and at subsequent celebrations at the Merton Center and later at the home of Tommie and Frank O'Callaghan, by many friends from across the years. Besides our frequent conversations on the telephone we would regularly exchange notes and other items through the mail. (3) After giving a conference paper on Merton and Celtic Monasticism at a TMS-GBI conference in 2012, I mailed Patrick a copy of my paper, knowing his own interest in all things Celtic. Within days he returned the paper with a gushing thank you note and, enclosed in the envelope (mailed via regular mail) was the bronze crucifix that had been sent to Merton by Pope Paul VI – a truly precious addition to the Merton Center's collections, but certainly not one I would have trusted to the USPS! Farewell to a dear friend who openheartedly welcomed me to take my part in carrying forward the legacy of Thomas Merton.



Birthday at the Hermitage – 2002



Paul M. Pearson

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