

Tribute to Fr Vincent Tobin by Adrian Brooks

A long time ago Fr Bob Abbott of St Ann's, at a clerical conference, bumped into a priest he referred to as a stray Benedictine (Fr Vincent Tobin) whom he immediately signed up to provide summer service at St Anns and St Chads.

In future years Vincent told me he simply sent him a note with the dates he was required with the command "Come" and so he did. So for about 15 years this 6'4" American drove a small Peugeot 207 from Rome to supply both St Ann's and St Chad's each summer. He was fondly loved by many of our parishioners for those visits. His sermons were amazing delivered with a slow pace and with the minimum of words they were immensely powerful.

He taught homiletics at the American College, Latin and Greek at the Gregorian and was the Administrator of St Anselmo on the Aventine and the Vatican procurator of the 2000 Benedictines in the Americas. At the call of his Abbot about 15/16 years ago he returned home to St Meinrad to run a newly built guest house and retreat centre, where he still lived until very recently.

He was much in demand for retreats both as part of St Meinrad's retreat programme and further afield. He thought nothing of driving 8 – 11 hours to venues all over the U.S. to give retreats. He was a co-founder of the U.S. National Association of Spiritual Directors and was also a chaplain to visitors to the retreat centre.

Like the Abbey he had an open door to all including all denominations and none. One time when I visited him I had lunch with a Baptist Minister and professor of theology who had visited St Meinrad simply to talk with Vincent for a few hours over a few days of time out. His hospitality was exceptional, quiet, unassuming and amazing. Many parishioners visited him in Rome and were given a Rome tour and then a trip to what he called his neighbourhood Italian restaurant.

Maureen and I were fortunate enough to attend his 60th anniversary as a priest at St Meinrad last summer and present him with a Card signed by parishioners and Fr Chris.