

## How to Live and How to Die

By: Fr. Jim Kent, OFM Conv.

I majored in English and Journalism in college and, to be honest, I found it an easy course of study. That's because all four years of high school I had had Fr. Kent Biergans for a teacher. He was a demanding instructor, stretching and encouraging me along the way. In the process I not only learned how to write from Fr. Kent, but learned to love writing—and reading.

My college classmates often said I had written a bunch of papers in high school



Fr. Kent Biergans meeting Pope John Paul II

and simply reused them in college. I did rework some of those papers I had first written for Fr. Kent; what they didn't know was I got better grades on them in college than I had from him in high school.

Fr. Kent also coordinated our theater productions. I was blest to have been cast in some fun and challenging roles, one where I got to play the villain who wasn't revealed as such until the final act. I guess he saw my shadow side enough to know I would play it well.

There is no question I learned much from this friar who shared a name with me; his first, my last. Fr. Kent loved being with and ministering to the poor. He lived a simple life and served the Order and Church as a teacher, pastor, formator, and Minister Provincial. Kent was competitive on the tennis court and loved to kid people. Raised in Lansing, Mich., he cherished Michigan State's 2000 NCAA basketball championship, and wore his MSU sweatshirt over his collar the next day as I accompanied him to a meeting with Archbishop Kelly of Louisville.

While serving the province as Minister Provincial, he asked me to serve as Vocation Director, a ministry I have been privileged to do for nearly 13 years. The last thing I learned from Fr. Kent was how to embrace death.

For seven years he lived with leukemia and for many of those years it barely slowed him down. He continued in province administration and then to serve the poor as pastor of an inner-city parish. As the last two years slowly enveloped him in pain and suffering, he continued to live the Gospel with verve and hope. He died at age 64—much too young—with friars and friends around his bed singing the Prayer of St. Francis.

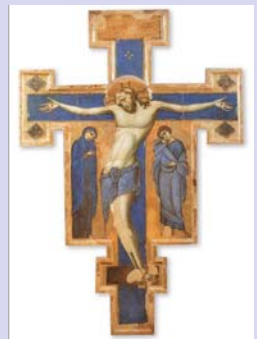
Kent taught me a lot about being a friar and a servant of the Lord, about how to live and how to die.

This issue of "Vocation Views" includes reflections from some of our younger friars about those who have mentored them in their call. It is a blessing to have been mentored by such fine men, and will be an honor when we are one day called to do the same.

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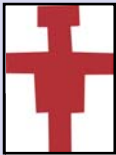
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## Father Alcuin Hunter

By: Friar Jesús Grajeda, OFM Conv.

Jesus called his apostles in a very personal way. He went where they were, spent time with them and called them by name. He calls people in the same way today, but his presence and his voice are silent and mysterious. His voice, for me, was Fr Alcuin Hunter, who one day approached and asked me “Are you interested in learning more about St. Francis?” Fr. Alcuin, a total character, a man of prayer and dedication sat down with me on a church bench and started to share the life of St. Francis, his own life and the life of the friars. Fr. Alcuin, just like Jesus, went to where I was, explained to me with simplicity and humility a joy that he had found by following Christ in the steps of St. Francis.

I came to the friars because of his cuin it is humility. He probably ac- life. It comes with no surprise that he He knew exactly how difficult it is to living here in the USA. He himself ex- in Europe and migrated to the United States.

I don’t think I will ever forget Fr. Alcuin, he not only was God’s instru- ment to help me discover my vocation, but was also great inspiration! Throughout my religious life, he was always there supporting me. Even though he has gone to the Father, I still feel his presence. During the embrace at my Solemn Profes- sion, Fr. Vince Peterson gave me a second embrace and whispered into my ear, “This one is from Alcuin.”



Friar Alcuin Hunter

example! If there is a word that describes Fr. Al- quired such virtue throughout his struggles in understood exactly my feelings and emotions. move from another country and try to make a perienced such struggles when he left his family

*“Fr. Alcuin mentored and inspired my choice of Franciscan life through his presence and example of being a true servant to God’s people.”*

By: Friar Mario Serrano, OFM Conv.

As a junior in high school I had my plans outlined, I “knew” exactly what and where I would be by the age of 22. Now as a friar and 24, I have to smile and realize that my plans were not God’s plans. His humble servant Fr. Al- cuin Hunter instigated God’s plans by asking sidered being a friar. Father Alcuin’s persis- toward people always surprised me. His will- people and help them in any way and his dedi- to a community the Eucharist, a community he 30 miles to be with, always made him someone

Fr. Alcuin mentored and inspired my choice through his presence and example of being a people. He was a humble friar who was dedi- to the people of the Southwest. He was always the language barrier and speak to people actions.



Friars Jesús Grajeda and Mario Serrano

me if I had ever con- tence and outreach ingness to approach cation to bring forth would have to travel I admired.

of Franciscan life true servant to God’s cated to ministering able to break through through his kind

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## Brother Raphael Ruffolo

*By: Friar David Moore, OFM Conv.*

Br. Raphael was born in Chicago in 1919. After high school he enlisted in the Army and fought in the Pacific theater during World War II.

Although Br. Raphael had always dreamed of becoming a missionary, it wasn't until several

years after the war that his vocation was reshaped though the inspiration of Fr. Dominic Szymanski, a Conventual Franciscan. Fr. Dominic was beginning a new apostolate by adopting St. Maximilian Kolbe's far-reaching dream of evangelization through the modern media. Fr. Dominic's "Marytown" was just then being initiated in Crystal Lake, Illinois. Br. Raphael visited the proposed site of the future friary and felt drawn to help in this work. He entered the community in January 1949.

Very early on, Br. Raphael served as the business administrator of Marytown, and eventually he was also chosen to be the Guardian (superior). When Marytown was in need of more space many years later another move became necessary. In 1979 the friars relocated to Libertyville, Illinois after Br. Raphael wisely negotiated the purchase of a chapel and convent operated by the Benedictine Sisters. Br. Raphael has truly been a great asset to Marytown's founding, her growth, and her continuing ministerial outreach.

*"While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart."*

*St. Francis of Assisi*



Friar David Moore and Brother Raphael Ruffolo

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## Novitiate "Basement Project"

*By: Br. Joseph Wood, OFM Conv.*

The novitiate is a year when a friar focuses more of his energies on the contemplative aspect of religious life. And for Franciscans, contemplation is sometimes attained through the hard work of a common project. This year the basement of the novitiate needed a face lift. Mildew and rust had taken their toll through the years. Now complete, the hard work and sweat of novices have earned them a great new recreation room.



Friars Francis Mikosz, David Moore, Nader Ata

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