

“Living the Mystery”

by Fr. Augie Gothman

Leafing through time and space

Recently, I made quick trip to the Twin Cities to do some shopping in a couple of places we just don't have in our Diocese. Loomer's Theological Bookstore is, according to their website, “the largest secondhand dealer of theological books in the world.” Sitting on the floor and leafing through books I saw names I recognized—not on title pages, but on inside covers.

The former owners of the books had written their names in their volumes. Three deceased Benedictine priests. Two of the men I had known: Fr. Roger Schoenbechler, OSB, and Fr. Bartholemew Sayles, OSB of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn. The third I know from his writing: Fr. Aidan Kavanaugh OSB, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana.

Fr. Roger was chaplain to the Sisters at Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston for a number of years.

Fr. Bartholemew came to Saint John's in 1942 and by then was only the third African-American man accepted into the community. He was a wonderful musician and leader in liturgical music and chant. Each of these men had inscribed their names in his copy of the Book of Psalms.

Fr. Aidan Kavanaugh OSB, a priest and professor, had written his name in a volume he'd written, On Liturgical Theology.

I had a strong sense of the continuity of the tradition - ideas, thoughts, and prayers can be literally handed on to successive generations.

I had another experience of leafing through things that same day. I love to visit a warehouse in St. Paul that is the ‘last chance’ for a major chain of second hand or thrift stores.

Unsold items from local stores come by the truckload for one last hurrah. Items are placed in gray bins and circulate through the warehouse on conveyors. They cycle past all kinds of people who shuffle, dig, and sort through literal mountains of used clothes, shoes, coats, personal articles and of all manner of goods. I have found a few ‘treasures’ there.

Mostly I am amazed at two things: first, the sheer volume of the ‘stuff’ our civilization has and gets rid of; and second, that I am almost always the only caucasian there. There

are people of from every corner of the globe in all beautiful shades of olive, amber, ebony.

I go there to make sure I don't forget that I am very privileged, and gaze into the many faces that look different from mine yet are with me sons and daughters of God.

Autumn is made for leafing through things: handing on traditions, seeing the other, and living the mystery that God gives us.