

Friday, 2 March 2018

Funerals may be used for consolation or for nostalgia.
Requiems are for prayer.
But neither, funerals nor requiems, is meant to be jolly.
So we will try to avoid telling funny stories.

With maybe one exception:
it is curious that a man for whom
cigarettes were not an option should
bear the name Phillip Morris

For many years those at the College were not
sure if the last name was Neely, K'neely or 'Neal'.
To make it more difficult, Brendan's mother was a Kenneally.

Brendan was born in Montana.
We have had some experience of those from under the Big Sky:
squared away, not jolly,
but with a quiet sense of humour,
organized and organizing, but gently.
Even after moving to Los Angeles, he remained a Montanan.

At Cathedral High School he met the Brothers
and with his diploma in hand headed for the novitiate in Napa.
Here, for some reason, he joined the ten lads from the juniorate
and was robed with them in August.

They were quite a group: one became President of the College,
one became Visitor, four were on the College faculty and two taught
high school and grammar school. One is still here with us.

From here on Brendan was a teacher, even to the day he died.

What then is a 'teacher'?

We all know at least a few...from long ago.

Some of us have fancied ourselves as teachers.

But what is a teacher?

At one end, a teacher is an *instructor*,
someone who tells you or shows you how to do something.
Maybe a driving instructor, a baseball coach, music teacher.

At the other end, a teacher is a *professor*,
someone who knows all about one topic
and is bent on telling you,
so that you may write it down...
and then forget it.

John Gardner declared years ago that:

*The ultimate goal of the educational system is
to shift to the individual
the burden of pursuing his own education.*

Brendan was such a one.

He fell between the busy instructor and the wordy professor.

After the World War 2, he and Brother Robert worked together
to set up the Integrated Program,
a curriculum designed to eliminate both the professor and the
instructor.

Brendan then was something of a philosopher. He lived by what Aquinas
meant when commenting on Aristotle:

*The study of philosophy does not mean to learn what others have
thought, but to learn what is the truth of things.*

He tended to be rather careful, even conservative,
not given to the latest fad or movement.

Chesterton explained it in a way Brendan understood:

A piece of peculiarly bad advice is constantly given to modern writers, especially to modern theologians: that they should adapt themselves to the spirit of the age. If there is however one thing that has made a shipwreck of mankind from the beginning, it has been the spirit of the age.

--Gilbert Keith Chesterton. *Lunacy and Letters*.

All the while Brendan was a *teaching Brother*

at a time when teaching was the Brothers' main job.

He taught high school and then at the College for years and years.

In class, he was not a jolly fellow;

"bread and circuses" were not on the menu.

However, he shuttled between the math department and the Integrated Program, and brought many students to the *truth of things*.

His work as a teacher continued outside the classroom
and far beyond....

He stayed close to the California Math Council,
attending conferences,

writing papers,

and serving as president.

He helped publish *Horizons* for some years.

He wrote handbooks and manuals for both math and the Program.

He was a stalwart member of the Brothers' community,

wrote a small brochure with the duties assigned each of us.

He loved to play Pedro,

the card game in the dorms and among the Brothers.

He was a dedicated custodian of the fireplace,

building one-match fires all winter.

And Brendan helped run the greenhouse (where Soda is today),

where dozens and dozens of trees were raised

and then planted across the campus.

He may have remembered the old line:
The man who plants trees is a man full of hope.

All of these were the work of a teacher, an educator.
Such a list of assignments, tasks and hobbies
was not the result of any ambition.
Brendan did the job he was asked to do,
cheerfully,
not because he badly wanted it.

So, we are here to remember a teacher,
a Brother,
in the classroom, in the office and in the garden,
a man from Montana.

Always remember the words from the prophecy of Daniel:

*2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting
contempt.*

*3 And they that be wise teachers shall shine as the brightness of
the firmament; and they that teach many righteousness as the stars
for ever and ever.*

—Daniel 12