



“Father, I wish that all you have given me may be with me where I am” (Jn 17:24)

On Sunday, 2 June 2019, when the above verse of the Gospel was proclaimed, three days before his 88th birthday, our confrere

Father Gregor (Ferdinand) Bergenthal OSB

entered into the peace of God after suffering for a long time.

Fr. Gregor was born on 5 June 1931 to Dr. Ferdinand Bergenthal and his wife Anneliese von Lampe as the third of eight children in Ratibor, Upper Silesia, where his father was a teacher in the high school. Some days after his birth, he was baptized in the parish church of Ratibor with the name Ferdinand Maria Placidus. He was confirmed by Auxiliary Bishop Ferche of Breslau in the city parish of Ziegenhals where in the meantime his family had moved. Ferdinand Bergenthal attended primary school in Bad Ziegenhals from 1937 to 1941. In 1941 he transferred to the humanities gymnasium in Neisse, Upper Silesia and completed his gymnasium studies at the Leopoldinum Gymnasium in Passau from 1946 to 1951.

The most dramatic experience in the childhood of Fr. Gregor and for his family was the hasty and life-threatening flight in the face of the approaching Russian army on 19 March 1945 and the loss of home and all property. After a journey via Czechoslovakia and Austria, the family settled first in Taubenbach, Lower Bavaria and from 1947 in Burghausen. This became a second home for the parents and their children.

Fr. Gregor had very early made contact with the Benedictines through his family, namely with the Abbey of Grüssau in Silesia where his parents and children had been received as oblates. As a student he liked to help out in the library there during holidays. During his time in the gymnasium in Passau, he lived in our then Bergfried study house. And so it is not surprising that he found his way to monastic life. On 15 September 1951, he entered our abbey and was admitted into the novitiate on 20 September as Frater Gregor. He made his first profession on 22 September 1952 and made solemn vows on 16 September 1956 in our abbey church. The subsequent philosophy and theology studies were taken in Fribourg in Switzerland (1952–1954) and then Sant’ Anselmo in Rome (1954–1956). From 1957 he studied philology and sport at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. On 29 June 1959, he was ordained a priest in the Passau cathedral by Bishop Simon Konrad Landersdorfer.

In 1961 he began teaching in our pro-gymnasium as a sports teacher. Though interrupted several times due to illness, he taught sports, German, geography and Latin (two years) there until 2004. With his unique meticulousness and energy, he devoted himself to the education and training of our students, for whom he provided solid skills especially in the area of German. Since the beginning of the sixties, Fr. Gregor regularly celebrated the early morning liturgy with sermon in the abbey church until 2007. In addition, he also led some Bible and prayer groups in Vilshofen and nearby Austria.

A nervous disease lay over his life and work for a long period like a dark cloud, which not only tore him away from his assigned work in the school but also made a number of hospital stays necessary. In addition, a hearing disorder that led to hardness of hearing in old age made it difficult to have conversations with people in school and community. During the times when Fr. Gregor’s health was somewhat better, he was able to realize his great intelligence, his humor, his love of art and culture, his ability to approach people and to make the faith attractive and worth living.

Our confrere spent the last decade of his life in the monastery infirmary where he was cared for with great sensitivity by our nursing staff. Up until the last days of his life, he could still participate in daily Mass and keep alive spiritually by reading.

With gratitude to all who cared for Fr. Gregor and stood by him in his difficult moments, we also add the request for a remembrance in prayer for our deceased confrere.

**Prior Administrator Fr. Benedikt Schneider OSB
and the community of Schweiklberg Abbey**