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+ Father Bruce Wollmering OSB 1940-2009

Luverne Wollmering was the oldest of five children born to Gregory and Marie (May) Wollmering on a farm in Hastings, Minnesota, November 2, 1940. Luverne attended St. Boniface Grade School in Hastings. Father Kilian McDonnell OSB, associate pastor, encouraged Luverne to enter Saint John's Preparatory School where, in 1954, he began his journey to the priesthood.

After graduating from the prep school in 1958, Luverne enrolled in Saint John's University. He entered the novitiate of Saint John's Abbey after his sophomore year. He accepted Bruce as his name in religion and professed first vows, July 11, 1961. As a junior monk Frater Bruce earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and classics, May 1963. He completed his studies toward the priesthood at Saint John's Seminary. His ordination took place on June 3, 1967.

Father Bruce attended the University of Arizona in Tucson and earned a master's degree in counseling and guidance, May 1970. He continued his studies there, and the university awarded the doctorate, May 1978.

Father Bruce began his professional career at Saint John's Preparatory School as a Latin teacher, prefect, and cross-country/track coach from 1967 to 1969. He served as the Business and Placement Director and counselor at Saint John's Preparatory School and University from 1970 to 1972. He was consulting counselor at the prep school from 1970 to 1975. For six months in 1972 he served as substitute novice master in the abbey. From 1973 to 1975 he lived as a prefect on the fourth floor of St. Benet Hall in the university. Father Bruce was a faculty resident in St. Thomas Hall from 1978 to 1980.

The bulk of Father Bruce's professional life was devoted to teaching psychology and working as a counselor. He was a member of the counseling services team at Saint John's University from 1978 to 1980. During this time he also served on the faculty as adjunct professor of psychology. He was assistant professor of psychology from 1980 to 1988 when he achieved tenure as associate professor of psychology.

Father Bruce was delighted by the opportunity to spend his sabbatical at the Carl G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland, from 1990 to 1991. His doctoral thesis had

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The Archives

Saint John's Abbey
31802 County Road 159
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focused on dreams, a key element of Jungian psychotherapy. From 1994 to 2003 he was chair of the Department of Psychology at Saint John's University. Father Bruce conducted more than 50 workshops and seminars in psychology that dealt with subjects such as dream analysis, therapeutic hypnosis, human sexuality, and healthy spirituality.

After his retirement from the university, Father Bruce was free to pursue many other interests. He worked with Father Paul Schwietz OSB in the establishment of the Saint John's Arboretum that began with the successful restoration of the prairie, wild flowers, oak savannah and marsh lands. He served two terms on the Arboretum Advisory Council from 2002 to 2008. He was very active as the chair of the Abbey Forest and Lands Committee. Father Bruce was an engaged and dedicated ornithologist. He identified 39 species of birds that visited campus. His favorite was the Eastern Bluebird. Around a six-mile perimeter of the outer campus, he built more than 70 nesting boxes to encourage the re-population of the bluebird during the past 15 years. He kept annual records of the nesting success which was usually very good. Father Bruce also built and maintained loon platforms at Saint John's that were responsible for successful hatches every year.

Few enjoyed and remembered a good meal as well as Father Bruce. Beginning in 2005, he worked with six monks to increase the amount and variety of food grown and served at Saint John's. During the summer the team enriched the monastery's salad table with numerous boxes of lettuce, radishes, peppers, and tomatoes. Father Bruce renovated the root cellar for the eco-friendly storage of squash and other vegetables over the winter. The "hoop house" constructed in the garden a few years ago allows the early and prolonged growth of vegetables -- much to the delight of the monks.

Father Bruce was active and healthy until the sudden medical incident that took his life. He had collapsed in the basement locker room of the monastery. Loss of much blood caused cardiac arrest. Despite being on the scene almost immediately, the emergency medical team was unable to revive him. His younger siblings were shocked and saddened by his unexpected death. Both of their parents also suffered sudden death in an automobile accident, June 2001.

Father Bruce died on Wednesday, February 4, 2009. He is survived by his brother, James (and Judy) Wollmering, Hastings; his sisters, Mary (and Jerry) Sullivan, Hastings; Judy (and Michael) DeShon, Mt. Prospect, IL; Deborah (and James) Hassell, Saudi Arabia; a niece, three nephews, and a new grandniece; as well as the community of Saint John's Abbey. The monks, family, friends, and colleagues will celebrate the Mass of Christian Burial, Tuesday, February 10, 2009, 3 p.m., in the abbey church. Interment in Saint John's Abbey Cemetery follows the service.

We ask each community member to offer two Masses according to the manner of his participation in the priesthood of Christ. We commend our brother, Bruce, to your prayers.

Abbot John Klassen OSB
and the monks of Saint John's Abbey

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