FROM SAINT MEINRAD TO SOUTH AFRICA: The Journey of Archbishop Peter Wells
A retired priest who formed a ministry in the Caribbean, an archbishop honored as a distinguished alumnus, a Saint Meinrad alum with a passion to serve in her community, a retreat by alumni for alumni. This issue of Voices from the Vineyard contains something anyone can connect with.

We are all called to serve as the Body of Christ in many ways (1 Cor. 12:12-27), yet the body of the Church must also rest and look at how one’s gifts and talents might be used for the common good.

This issue contains stories of connection. As the director of alumni relations, I believe that connection is my directive. Promoting alumni and activities that truly tell the story of how connection gives life to faith and vice versa is exactly the type of good news we need today.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Christian Mocek, who has been busy teaching me the ways of the Alumni Office and helping my transition during his own transition into the role of Director of Annual Giving.

Taking on this new role with Saint Meinrad, I hope to help embody the mission of this place of peace to our faithful alumni – to be a beacon of what the Catholic Church was entrusted by Christ to be.

May our stories continue to strengthen us for the journey and our humble work in the vineyard. Remember to rely on the many connections Saint Meinrad has created and put out into the world. Let us press on with Easter joy! ♡
Every year since 2014, a number of Saint Meinrad alumni and friends have gathered to serve their community in the spirit of *ora et labora*. In recent years, that number has increased. In both 2017 and 2018, a total of 177 volunteers participated each year. This year, that number broke 200 volunteers! Since the Day of Service was begun in 2014 with Evansville as the only location, we have served in 16 cities in the United States, from Louisville to Louisiana.

But, why? Looking at numbers is impressive, but they do not tell the whole story. The Saint Meinrad Day of Service is more than a day and statistics. There is a story behind each individual who decides to take a Saturday to sort at a food bank or do demolition on a house. Even more so, why do alumni choose to lead projects every year so that other alumni and friends of Saint Meinrad can join in this great work?

One of those project leaders, Ann Tully, provided some insight. “I have always been drawn to service in my local community and have had many opportunities over the years to serve.” Tully works for the Church in the Tribunal for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “To represent Saint Meinrad at the Day of Service is a great opportunity to continue to serve my local community and witness the values of Saint Meinrad.”

Tully organizes one of the Indianapolis projects with St. Vincent de Paul. She notes, “It is a tiring day but completely worth it! So much good work is accomplished and alumni can be very proud of that.” Tully had 20 volunteers this year and has been gathering passionate volunteers since 2017.

The Day of Service gives her a glimpse of what the Saint Meinrad alumni community is made of: “We are definitely a multi-generational group! Many of the people I volunteered with, I did not go to school with. I enjoy meeting many different people and hearing of their experiences of Saint Meinrad.” The day also serves as a public witness to the core values of Saint Meinrad, she said.

The Day of Service enkindles the memories and lessons of Saint Meinrad as alumni continue their ministry in the world. “Saint Meinrad prepared me to interact with the world as a Catholic Christian woman in my tribunal ministry, in my marriage, as a parent, and as a member of my community – both parish and civic. I would encourage others to join us next year, because the day is really a celebration of all the good gifts we received from Saint Meinrad and an opportunity to give back.” To summarize it all, “Our service work is a reflection of our spiritual formation and belief that ‘in all things God may be glorified.’”

Tully is just one of many people who make a commitment to lead a Saint Meinrad Day of Service in her community. If you would like to participate or lead a project like her, contact our office at alumni@saintmeinrad.edu or 812-357-6222.

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*Ann Tully MTS ’03 - is an oblate of Saint Meinrad and a member of St. Matthew Parish in Indianapolis.*
**Coming to Saint Meinrad:**

“I had finished my pre-med prerequisites in Oklahoma, and I was hoping to go to medical school. I had thought about it for many years off and on at the possibility of a vocation [to the priesthood], so I decided to give it a try. I wasn’t sure.

But to be honest with you, I hadn’t been here [at Saint Meinrad] even a week and I already realized that it seemed like this was the way God had laid out for me.”

**His Time at Saint Meinrad:**

“But, it [the time at Saint Meinrad] cannot, not stay with you. I just used a double negative there.

I think the reason is, because of, not only the incredible tradition that is breathed in this place, but the spirituality and the goodness of the monks. We had wonderful community life as students. There was a lot of joy, there was a lot of laughter, there was a lot of prayer, and there was very serious studying. I think it has stayed with my priesthood, those early years of formation. *Ora et Labora*, it’s not only for Benedictines, but prayer and work is for all of us who are in ministry.”

**Becoming a Priest of the Vatican Diplomatic Corps:**

“You don’t decide to join. You’re drafted into the Vatican Diplomatic Corps.

The way it works, it’s interesting. I had gone to school at the North American College in Rome, and after I was ordained a priest I went back and finished a graduate degree, and then came home. I was in parish ministry, as well as had some chancery jobs for the first four years. After I was ordained for just a few years, the Vatican asked me if I could be released for service in the Vatican Diplomatic Corps. What that means at the time when you are asked is, you go to a school of formation – a school of formation for future Vatican diplomats.

They asked if my bishop would be willing to release me for that. After some discussion with me, and of course with other priests in the diocese, I decided to go ahead and to try it. I tried it, and once again, I found it to be very fulfilling.”

**Serving for Three Different Popes:**

“I think you could do an entire course on these three popes. In a sense, they’re all the three post-conciliar [Vatican II] popes, and they bring in very different human characteristics, but I think a very similar ecclesial vision, in some ways, of what it means to be a post-Vatican II Church.

Pope John Paul II was a great Christian anthropologist ... and put some philosophical underpinnings, if you will, to much of what happened during the Council.
Pope Benedict XVI was a patristic father in the 2000s. He gave us a sense of fundamental, theological teaching based in the Council and in the long tradition of the Church, which I think people will refer back to for centuries.

Pope Francis has an extraordinary ability to touch the ordinary person. He is, is a sense, the par excellence of a catechist. He has taken what has been extolled from the Council, what came from the magisteria of John Paul II and that of Benedict, and is able to make people – normal, ordinary people in the pews – appreciate it, and to live it, and to give examples of how that faith is to be lived. I think we really needed that. The Holy Spirit is wonderful, always offers us the perfect person at the perfect moment.”

**His Service and Appointment to South Africa:**

“Whenever I was in the Vatican, for a number of years I worked in what they call the English section of the General Affairs section of the Vatican, and I watched over a number of African countries at the time. One of them was South Africa, so I’d always kept up a bit with what was going on in South Africa, but mainly at a political and ecclesial level.

I don’t think I really realized what was going on, on a sociological level, and the social challenges at the level that we see them in the country. In many ways, I’d been very surprised at how developed the country is.

There are a number of challenges there. Extreme poverty is a real challenge. There’s also an extreme difference between the very rich and the very poor. There are a lot of problems with racism and xenophobia that are still prevalent, not only in South Africa, but in all of southern Africa.

You see these problems, as you see them in the rest of the world today, to be honest. These are constant issues that we’re having to address and to look into. It’s a complicated society. We’re talking about 11 different language groups, at least. Those are the official language groups that are recognized.”

**His Work Today:**

“I work as the Pope’s ambassador from one state to the Holy See, and so, as an ambassador, I do the things that other ambassadors do. I go to meetings of the diplomatic corps and heads of mission. We have a number of bilateral interests, including things such as climate change, or empowerment of people, women’s rights and children’s rights.”
Human trafficking is a huge concern of ours, so I would be an interlocutor with the rest of the diplomatic corps and the local government to present the interest of the Catholic Church in those particular topics, as well as many, many others. Then I also work with the local churches. We have 36 jurisdictions in that area and around close to 40 bishops.

I always like to say that I’m there to listen. I’m there to listen to the concerns, the sufferings, and also the hopes and aspirations of the local Church, and to bring that back to Pope Francis and to the Holy See. Then at the same time, I’m there to act as a conduit of communication for the Holy See and the Holy Father.

“I always like to say that I’m there to listen. I’m there to listen to the concerns, the sufferings, and also the hopes and aspirations of the local Church, and to bring that back to Pope Francis and to the Holy See.

When he would have something that he would want to bring to the local church there, whether it’s through the magisterial teaching of the Church, or whether it’s through his specific concern for the local churches in the area. My work can be varied. A lot of it is bureaucratic. Lots of it is pastoral, though. I’m almost every weekend at a different parish. I do things that everyone else does. I do confirmations. I have done weddings. I do baptisms. I do pretty much whatever people need, so it’s a very varied ministry.”

Archbishop Peter Wells C ’87 (’85-87) continues to serve as apostolic nuncio of South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland, and as the titular archbishop of Marcianapolis. He received the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2018 from the Saint Meinrad Alumni Association.
If you would like to plan a Saint Meinrad Day of Service in your community for 2020 (Saturday, March 14), contact Joe Oliveri at joliveri@saintmeinrad.edu or 812-357-6222.
91st Annual Alumni Reunion

Click here to register!
# Schedule

## Sunday, July 21, 2019

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:00 - 11:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Early Arrivals Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Vespers with the Monastic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:15 - 6:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Supper, Newman Dining Room</td>
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## Monday, July 22, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Graduate Theology Program Alumni Reception, Alumni Commons</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Golf Scramble (Christmas Lake Golf Course, Santa Claus, IN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 - 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Morning Presentation: “iGEN – Preaching the Gospel to the Next Generation,” Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, St. Bede Theater</td>
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<td>11:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Lunch, Newman Dining Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15 - 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Workshop: Bob O’Connor with the Saint John’s Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15 - 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Workshop: “Thomas Merton – Evil and Why We Suffer,” David E. Orberson</td>
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## Tuesday, July 23, 2019

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Morning Prayer, St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Alumni Association Meeting, St. Bede Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 - 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Day of Recollection: “Being Doers and Hearers of the Word,” Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, St. Bede Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Lunch, Newman Dining Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15 - 2:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Tour of Saint Meinrad – or – Tour of Abbey Caskets Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15 - 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Day of Recollection (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Choir Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 - 2:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Confession, St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel</td>
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## Wednesday, July 24, 2019

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 - 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Breakfast and Departure</td>
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MINISTRY GETS A ‘SECOND WIND’
A story on Fr. Ron Knott

by: Christian Mocek

In a long career of ministry, it is easy to get tired, to look at one’s work and not want to take up another project, let alone another ministry. This story explores the good work of one man who went beyond his archdiocese to find those in need – even after decades of ministry. Christian Mocek, Director of Annual Giving at Saint Meinrad, sat down with Fr. Ron Knott to discuss what this ministry was about and why he chooses to do it.

Rev. J. Ronald Knott, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, is the founding director of the Institute for Priests and Presbyterates at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. After graduating from Saint Meinrad School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree, Fr. Knott was ordained in 1970.

His new ministry is called The Catholic Second Wind Guild and it strives to give retired priests, bishops, and lay professionals a chance to do something good in the Caribbean missions, particularly in the Catholic Diocese of Kingstown in the small country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Fr. Knott discovered the situation there was much worse than it was back home in the Midwest.

“I went down there on my first trip and I saw the situation. I was sitting in the Pastoral Centre (bishop’s house, chancery office and small retreat house combined) realizing how rundown it was,” he recalls. There are only seven active priests in the diocese. With this shortage, Fr. Knott saw an opportunity. “The idea was to give retired priests who wanted to get out of their cold climates a free place to go. These volunteer priests get a free vacation, and the Diocese of Kingstown gets free priests.”

Fr. Knott invites Saint Meinrad alumni to think about how they could help out. “A priest could fill in, give the other priest a break. And what we like to do is for them to come back every year at that time to build a relationship.” He says there is also a need for priests who could give a retreat, teach in deacon formation or offer a continuing education workshop for priests.

But this ministry needs more than priests. Overall, he is looking for anyone, especially retirees in good health, with connections, skills, and even the ability to pay for some of these needed projects in the Pastoral Centre, one of the Catholic schools, one of the orphanages or one of the small parishes.

One might wonder what drives someone like Fr. Knott to keep giving after his decades of service in the priesthood. “Everybody thinks that their poverty [in the U.S.] needs to be addressed before we go outside. Their poverty is so different than our poverty.” Fr. Knott is determined that this ministry is needed.
“I know that I’m not saving the world, but I am making a little impact in that little diocese down in the Caribbean that I had never heard of.” Put simply, he says, “I think that’s what gives life – to know that some simple things are very transformative. We sent seven teenagers to World Youth Day in Poland. Believe me – that was transformative for people who have never been off their island or even imagined that there are that many Catholic youth in the world!”

In conclusion, Fr. Knott continues on this mission with his Catholic Second Wind Guild, with 12 trips already behind him. He recently completed the renovation of the Pastoral Centre so that professional-level adult volunteers will have a safe, clean and workable place out of which to operate. His organization has donated two vans to parishes and bought the new bishop a car. It has supported the hospitals and clinics with truckloads of surplus medical supplies, the schools with school supplies, and the orphanages with food and Christmas toys.

Fr. Knott’s projects already have received praise in the community. “They come to the Pastoral Centre and they’re blown away that this diocese has got this place now that’s all fixed up.” He offers this phrase to reflect on: “With some help, we can do more than we think we can.”

If you would like to participate in the Catholic Second Wind Guild or simply learn more about Fr. Knott’s work, please go to Fr. Knott’s blog, An Encouraging Word, at www.FatherKnott.com.

Fr. Ron Knott is a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville. He is the founding director of the Institute for Priests and Presbyterates at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. After graduating from Saint Meinrad with a Master of Divinity degree, Fr. Knott was ordained in 1970. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in parish revitalization from McCormick (Presbyterian) Seminary in Chicago. Fr. Knott is the author of numerous books and has published articles in America, Church and Seminary Journal.
One of my first duties as alumni director was finalizing and directing the alumni retreat held in February. A reason you might not be familiar with this is that the retreat was the first ever in recent Saint Meinrad Alumni Association history.

Nonetheless, on February 8-10 of this year, 13 proud alumni came to the Hill to be on retreat from daily duties and responsibilities. Dan Conway O’75, the retreat presenter, brought that very reality into the space of faith and spirituality.

As the reader may very well know, the Benedictine monks of Saint Meinrad are founded on and obedient to the Rule of St. Benedict, which champions the holy saint’s essential teaching – *ora et labora* (prayer and work, respectively).

Conway used the retreat to speak on and lead discussion about *The Benedictine Way*, his recent book about his experiences in daily life after being instilled with the values of Benedictine living while at Saint Meinrad. The retreat sessions proved that this way of life is challenging and demanding in the age we live in, especially to those who have not committed their lives to monastic community.

The end. Well, not entirely. I attended these discussions. I was amazed at the diversity of people around the table, offering wisdom on these traditional, religious terms of *stability, obedience, poverty*, among many others. Each person spoke from their failings and their successes. Some had answers, while others had questions. One could ask after this short weekend retreat of much pondering, “What was the point? What did everyone get out of it?”

In my opinion, I found that in the differences of laity and ordained, male and female, old and young, we were all united by what Saint Meinrad has given to us – not just a beautiful, spiritual home, but a challenging, yet worthy mission. This mission isn’t just what sends us forth to unknown places spatially, but, ultimately, into our own mystery of daily living, praying and working in community with one another, informed and transformed by our faith in relationship with Jesus Christ.

This alumni retreat revealed that not only are we many parts, but we are one body. But this body, which is the Body of Christ, also shares in one mission – as ordinary, yet busy as it seems. I encourage each of you to take some time in silence and ask yourself: How might the many things I do be a continuation of the mission we all share? How does my work and prayer keep me obedient to this mission and connected to my community?

I look forward to see what we can put together for the next alumni retreat! Please email joliveri@saintmeinrad.edu if you have suggestions. Peace to you all!
And let them first pray together, THAT SO THEY MAY ASSOCIATE IN PEACE.

—St. Benedict of Nursia

Interested in hearing more stories like these? Do you know alumni who should be featured? Please share your feedback and suggestions with Joe Oliveri, director of alumni relations, at joliveri@saintmeinrad.edu or (812) 357-6222.