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Tribute to Dietrich Reinhart, OSB

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My memories of Brother Dietrich's involvement in the School of Theology•Seminary revolve around his ongoing care for the well-being of this part of the university. He was committed to the mission of the SOT•Sem and would quietly support it during times of stress and strain. As a historian, Dietrich valued the deep roots of the SOT•Sem in the culture of Saint John's. From the founding of the educational apostolate in 1857 with the chartering of Saint John's Seminary, theological education was part of the soul of this place. Dietrich knew this in terms of lived history as well as of historical facts. Experientially, he knew that the way in which Saint John's understood what it means to be Catholic arose out of the way worship and work, reading and reflection, and care for one another happen in this place. For Dietrich, the SOT•Sem was part of the fabric of Saint John's. As president, he was obliged to be attentive to the whole of the university and not privilege one part over another.

He did this admirably, but at the same time always stepped forward with energy to help the SOT•Sem when problems arose.

Dietrich is legendary for his capacity to monitor details while keeping his sights on the bigger picture. Perhaps it was his aptitude and formation as a historian that cultivated this dual gift of vision and attentiveness. No doubt his heightened awareness of the facts on the ground landed him in many dilemmas. Characteristically, he was able to move the people involved to help find solutions. He had a way of challenging people to stay involved and do their best for the sake of those to be served. In dealing with faculty and administrators, he repeatedly kept before their eyes the needs of the students. His underlying premise seemed to be the following: this educational

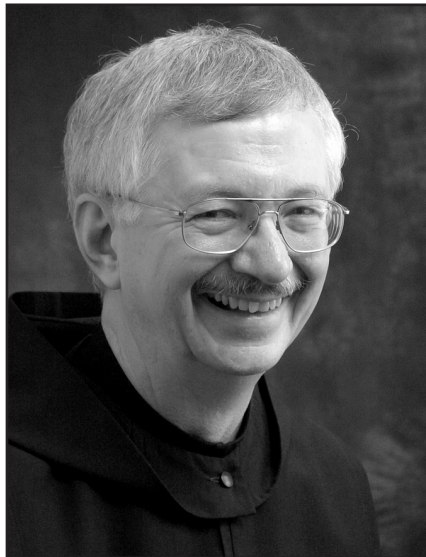
operation serves monks or teachers or administrators to the extent that their primary goal is to serve students; the only goal superseding this attention to students is service of God. Dietrich's hierarchy of values made him a ready ally of the SOT•Sem.

As a monk, Dietrich was devoted to the liturgy. His tenure as liturgy director for the abbey was highlighted by a massive revision of the Office books for the Liturgy of the Hours. His knowledge of liturgy was shaped in no small way by his studies in the SOT•Sem. His care in getting others involved in the process and of taking extra steps to get it right has enhanced the worship of the monastic community in ways that continue to manifest themselves.

Community is a word that we frequently hear from undergraduate and graduate students as well as from staff, faculty, and administrators. Dietrich exemplified community in a compelling way. He paid attention to the people with whom he was conversing. He knew how to draw them out. The energy he expended in doing this seemed to arise from his commitment to Saint John's

as a place in which the people count. At monastic table, he frequently was one of the last to leave the gathering because he had engaged those around him in a discussion about matters of the common life. He was adamant about keeping business out of the monastic refectory so that the other dimensions of community life might unfold in conversation. In his social gatherings with administrators and faculty, he demonstrated a genuine interest in their well-being as members of the community.

Dietrich loved monastic life and the educational apostolate of Saint John's. The SOT•Sem benefited greatly from his superb leadership of the university and his unwavering commitment to Saint John's. His legacy will live on in the SOT•Sem for many years to come.



Photograph courtesy of Saint John's Abbey