

Father Kevin Watkins

January 7th is the anniversary of the death of Father Kevin Watkins. Paul Watkins was born in Fort Worth, Texas, on November 29, 1931. After graduating from our academy with the class of 1948, he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 16, 1950, receiving the name Kevin. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Albert L. Fletcher at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on May 28, 1955.

Father Kevin studied in various fields; while attending the University of Arkansas he was a member of the Schola Cantorum which won international fame, and at Kansas State University he received a master's degree in counseling. He also studied at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Father Kevin served our community as organist and cantor. For a time he was also choirmaster. In the Academy he taught a variety of subjects, mostly music and Christian Doctrine. During the last nine years of his life he was counselor and guidance director for the students.

But Father Kevin's primary role throughout the years was in spiritual leadership, serving for a time as student chaplain, giving retreats, and lecturing on Sacred Scripture throughout the state. Many, including his own confreres, sought him out for spiritual direction. His influence on the youth was a factor in deepening the prayer life of many students. Blessed with a warm personality and a gentle sense of humor, he proved that spiritual depth can be graced with the best of human qualities.

Father Kevin died in his room in the monastery on the morning of Friday, January 7, 1977, from an apparent heart attack. He had been preparing for a trip he was to take on behalf of the academy that day, but was found dead by one of his confreres. Passing the door of Father Kevin's room on the day of his death one noticed a small poster that had long hung there: "For everything there is a season: a time and purpose for everything."

Perhaps the measure of Father Kevin can be seen most simply in the note he wrote to a friend on Christmas Eve: "I have had a wonderful Advent. I have been blessed with a sense of deep quiet and expectancy for the Lord's coming..."

On Monday, January 10, Abbot Raphael was celebrant of the Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies. In brilliant sunlight glistening on deep snow, Father Kevin was laid to rest.

At the time of his death, Father Kevin was 46 years old. He had been a professed monk for 26 years and a priest for 21 years. He is buried in our cemetery.

