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Vernon Charles “Fr. Regis” Probstfield

BIRTH 16 Feb 1931
Verona, Lawrence County, Missouri, USA

DEATH 4 Nov 2008 (aged 77)
Conception, Nodaway County, Missouri, USA

BURIAL [Saint Columba Cemetery](#)
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Lawrence County Record - Nov. 12, 2008: [corrected]

Father Regis (Vernon) Probstfield, 77, Conception Abbey, Conception, died Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2008 at the Abbey.

He was born Feb. 16, 1931, in Verona to [Paul J. and Christine \(VanHatten\) Probstfield](#). He became a Benedictine Monk at Conception Abbey in 1952 and was ordained a priest April 6, 1957. He served as pastor in several churches in northwest Missouri and on Native American Indian reservations in North and South Dakota. He served as secretary to the Abbot at Conception until his health did not permit.

He was preceded in death by seven brothers, [Paul](#), [Captain Edgar](#), [John](#), [Lawrence](#), [Clarence](#), [Fr. Edgar \(Victor\)](#) and [Jim Probstfield](#); and one sister, [Ruth Evans](#). Survivors include one brother, [Ralph](#), Tuscan, Ariz; and one sister, [Caroline McNeerney](#), Mt.Vernon.

Funeral Mass was held at Conception Abbey, with burial in the Abbey Cemetery.

The 1940 US Census shows that widow [Christine Probstfield](#), 52, lived at Pleasant Ridge Township, Barry County, Missouri. Living with her were son [John](#), 21; son [Lawrence](#), 17; son [Clarence](#), 14; son [Victor](#), 13; son [James](#), 11; and son [Vernon](#), 9. (Census)

Abbey Obit:
Father Regis Probstfield, O.S.B.

In the evening hours of Tuesday, 4 November, 2008, as our nation settled down to watch the returns of the national election come in, and as the monastic community of Conception Abbey gathered for our weekly haustus in celebration of our life in communion, word came to us from our infirmary that our beloved confrere, Father Regis Probstfield, O.S.B., had quietly and unexpectedly surrendered his earthly existence and passed into eternity. Jubilant in both profession and ordination, Father Regis had moved into our infirmary only a few months before, having begun to feel rather more acutely some of the inevitable effects of the advancing years. Though Saint Benedict admonishes his monks to keep death daily before them, the passing of Father Regis came as something of a surprise to his brother monks. Yet we remain assured that the quickness of his passing is a certain sign of his readiness to enter the blessed presence of his Lord.

Vernon Charles Probstfield was born in Verona, Missouri, on 16 February 1931, the youngest of eleven children born to Paul and Christine (nee Van Hatten) Probstfield. He was baptized nine days later at Sacred Heart Church by Father Cyril Buettner, O.S.B., a monk and priest of Conception Abbey who was serving as pastor of the parish at the time. Vernon attended the parochial grade school at Sacred Heart, and then proceeded northward in 1945 to Conception to attend high school. In taking this course he was following in the footsteps of his elder brother Victor, who was to profess vows as Frater Edgar in the monastic community of Conception Abbey the following year. Like his brother, Vernon too had begun to discern a call to the monastic life. He entered the novitiate of Conception Abbey in 1951, and on 8 September 1952 professed first monastic vows before Abbot Stephen Schappeler, who gave him the religious name Regis, placing him under the patronage of Saint John Francis Regis. Frater Regis was duly advanced to solemn monastic vows in 1955, and thence to the sacred priesthood, when he was ordained by Bishop John Patrick Cody on 6 April 1957.

Father Regis was a man of much erudition and many talents, all of which were put to good use in his career of service as a monk. He received an STL from The Catholic University of America in 1958, and an MA in Latin from Fordham University in 1961. Returning from his studies, he served in the seminary as Latin professor, prefect and Vice Rector. In addition to his seminary duties, his responsibilities in the monastery at this time ranged widely; among other assignments, he was Socius to the Novice Master and editor of our community's periodical publication, *rower rapz.c5*. He lent his services and expertise to the wider Church as well, serving as Director of the inner-city Pastoral Formation Center in Kansas City.

In 1972 he was assigned as pastor of Saint Bernard's Parish in McLaughlin, South Dakota, on the Standing Rock Reservation. He returned to the Abbey in 1973 to become Kitchen Master, and eventually Master of Novices and Juniors. He was made Associate Business Manager in 1978, and Subprior in 1979. He returned to parish ministry in 1981 as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Parnell, Missouri, and then was assigned to another term on the Catholic Indian Missions as Associate Pastor and Director of Development at Fort Yates, North Dakota. And many in our Congregation will have known of Father Regis from his long service as Ordofex, a position he held for eleven years, 1996 -2007. In these latter years he also served as secretary to the abbot and chaplain of our senior brethren in Saint Stephen's Infirmary.

Having taken to heart the admonition of pope St. Leo the Great, "Christian, remember your dignity," Father Regis always bore himself with what might be termed a gracious humility. He knew that the life of a Christian was indeed graced by the Lord. Whether calmly sitting on the bank of a lake or stream with rod and reel in hand (he was an avid angler), or carefully parsing a sentence of classical Latin, Father Regis did everything with dignity and grace. He was a man of singular equanimity, who was never heard to raise his voice in anger. He was much appreciated as a confessor among the students in our seminary, and had been well received during a brief term as Chaplain to the Benedictine Sisters at the Monastery of Our Lady of Ephesus in Kansas City. He was, too, a lifelong lover of poetry, frequently delighting his confreres with an apt aphorism or verse, whether in Latin or in English. His homilies were remarkable both for their rhetorical precision and for their apposite poetic allusions. He was particularly fond of the deceptively simple lyric verses of the American priest-poet, Father John Bannister Tabb, and loved to quote the following lines:

*Their noonday never knows
What names immortal are:
T'is night alone that shows
How star surpasses star.*

Having now surpassed the stars themselves in his advance to glory, Father Regis surely enjoys the full vision of beatitude and the perfection of life and love toward which all poetry yearns.

Vespers of the Faithful Departed were prayed at 7: 15 p.m. on Thursday, 6 November 2008, and the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at 11 :00 a.m. on Friday, 7 November 2008 .
Requiescat in pace. Amen!

Inscription

Fr. Regis Probstfield, OSB
Born 16 Feb 1931
Professed 8 Sept 1952
Ordained 6 April 1957
Died 4 Nov 2008