



Br. Bernie Klím, CSC
March 29, 1930 - Oct 4, 2015

“Do you hear that?”

“Do you hear that?” Br. Bernie Klim asked me. I was on home leave in Indiana and I went to drop off some of his personal items at Columba Hall at Notre Dame where he had arrived the year prior. One of the items I handed him was his Zen bell wrapped up in a red-checkered kerchief once commonly worn by farmers in the U.S. He unwrapped it and rang it twice for me. He smiled so contentedly when he heard the chime of that little bell.

Br. Bernie told me about the time he was at a Japanese Zen monastery. He was frustrated and angry about something and expressed this to the Zen Master one morning. He was ordered to go down by the lake and shout out “moo” for a half-hour with all his might. I suspect that the neighbors were used to hearing these kinds of things. All his anger seemingly worked itself out until there was only silence. Then he heard the voice of God say, “I don’t just want your heart. I want all of you!”

On almost every Holy Cross property he ever worked on he installed a Zen wind chime. At Bishop McCauley House I used to sit in the Banda out back and once I wrapped the gong of the wind chime around itself because it’s constant gonging bothered me. He visited once and said, “Oh, look, it seems the wind wrapped this chime around itself.” Slightly embarrassed, I realized how far I have to go to learn how to really listen. After all, the chime set off by the breeze was to remind me of God’s presence in the seemingly mundane moments of daily life.

“Do you hear that?” Br. Bernie was a spiritual master who learned to still his restless mind through the practice of daily meditation. He learned to listen to God in the stillness. If we remember the story of Elijah, he heard the voice of God in a tiny breeze and hid his face. This gift of stillness pervaded Br. Bernie’s way of living, his way of working, and his way of relating and listening to others.

We don’t get to hear the gentle voice of Br. Bernie anymore. I wish I had more time to listen to him in person. I had so many questions to ask him. I guess the best that I can do is learn to practice holy listening as he did. Maybe someday I will be taught how to still my restless mind and hear the voice of God in all the sounds of daily life that reach my ears. I cannot hear one of his wind chimes anymore without smiling contentedly, just as he did when he rang that little Zen bell for me.

Patrick Neary, C.S.C.

When I was on my Community Experience in Kyarusenzi, Brother Bernie told me: “Emmanuel, we cannot serve people unless we go beyond appearances to touch the core of who they are as children of God.” *By Emmanuel Ssegujja, CSC*

Recalling Brother Bernie’s Life of some twenty years with us in the District, I dare to say that in 1992 God sent Bernie to us to teach us to listen to Him, that in living simply and doing our daily work we can be poor in spirit; that by using our talents we can serve Him faithfully and do good for others as Holy Cross religious. Thank you, O God for our brother, Bernie. We have been richly blessed by your sending him to us.

By Fr. George Lucas, CSC.

Bernie was a figure of humility among us. He did a lot but never “blew his own horn.” You would never hear him say “I am the one who did that”, “I was the first to do that.” He didn’t look for glory but he showed us service and simplicity. He let what he did speak for him. Brother Bernie “humility amongst us”, Rest in Peace!

By Fr. Willy Lukati, CSC



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Sculpture by Brother Bernard Klim, C.S.C.

In 1989 when I was on my way to Uganda for the first time, I met Bernie in Rome. At the time I didn’t know him very well but we immediately became friends. He was about 60 years old at the time and I was 46, so he was an “elder” to me. Elders often give good advice, and he gave me some excellent advice that day. He himself had wanted to go to East Africa for many years. His superiors had told him that his services were needed in Rome for a while longer. His advice to me was to accept things as they were. He knew that life would be very different and his advice to me proved invaluable. “Accept things as they are.” Simple advice, yet profound. With Bernie’s advice and the Lord’s blessing, I found the adjustment fairly easy and the subsequent 25 years have been very good to me. *By Br. Alan Harrod, CSC*

Not a word was spoken! Some years ago a young man was employed at McCauley House in Kampala. Brother Bernie was living there at the time and each afternoon after his long hours of work, Bernie would return to his room, put on his Zen Robe and **sit** for an hour of prayer. The young man got into the habit of knocking on Bernie's door, apparently in urgent need of something at that moment, shortly after Bernie started his daily hour of prayer. After a number of interruptions in his prayer, Bernie decided that the young man needed to become aware that this was not the time to knock on his door. And so, one afternoon after returning from his long hours of work, Bernie did *not* put on his robe. He was sitting in his prayer chair totally naked. So, when the young man knocked and entered his room he *got the message and quickly ran out!* Never again to disturb Bernie at his prayer time. **By Br. Jim Nichols, CSC**



I Met Bro. Bernie Klim, CSC, in 1993 just after I had joined the candidate program in Jinja. I remember he gave us a Zen recollection which I admit was not a good experience for me at that time. In fact, one of us candidates left the program after that! Being young then, we always wanted immediate answers, but Bernie's answers always left us upset or thinking about what he exactly said. **"Think about it."** This was the expression that followed his answers. Little did we know that he was teaching us to be patient, think and live in the moment. One of the most outstanding sayings of Brother Bernie's that I have lived with is: **"Many get into the water but few get out wet."** **Think about it.** Rest in Peace, Brother Bernie Klim, CSC

By Fr. Richard Kyazze, CSC

MY first encounter with Br. Bernie was at Kyarusozzi Parish when I was learning Rutooro with others and preparing to join the novitiate at Saaka. He was a man of few words. He used to drive a Mitsubishi truck and one would see it busy



from morning to evening. We used to ask him questions and initiate conversations with Br. Bernie but to our surprise, his responses would always be very brief. So we thought he was not a conversationalist. The breakthrough was when we decided to join his workmen in the field as he supervised. We were installing a water tank in the ground. The tank supplies the parish house today. We saw smiles that we had never seen before on Brother Bernie's face. He opened up and from then on we could enjoy stories from Mzee. If I would use a motto for Br. Bernie, it would be the motto of the Benedictine order "Ora et Labora" For him, it was "work and pray". Often he would pray in the Zen style, whether in the compound or in his room. While I stayed in Kyarusozi, I learned what Br. Bernie meant to communicate to us..."to rest in prayer." In McCauley House, Nairobi, the Small Christian Community of which I was a member decided to take the name "Br. Bernie Klim SCC/ after ours, another group named themselves after Brother Bernie. He was a seraphic saint! May Br. Bernie pray for us.

By Fr. Francis Mukasa, CSC

My first experience of Br. Bernie was at Andre Formation House in Jinja when he gave us a Zen Retreat and the kinhin walks are still vivid. I got an opportunity to know Br. Bernie more closely when I was sent for a community experience in Kyarusozi in 2006. Every evening I would thank him after a day's work. One day, he asked me to work with him in his workshop and I did. While in the workshop, he asked me: "Peter, what are your values?" I outlined a number of them for him. "Peter, after ten years, review your list and see if those things will still be the things you value." It is now close to 10 years since we had that conversation, and I see great wisdom in the words of Br. Bernie. We celebrate the life of Br. Bernie- his simplicity, generosity and hard work. Rest in peace *Br. Bernie. By Peter Cxton Mayanja, CSC*



A MEEK WISDOM TEACHER, BRO. BERNARD KLIM, CSC

Having lived with Bro. Bernard during my Pastoral (2008-09) and many other, I have no hesitation to say that as a community, we had a saint in the making. In his simplicity, Bro. Bernie has been a great wisdom teacher. Those who lived around him can attest that Bernie would not just speak for the sake of speaking. Any statement that came out of his mouth was always full of wisdom, and one had to first think twice to get understand what he meant. For example, just look at the following:

- a. ***Why did the chicken cross the road?*** This is one of the questions often asked in the monitor newspaper of Uganda. As a community of eight at Kyarusozi parish at that time, we tried to get answers to that question. Many answers were that the chicken was rushing for insects on the other side of the road. Silent but keenly listening, Bernie told us that we were all wrong. We listened to him intently expecting an extra-ordinary answer but he only told us that the chicken didn't even know it **WAS** crossing the road. So, why did the chicken cross the road? It didn't know it was crossing the road. The chicken never planned to cross the road. After this answer, Bernie asked the community to think again about how we approach certain issues. What do you think yourself as you read this?

- b. In January 2013, we were at the District of East Africa annual gathering at St. Augustine Institute in Nsambya. We were having dinner one day and suddenly the electric power disappeared for about two minutes before the generator was switched on. Since no one expected the sudden power disappearance, everyone, I guess except Bernie, was alarmed, "Oh nooooooo!" There was light again after two minutes and we continued eating. I had sat next to Bernie and when light appeared again, he asked me in particular, "Why did you scream?" I responded that power went-off. He answered as follows, "You mean when power disappears people are supposed to yell? I had answer so I listened to him as he offered me wiser teachings. His point was that people **need**, all should be received as any other piece of news.



Br. celebrating 50 years as a Brother in Jinja-Uganda

- c. Bern's wisdom teaching makes us examine how we look at and value life: He has been an example of living a simple life style; he is an example of *doing more* to learn how to receive sudden news. He associated this lack of proper handling of sudden news with one of the causes of high blood pressure. Be it death news, losing at a game or any other set-back.
- d. *Listening rather than just talking*; he was an example of balancing work and prayer; he always taught those around him to utilize the gifts of reasoning and energy that God gave them. He avoided and discouraged people from calling him a boss, he always taught those around him not to live a life of extremes: if you laugh, its okay but don't overdo it, always keep balance in all spheres of life.

Whenever I read the book of Qohelth in the Bible, I always see Bro. Bernie in the picture of the wisdom teacher. We will miss your wisdom Bernie! But we are people who live in **Hope**.

By Fr. Muhindo Luke, CSC

Brother Bernie came into my life at a late stage in his life. We spent eight years together at Kyarusozzi Catholic Parish in the Fort Portal Diocese, western Uganda. In those years together, we did many building projects together. I would tell him what we needed and he would design what he thought that I or the community wanted. He was



always ready to modify any project if he thought it would be better one by our suggestion. In many ways he was a perfectionist. If the workers didn't follow his plans, they had to do it over until it reached his standards of workmanship. In this way he was also to leave behind young men who learned new skills on how to build strong structures. Brother was not always perfect. He also made mistakes, but he also had this humility about him. He would say to me, "do we have the money?" If I answered "no", he would reply, "Let's stop until we have it". It wasn't his genius in planning and building that inspired me, it was the times that we sat together meditating on books early in the morning before the birds woke up the rest of the community. We had other times of sharing that I will always cherish. What was it about Brother Bernie that inspired me the most? His love for natural beauty in creation even in the smallest of things of nature. His love for simplicity, the beauty of rocks, and his love of silence. His practicality in dealing with adverse situations, like two flat tires at the same moment and only one spare. His most famous words to me as he repeated them many times, "That's the way it is!" There was no room for anger in him although he would complain that the boys were not doing their best. I am trying to sum up the most important idea that Bernie passed on to me and I can only say it inadequately. God is present in all things. More importantly God is within us. It is when we leave God to be God and know that God is truly within us, then we do not need words or thoughts to communicate, because we are one. Bernie would point out to me that was no difference in our own tradition of mystics and other world religions when it came to this idea. The beauty of it all is that God reveals to all of mankind the truth of who we are and who God is. For myself, I believe the beauty of our Catholic religion is that Jesus is revealed as the Son of God and it makes it a whole lot easier to deal with all aspects of our life. The fact that Bernie could also spend hours before the blessed sacrament, especially on Holy Thursday night, to me was a sign that Jesus was important to his life. When I am alone with Jesus in the blessed sacrament, or when I am alone with nature, my thoughts sometimes turn to Bernie, as if he were right there with me. Someday it



will happen and he might be the first person to greet me as I enter the kingdom of heaven. **By Fr. Richard Potthast, C.S.C.**

I am who I am because of Brother Bernie, he is part of my history. I saw Brother Bernie from a distance in 1995 at the bishop's house then under construction in Fort Portal. It was timely since I was looking for work in order to raise my school fees.

To be honest, my English was very poor, but I made a step to meet Brother Bernie. As they say, "Begin with what you have." I did and it helped me. Brother Bernie listened to me, though it did not seem easy for him. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, he understood me. He asked me why I was looking for work. I responded that I was looking for a job to raise school fees. He later asked me about my parents. I told him that my mother was still living, but that my father had died when I was about 10 years old. He told me to begin working for him in the compound. This was a very important moment in my life. He taught me the value of work, to love the work that I am doing. I have embraced these values in my life. A value above all others is to fear God and to see God in others. This has helped me to see nature as it is.

Brother Bernie has lived the true gospel values on earth and I am the witness of this. He fed me when I was hungry. He clothed me when I had no clothes. He nourished me spiritually and when I was sick, he took me to the hospital. In fact the love Bernie showed me and the attitude of work which he had attracted me to join the Congregation of Holy Cross as a brother. I may not live like him exactly but I will try to keep his values in my life. Indeed, I am confident now that Brother Bernie is a saint now in heaven interceding for us. His death was a blow to me but I am firm now. May his soul rest in eternal peace. Amen.

By Brother Patrick Mugabo, CSC

I am sure "Courage!" Is what most people of my time will remember of Bernie.

When he was asked to preach before the prisoners at Katojo Prison outside Fort Portal that one word was what he said! This was perhaps the shortest homily on record, and I believe it was one of the most effective as well!

Bernie was very prayerful. Work and prayer were the key elements of his life. Bernie always impressed me with his spiritual reading, making me believe that the reading was a foundation for what he did.

When Bernie arrived in East Africa, I was still in Nairobi. Bernie wanted me to join him in Virika to mentor me in skilled practical work. Though I never lived in the same house as Bernie, I can still say that he mentored me in the spiritual life.

Bernie touched many in many different ways. Last July, while I was in the United States, I gave him a letter from Brother Mugabo. Bernie shared many phrases from that letter with me. I could see in Bernie's face how much that letter meant to him. Many have been touched by Bernie. He was echoing St. Paul when he said: "I have run the race." May you rest in Eternal Peace our Brother Bernie.



By Br. Cleophas Kyomuhendo

Bernie was alert and in good spirits when Dick Stout and I visited him in the hospital just a couple of weeks before he died. When he saw me, he asked "What are you doing now?" I answered that I am in the novitiate trying to teach the novices how to pray. He responded: "And how do you DO that?" I felt like I was being examined by a master, for sure, and told him a bit about the prayer conferences we offer and the prayers we have in community etc. He looked at me and smiled his smile while shaking his head. "No, no, no! Too many words! What's important is *experience---they need to experience God, then words won't matter.*" Of course he spoke from *his* experience, and he spoke what is most true. He went on to tell us about his own experience of God, the breaking of pride in his own life, the deep peace he had in the face of sickness and death. Bernie, I'm so grateful for your radical example of prayer and service. Pray for us now from your place with God. **By Fr. Tom Smith, CSC**

Several months back, I visited Columba Hall, the Holy Cross Brothers residence at Notre Dame. Brother Bernie was not there but at Holy Cross Village, the health care center. Brother James Newberry, CSC, volunteered to drive me there. Brother James had worked in Liberia and knew how important this visit would be for Bernie and for me.

When the nurses cleared us and directed us to Brother Bernie's room, Brother James said he would wait outside a few moments before coming in. You should have seen the face of Bernie when I stepped into the room and he recognized who I was. There was a mixture of surprise, excitement and happiness on his face. He had that shy "what are you doing here?" expression all over his face. He invited me to sit on a chair next to his bed. That's when I realized that he could no longer sit up. He began by telling me every African, Jinja, Fort Portal, Kampala story that crossed his mind. We talked about the work of Holy Cross in East Africa and how it's going to impact the lives of many people over the years, and the ways he has contributed to it. I reminded him of how he had been an inspiration to many of us in East Africa. One thing I noticed was that he was at peace in his sickness despite the great pain he was going through. At some point in our conversation, he mentioned that he was "ready".



As I prepared to leave, I asked if I could pray with him. I put my hand over his head and prayed in gratitude to God for the gift of our vocation to Holy Cross and for whatever ways the Lord has allowed us to share in His work. I prayed for his healing...he broke down and started weeping. I couldn't hold it either. For more than five minutes, tears were running down our cheeks like little babies. Brother James quietly sat through all of this observing everything without interrupting...only passing the box of tissue.

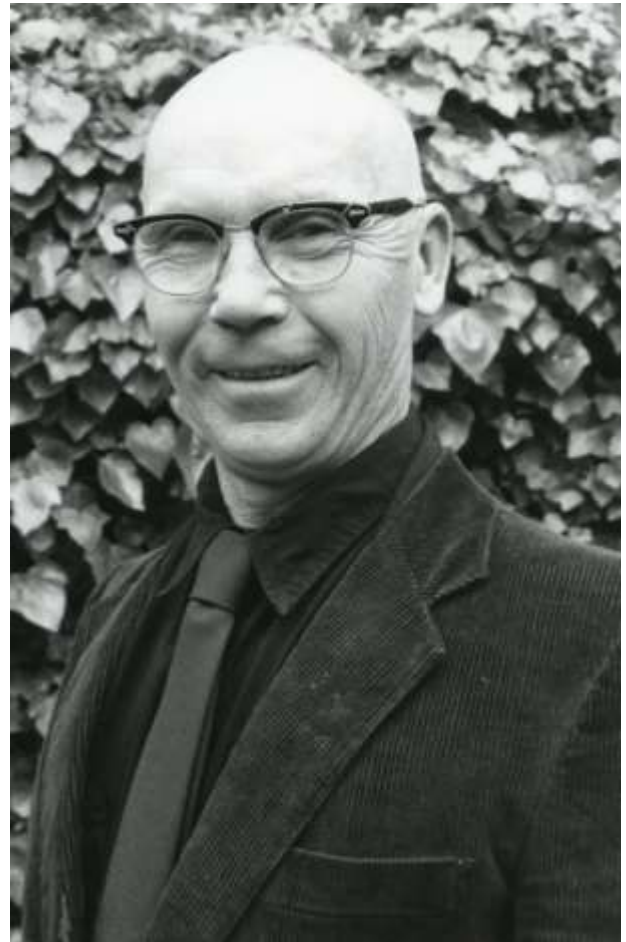
At the end of the visit, Bernie asked me to go to his room at Columba Hall with Brother James and look into the drawers for any money that might be there. Then I was to send the money to St. Joseph Hill secondary school in Uganda where he had worked. This money would be to help with the fees of the students he was supporting in school. The only other time I had done

anything like this was at Assimwe Erogi's room in Bugembe after his death. I found 300 dollars which I sent to Brother Joe Kaganda by way of Fr. Luke Muhindo who happened to be at Notre Dame at that time. Even in his last moments on earth, Bernie was thinking about other people and how he could be of help to them.

Brother Bernie, you have fought the good fight, you have kept the faith. Farewell to thee, our mentor, brother and friend. ***By Fr. Fred Jenga, CSC***



The St. Joseph dormitory for girls Br. Bernie helped construct





Brother Bernard Klim sits next to one of his favorite pieces, "The Shoe Shine."
Tribune Photos/ROBERT FRANKLIN

Brother sends message with art pieces

By **MAY LEE JOHNSON**
Tribune Staff Writer