

I Have Called You Now

I have called you now by your true name:
one heart we have become.
With you shall I be:
the gift of faithful love shared among us.

Yes, we have come to know
within our lives
a love to last beyond time.

There is no need to fear:
our God is near,
creating persons new.

Be glad with dance and song,
let joy run free:
God's love renews our hope.

Let justice flower now.
Love tenderly.
Walk humbly with our God.

No need to live the past,
for we are free:
our roots have found their home.

Invite us all to be
the bread of peace
for those who live in fear.

With Deep Gratitude

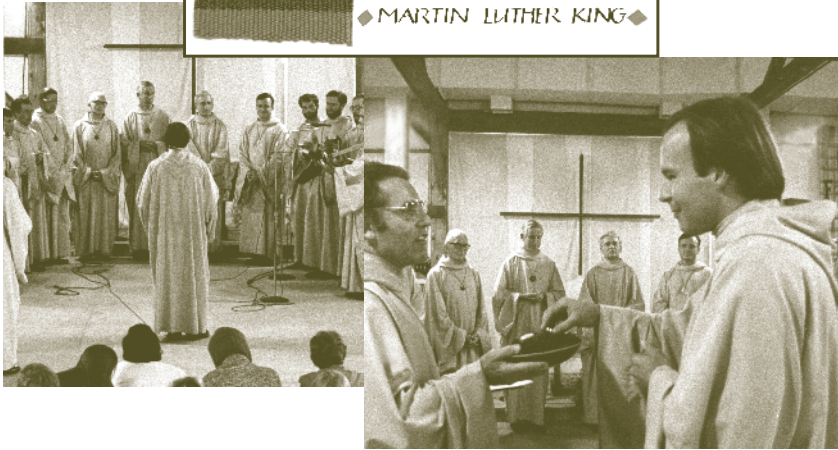
VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING ON CHRISTMAS EVE, after our vigil prayer, the brothers gathered at the bedside of our brother Philip, together with his sister, Margie, and his physician and friend, Delores Barbeau. As brother Philip breathed his last, we sang together a song whose words he wrote for his solemn monastic profession, October 1, 1977: *I Have Called You Now By Your True Name*. The Word of God truly was enfleshed in this moment of tears and deep gratitude for the faithful life and love of our brother among us.

In the last few bulletins, brother Philip shared his reflections about his experience of living with ALS¹ and the process of letting go into the hands of God and of all of us. From the time of the diagnosis, a year and several months before he died, brother Philip lived life fully and never lost his welcoming smile. In the midst of a very difficult journey that gradually took away his every capacity to care for himself, he continued to reflect with creativity and freedom on the meaning of our life together and the reality of our world—including politics and the elections! He remained faithful in prayer, trusting that God was with him; and he never lost the humble sense of humor that kept all the brothers engaged who were offering him care.

During these days of the Easter celebration, as we walk the road to Emmaus, we try to understand what has happened and the “why”

¹ Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

All I want
is to leave a
committed
life behind.
♦ MARTIN LUTHER KING ♦



of pain, loss and separation, of human suffering and death. Even as we remember, God's word opens us to deeper mystery. As our questioning mind lets go, we find our hearts are on fire with a presence we cannot explain. With gratitude we have begun to experience the *shalom* and fullness of Sabbath rest that our brother Philip knows eternally.

Brother Philip relished the celebration of Pentecost! Pentecost is the great liturgical feast of Christian and monastic life. On the Vigil of Pentecost we will return brother Philip's remains to the earth from which we were all formed. With him, we celebrate the Sabbath of the Spirit who prays beyond words in our spirit today and forever. When the breath can no longer be confined to our bodies, this breath of spirit comes to life in the beauty of creation and in the hearts of all we have loved.

Words cannot express the depth of the gratitude we feel for all the expressions of love and care for our brother Philip and for all of us brothers during the time of his illness and at his dying. Every heartfelt word and gesture of support strengthened us on this journey.

In a limited way through this memorial edition of our bulletin, we hope to share some of our own reflections and a small sample from those who so graciously shared thoughts and wishes with us. Possibly the few can somehow represent the many.

Poetry often captures the deeper reality and mystery of experience. We have included poems that brothers John, Columba, and Augustine shared with brother Philip before he died. An excerpt from a poem that

brother Philip kept in his own book of psalms comes from Catherine de Vinck's *A Book of Uncommon Prayers*. It echoes his journey of faith.

At the Memorial Eucharist celebrated after brother Philip's death, a good friend of our community, Bishop Paul Bootkoski, of the Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, gave a moving testimony remembering brother Philip which is included.

There are two other poetic expressions written in remembrance of brother Philip: one by friends and Vermont neighbors Jenny and Cliff Pollard; the other by Lorrie Ann MacGregor who found strength and understanding in the faith and hope of brother Philip in the midst of her own physical challenges.

The month of May has been designated ALS remembrance month. During his illness, brother Philip was interviewed for the MDA/ALS Regional Newsletter of May, 2008. Keeping in mind those living and dying with the disease, we reprint a section of that inspiring article.

And finally, in a spirit of gratitude, we share the prayer, personal reflection, and song that brother Philip assembled shortly before he died. He asked the brothers to pray it with him in his final days. It is titled: *Our Paschal Journey*. The depth of his journey in faith and hope speak eloquently of the love we shared for each other. He was truly called by his name, and he now goes ahead of us and calls each of us by our true names until that day when we will be brought *all together* to everlasting life (*Rule of Benedict*, chapter 72) — the fullness of God's Sabbath rest: shalom! ■