

RET. ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS R. NOWICKI, O.S.B.



Retired Archabbot of Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Douglas R. Nowicki, O.S.B., 79, died Tuesday, July 23, in Allegheny General Hospital, Pittsburgh, following a brief illness. The eleventh Archabbot of Saint Vincent, serving from 1991 until he reached the retirement age of 75 in May of 2020, he was the second longest-serving archabbot in the 178-year history of Saint Vincent, which was founded in 1846

and became an abbey in 1855. Saint Vincent Archabbey, with more than 150 monks, was the first Benedictine monastery in the United States, and is one of the largest monasteries in the world.

A native of Everson, Pennsylvania, born on May 8, 1945, he was one of four children of the late Sylvester and Evelyn (Jackamonis) Nowicki. He is survived by his siblings, Edward Nowicki of Greensburg, Lawrence (Katie) Nowicki of Harrisburg, and Sylvia M. Sickenberger of Greensburg, and their children, Ed (Kathy) Nowicki, Lori (Brian) Bottarini, Kim (Bruce) Pesarchick, Kristen (Ross) Aron, Stacy Rae (Andy) Muetzel, Robert Dean (Sandy) Sickenberger Jr., Diane (Robert) Armstrong, and many great-nieces and great-nephews and great-great nieces and nephews, as well as members of his monastic community.

He attended Catholic grade schools at Saint Joseph, Everson, and Holy Cross, Youngwood. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from Saint Vincent College in May of 1968, a Master of Divinity from Saint Vincent Seminary in May of 1971 and a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Tennessee in December of 1977. He was professed as a Benedictine on July 11, 1966, and was ordained to the priesthood at the Archabbey Basilica on May 21, 1972 by Bishop William G. Connare of Greensburg. He was elected eleventh Archabbot of Saint Vincent by his fellow monks on January 8, 1991, and received the Abbatial Blessing from Bishop Anthony G. Bosco of Greensburg on March 1, 1991. In his role as Archabbot, he served as Chancellor of Saint Vincent College and Saint Vincent Seminary and was the Major Superior of the Benedictines at the Priory and Benedictine Military School in Savannah, Georgia, and the Benedictine priories in Brazil and Taiwan.

Prior to his election as archabbot, Archabbot Douglas had served for five years as Secretary for Education of the Diocese of Pittsburgh from 1986 to 1991 and pastor of Our Lady, Queen of Peace Parish, North Side, Pittsburgh from 1984 to 1986. At Saint Vincent College, he served as chairman of the Department of Psychology from 1979 to 1984 and associate academic dean from 1983 to 1984. From 1978 through 1983, he was also a member of the staff in the Behavioral Science Department at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. The archabbot also served as a psychological consultant to Mister Rogers' Neighborhood for a number of years and was a close friend of Fred Rogers and his wife, Joanne.

Coming to Latrobe as a student in the Saint Vincent Preparatory School, he graduated in 1963, the year of the devastating Saint Vincent fire. Years later, after he was elected Archabbot, he inaugurated a renaissance of growth and building across campus, and spent nearly three decades working for the betterment of all of Saint Vincent. During his tenure as Archabbot, growth occurred in all areas of Saint Vincent: Archabbey, College, Parish, and Seminary.

Sometimes those projects were in the form of construction, renovations and improvements, such as the construction of the Monastery Run Improvement Project to treat acid mine drainage via a wetlands on the monastery's land (1997), or renovation of the historic Gristmill, built in 1856, with new siding and windows (1998), or construction of the Mary, Mother of Wisdom Mausoleum Chapel at Saint Vincent Cemetery (2014). Other times, those projects involved celebrations, such as the 150th anniversary of the founding of Saint Vincent as a Benedictine community (1996), or the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Saint Vincent founder Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B. (2009).

At Saint Vincent Basilica Parish, the Preserving the Vision capital campaign raised \$1.5 million to build the Parish Center in 1997. Archabbot Douglas raised funds for and oversaw the restoration of the Archabbey Basilica (1996), constructed in 1905, as well as the installation of the front spires and a bell tower (2000), new organ (2010) and restoration of the Basilica Crypt (2010).

Saint Vincent Seminary saw the expansion of the Elizabeth J. Roderick Center (1997), addition of student rooms, staff offices, and construction of the Saint Gregory Chapel (1997), John and Annette Brownfield Center (2004), and DiPadova Hall (2020-2021), establishment of the Pope Benedict XVI Chair of Biblical Theology and Homiletics for Excellence in Preaching (2004), increased scholarships for seminarians, and sponsorship of international seminarians from Africa, China and Brazil to attend the Seminary. He met with Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, and forged relationships with countless cardinals, bishops, and priests, frequently bringing them to the Seminary to broaden the exposure of the Seminary and to enhance the growth of seminarians.

Construction projects at Saint Vincent College were numerous, from construction of a two-mile fitness trail around campus (1994), to expansion of parking areas for improved access and safety (1994), and construction and renovation of dormitories such as Rooney Hall (1995, expanded 2002), the \$5 million Prep Hall (1998), and the \$16 million Saint Benedict Hall (2002). Archabbot Douglas oversaw the expansion and renovation of the Robert S. Carey Center (2003), construction of Chuck Noll Field (2003), creation of the Fred M. Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media (2003), the Alex G. McKenna School of Business, Economics and Government following a \$3.2 million renovation project in Aurelius Hall (2005), the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve (2006), the Loe China Studies Center (2008), and upgrades and renovations to the Latimer Family Library (1998, 2006, 2020) and construction of The Verostko Center for the Arts (2020). Other projects included the \$14 million state-of-the-art Rogers Center facility, conference center and exhibition space that also features the Foster and Muriel McCarl Gallery of Early American Coverlets (2007), and the \$40 million Sis and Herman Dupré Science Pavilion (2011), which is home to The Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computing (2006), the James F. Will Hall (2017), and the Ralph Liberatore Human Anatomy Lab (2017).

There were countless scholarships and sponsorships for college students, international students, monks, and seminarians, who helped expand the scope of the Saint Vincent community in Latrobe. Speakers such as Fred Rogers at the sesquicentennial, or guests such as Prince Ludwig of Bavaria, whose family has ties with the Archabbey dating to Boniface Wimmer, and Yo Yo Ma served to draw national and worldwide attention to the Archabbey and its works.

One of Archabbot Douglas' favorite quotes was from Wimmer, "Forward, always forward, everywhere forward. We cannot be held back by debts, by the difficulties of the times, by unfortunate years. Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

The body of Archabbot Douglas will be received at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, July 27, in the parlor of the Elizabeth Roderick Center at Saint Vincent Seminary, with viewing from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday, and from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, July 28. A wake service will be held at 7:15 p.m. Sunday, July 28 in the Archabbey Basilica with Archabbot Martin Bartel, O.S.B., as celebrant and homilist. A concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 1:30 p.m. Monday, July 29, in the Archabbey Basilica, with Archabbot Martin as the celebrant and Father Paul Taylor, O.S.B., as the homilist. The Rite of Committal will follow in the Mary Mother of Mercy Mausoleum Chapel at Saint Vincent Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Benedictine Health and Welfare Fund at Saint Vincent Archabbey, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650.

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