PASSAGE OF BROTHER CONRAD FEDERSPIEL, C.P. (Born May 28, 1924, Professed April 3, 1952, Died October 6, 2013)
By Tom Keevey

Brother Conrad Federspiel was a member of the Passionist Religious Order, as was Thomas Berry. He worked in many monasteries including years at the foundation in Port Burwell, Canada, where he cared for the property and did much of the internal maintenance that keeps large buildings going. But he had many other avocations and interests; he was a wealth of knowledge in areas that he loved, such as the history of the great musical organs throughout the country and also trains. He was truly a Renaissance man.

When he was assigned to the Riverdale monastery and retreat center, his love of nature and the outdoors deepened into an eco-theology when one day Thomas Berry knocked on his door and suggested a walk throughout the neighborhood. They walked along their property which overlooks the Hudson River and stares at the great cliffs of New Jersey, the Palisades, which as Thomas explained were unique in the history of this bio-region. Thus began a mutual friendship that was a combination of practical know-how and a vision of a peaceful Earth. Conrad and Thomas were host to many important guests, such as Bede Griffiths, the Dalai Lama, diplomats from the UN—too many to list here, and Conrad loved to display his photos of all these guests and to talk about the wisdom and insights of Thomas. Conrad was also an active participant in the Riverdale seminars and workshops conducted by Thomas. When Thomas moved to North Carolina, Conrad continued to attend the Teilhard meetings in the New York area where he was always welcomed and honored. Brother Conrad remained devoted to Thomas and the dream of Earth until his death.

His funeral ceremony was carried out in a dignified manner in the beautiful liturgical setting of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception Monastery in Queens, New York City. Organ, violin and trumpet sustained the singing as well as offering solo pieces. The Provincial Superior, Fr. Robert Joerger, C.P., celebrated the Mass, the Brothers did the readings and prayers and Brother Edward Hall, C.P., gave a moving homily emphasizing Conrad's care for others and his gentleness and kindness. The entire community filled the monastic choir to pray for and remember their friend and fellow Passionist. Along with Catherine and I, T. Mullin attended as well as people from the surrounding neighborhood and convents and a few other friends of Conrad and Thomas. Conrad's brother from Wisconsin with his daughter and her husband were also there.

At the end of the Mass, the Provincial thanked everyone and alluded to Conrad's work with Thomas Berry and his love and respect for Earth. Burial took place immediately after the Mass in the cemetery out back. After the committal prayers by the Superior of the house, Fr. Peter Grace, C. P., taps were played. The Marine honor guard folded the American flag draped on
Conrad’s casket and presented it to his brother. Everyone was invited into the monastery refectory for lunch.

Brother Conrad’s obituary may be read here along with some very nice reflections from his nieces and nephews.

The homily by Brother Edward Hall may be read here.