

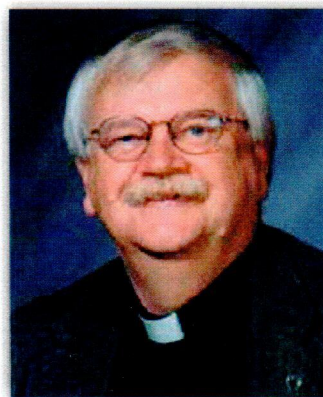
Father Eric Vogt, O.S.B. **A monk of Saint Vincent Archabbey**

Born: January 14, 1951

Professed: July 10, 1971

Ordained: May 19, 1979

Died: April 8, 2023



Father Eric T. Vogt, O.S.B., a monk of Saint Vincent Archabbey for more than 50 years, died Saturday, April 8, 2023.

Father Eric served at parishes in the dioceses of Greensburg, Erie and Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania, including in his native St. Marys, in Richmond, Virginia, and Savannah, Georgia. He served in various roles at Saint Vincent College, was a successful baseball coach, and an official for the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) in basketball and softball, as well as a PIAA baseball umpire, all for nearly 30 years. He was also chaplain of the St. Marys Police Department and life member and chaplain of the Bucktail Lodge 96 FOP.

Father Eric was born in St. Marys, Pennsylvania on January 14, 1951, a son of the late Robert Vogt, Sr. and Joyce (Wehler) Vogt. He was the oldest of 12 children. He was preceded in death by his sister Cheryl Herzing and his brother Robert (Rote) Vogt. Surviving are his siblings Mike (Elaine) Vogt, Ken (Gerry) Vogt, Dale (Jen) Vogt, Judy Vogt, John (Dawn) Vogt and Emily Saline, Joe (Peach) Vogt, all of St. Marys; Mary Jo (Joe) Bolitiski of Daguscahonda and Chrissy (Blaine) Stauffer of Lake Luzerne, New York. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews; his godson, nephew Mark Bolitiski; and his loving aunts, Mary Lou Seelye, Helen Williams and Emma Vogt.

He attended Queen of the World Grade School in St. Marys, and was a 1968 graduate of Saint Vincent Preparatory School. While he was still a student at Saint Vincent College, he joined the Benedictine monastic community, in 1970. Three years later he earned the bachelor of arts degree in history, then began studies at Saint Vincent Seminary, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 1976. He made simple profession of vows on July 10, 1971, and solemn profession of vows on July 11, 1974. He was ordained a priest in Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica by the late Bishop William Connare of Greensburg on May 19, 1979.

During his early years in formation, and while a student, he served in various roles at Saint Vincent College, including assistant director of Project Headway (1972-77); prefect (1975-76); admissions counselor (1977-78); dormitory moderator, campus minister, assistant athletic director in charge of intramural athletics, director of the swimming pool and assistant producer of the Saint Vincent Summer Theatre. At the Archabbey he served as assistant director of Lay Retreats (1972-77). He was a faculty member of Benedictine Military High School, Savannah, Georgia (1976-77).

Following his ordination, he was assigned as associate pastor at Sacred Heart Parish, Jeannette (1979-1982); parochial vicar at Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Virginia Beach, Virginia (1982-86); and Saint Benedict Parish, Carrolltown (1986-88). He returned to Saint Vincent to serve as head baseball coach (1988-1997). Then followed assignments as parochial vicar at Saint Peter Parish, North Side, Pittsburgh (1997-98), prior to his appointment as pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, New Germany, and Saint John Parish, Summerhill (1998-2002) and pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, St. Marys (2002-2017). In 2017 he was named pastor of Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Virginia Beach, serving there until 2022 when he was named senior associate at Queen of the World, Saint Mary and Sacred Heart parishes in St. Marys. Father Eric was involved with the Knights of Columbus, with various schools, and with sports, serving as chaplain, school board member and hospital board member at various places where he was serving.

The gospel for his funeral Mass, from Mark 12:41-44, tells the story of the poor widow who put all she had into the Temple treasury, when many richer people put in larger sums, contributing out of their abundance. She contributed out of her poverty.

The traditional interpretation of this ancient gospel is one of praise of interiority and integrity, of a truly generous and unselfish heart. But the scene also shows us a bustling crowd at the Temple, people ostentatiously tossing their offerings into the poor box, the treasury. There are a lot of people going to and fro. Yet the sensitive eye of Jesus picks out among the well-robed important folk, a small, nondescript widow—no husband, no son with her in public. That's how He knew she was a widow—and her clothes and her demeanor betrayed her poverty. In short, the kind of a person who could get lost and unnoticed in the crowd. But not by Jesus. He noticed her. No one else did, but He did.

As we give Father Eric back to the hands of God, we recall his spirit, his ministry. But this gospel episode came readily to mind when thinking about Father Eric, a monk and priest who noticed and touched the ordinary person, the common person, the unremarkable person, those who might go unnoticed by many others. It was to those that

he ministered and reached by his priesthood. It was to those that he quietly enriched, softly making a difference in their lives, dropping unnoticed coins of care into the treasury of many lives. And that care extended beyond any particular assignment. Once you were his parishioner, you were always his parishioner, once a friend, always a friend. He also had the tradition of concluding his Masses by thanking the parents who brought their children to church.

When he lived in the dorms at Saint Vincent College and served as baseball coach, he could reach the student on the periphery, the odd man out, the wallflower, often by his interest in sports and his skills on the ballfield. His coaching and his emphasis on teamwork and evoking the best in his players moved just as many hearts as his sermons. He was not one to seek the limelight or call attention to himself. Like the widow of the gospel, he could go unnoticed by those who did not know him. But Jesus noticed, and so did those of us whose lives he touched. This man, this monk and priest, touched by God has, in his quiet way, touched us.

In a post-communion reflection at the funeral Mass, Brother Albert Gahr noted that "A few years ago, our Holy Father Pope Francis called his priests to be out with the people, to go out and smell like the sheep. Father Eric lived this reality long before the admonition of the Holy Father. Whether we met him as a pastor in our parish, as a coach in the field, as a dorm moderator or most importantly as a member of our family, he was always out with the people, even in his concise message from the pulpit; on the baseball field, where his preaching took a different tone; on the basketball court, where he let his play do the speaking for him; in the park on a Sunday morning after Mass, teaching the kids to swing the bat properly, and occasionally I hear, maybe in a casino or two. During his time in the dorms Father Eric was a constant support for those who had any issue. He did not pretend he was perfect. He acknowledged his faults. He lived his faults. He smelled like the sheep. But this, I think, ingratiated him to a lot of people who otherwise would not have approached a priest for advice, for help, for reconciliation,"

Brother Albert recalled that "as a coach we've seen a side of Father Eric that showed his care and concern beyond the field. It wasn't just your performance on the field that he was worried about. It was how he could help you and be ready for whatever life was calling you to. And I know at least a few of his former players that have taken that seriously and considered and entered religious life or sought ordination. Throughout his life he was always an example of imperfection being perfected. He was always an example that allowed you to enter into, in a new way, your faith. In parishes he welcomed those who maybe weren't as ready to be active in parish life. He connected well and encouraged the men's groups in various parishes, the Knights of Columbus, if for no other way than coming for a drink after bingo or going to play bingo to catch a different group at the same time. In all of those little ways he reached out, he touched people who otherwise may have been on the fringe... It was during those little events that he touched lives. He found people a new way to draw closer to God and closer to others."

Father Eric's love of baseball was somehow fitting. Baseball is a pastoral game. The whole point of baseball is to go home. The whole point of our faith life is to go home. And in that last at bat, he took to first, with Jesus Christ at bat, swinging for the fences, sending Father Eric home, where he belongs, in the hands of God.

There were services for Father Eric in St. Marys and at Saint Vincent Archabbey. Following a funeral Mass at noon on April 12 in St. Marys at Queen of the World Church, a wake service was held at the Archabbey that evening. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on April 13 by Archabbot Martin, with Most Rev. Lawrence Persico, Bishop of the Diocese of Erie, in attendance. The Rite of Committal followed in the Mary Mother of Mercy Mausoleum Chapel at Saint Vincent Cemetery.

We ask for your charity and customary suffrages. It is consoling to know that every monk of our monastery offers three Masses for the repose of Father Eric's soul, and that he will be included among those confreres for whom all professed monks of our Congregation offer Mass monthly.

MAY FLIGHTS OF ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST

Martin R. Bartel, O.S.B.

**+Martin R. Bartel, O.S.B.
Archabbot**

**Saint Vincent Archabbey
Latrobe, Pennsylvania**