

PASQUALE (PAT) ONOFRIO – Kind Man of Many Gifts (1948-2009)



On Thursday August 13th, 2009 Pat died at the Hotel Dieu Hospital following a lengthy period of illness. Predeceased by his common life partner André Leclerc in 2003, he is survived by many of his dear friends, as well as many colleagues from the Montreal Gazette.

Pat grew up in Rosemount, and studied Theology at Loyola College, and Concordia University (1969 through 1976) and ultimately did post graduate studies in St. Paul University Seminary in Ottawa (1977 through 1982). He excelled in research and writing, however he was also a gifted artist and photographer. Many of his photographs were featured in the weekly church publication “Le Feuillet de dimanche” and much of his artwork, murals and paintings are still being seen today in churches throughout Montreal and Ottawa.

He used his research abilities throughout his long career as a librarian at the Montreal Gazette, assisting many of the journalists to obtain necessary background information for their stories and articles. Among his most cherished achievements, Pat championed the rights of gay couples to gain the dignity and respect they deserve in the eyes of society by writing an article which was published in the Gazette 8 Sept, 2003.

His last years were plagued by throat cancer, heart and respiratory problems, and limited mobility. His friends pray that he is now reunited in peace with André.

Pat gifted the author of this website, Fr. Gilles Surprenant, with his warm fraternal love and friendship, and I regret to recall that I did not sufficiently reciprocate. Pat often showed a gruff exterior but had a truly kind and understanding heart. He was very sensitive to issues of justice and cared deeply about people and the world. His occasional rude / humorous remarks were just a shield to protect his deep feelings. When he most needed my understanding, as he shared with me his personal struggle and finally his change in lifestyle; I failed him by reacting intellectually, instead of showing him the same understanding and compassion he had shown me.

Years before he had crafted this poster using a hand made “dot matrix” to illustrate the meeting of Jesus with two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the late afternoon of Jesus’ Resurrection. This unique poster graced the two programs for my ordination as a deacon and as a priest. Pat also produced a 7-foot banner illustrating the same scene on fabric. He also crafted a beautiful stained glass window of the Madonna with Child and a painting illustrating 3 Gospel scenes: the Good Samaritan, Jesus preaching about the lilies and the birds, and his parable of the Sower and the Seed.

My dear Pat, I trust that in the blessed company of the Most Holy Trinity you have at long last found answers to the many questions that percolated throughout your life in your brilliant mind and gifted imagination, and that your restless heart is finally finding the rest God has always desired for you. I also hope that now you are able and willing to forgive my poor stupidity and the self-absorption that prevented me from showing you the compassion you needed and that every human being deserves. I am truly sorry that I failed you on this Earth.

Farewell dear friend!!

Written by Bruce Herbert in 2009 with additions by Gilles Surprenant in 2020