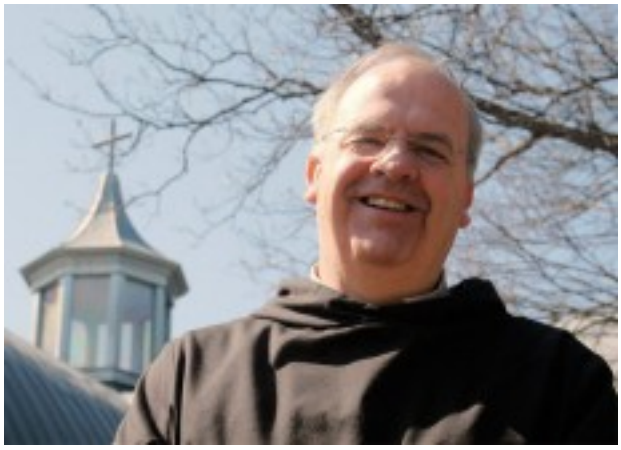


Entry for November 29, 2010

Less than an hour away from departing Dalat, the second leg of our Asian journey. It's been a most enjoyable and instructive time. The enjoyable part begins with the climate which, on account of its elevation, is much cooler than Saigon. It's a city built along the slopes of a mountain - before 1975 in a manner that respected the natural beauty of its setting, after 1975 in a more careless and haphazard way. A heavy dose of sadness has been a companion these days, especially in viewing what was done to Dinh's family home here, but overall in the culture-destroying depredations of the regime. Call it the "shabbification" of a lovely city. I recall the rhetoric in the mid-seventies in the US along the lines of "our long nightmare being over". For the South Vietnamese it was just beginning, and the consequences for the Church and for the society at large have been devastating. Since the early 1990's, ideology has given way to maintaining power and riches, and to that end there has been a loosening of the reins. University students still spend at least half of the first two years studying the history of communism and other fascinating anacronisms, but the standard joke is that Ho Chi Minh is mostly known as the face of the currency.



It has been a heartwarming three days for Dinh - meeting his former teachers, friends and

parishioners and renewing connection with a place that formed him so deeply. The seminary itself is, I suppose, reminiscent of our minor seminaries in the 50's and 60's - a regimented schedule, half the day spent in manual labor, and here a liturgy that is reverent and rather beautifully sung.

Entry for November 30, 2010

(Editor's note: after leaving Dalat, Dinh and Dennis traveled to the town where his 95 year old grandmother and his uncle and his family live and spent two days there.)



Sleeping Vietnamese style tonight - on a mat.
Yin and yang: my softness meets the mat's hardness.

By the way, Dinh's grandma is a pistol.

Entry for December 1, 2010

We arrived at the AA novitiate early this afternoon after a hundred mile drive from Dinh's family. Having come down from the mountain, this is the toastiest first day of December this body has ever experienced. With roosters and birds of many other feathers cavorting within a few yards of the back door of my room, it might be a summer's day in Milledgeville, Georgia.

