

Fr. Denys Gonthier, esteemed professor of French at Assumption for many years, was fond of quoting Gabriel Marcel, twentieth century French existentialist, to the effect that absence is another form of presence. Fr. Denys was a lover of mystery and paradox, so the effect of this statement, upending our customary way of thinking, accorded well with his playful spirit. The force of the seeming paradox may be less evident for us today, for whom computers and smartphones and other modes of instantaneous communication collapse the distance that separates us from one another both in space and time. I betray my age and perhaps my nostalgia in wondering whether something has been lost in no longer waiting for a return letter from a friend or a loved one.

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