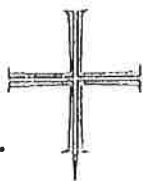


SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY



Work Assessment: Michael Bik, O.S.B.
September 1989

Finding work for Brother Michael should never be a problem for the abbot or personnel director. Limiting work for Brother Michael may prove to be a more formidable task, however. Michael's compulsive work habits, like his compulsive eating habits, may prove to be a long-range concern for his superiors. Positively, this will mean that Michael will generally be perceived as someone who can always be asked for help on short notice, someone who will rarely say no to someone in need. Negatively, this will mean that Michael will often be running in many directions, overextended, and usually short on time for himself and for community presence.

Michael's work as a teacher in the Prep School (both in theology and math) has been generally well-received by the staff. If there are any shortcomings in particular, they would probably lie in Michael's head: he is short on self-confidence, despite the expressed love from his students, the respect of his colleagues, and his significant formal preparation and years of experience. Also, he often gives the impression that he is getting the short end of the stick in his work and relations with others. Sometimes that may be the case, but not always. Of the two areas in which Michael has made his most significant contributions, it would seem that he is less comfortable and less gifted in the math department; theology/campus ministry is his strong point.

Above all, it is for his dealings with others that Michael is best known. Michael is the ever-ready shoulder on which many young students have cried. Michael is the outstanding cook/baker who has delivered no end of cookies, cakes, and even meat loaf to colleagues, students, and summer campers. Michael is the most faithful cheerleader/chaperon at virtually any activity in any way related to the Prep School or summer camp activities. Indeed, one could do damage to both charity and the Gospel of Matthew by suggesting that "Where two or three preps are gathered, there is Michael Bik in their midst." But alas, it seems true: Michael is unable to resist any opportunity to engage in small talk or serious counseling, unable to resist attending any event, big or small, related to the Prep School.

A confrere has suggested to me that maybe Michael is the new Otto Weber. If that is the case (whether consciously or not), it is a comparison which cuts both ways. Michael may indeed be the next confrere who will be known and loved by many generations of Prep/summer camp alumni, the confrere who works so hard and so long. But he may also be the confrere who so many do not know well simply because he is not present to the community so much of the time. And that is a shame, because those who do know Michael better know that he is a good and loving individual at heart.

Michael would seem well-suited for continued work in teaching and capable of fulfilling the demands of positions related to guest work/hospitality/retreatants. He will certainly make every effort to make others feel at home at Saint John's. It would be helpful, I believe, to pursue situations/assignments in which Michael's talents and good will could be more diversified, to expose Michael to the many opportunities and responsibilities which exist even beyond the world of adolescents.

Robert, O.S.B.

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