

ROLAND R. ROPERS



Pascaline Coff O.S.B.

Benedictine Sister Pascaline Coff, born **January 22, 1927**, is an US-American and since 1980 had directed one of the most beautiful spiritual centers in the United States: ***Osage Monastery, Forest of Peace***, in **Sand Springs, Oklahoma** (20 miles from Tulsa Airport).

Bede Griffiths especially loved ***Osage*** and spent 8 weeks there in 1991 and 1992.

Pascaline Coff is a remarkable woman whose dedication is exemplary. It is thanks to her initiative that the **XIV. Dalai Lama** has become so well known in America for many years. **Pascaline C.** has long served as president of the ***North American Board of Monastic Inter-Religious Dialogue***. She has made many trips to Tibet and northern India to see the Dalai Lama, who holds her in the highest esteem. In the early 1980s, Pascaline Coff spent a full year with Bede Griffiths in the ashram.

In America, she participated in the famous retreats of **Raimon Panikkar** in **St. Louis**, from which the book ***"Blessed Simplicity"*** (German: ***"Den Mönch in sich entdecken"***) was written.

Pascaline had not an easy time with her religious leadership. Her commitment to the Eastern ways had been severely criticized time and again. With her admirable gentleness, she knew how to open doors everywhere and win people over.

In **September 1993** we established in **Osage** together with my Australian friend **Dr. Meath Conlan** "**The Bede Griffiths Trust**". For private reasons I later refrained from my membership on the board.

Pascaline is very weak now and had recent periods of complete conscious absence. We have exchanged dozens of e-mails until 2017. She always wrote: "**Roland, you have special gift to coin words!**"

22nd January 2021 – Sister Pascaline's 94th birthday

Sister Pascaline Coff O.S.B.

90th birthday

22nd January 2017

"The realization of the Atman, is the realization of one's inner self, the total Oneness with the Supreme, Brahmavidya, the knowledge of Brahman.

You discover your Buddha Nature. In Hindu tradition you speak of Jivanmukta, of total liberation while still alive.

In this state one has integrated his whole being in the one Supreme Reality. This is when emptiness becomes fullness, beyond the beyond, here and know.

Existing from the beginning, hidden behind your body, senses, your feelings and all your limitations."

(Dom Bede Griffiths)

*Dearest Sister Pascaline,
dear faithful spiritual companion and friend,*

you will celebrate your **90th birthday** – hopefully in good health and in a state of "**total liberation**" as outlined by our beloved guruji **Bede Griffiths** with whom you were so deeply connected. Dom Bede was already 83 when he

experienced end of January 1990 his all-changing enlightenment – the complete integration of the masculine and feminine. And when I saw him for the last time on **31st December 1992** in *Shantivanam*, he said to me: ***“All my 83 years before were only the preparation for that great advaita-experience”***. In September 1990 Bede Griffiths started his breath-taking world-travel programme which ended in October 1992.

You had spent a full year with **Dom Bede** in *Shantivanam* and you have made many trips to India. Your connection with the **Dalai Lama** has been close – you brought him to the United States. Through your work and guidance **Osage Monastery, “Forest of Peace”**, in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, became a very special spiritual retreat centre.

On 22nd July 1992 **Bede Griffiths** wrote from Osage:

“My dear Roland, this place has had a profound effect on me. It is the most peaceful place I have ever known and makes me feel the presence of GOD more intimately. One needs constantly to be renewed in the divine presence which solitude can bring... Something very deep is happening in me. I have been reading the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament – it is appalling. The God of Israel was a God of murder and destruction, ordering the slaughter of men, women and children. We have to read the Old Testament with new eyes. Even the best of the prophets are affected by it like the psalmist. Anger, hatred and revenge are the order of the day. Jesus came to set us free from the Law, the Torah, as St. Paul so well understood, and to put an end to that religion of judgment and condemnation, by revealing the mystery of unconditional love. We are all conditioned by our ignorance and all need forgiveness...”

Bede Griffiths always used a language of poetic beauty which brought everyone who entered into his aura into an immediate feeling of reconciliation and oneness. When Dom Bede joined the Benedictine order he was trained with the weekly routine of praying all **150 Psalms** of the Old Testament. The more he became conscious of the deeper meaning of words he felt that these prayers need to be revised. No one ever in history had the courage to positively manipulate the psalms which are being prayed more or less unconsciously. In the spirit of the witness of Christ to peace and neighbourliness, Bede Griffiths edited 95 of the Psalms for use in **Christian Prayer** and liberated all texts from words that could badly influence man’s subconsciousness. Inspired by our many unforgettable conversations he wrote on **30th March 1992** in Kreuth/Germany – viewing the **Blue Mountains** (Sanskrit: **Nil Giri**) – his courageous introduction to his new book of Psalms:

“From the earliest times the songs of the Hebrew Psalter have been held in veneration by the Christian Church. They were considered to have been inspired by GOD and to have been the prayer of Jesus himself. St. Benedict in his rule was careful to arrange for the whole Psalter to be sung every week in choir, and declared that the holy fathers were wont to recite in a single day what we tepid monks may only sing in a week. If there were any problems about the sentiments expressed in some of the Psalms, the difficulty was overcome by interpreting them in an allegorical sense... The symbolic understanding has been continued until the present day, but as we come to attend more closely to the literal meaning of the Psalms, which for an educated person today is almost inevitable, it becomes more and more difficult to accept many of them as Christian prayers. Taken in their literal sense many of the Psalms express feelings of anger, hatred and revenge against one’s enemies which are entirely opposed to the teaching of the Gospel on love of one’s enemies... We have to remember that ancient Israel grew up in a dualistic culture in which GOD was considered to be separate – the word ‘holy’ originally means separate – from humanity and the created world. Human beings were separate from GOD and one another from the surrounding world. Israel was a ‘holy’ nation separate from the other nations of the world. As a result Israel was surrounded by ‘enemies’ who were hostile to GOD and to the people of GOD. The good were separate from the wicked, the righteous from sinners, and the end was conceived to be the destruction of the ‘wicked’ and all the ‘enemies’ of Israel. The Messiah was to conquer their enemies and subdue them under his feet. This was the perspective of the Psalmist and it was precisely this dualism which Jesus came to overcome. He broke down the dividing walls between Jews and Gentiles... The Psalms still retain their value and can be used in Christian prayer. We can praise GOD for all the work of creation, thank him for his providence over human life, ask for mercy and forgiveness and look forward to the joy of reconciliation...”

HarperCollins published this unique gem in 1995 – it took me an enormous effort to convince the London world-famous publishing house. Only a few hundred copies were sold – German catholic publishers were extremely reluctant. So, the routine of praying the 150 psalms during a week in the monastery is unchanged – the words of revenge and hatred etc. are still being spelled out.

Lao Tsu says so wisely in chapter 47 of the „*Tao Te Ching*“

***„Without going outside, you may know the whole world.
Without looking through the window,
you may see the ways of heaven.
The farther you go, the less you know.***

***Thus the sage knows without travelling;
He sees without looking;
He works without doing.“***

The above lines of a sage indicate that religion cannot be found on the tempting stage where global players try to disconnect humanity from its divine centre.

Dearest Sister Pascaline,

we live in a period in history of tremendous turmoil and challenge. With your brave spiritual clarity you have made an important contribution to make this world more human.

„Contemplation is Knowledge by Love“

(Bede Griffiths O.S.B., Kreuth 22nd September 1992)

***„Speech is the organ of the present world,
Silence is the mystery of the world to come.“***

(St. Isaac the Syrian)

When I visited the Indian Sage **Sri Eknath Easwaran** (1910 – 1999) on March 7th 1997 in his „**Blue Mountain Meditation Center, NILGIRI** “ in Tomales/ California he quoted his favourite passage from the **Chandogya Upanishad** which **Dom Bede** loved so much as well:

“The sages of ancient India affirm that within the lotus of the heart is a secret dwelling, which can enter in the depths of meditation. We will find therein the fulfilment of all desires and the knowledge that we are not the body. With this experiential knowledge we leave disease, decay, and death far behind. While we still take good care of the body, we do so purely out of love for all those we want to help go beyond death by making this supreme discovery for themselves. And when the body is no longer able to serve others, we give it up with grace and dignity, crossing over the bridge from this mortal land to the immortal.”

With these memories and in the awareness of immortality I convey my cordial birthday greetings from Bavaria to Oklahoma, with sincere gratitude for your long-standing friendship,

ONE+HEART
Roland



Osage Monastery
September 1993