

# GOOD NEWS

Feature



## Maxwell Klug, OFM in Morocco



Maxwell Klug is a simple professed friar of the Assumption Province. Majoring in French, Loyola University arranged for him to have an immersion experience of the language by spending ten weeks in Morocco. The following is a letter he sent to the Provincial Minister, James Gannon, OFM

It has been just a little over 2 months since I have arrived in Rabat, Morocco. The time has flown by very quickly.

Here in Rabat there are 3 of us in the friary: Fr. Manuel (Spanish & the Custos), Fr. Kevin (Congolese), and yours-truly. Connected to the friary is the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the many ministries of the friars here in Rabat. The parish serves the English, Spanish, and Portuguese speaking communities.



The Sahara Desert

The friary it is almost exclusively French speaking. My French has greatly improved since arriving. I am able to understand about 95% percent of the conversation. For the words or conjugations that I don't know, the brothers have been phenomenal with helping me. Besides French, I am also learning classical Arabic and a bit of the local Arabic dialect (Dar-ija). In addition to

working on my foreign language(s) I am also studying Margrebian (N.African) French literature and a course on Islam (both French taught) and a course of North African History. Overall, classes are going very well.

I have had the opportunity to travel around a large portion of Morocco due to the size of the country and the affordability of getting around the country by bus or train. The most breath-taking place thus far has been the Sahara desert. Within our 12hour bus ride to the Sahara we passed through 3 different climates: spring like weather in Rabat, snow (a lot more than I anticipated) in Ifrane, and of course the heat of the dessert. I find it difficult to describe

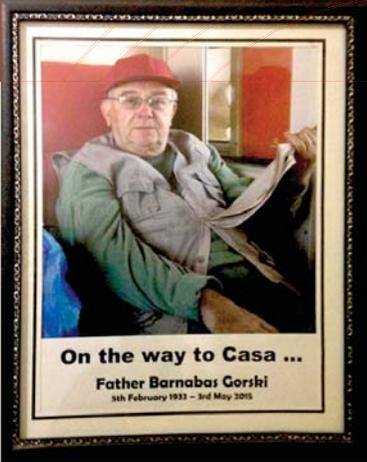


Photo of the late Barnabas Gorski, OFM

the immense beauty, humbleness, and adventure I felt while walking in the Sahara both during the day & night. I eventually stopped taking pictures while sitting atop a dune watching the sunset because no camera could adequately capture the beauty of that moment or place. It was truly breathtaking!

Although I have experienced incredible beauty, I have also experienced incredible darkness while here. In the United States, in a certain sense, we are very secluded from refugee/immigrant crisis that is happening here in Africa, the Middle-East, and Europe. The reports from the news are a constant living reality here in Morocco. Each friary I have visited

has had a constant flow of people, mostly sub-Saharan Africans, searching for help as they make their way to Europe. On the streets there is the constant presence of the broken families that have fled the middle-East. Sadly, the other day I came home to a house surrounded by the police. My first thought was about Fr. Kevin, who was home alone, but the police assured me that he was okay. They then told me to go into the friary. Once the sea of police opened for me I noticed, laying on our steps, a dead refugee. The officer, who was incredibly kind, kept telling me that this kind of thing happens often. I am sure that he was saying that so I wouldn't be so taken aback, but it was all the more unsettling knowing that it is a daily occurrence and the government does nothing. The government has nothing set up for immigrants/refugees. Therefore, many NGO's have tried to help those coming to Morocco, but there is still so much to be done.

On a much lighter note. I had the grace filled opportunity to meet with Br. Jean Pierre Schomacher. He is one of the Tibihrine Trappist monks. He is now 94 and lives in Morocco. He was staying at the friary here in Rabat while he visited his doctor(s). I was greatly surprised as he introduced himself. Not only have I seen the movie *Of Gods and Men* several times, I have also read one of his books. Once he settled in, I had the opportunity to have a very lengthy conversation with him. It is one thing to see the movie and read his book, but to sit one-on-one and hear what happened that night and his faith journey was a beautiful and sacred moment. It was a great honor to have met him.

I have attached a picture of Fr. Barnabas I thought you all might enjoy that the Friars have hanging in the corridor leading to their bedrooms. The brothers have fond (and of course comical) stories of our late brother. Since they introduce me as "Br. Maxwell from the province of Barnabas," many people have shared great memories of him. It always warms my heart to hear how the Friars have touched the lives of others.

I would again like to thank the province for allowing me to have this incredible experience. I keep you all in my daily prayers.

--Max



Max as Lawrence of Arabia

