Alumnus Profile - Bo (Horace) Pearsall

Preach at all time, if necessary, use words

Out of Wilmington, North Carolina in the 1950’s came a man who knew he had a faith different than that of his Protestant parents, but not quite sure what to do about it. His name? Horace Hall Pearsall, III, better known as Bo. Unlike his two sisters, Bo followed his big brother, Fr. William B. Pearsall into the world of Catholicism at age 29. Fr. Pearsall would tell Bo, “In order to be a better Christian, I became a Catholic. In order to become a better Catholic, I became a religious and eventually a priest.” By 1995 Bo’s own desire to follow a life of compassion led him to the Franciscans. Though living a life with numerous deviations, he is finally following God’s perfect plan through crooked lines with a beautiful granddaughter and a consistent love of music.

The love for music has a long history for Bo. “Music is in my heart because of my family. My grandmother played and taught piano. My brother plays classic piano. I learned the guitar then taught guitar to high school students and was in bands.” Bo spent some time sharing his passion with the Friars by doing liturgies. Now music is seen in his life playing for Serra Chapel in Shandon, CA.

Part of Bo’s deviated path after acquiring degrees in English and drafting, in addition to FST and schooling in Music Therapy from Arizona State, is in his work with prisoners with mental illness as a rehab therapist. “It’s a forensic hospital, as they call it, meaning it is a maximum-security place with barbed wire fence all over the place. The men come there either to get stabilized to go back to prison, which I usually work with, or they are there because they are repeat offenders. The repeat offenders get in trouble with the law because of mental illness, they get off their medications and they end up going to jail. It is a vicious cycle. They get released and get back on the streets. Then they can’t think because their judgement is impaired because of their mental illness, so they eventually get to the State Hospital where hopefully they can recover and get back on their feet and try again. Sometimes they stay for long periods of time at state hospital because their
mental illness can be so severe that it is the only safe place for them. But they are always given the chance to parole. So, I see the need for the Franciscan spirit there at the hospital. A need to be a witness of Christ’s compassion for others. St. Francis compassion, as shown in reaching out the leper and embracing the leper. These guys aren’t lepers, but they are societal lepers. They’re really an outcast from society. So the need is great for that Franciscan spirit here and I’m happy to have that experience of being with the friars, going to FST, learning more about St. Francis, more about Franciscan spirituality, more about my faith. We just do our best and God provides.

Bo said it best in that “I’m trying to give back what I was given.” He credits his teachers for his continued support of FST, saying “I believe that this world needs Franciscan values of love for the poor.” Professors like Fathers Bill Short, Kenan Osborne, Michael Guinan, and Mary McGann, R.S.C.J. left an impression on his mind. “It is their example. Their witness of Christ walking in the footsteps of Francis that left a beautiful mark on me. Sometimes I find myself talking a little bit like Fr. Guinan with how he would throw humor in there. It just stuck with me all these years. I think it is the joy that comes through. That was a special time I’ll always treasure.”

Bo shared that to this day he connects monthly, via zoom, with his Fraternity. “I’m so thankful to have a good family growing up, a good family at this stage in my life, and especially have a Franciscan family. The spiritual side helps me in the everyday side of family life. I’ve had so many wonderful experiences in my life. I’m so happy that it turned out this way. God led me down this crooked path to get where I’m at right now. And it’s great and it’s wonderful. I only wish I still had my FST t-shirt saying ‘Preach at all times. If necessary, use words.’”