

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



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Abbot Peter marks 50th year as Benedictine monk

By Paul Paproski, OSB

The Second Vatican Council, with its renewal of church life and greater individual responsibility, is one of the more memorable events for Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB during his 50 years as a monk of St. Peter's Abbey. Everyone felt the changes of the council, held 1962-65, particularly at Mass where celebrations in Latin were replaced with the vernacular, English, Abbot Peter said. The atmosphere of monastic life was transformed through a greater emphasis on equality between monks. The hierarchical separation between priests and non-clerical (brothers) was de-emphasized. This new outlook was evidenced at monastic office where brothers and priests began to pray together as one group, he commented.

The abbey later pioneered the introduction of hermit life, during the 1970s, in North America, with Fr. James Gray becoming a hermit, Abbot Peter said. At one time there were six hermits living in hermitages on the grounds.

Abbot Peter, who took his first vows as a Benedictine monk on July 11, 1964, is the last vocation from the former St. Peter's Abbey, a diocese (abbey nullius) that existed between 1921 and 1998 when it was amalgamated into the Diocese of Saskatoon. The amalgamation ended an important era for the Benedictines who staffed abbacy parishes for more than 75 years. The monks had a special bond with the local residents that set the abbey apart from most other Benedictine abbeys, Abbot Peter commented. There were more than 60 professed monks in the community in 1963 when Abbot Peter joined St. Peter's Abbey, and that number is 19 today.

Role models are always important for encouraging vocations to the priesthood



ANNIVERSARIES – Bishop Donald Bolen congratulates Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB and Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk, OSB on their 50th and 25 anniversaries of monastic profession, respectively. They were recognized, July 20, at the 2014 annual Mount Carmel Pilgrimage.

and religious life. The most important role models for Abbot Peter were his parents, Martin and Elizabeth Novecosky, who spent much of their life on a farm at Burr, south of Humboldt, before retiring in Humboldt.

"They were amazing people, when you look back, to see how my parents coped with raising a family in the Depression and post-war years," he remarked.

Born in 1945 at Burr, Sask., and named Wilfred, he was the last in a family of eight, just after the Second World War ended.

"I still have the hospital bill for \$10, the cost of the eight days my mother was in hospital," Abbot Peter commented.

Raised on a mixed farm, he attended Willow Ridge School, a one-room

school for eight grades. Following school and on weekends, he worked alongside his siblings, doing farm chores.

"When I finished Grade 8, there were no school buses, nor was there TV! I went to St. Peter's College at Muenster for my four years of high school and first-year university. I took part in all the sports, which I loved. It was at college that I saw my first indoor plumbing," he said.

In 1963, Abbot Peter entered the monastic community of St. Peter's Abbey as a novice and made his profession of vows on July 11, 1964 where he changed his name from Wilfred to Peter. He studied philosophy and theology in the seminary at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville,

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Abbot attends school at SP college

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Minn. and was ordained to the priesthood in 1970. Three Benedictines from St. Peter's Abbey were ordained that year, the other two being Frs. Damian Yaskowich and Bernard Stauber.

"This was the era of the Second Vatican Council, the Vietnam War, and major social and cultural changes in society," Abbot Peter remarked. "All of my 22 classmates from St. John's eventually left monastic life. The three from St. Peter's all persevered."

After ordination, Abbot Peter became a prefect at St. Peter's High School and taught there. He expected to remain in the teaching role the remaining years of monastic life. However, the high school closed in 1972. He then worked with the Prairie Messenger and St. Peter's Press for almost 20 years. He became involved with formation work at the abbey and served as guest master for more than a decade. In 1978, Abbot Peter began to serve in a leadership role in the monastery.

"It was a very enjoyable time, a time

which saw the introduction of computers, faxes and now the Internet," he commented.

The year 1990 was an important milestone for St. Peter's Abbey when Abbot Jerome Weber, after reaching the age of 75, resigned as abbot. Abbot Peter, 45, was chosen the fifth abbot of the community, and the second (after Weber) to be born and raised in the local district. He will be celebrating his 25th anniversary as abbot next year.

While serving in his leadership role, Abbot Peter has been involved in the church on a broader scale. As ordinary (title given to an abbot of a diocese or abbey nullius), he became a member of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. He attended the annual plenary meeting in Ottawa; the annual regional meeting in Edmonton; and other meetings of national committees which meet three or four times a year. He was national spiritual advisor for the Catholic Women's League of Canada for five years (1993 - 98). The position gave him the opportunity to visit every province in Canada.

Abbot Peter accompanied the Western bishops on their 1993 and 1999 ad limina visits (every five years) to Rome. He has been secretary for the Western bishops since 1992. He attended, as well, meetings for abbots in the United States and Rome. Abbot Peter visited the abbacy mission team in Brazil several times in the 1990s. In 1992 he attended the funeral of Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor, OSB who was killed in Brazil. The last visit to Brazil was in 2014.

Since 2010, Abbot Peter has been a member of the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) Council. The CRC represents 17,000 religious across Canada and meets three times a year in Montreal.

During the 1980s, Abbot Peter became a member of the Knights of



POTATO PICKING – Abbot Peter Novacosky, OSB unearths potatoes as he pulls a potato digger during the annual potato picking day at St. Peter's Abbey. Abbot Peter enjoys working in the garden during the summer months.

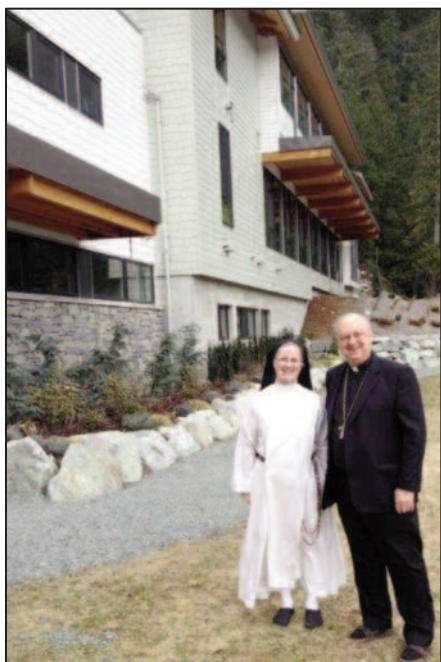
Columbus (KC), and in the early 1990s he was installed into the KC 4th degree. From 2000-2002, he was KC state chaplain in Saskatchewan and served in that role again from 2008-2010. He was also chaplain for the Saskatchewan Knights Charitable Foundation from 2002-2008. While serving in this capacity, he attended many provincial and supreme KC conventions.

"I acquired a reputation for being a traveling abbot. It's one of the hazards of the job! Another hazard is the many meetings one has to attend, both at the monastery and on various boards for Catholic organizations," Abbot Peter commented.

"In 2003, St. Peter's Abbey celebrated its 100th anniversary at Muenster. We had wonderful weather and there was a marvelous spirit. We celebrated a long-standing relationship of mutual support and friendship with the people of this area."

In 2004, Abbot Peter became editor of the Prairie Messenger, replacing Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB who suffered from Parkinson Disease.

"The abbacy has changed a lot in the past 100 years and more so in the past 20 years. So has the larger community. One of my beliefs is that we can't clearly foresee the changes that are coming in the future; we can't always plan for them. But if we are flexible, adaptable and creative, we will be well equipped to manage any crisis or challenges that come our way," Abbot Peter remarked.



VISITS MONASTERY – After the meeting of Western bishops in Victoria in February, Abbot Peter visited the new Dominican contemplative monastery in Squamish, B.C. Here he is seen with Sr. Claire Rolf, the superior.

Four Benedictines enter junior program

By Paul Paproski, OSB

Four novices at St. Peter's Abbey entered a new stage in their monastic journey, April 12, when they made their profession of temporary vows before Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB the monastic community and friends and relatives. The novices entered the juniorate, the final stage of discernment of three years, before becoming fully-professed members of St. Peter's Abbey.

Abbot Peter recalled, at the celebration, when he visited the Community of Hope, a drug rehabilitation centre in Brazil. He asked the 40 young men in the community about the hardest part of their rehabilitation. Everyone agreed the most difficult struggle was community life. The Community of Hope program has a similarity to the Benedictine way of life, Abbot Peter remarked. It strives to bring a conversion in a way of thinking through both work and prayer.

"There are many ways to seek God, whether marriage, family life, the single vocation, but the monastic way of life is guided by three pillars which are very similar to the community of hope," he commented. The three pillars of monastic life are the three vows the juniors took which include: stability (living in one community); conversion to a monastic way of life (daily change); and obedience (to the Rule of St. Benedict and the abbot). The juniors will be making a commitment to a new life that is made out of love, he said.

The juniors first entered the monastery in September of 2012 and lived as candidates until March of 2013 when they became novices and were first presented their Benedictine habits. The youngest, Br. Stephen (Linden) Predy, 20, is originally from Saskatoon; Damian (Christopher) Weber, 37, comes from Hanover, Ontario; Dominic Leo, 43, was born in Bangalore, India and later moved to Vancouver; and Benedict (Peter) van Ginkel, 51, is from Winnipeg.

Br. Stephen entered St. Peter's Abbey after studying religious traditions for one year at the University of Saskatchewan through St. Thomas More College.

"The time went by tremendously fast! My novitiate taught me a great deal about myself, how I am supposed to



TEMPORARY VOWS – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB presided, April 12, at the Ceremony for Profession of Temporary Vows. The four juniors who made their profession at St. Peter's Abbey include: from left, Br. Damian Weber, Br. Benedict van Ginkel, Br. Dominic Leo and Br. Stephen Predy.

relate to God and to my brothers," Br. Stephen remarked when reflecting on his past year as a novice. Humility is difficult to learn, he said, because humanity is flawed but ultimately redeemable through Jesus Christ.

"May God grant each of us the grace and insight to know Him and His mercy more and more as we continue our journey in the monastic way of life," he commented.

Agreeing, Br. Damian said he was surprised at how fast the novitiate year went.

"I learned much about myself in that I have a long way to grow in purification to become the new man Christ desires me to be. Being confronted with this fact each day is challenging, yet positive knowing that we are all in this together. Being accepted and embraced and welcomed by the entire monastic community after making vows was a very moving moment for me."

Br. Damian recently completed a year of studies in theology at the Seminary of Christ the King in Mission, B.C. The seminary is operated by a Benedictine monastery and he attended monastic office there. Previously, he worked five years in the lay apostolate through the Secular Franciscan order. He resided in the Diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, where he lived and worked at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, doing maintenance and assisting in the retreat house.

"The year began with this fascinating

notion of what monastic life should be with set idealistic expectations, but actually living monastic life was quite an eye-opener," Br. Dominic said. "While the experience was mainly positive and very formative, it was also very challenging. It takes quite a lot of work to form oneself, as well as to blend into the community life by trying to relate to each member's unique personalities. ... I have learned that the genuine glorification of God, which is the reason for our way of life here, is greatly enhanced when we progress in ceasing to dwell on ourselves, and advance in developing our relationship with God first, and then with the community. ..."

Br. Dominic worked as an Information Technology (IT) technician and computer programmer analyst in Vancouver for the Knights of Columbus. He spent two years of seminary at the Benedictine monastery at Westminster Abbey in Mission, B.C.

Reflecting on his past year, Br. Benedict said, "There was a wall poster that had the saying, 'Start every day with a new adventure.' There was an image of horses galloping freely. Since then I have tried to make the saying a reality. The novitiate went quickly. There were new and interesting things to discover. As I will make my vows, I will be thinking that I am continuing an important adventure."

Br. Benedict taught music in Winnipeg before entering the monastic life.

Fr. Demetrius marks 25 years of monastic life

By Paul Paproski, OSB

The guest wing of St. Peter's Abbey has been a beehive of activity in the past decade. The guest apostolate of St. Peter's Abbey has grown to accommodate as many as 85 visitors at once in the summer when there are no resident students. More than 3,000 register at the guest wing of St. Peter's Abbey throughout the year, a number that has doubled in the past decade, according to guest-master Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB.

Guest-master for St. Peter's Abbey for the past 18 years, Fr. Demetrius has used his savvy for business to promote retreats and workshops to groups as varied as clergy, writers, artists and sewers. The retreat facilities have excellent guest rooms, lounges, recreation and meeting facilities, he remarked. The grounds have electrical outlets for camping units. Families have held reunions and have enjoyed using the soccer and baseball fields, paths for walking and fire pit. Growth in the guest wing apostolate has been made possible, in part, through upgrading of present facilities and the transforming of the top floor of the monastery, during 2011, into a guest facility.

Working as guest master is one of many occupations held by Fr. Demetrius during his past 25 years as a monk of St. Peter's Abbey. He has served in the infirmary and business office and has sat on many committees, some of which have been senior council, vocations and



BYZANTINE VESTMENT – Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB displays a vestment worn for Divine Liturgy in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Fr. Demetrius celebrates in both the Roman Catholic and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Churches.

finance in the abbey, and board and finance of St. Peter's College. He has chaired the board of St. Peter's College for 10 years. He helps with grounds maintenance and is the abbey beekeeper.

Making his first vows as a Benedictine on July 11, 1989 was a logical step in Fr. Demetrius' faith journey. When he finished high school he became a funeral director and looked upon that role as a

vocation of service. His early years of employment were with Scarf's Funeral Home in Humboldt where he was introduced to three Benedictine priests, Frs. Florian Renneberg, OSB, Maurice Weber, OSB and Martin Brodner, OSB.

"I stayed in contact with Fr. Maurice and under his guidance I came to Muenster to continue my education and eventually enter the monastic life," he said. Fr. Demetrius attended St. Peter's College as a resident student for one year and then entered St. Peter's Abbey. During his first years as a monk he worked in the infirmary with the elderly, sick and terminally ill. In 1989, he began attending Mt. Angel Seminary at

Mt. Angel, Oregon and was ordained to the priesthood in 1996.

Fr. Xavier Benning, OSB became a mentor to Fr. Demetrius and taught him how to raise honey bees. Fr. Demetrius continues to raise honey bees, producing up to 800 lb. of honey each year. He has a proficiency in languages, understanding the Slavic languages, Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

In 2005, Fr. Demetrius was granted faculty to celebrate Divine Liturgy (Ukrainian Greek Catholic) in the Eparchy of Saskatoon. Bishop Michael Wiwchar, CSsR, of the Eparchy of Saskatoon (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Diocese of Saskatchewan) invited him to celebrate in the eparchy, knowing that Fr. Demetrius has a background in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. He celebrates Mass in both the Roman and Byzantine Rites, often assisting parishes in the Dioceses of Saskatoon and Prince Albert, as well as the Eparchy of Saskatoon.

Born in 1958, Fr. Demetrius was raised on a farm near Watrous by his parents Joe and Elsa Wasylyniuk. He has a twin brother Alex (Rita) of Saskatoon.



SCHOLASTICA LOUNGE – The Scholastica Residence at St. Peter's Abbey was renovated and is now being used by guests at St. Peter's Abbey. The residence has 11 bedrooms, one kitchenette and a large lounge.

Br. Cosmas takes final vows at St. Peter's

By Paul Paproski, OSB

"Br. Cosmas, we ask you, today, to consider well the covenant you are about to enter with the Lord. ... To embrace it, you must leave all else aside. Yet this very renunciation, which is evidence of dying to ourselves, at the same time proclaims the victory of Christ's cross," Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, of St. Peter's Abbey said, July 11, at the Rite of Monastic Profession for the solemn vows of Br. Cosmas Epifano, OSB.

A few years ago, the President of Harvard University was asked about the greatest problem facing students, Novecosky said in Sts. Peter and Paul Church. The president remarked that the students have an emptiness and lack meaning and passion for life. St. Benedict had a much different vision for his monks when he wrote in his Rule (guideline for monastic life) that as monks progress in their monastic life their hearts should overflow with the inexpressible delight of love, Novecosky commented.

St. Benedict seemed to have an understanding of how the zeal for life can be promoted in community. He was aware that communities are made up of many different personalities and he adjusted for them. St. Benedict wrote in the Rule that the abbot should arrange



FINAL VOWS – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB congratulates Br. Cosmas Epifano, OSB on his final vows at St. Peter's Abbey. The Rite of Monastic Profession for Solemn Vows was held, July 11, at Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

everything so that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from. Novecosky said he remembers a plaque that once hung in the entrance of the bishop's house in Saskatoon and on it were three simple lines: *See everything. Overlook a great deal. Correct a little.* The wisdom of the plaque speaks to the Rule of St. Benedict which promotes discretion in making decisions and correcting faults.

St. Benedict was likely very aware of his own imperfections, resentments, lack of patience and judgmental tendencies, Novecosky remarked. Conversion of life is continual and always ongoing.

In May of 2011, Br. Cosmas made his simple vows at St. Peter's Abbey and began studying theology in Rome that year. Br. Cosmas was ordained a deacon, July 30, at his home parish of Holy Redeemer in Sydney, Nova Scotia. He served at St. Augustine's Parish in Humboldt for the summer, and returned to Rome for his final year of theology.

Br. Cosmas, 54, was born and raised in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Following high school he attended Nova Scotia Teachers College in Truro, Nova Scotia for one and a half years. He later earned a three-year bachelor of arts Concentration in Theology degree. Br. Cosmas joined Scarboro Missions as a lay missionary and served overseas in China for four years. Upon returning to Canada, he joined an eremitical community, The Association of Hermits, in his home diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and remained with them for five years. He served as a caregiver for his parents for seven years. Both his parents are deceased. Br. Cosmas has three sisters living in Nova Scotia.



KC DONATION – Brad Lefebvre, Humboldt, representing the Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus Charitable Foundation, presents \$2,500 to Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, for the St. Peter's College Campus Ministry program.

Discernment for religious began as youth

By Brother Basil Schaan, OSB

(This reflection by Br. Basil Schaan, OSB, was presented at the Saskatoon Diocesan Congress Days in the deaneries earlier this year as part of a discernment about the possibility of ordaining permanent deacons in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. Br. Basil is a Benedictine monk at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster, SK. A video of his complete presentation can also be found at: www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos)

Discerning my vocation was somewhat long: a time from about 10 or 12 years of age, until a commitment some 25 years later. This took place with lots of prayer, reflection and trust.

In my early discerning years, the question was should I be a priest, married, or single? It wasn't until I felt I had to get more serious about this nudging – this call – and decided to investigate possibilities, that brotherhood entered into the picture. I was about 18 or 20 years of age when I met Br. Walter DeMong, OMI, at Queen's House in Saskatoon.

I found a yearning for something more in life; this searching, this conversion encouraged me to deeper encounters with God, people, and creation – or as our catechism says: to a divine life, a Trinitarian life, a life of witnessing to God's love; a life where things were impossible for me (man) became possible with God.

A fair portion of these stronger discerning years were with first the Denzil



CONGRESS DAYS – Br. Basil Schaan, OSB gives a presentation on religious life at Congress Days, sponsored by the Diocese of Saskatoon.

parish community – then with the church and my home parish of St. Patrick's in Young. Those communities taught me love, love of God, love of others.

It was about the time that I was searching for something more in life, that God led me to Development and Peace. This organization witnessed to me great caring for God's creation, his people, and the world in which his people live. Development and Peace helped me become more aware of the poor and under-developed countries in the world; and why poverty exists. This body of the church helped me reach out – to witness in many areas. Agriculture and growing healthy food is very much a part of my life today.

By 1982, I believed I was called to religious life, because God had graced me with signs and the warmth of his love. Picturesque memories of light and Jesus on the cross sharing his redeeming and forgiving love stand out. I now had the challenge of deciding what religious order to seek out, and was I called to the priesthood or brotherhood?

I became aware of quite a few differ-

ent religious orders but focussed on the three known to me in Saskatchewan: the Benedictines, the Franciscans, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Now another fear of challenge begins, but God's grace told me I needed community, but where?

After visiting and living with these three religious orders for about 10 days each, God drew me to the Franciscans – they taught me more on poverty and working with the poor. Another teaching was granted me from them

which I was slow to understand or grasp at that time. This was my fear of education in the form of university studies.

Our Catholic belief teaches us to abandon our reservations and fears, and base our lives on faith in Jesus. Time – and trust in Jesus – allowed me to discern priesthood or brotherhood more clearly. Priesthood meant university studies, which didn't appeal to me. This was God's way to make me look closer at the Benedictines and brotherhood. Because priesthood discernment hadn't totally vanished, I took some university classes at St. Peter's College after my candidate time period and one year of novitiate. Then I took seminary classes at Mount Angel, a Benedictine seminary. Faith and complete trust in God was what got me enrolled.

Studies went quite well, although it was not without a lot of work and grace-filled moments. I made my solemn (final) vows in July 1987 and it was my second year of seminary studies that fall. It was during this fall semester that my discernment that I should be a Brother became clear.

I heard God calling me to work with the land, the farm, the garden, to be at prayer in all things that I do.

If I take the few words from the Rule of St. Benedict: "Listen, my son to your master's precepts and incline the ear of your heart." When I did this, I finally said yes to brotherhood.



UPGRADE FLOOR – Br. Basil Schaan, OSB and the junior monks of St. Peter's Abbey remove floor tiles in a guest room of upper St. Peter's Abbey. Five rooms and the lounge were fitted with new linoleum.

‘Snow Angel’ welcome presence at college

By Paul Paproski, OSB

Lillian Hinz, 74, of Muenster received an unexpected recognition in January from Rob Harasymchuk, president of St. Peter’s College. Harasymchuk presented her with a trophy inscribed with the words Snow Angel. The trophy recognizes Hinz for donating many hours of her time, each winter, shoveling snow for the college.

Most people likely find shoveling an unwelcome, perhaps even a grueling task. Hinz decided to volunteer her time shoveling snow at the college and abbey after she retired in 1999 from 25 years of teaching primarily Kindergarten to Grade 4.

“I don’t know if it was a neat idea or just the reality that if the snow plow was down, the white stuff would have to be removed by shoveling. Looking around it was obvious that there were not all that many monks who were able to undertake shoveling. I thought, ‘You are strong and healthy why not use these gifts for the good of the abbey.’”

If the 6 p.m. weather forecast predicts snow overnight, Hinz prepares for her work the next day by going to bed earlier and then arising well before the sun has appeared in the eastern sky. She has begun shoveling as early as 4 a.m.

“I appear the morning after each snow

fall and pretty much stay until all the walks are free and safe,” she remarked. “The most challenging aspect of snow removal is when it has been very moist snow that has fallen. When the snow is carrying a lot of moisture, it is a real feat to lift the heavy shovels fully high enough on top of the existing piles. Blizzards just bring the challenge of much accumulation. As far as ice, as long as I am hanging on to my shovel, I feel reasonably safe.”

One memorable occasion was the day following a blizzard in January of 2007. Hinz spent seven hours shoveling snow at the college and abbey. A large snow bank completely hid the south door of the Jerome Assembly Room at St. Peter’s Abbey.

“Removing the huge blocks of snow made me feel like an Eskimo getting ready to build an igloo,” she remarked.

The only obstacle to keeping Hinz away from shoveling is sickness or another commitment. The late Fr. James Gray, OSB used to remind Hinz of her father who died of a heart attack while shoveling snow.

“My response to him was, ‘Fr. James, my dad had not done any physical activity for months and then went out and shoveled. Whereas I spend an hour each



FAITHFUL VOLUNTEER – Lillian Hinz, 74, of Muenster has a generous spirit of volunteerism. She is often at St. Peter’s College and Abbey in the winter months where she helps to shovel snow, whether in the early morning hours or during the day. She also looks after plants in the abbey church and college.

day in the gym doing weight lifting and treadmill walking, so I am ready to shovel. Actually I think the shoveling helps strengthen my muscles and back.’”



BLESSING OF FIELDS – Bishop Donald Bolen blesses the fields at the 92nd annual Mount Carmel Pilgrimage. Helping are servers: from left, Joan Hill, Angelica Hill, Emma Syroteuk (carrying basin) and Kirk Duffley.

People and events around the abbey

October of 2013

Oct. 17 – James Burns, a Cree elder of James Smith Reserve near Kinistino, discussed Cree spirituality at a campus ministry luncheon, attended by students and staff of St. Peter's College. Burns spoke to a public gathering in St. Peter's College library that evening.



CREE ELDER – James Burns, a Cree elder of James Smith Reserve near Kinistino, discusses Cree spirituality, in October, to the public in the St. Peter's College library. He spoke earlier in the day at a campus ministry luncheon, attended by students and staff of St. Peter's College.

Nov. 14 – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB discussed St. Benedict and the influence of Benedictines and the Rule of St. Benedict to a campus ministry luncheon, attended by students and staff of St. Peter's College.

January of 2014

Jan. 7 – The paintings of Br. Pierre Rouillard, OSB were put on display for sale in the guest eating area of St. Peter's Abbey and College. Some photos by Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB were placed on display in the guest eating area and main floor of St. Peter's College.

Jan. 14 – Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon addressed students at a campus ministry luncheon. He spoke on the topic, "Talking to the Dead".

Jan. 16 to 25 – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB and his sister Agnes Tropic of Ladner, B.C. visited Maceio, Brazil, the missionary home of the Ursulines of Humboldt. Sr. Claire Novecosky, OSU, and Sr. Louise Hinz,

OSU were there. They finished their work in Brazil and are now living in Saskatoon.

Jan. 24 to 26 – Michael MacLean, campus minister at St. Thomas More College (STM), Saskatoon was guest speaker at the annual Newman Retreat of STM. It was attended by 20.

Jan. 25, Feb. 1 and Mar. 8 – Br. Basil Schaan, OSB gave presentations on religious life to Saskatoon diocesan Congress Days gatherings.

Jan. 25 – Br. Anthony Nguyen, OSB reburied his parents' bones in a Saskatoon cemetery.

Jan. 27 – Bryce Thompson, 18, of Naicam, a Saint Peter's College (SPC) resident student, was killed at 6 a.m. along Hwy. 5 near Muenster.

Feb. 1 – Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk, OSB and Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB attended the funeral, in Naicam high school gymnasium, of Bryce Thompson, along with Rob Harasymchuk, president of SPC, and many SPC staff and students.

Feb. 6 – Rev. Colin Clay of Saskatoon spoke to a campus ministry luncheon on the topic of "Cults".

Feb. 21 to 24 – Abbot Peter attended an abbots workshop in Cullman, Alabama.

Feb. 25 to 28 – Abbot Peter attended the annual meeting of the bishops of Western Canada, in Victoria, B.C.

Feb. 27 – Darrell McLaughlin, associate professor of sociology and associate



SPEAKS ON CULTS – Rev. Colin Clay, 81, of Saskatoon addresses the topic of Cults and the Paranormal to students and staff of St. Peter's College.

dean at St. Thomas More College (STM), spoke to a campus ministry luncheon. He discussed the benefits of Catholic liberal arts colleges.

Mar. 4 – The annual medieval banquet was held in the Jerome Assembly Room, sponsored by campus ministry. Students and staff dressed in medieval costumes and even took part in some festive medieval dancing. The event was held the day before Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

Mar. 13 to 19 – Fr. Paul presented a Lenten retreat at Our Lady of Perpetual Help RC Church in Carrollton, Georgia.

Mar. 20 and 21 – Fr. Michael Patella, OSB, rector and professor of theology at St. John's School of Theology Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota visited the abbey.

Mar. 20 to 27 – Sr. Pauline Michaniuk of the Sisters of Precious Blood (RPB), Regina made a retreat at the abbey.

Mar. 22 – Kyla Rita Brietta of Saskatoon, Gwen Fagnou of Calgary became Oblates of St. Peter's Abbey, and Jane Novecosky com-



MEDIEVAL FEAST – Students, staff and monks take part in dancing at the opening of the Medieval Feast in the Jerome Assembly Room. The event, sponsored by St. Peter's College Campus Ministry, took place on Shrove Tuesday, a time of celebration before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent.

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pleted her Final Oblation. Pol and Judy Zwart of Saskatoon gave a PowerPoint presentation, in the afternoon, on The 12 Steps to Humility.

Apr. 4 to 6 – Fr. Paul was a presenter at an Engagement Encounter at St. Michael's Retreat Centre in Lumsden. There were 21 couples registered.



RECTOR OF ST. JOHN'S – Fr. Michael Patella, OSB, rector and professor of theology at St. John's School of Theology Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota visited St. Peter's Abbey.

Apr. 11 – Fr. Paul was installed as junior master at vespers by Abbot Peter.

Apr. 12 – Four novices professed temporary vows at a special celebration of Mass, presided by Abbot Peter. The new juniors include: Brs. Stephen Predy, Damian Weber, Dominic Leo and Benedict van Ginkel. Attending the celebration were the monastic community and



BENEFIT CONCERT – Harpist Martha Cowie presented a concert to the public in the Jerome Assembly Room. A silver collection was taken with proceeds going to charity. Martha and husband Rev. Quentin Little, pastor in the Anglican Church and Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey, have moved to London, Ont. They had been residing in Lintlaw.

friends and relatives of the new juniors.

Apr. 14 – Several monks concelebrated at the Chrism Mass in the Saskatoon cathedral.

May 1 to 3 – Abbot Peter attended the Canadian Church Press annual meeting in Winnipeg. Brs. Pierre and Benedict accompanied him, and visited their families.

May 3 – Faculty from St. Dominic and St. Augustine schools of Humboldt attended a retreat at the abbey, led by Tom Saretsky, teacher at Bishop James Mahoney high school in Saskatoon. Fr. Demetrius celebrated Mass with the group, assisted by Br. Anthony on the organ.

May 3 to 31 – Fr. Richard Meidl, OSB attended a Monastic Renewal Program in Rome. The program involved tours of historic sites and classes in scripture and monastic spirituality.

May 10 – Harpist Martha Cowie of Lintlaw presented a concert to the public in the Jerome Assembly Room. A silver collection was taken with proceeds going to charity. Martha and husband Rev. Quentin Little, Anglican minister and Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey, have moved to London, Ont. They had been living in Lintlaw.

May 25 to 30 – Fr. Paul led the annual retreat for St. Gregory's Abbey, Shawnee, Oklahoma.

May 29 to June 8 – The Saskatchewan Stitches Conference was held at St. Peter's Abbey. Instruction was given in: quilting, bra making, fibre art, knitting, rug hooking and sewing. More than 200 participated in the annual event.

May 29 to June 1 – Abbot Peter attended the general assembly of the Canadian Religious Conference in Montreal. He was re-elected a member of the council.

June 2 to 5 – Abbot Peter preached a retreat for the priests of the Thunder Bay Diocese.

June 6 to 8 – Abbot Peter preached a retreat for the married deacons and wives of the Thunder Bay Diocese.

June 14 to 28 – Brs. Dominic Leo, OSB and Stephen Predy, OSB attended junior summer school at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania. They attended classes and visited historic sites, along with 35 other junior Benedictines from 17 other Benedictine monasteries in the United States.

June 15 to 19 – Fr. Raymond Douziech, CSsR of Toronto, preached the annual retreat of St. Peter's Abbey.



SUMMER SCHOOL – Brs. Stephen Predy, OSB, left, and Dominic Leo, OSB, stand in front of St. Vincent Archabbey Basilica, Latrobe, Pennsylvania during the annual Junior Summer School in June. They attended classes at St. Vincent Archabbey and visited historic sites, along with 35 other junior Benedictines from 17 other Benedictine monasteries in the United States.

Attending were 12 Ursulines, formerly of Bruno and now presiding in Humboldt, Muenster and Saskatoon.

June 20 – Br. Cosmas Epifano, OSB arrived home from studies in Rome.

June 24 – Abbot Peter was guest speaker at the 25th anniversary of the

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RETREAT MASTER – Fr. Raymond Douziech, CSsR, of Toronto led the annual retreat of St. Peter's Abbey in June.

People and events around the abbey

Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly. The anniversary, at St. Augustine's Parish Hall in Humboldt, was attended by Fr. Paul who is friar (chaplain) of the assembly.

June 25 to 30 – Thuy Nguyen of the Archdiocese of Regina spent his diocesan retreat at St. Peter's Abbey, led by Fr. Paul.

June 30 – Br. Damian (Chris Weber) was granted dispensation from his simple vows. He has transferred to the Diocese of Prince Albert.

July 1 – Fr. Paul was appointed associate pastor of St. Augustine Church in Humboldt, and the mission parishes of St. Scholastica, Burr; Assumption, Marysburg; and Holy Trinity, Pilger. He is working with Fr. Ephraim Mensah. Fr. Paul completed a five-year term at St. Mary's in Lanigan and Holy Rosary in LeRoy.

July 11 – Br. Cosmas made his solemn vows as a Benedictine monk at St. Peter's Abbey.

July 12 – Oblate Day was held with Bishop Donald Bolen as guest speaker who addressed the topic of "Obedience". Bishop Donald is an Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey. Myrna Kostash of Edmonton and Stephen Hallford of Dundas, Ontario made their final oblations.

July 20 – Bishop Donald Bolen presided at the 92nd annual Mount



CLERGY DAY – Participants in the annual Clergy Sports Day enjoy a game of ladder golf. Priests and seminarians in the province completed in sports and card games, July 21 and 22, at St. Peter's Abbey.

Carmel Pilgrimage Mass. He was assisted by Abbot Peter, and Frs. Daniel Muyres, OSB, Demetrius and Paul. Bishop Donald Bolen recognized Abbot Peter on his 50th anniversary and Fr. Demetrius on his 25th anniversary, respectively, of monastic profession. Approximately 425 attended the pilgrimage.

July 21 and 22 – The annual Clergy Sports Day, sponsored by the

Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus, was held at St. Peter's Abbey with 45 priests and seminarians participating from across the province.

July 30 – Br. Cosmas was ordained a deacon in his home parish of Holy Redeemer at Sydney, Nova Scotia. Abbot Peter attended. Br. Cosmas served at St. Augustine Roman Catholic Church in Humboldt for the summer.



RECREATION – Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR, of the Eparchy of Saskatoon, enjoys a game of cards at recreation with Benedictine juniors: from left, Brs. Dominic Leo, Benedict van Ginkel and Stephen Predy.



VESPERS IN CEMETERY – St. Peter's Abbey monks celebrate vespers, each year, in the cemetery during the annual retreat.

Abbot Severin 4th degree marks 25 years

By Paul Paproski, OSB

If the church wants to encourage youth to have an interest in their faith, it must learn how to become a mother, otherwise it risks becoming an 'old maid,' who fails to bring forth children, Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB said to the 25th anniversary of the Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly. Novecosky, referring to a speech of Pope Francis, said the church does not become a mother by going door to door and offering to sign people up as if the church were another association.

"Rather, the church is a mother when she does what mothers do: offer love, tenderness, a caring gaze, almost endless patience, a welcome and compassion," he said, June 24, in St. Augustine Parish Hall, Humboldt. Pope Francis believes the church does not need cosmetic surgery, Novecosky remarked, only energy and joy that come from being a mother where there is a gathering and warm welcoming. Quoting Pope Francis, Novecosky said the church needs "'a heart without limits, but not just a heart, also a certain gaze, the sweetness of Jesus' gaze, which often is more eloquent than many words.'"

The comments of Pope Francis on the church came after the pontiff was asked how the church can stop youth from leaving. Pope Francis said he knows of many parents who spend much of their time and energy working and as a consequence have little time to spend with their children.

Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Assembly is named after Abbot Severin

who grew up in a family very different from most families today, Novecosky commented. He was born in Minnesota and his father was a teacher who taught for more than 50 years before retiring. The Gertkens raised a family of 13 children near St. John's Abbey in Minnesota. Seven daughters became Benedictine nuns and four sons became Benedictine monks. One daughter remained single and stayed home to care for her mother. She was the post mistress in the town of St. Joseph's. Two of the religious became noted musicians.

Abbot Severin got his masters degree in chemistry from the University of Chicago and taught in the science department at St. John's University. He was elected abbot on September 8,

1926, following the resignation of Abbot Michael Ott. Abbot Severin was abbot for 33 years, until he died in March of 1960.

"I remember the day, as I was a student in Grade 10 at the college at the time. He died before the opening of the Second Vatican Council. I was told that he had the nickname of Abbot of the Mystical Body, as that was a favourite topic in his homilies and talks," Novecosky commented.

Nap Boutin of Humboldt, Faithful Navigator of the Abbot Severin Gertken Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Assembly, presented Novecosky an Award of Merit for his service to the 4th



RECOGNIZE KCS — Sir Knight Ray Gehlen, left, of Humboldt presents a 25th anniversary certificate to Nap Boutin of Humboldt, Faithful Navigator of the Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly. Gehlen is Master of the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly for Saskatchewan. The presentation was made, June 24, at the 25th anniversary celebration of the Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Assembly.

Degree Knights of Columbus, following Novecosky's presentation. Ray Gehlen, Master of the 4th Degree Assembly in Saskatchewan, presented a 25th anniversary certificate to Boutin.

The beginnings of the Abbot Severin Gertken 4th Degree Assembly date to 1988 when Master Steve Harasymuk of the 4th Degree in Saskatchewan encouraged an assembly to begin in Humboldt. The Abbot Severin Gertken Assembly was later formed on June 24, 1989 and it meets regularly at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster. The first Faithful Navigator was Hubert Lux and the first Faithful Commander was John Stroeder.

Donations and Bequests

We seek to provide prophetic witness through a monastic lifestyle of prayer and work that gives priority to the praise of God. We embrace service to God's people through hospitality to guests, involvement in parish ministry, education, the press and sustainable agriculture.

Please remember the monks of St. Peter's Abbey when considering making donations to charities or bequests.

Donations will help, in particular, towards helping us finance needed improvements to our infrastructure, promoting vocations, supporting seminarians and providing for the needs of our elderly.

Donations can be sent to: St. Peter's Abbey, Box 10, Muenster, SK, S0K-2Y0.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations.

Benedictines begin journalism career in 1904

By Paul Paproski, OSB

(The following article is based on the English translation of the first 11 years of *St. Peter's Bote*: 1904-1915. The Benedictines of St. Peter's Abbey printed the German Catholic newspaper from 1904 to 1947. Translations into English have not been made of publications from 1915 to 1947. Information has been taken, as well, from history books published by the Benedictines.)

The year 2014 marks a small, but not insignificant anniversary for journalism at St. Peter's Abbey. It is 110 years since the monks of St. Peter's Abbey began printing the forerunner to the *Prairie Messenger*, *St. Peter's Bote*, on February 11 of 1904. *St. Peter's Bote*, a German Catholic weekly, was the first newspaper in St. Peter's Colony and was printed in Winnipeg. Prior Alfred Mayer served as the first editor for four months when he was replaced by Fr. Benedict Steigenberger. The Benedictines opened a printing press at Muenster the following year in September of 1905. Fr. Bruno Doerfler took on the role as editor in Muenster until being elected prior of the monastery in April of 1906. Steigenberger became editor again until 1908 when Fr. Peter Windschiegel assumed the editorship, remaining in the position until 1922. Fr. Joseph Sittenauer served as editor for the next 12 years. Windschiegel took over the helm again until the newspaper ceased production in 1947. The Benedictines continued offering news stories through the English Catholic newspaper, *St. Peter's Messenger*, which had been in circulation since May of 1923 to meet the demand for an English publication. The newspaper, today, is called the *Prairie Messenger*.

The first issue of *St. Peter's Bote* explains that the newspaper is "for the instruction and edification of German Catholics in all of Western Canada, and especially for matters of interest in the



ST. PETER'S BOTE — *St. Peter's Bote* was the first newspaper published by the Benedictines of St. Peter's Abbey. The first issue of the German Catholic weekly was January 11, 1904. The newspaper closed in 1947. The Benedictines continued to publish an English Catholic weekly, *St. Peter's Messenger*, which began circulation in 1923. Its name was later changed to the *Prairie Messenger*.

newly founded St. Peter's Colony." An editorial promises to avoid promoting any political parties and instead focus on defending truth and justice, religion and civic equality. Doerfler writes in March of 1906, "I will try to keep away from politics as much as possible, but will not hesitate for a moment to stand up for justice and freedom, if it finds these threatened."

St. Peter's Bote was a staunch supporter of St. Peter's Colony and German Catholic traditions. It lent much of its space to encouraging German Catholic settlers through editorials and articles on colony life. Achievements of colonists were often praised, whether opening new businesses or expanding present operations, growing successful crops and gardens or building new homes. The newspaper, in its promotion of the colony, even criticized those who sold their homesteads and left, suggesting they were too hasty in making their decisions after sacrificing much.

Correspondents promoted the colony, as well, in their positive writings of community life. Reports were often given of good crops and gardens, sometimes adding that agriculture was more productive in the colony than in the United States. These statements may have been in defense of criticisms from Americans who, settlers said, often complained that the weather in Canada was too cold to grow anything. Letters to the editor refuted

ed rumors in the United States that conditions in Canada were too harsh for settlement.

Readers were informed of church life through, among other things, regular reports of special liturgical celebrations, meetings of church organizations, parish picnics, donations to churches, and the building of new churches. Bishop Albert Pascal, on his visits to confer

the sacraments of confirmation and communion, often had the additional duties of blessing new churches, newly renovated churches, or church bells. Bishop Pascal loved to shower praise on the settlers for their dedication to their faith life.

Other community events were given coverage, including local political meetings and meetings related to agriculture and the problems faced by farmers. Excitement was expressed over the opening of the new St. Elizabeth Hospital in 1912 by the Franciscan Sisters (Elizabethans), and the arrival of the Ursulines in 1913 to teach in local schools. Not all the news was positive. Regular reports were given of accidents, deaths, fires and court news.

The Volksverein (People's Society) and rallies of Katholikentag (Catholic Days) received extensive coverage and tremendous support in editorials. The Volksverein, a German Catholic organization, lobbied for the right of German Catholics to open parish and separate schools they believed were essential for teaching religion and German. The Katholikentag celebrated German Catholic traditions.

Similarly to upholding German Catholic traditions, *St. Peter's Bote* promoted patriotism. The publication urged German Catholics, at the outbreak of The First World War, to remain patriotic to their new homeland of Canada.

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