



## Smiling monk dies

The gentle and congenial Dominic Distel passed away Oct. 30, 1991, shortly after 7 p.m. He had suffered a stroke about one week prior to going to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt. The stroke, coupled with Parkinsons disease, made Brother Dominic almost helpless during the final week. He died well fortified by the sacraments and the companionship of his brother monks. Brother Dominic had a smile for everyone, even on the last day.

Anthony Distel was born in Hochemmingen, Baden, Germany, on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, 1905. He came to Canada in 1922 and worked on his uncle's farm near Marysburg until he joined the Benedictines on Dec. 28, 1928, when he was given the name Dominic.

In 1990, on July 8, Br. Dominic celebrated 60 years as a professed monk of St. Peter's Abbey. All of his 60 years in the monastery were spent working for St. Peter's Press as a typesetter for both German and English. However, with the introduction of computers Brother Dominic graduated to other duties at the press.

During the latter years Br. Dominic also acted as porter or information clerk at the abbey, where he gained many friends with his congenial nature. People from all over the world maintained correspondence with Br. Dominic.

For 30 years he and Brother Conrad were responsible for getting the daily mail from the Muenster post office, on foot, summer and winter. Both brothers attribute their longevity to that daily exercise of walking a mile each way to Muenster.



*Dominic (Anthony) Distel, OSB  
1905-1991*

With the introduction of a modern printing system Br. Dominic had more time to spend outdoors. His favorite

task was caring for the Marian Shrine he had erected north of the abbey and college, in the woods near the railway



*Br. Dominic using the old linotype, and working in the mail room.*

tracks. Many retreatants visit this grotto in honor of Our Lady of Fatima, which was donated by a friend of Br. Dominic's.

For over 55 years Br. Dominic was responsible for ringing the abbey bell for morning and evening prayers, with "the accuracy of a CBC time signal," as one monk wrote in 1985. The same writer ends his tribute to Dominic Distel by saying: "The community of St. Peter's Abbey is grateful to Brother Dominic for being a true monastic brother." This editor gladly echoes and strongly supports that statement. May he receive the greatest reward possible for a truly hospitable, smiling monk.

Brother Dominic's wake and funeral took place in the Abbey Church of Sts Peter & Paul. The funeral and burial were scheduled for All Souls Day, the day after his 86th birthday. May he rest in peace.

In his room Bro. Dominic had a book filled with pictures and written comments. The book records his history, his thoughts and reflections. But mainly it is about his trip to B.C. to visit his friends, the Rositch family on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of vows in 1979.

The following are some of his re-

flections which reveal another side of Br. Dominic's character:

a) On his family and home: "My father and mother were poor but had a nice home. It was a real home; here we lived as a family. It was a blessed place. The most wonderful, the loveliest, the happiest, the most joyful evening in our home was always Christmas eve. Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht . . . ."

b) On working in the press for 50 years service, he comments: "Behold, I come to do thy will, O God. I thank you, Lord, with all my heart."

c) On St. Peter's, when he retired on March 21, 1985: "Tranquillity: no one can walk through the forest at St. Peter's without having his spirit lifted. There will never be a tranquillizer made by man to equal the peaceful serenity you will find here in many beautiful places where in peaceful brightness you may find a calmness that is above this world."

d) On celebrating his golden jubilee of vows, 1980: "Pray and work: that God may be glorified in all things. It is indeed 50 years ago that I entered upon the way of my religious life; the above motto expresses without any doubt my intention in joining the disciples of St. Benedict at St. Peter's. I will try with the grace of God to remain faithful to the motto until death:

that God may be glorified."

e) On a map of Canada with the Trans Canada highway highlighted: "A leisurely trip on Canada's ocean-to-ocean highway from St. John's, Nfld., to Victoria, B.C., would be an unusual experience. It would lead us through wilderness, prairie and mountains."

f) On his flight over the Rocky Mountains on trip to B.C. in 1979: "The air was crystal clear as the plane flew smoothly over the mountains from Calgary to Kamloops. I had a matchless view of the mountains from above. A land of tall peaks and glacier-choked valleys. 'The mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands' " (Is. 55:12).

g) On a picturesque view of a mountain stream: "Each day tells the other: my life is but a journey to great and endless life!"

h) On his love of nature: "Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery of things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love."

i) On his love of nature, during his trip to Vancouver: "On to the Scenic Drive — very beautiful. No computer yet designed can see, register and express the color, mood and beauty in this enchanted Scenic Drive. Only we humans have this God-given gift."

j) Comment on city life, in Vancouver: "As we walked on the streets not a single person came our way with a pleasant smile. The voice of the city is not a gentle one."

k) At the end of his jubilee trip to B.C.: "I look back to the few days which I had spent so far with my friends the Rositches. They were days of genuine love and happiness."

"Now back home to St. Peter's Abbey to pray and work. My only regret is that every reader of these few lines could not have taken the trip with me. That is the sad thing about life — our

inability to take everyone with us when we go to see beauty and to revel in its gifts."

1) Comment about the pioneers of Marysburg: "Many years have I walked over ground footprinted with the marks of these selfless pioneers. They did not consider themselves first. They thought only of what their work may enfold. They thought little of their own comfort. They realized that they may never reach their goal they aspire toward, but a certain happiness, a satisfaction of soul, a pious thought drove them on encouraging them that their pioneering is sure to be rich, even while they believed that their contribution is harvested for those whom they will never see or know."

Br. Dominic's love for Canada's native people is reflected in this prayer which he named "Indian Prayer":

O Great Spirit, Creator of all things;  
Human beings, trees, grass, berries.  
Help us, be kind to us.  
Let us be happy on earth.  
Let us lead our children  
To a good life and old age.  
These our people; give them good minds  
To love one another.

O Great Spirit,  
Be kind to us.  
Give these people the favor  
To see green trees,  
Green grass, flowers and berries  
This next spring;  
So we all meet again.

O Great Spirit,  
We ask of You.

#### From a friend of Br. Dominic's,

I was saddened to hear of (his death) and already miss him, but must admit that I was not surprised by the news. When he and Br. Basil visited me recently, I saw how quickly he was failing and sensed somehow that he was ready, almost waiting, to go "home." Dominic was one of the truly humble, caring people I have known. When he was still able and we

walked together about the grounds to admire the flowers in spring and summer, to feed the chickadees in the wintertime, and in all seasons to pay our respects to "Our Lady" at his beloved shrine, we talked of many things. Late one frosty December he dug up and tenderly planted a small pine tree to send home with me, so that I would have it for Christmas. His

disappointment was great when it did not take root and thrive on my balcony. Simply and generously Br. Dominic shared his experience of life. The pleasure he took in the world on our doorstep and the strength he derived from his faith. I remember him with affection and very much regret that I will not be able to be at St. Peter's for his funeral.

## Abbot Peter's Message

After a year in office, I have often experienced a familiar feeling: it's good to be home! It's the feeling you get when you return from a longer trip.

This summer there were several such trips.

One was to Vancouver where I took part in the installation of Adam Exner as archbishop of Vancouver on Aug. 15. While there I took the time to visit Westminster Abbey at Mission. I was treated royally by Abbot Eugene, Prior Wilfrid, Subprior Augustine and all the monks during my day and a half with them. I also visited my sister and her family. I discovered that the first Benedictine abbey had been located in their parish.

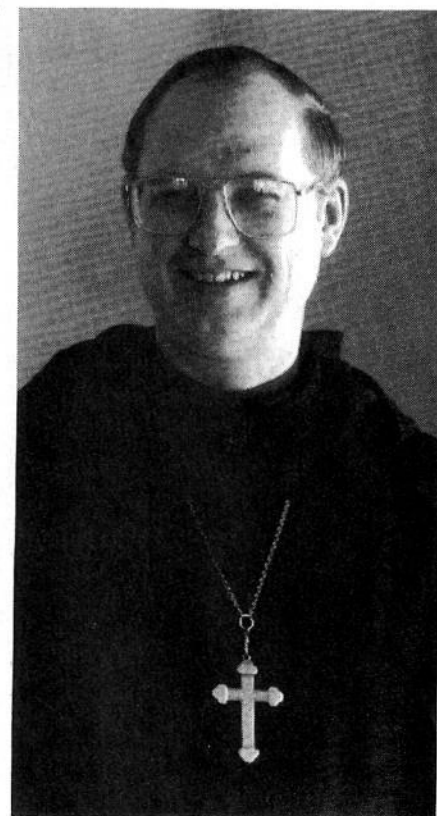
After being gone almost a week it was a good feeling to get back home.

Soon I was off to the Canadian bishops meeting in Ottawa at the end of August. It was my first experience and it was a good one. I found the bishops very friendly. I also found I had been put on a bishops' commission: Social Communications. The aim of the commission, in general, is to study and encourage proper use of the mass media by the church to promote the Gospel in our society.

After being gone almost another week, it was a good feeling to get back home again.

There were other shorter trips too: to Edmonton with Bro. Michael, and to Saskatoon for a meeting with bishops and religious superiors. Some times these trips are relaxing; some times they are quite demanding.

At the end, it's always a good feel-



ing to come back home.

As the Advent season of the Liturgical Year approaches, this theme of "coming home" is one that is brought closer to view for our meditation. In the second half of Advent we recall Christ's first coming. In the first half of Advent we recall Christ's second coming at the end of the ages. It is a season of joyful expectation. We look forward to our real homeland, our heavenly homeland. Our life here is but a pilgrimage preparing us for our real home.

This theme of being in this world



but not part of this world is a common theme in monastic spirituality. *Renew and Create* (#60) describes the monastic charism as "embodying the gospel command of love in a community which places special emphasis on the transcendence of the kingdom and on the passing character of this present world."

This Advent or "eschatological" theme is subtly impressed upon us daily as we pray in our new abbey church of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The stained-glass River of Life and the life it nourishes on its banks portrays the fullness of life in the New Jerusalem. The altar is cube-shaped. The church itself is like three cubes placed side by side. These are subtle reminders that the New Jerusalem, our heavenly homeland, is described in the Book of Revelation as a perfect cube: "The plan of the city is perfectly square, its length the same as its breadth . . . and equal in height" (Rev. 21). Even the jewels we see in the abbey church windows remind us that the New Jerusalem reflects the glory of God and "glitters like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond" (Rev. 21).

The feeling of "being at home" is a foretaste of our final "home place." As we daily journey "with expanded hearts" we prepare ourselves to take in the full view of the New Jerusalem.



*An unusual amount of rain this summer resulted in our small dam overflowing, reminding us of the annual spring runoff.*

## Letter from Abbot Severin's sister:

Written on the date of Abbot Peter's blessing as Abbot-Ordinary.

St. Benedict's Convent, St. Joseph, MN 56374 Nov. 26, '90

## Prairie Messenger goes desktop

A change took place at the *Prairie Messenger* in October. Readers may not have noticed it, but the staff sure did. Especially the first week, as all the kinks were being ironed out.

The change was the switch to desktop publishing. This means that the layout of the *Prairie Messenger* is now done on the computer, instead of the traditional cut-and-paste method.

The occasion for the change was the resignation of Glenda Pomedli after 3½ years as layout artist of the *Prairie Messenger*. Brian Hay replaced her

and the scissors and wax were discarded in favor of the computer screen and Quark-Xpress software.

The first week was rather hectic, in spite of some practice runs the weeks previous. It took a few days of midnight oil to finish the paper. However, most of the details have been worked out and the networking of Macintosh computers is simplifying things.

If you want to see how technology has changed the method of laying out a newspaper, stop in at the press and ask for a demonstration.

Dear Abbot-Ordinary Peter:

Today my prayers and loving thoughts are much with you and your dear Abbey St. Peter's. Its living and departed members are supporting you joyfully. And Christ is with you in power and glory.

I am Abbot Severin's last living sister, age 88, still active with the sacred chant, adapting hymns to English, hoping and praying that Benedictines see the spiritual value of these sacred melodies and share them.

. . . just know that you all remain in my heart and in my prayers.

Sister Cecile Gertken, OSB

# The prophecy of Bruno Doerfler

By Christopher Wiseman, Calgary

(Christopher attended the Saskatchewan Writer's Guild colony at St. Peter's in 1989. Abbot Bruno was St. Peter's first abbot.)

## 1. 1903

I'm here. What shall I do? I need help.  
There are so few of us and the land is big  
And waiting. What can I really do? I must  
Pray to see future beyond this weather,  
Just as I saw that here we had to stop.  
I see a wheel, yes a wheel, stretching  
Its spokes out all around for hundreds of miles,  
And inside it the faithful come to build farms  
And Churches all across the plain. Yes,  
And in the centre, the centre of the wheel  
Of prayer and the Lord's work, will be a great  
Abbey, bigger I think that I have thought  
Of yet, God willing. (Let me not be proud.)  
An Abbey, Ja! An Abbey with a farm,  
With corn and potatoes, fishponds, Sisters to cook  
And clean, a bell for prayers, and a school, oh yes,  
A school to teach  
English to us all. It  
is not good that we are set apart by  
Our beloved German tongue as well as the Latin.  
And I see avenues of trees, paths, flowers,  
Beauty and order in this unruly land,  
Dwellings for hermits far off in the trees.  
I see much but do I know how to create?  
If this vision is vanity may the Lord forgive,  
But I see myself finally lying in great  
Peace here, long before my visions come  
To pass fully, for I look far ahead,  
Surrounded by my dear friends and my brothers  
In Christ, in a special place, shining clean  
In snow, fragrant in the great heat of summer.  
O lieber Gott! I see a whole Colony  
Lying across this land, worshipping. But  
I have time only to start after my journey  
To find this place. Far from help. But I hope.  
Italy, Blessed Saint, then Germany,  
Then following your pulling to the New World,  
So strange after deep and friendly Europe -  
The work continues and the line goes on.  
And now the compass-needle has led us here.  
These words I write on my mind in 1903.  
I need help.

## 2. 1989

You were close, Bruno Doerfler, though even you  
Would be amazed at what your mind's words caused -  
New computers running the huge presses,  
Tens of thousands of newspapers in English,  
The gym, the running-track, the equipment  
In the College, strange farm machinery  
Humming and roaring. The mission in Brazil  
Would have pleased you, old traveller, and the peace  
Here always, in spite of the new things, the way  
It offers sanctuary to the maimed and wounded  
Fled from a troubled world. You'd grieve  
That world, oh yes, but see it as a challenge,  
I think, restless as you were, though the drifting  
Away of the nuns now, the age of the monks,  
Would disturb you. And the loss of the old Latin.  
And what would you think of the casual work-clothes  
Of the men of God, the desperate money-raising,  
The free and easy life of barbecues,  
Sex-therapy, and long evening ball-games?  
But even you, 1903 austere,  
Would recognize and be well-pleased by the place  
Where you lie, nearly fifty crosses  
Gathered round you there in neat rows.  
Standing looking it's easy to believe  
That this is the very heart of the wheel you saw -  
So I, at least, just a visitor, sense -  
You there in the centre, growing flowers  
Tended over you by rough fingers each evening  
And birdsong everywhere sweetening the mild air  
Loud enough to wake the dead, old Bruno,  
Under the stone carved with your credentials:  
*Die 12 Junii pie in Domini o but*  
*R'mus BRUNO DOERFLER O.S.B.*  
*Monasterii St. Petri Abbas I et inter*  
*fundatores Coloniae Sti Petri princeps<sup>1</sup>*  
Dark grey marble there in the soft grass.  
A small place for one man from the old myth  
Of journeying and knowing where to stop,  
Where to write future. But few can ever say  
I arrived, I dreamed, then life sprang up and grew.

St. Peter's Abbey,  
Muenster, Saskatchewan

1. (The full inscription on the gravestone translates as: "On the 12th day of June 1919 Most Reverend Bruno Doerfler O.S.B. departed devoutly in the Lord. Abbot of the Monastery of St. Peter, and principal one among the founders of St. Peter's Colony. Born in Richfield, Minn. Dec. 29, 1866. May he rest in peace. German Canadian Catholic erected this monument.")



**Here and there, old and new;  
some might even be true!!**

Br. Michael McAllister is taking a renewal program at the Redemptorist Centre for Growth in Edmonton. He lives at the Stillpoint House of Prayer run by the Ursulines of Jesus, about three blocks from the Centre. Michael expects to be home in early December.

\* \* \*

The Tri-Community annual summer gathering of Ursulines, Elizabethans and Benedictines this year was hosted by the Ursulines of Bruno on Aug. 7; a very memorable occasion.

\* \* \*

Monks who spent some time in hospital since the last newsletter were: Fr. Martin Brodner, for treatment of cancer, and Fr. Werner Renneberg, for a defective heart valve. Before taking up his new pastoral assignment, Fr. Martin had a hernia repaired. Br. Francis Fortney spent a few anxious, but leisurely days in hospital to rebuild his strength. The only way we can get Br. Francis to slow down is to send him to hospital.

\* \* \*



*Pastoral changes in the abbacy included Fr. Martin Brodner going to Bruno, Fr. Florian Renneberg going to Lake Lenore, Abbot Peter Novocosky becoming pastor of St. Gregor, Fr. Philip Loehr becoming pastor of Marysburg and Fr. Lawrence DeMong going to Muenster. Missing is Fr. Harvey Wingfield of St. Martin's Abbey, who came to Engfeld.*

\* \* \*

Frank Boser, a Benedictine Oblate candidate, has taken up residence in the old farm "bunk-house" after living in Humboldt for the past four years. Frank, who makes his oblation on Nov. 16, will do some light work on the farm, as well as some yard

maintenance. He says the main advantage of living on the Abbey grounds is that he can take part in the daily eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. Welcome, Frank.

Another layperson living on the premises is Pat Weber, well-known to most of our guests, and who had a slight stroke earlier this year. Pat works at the press.

Mary Torberg, our hard-working, former kitchen manager, is taking treatments for the fourth bout of cancer and is doing very well. She visits the kitchen staff frequently and is in good spirits — an edification to us all. Mary continues to live on her farm near the abbey with her seven cats.

\* \* \*

Fr. Xavier Benning lost his nephew, Richard Benning, this autumn from cancer. He was about 43 years of age. Later this fall, Fr. Xavier's sister, Rose Brandl, and Sr. Climacus, a cousin, visited him.

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*St. Pius X Seminary retreat took place the Labor Day weekend with Fr. Bernard de Marjerie as director.*

Five monks attended workshops earlier this summer: Fr. William

Thurmeier attended the annual Benedictine Formation Director's workshop, and four monks travelled to St. John's Abbey in Minnesota for the annual Monastic Studies program. Fr. Albert Ruetz and Brs. Randy, Demetrius and Gerald participated in a workshop on Monastic Prayer. Several top Cistercian and Benedictine experts in this field conducted the five-day study.

\* \* \*

Fr. Leo Hinz visited Brazil this past spring — a gift from the parish for the 40th anniversary of his ordination. Also visiting Brazil in July were Fr. Andrew Britz and Sr. Marian Noll, OSU. These were well-deserved vacations for both. Fr. Andrew just finished building the Abbey church which was officially opened on June 29, and Sr. Marian for the work she has done over many years for the Prairie Messenger.



*Fr. Andrew Britz, who celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination this summer, examines Fr. Rudolph Novecosky's hand-driven tricycle.*

\* \* \*

Br. Stanley Vindevoghel, who has studied at the University of Regina for the past two years has just completed his thesis and has been asked to sub-



*Br. Anthony Nguyen with Abbot Peter Novecosky and Fr. William Thurmeier and relatives on his profession day, Sept. 3, 1991.*

stitute teach while the regular professor is away. Br. Stan is with the Social Work Department and is specializing in serving senior citizens and the Elderhostel Program. Should you wish to phone or write Br. Stanley, his address is #509 - 2250 Rose St., Regina S4P 2A7; phone 522-2296. And speaking of theses, Br. Kurt van Kuren spent six weeks in San Francisco working on his thesis on Meditation. He is presently teaching psychology in our college.

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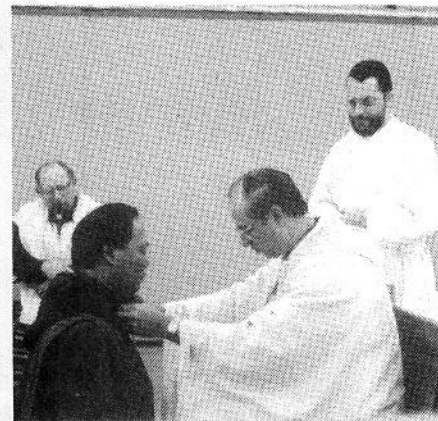
## **Benedictine Oblate dies**

Theodore (Ted) Herman Bergerman died on Oct 7, 1991, at age 79, in Prince Albert. Ted and his wife Alice are Oblates of St. Benedict. Prayer service and funeral mass were held in Prince Albert at St. Joseph Church. Ted's wife Alice is a sister to Fr. James Gray, our bush-dweller. Interment was in St. Peter's Cathedral cemetery at 3 p.m. on Oct. 10, with Abbot Jerome officiating.

\* \* \*

## **Br. Bernard's fall farm report**

Our crops were very good this year and of the finest quality. This was



*Br. Anthony Nguyen's profession ceremony of first vows on Sept. 3, 1991.*

mainly due to the large amount of moisture this spring and summer. The yield averaged 46 bushels per acre of #1, with over 13.5 protein valued at \$2.08 per bus. Other crops which also yielded well were barley, oats and canola. Besides the abundance of moisture, sufficient nitrogen also contributed to the good yield. There was much straw to bale: 6,000 barley and oat bales and 3,000 wheat straw bales. We could not meet the demand for potatoes — such a poor yield. The corn, however, was very good, more than we could sell. The cattle lived on corn for almost a month. The farm livestock consists of beef cattle, pigs,



# Official opening of the abbey church of

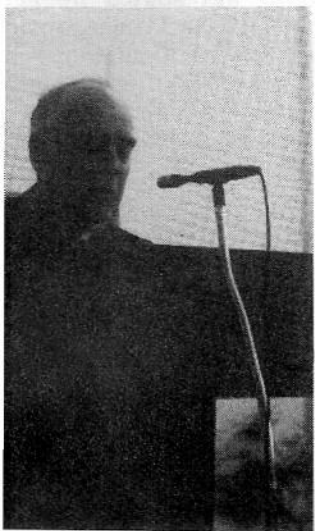
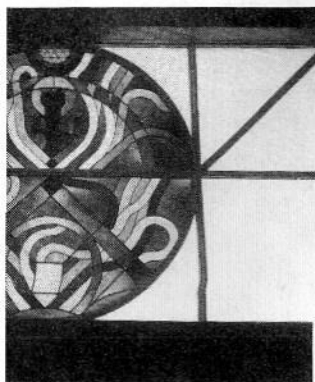


*Andrew Britz, OSB, construction manager.*





# Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29, 1991

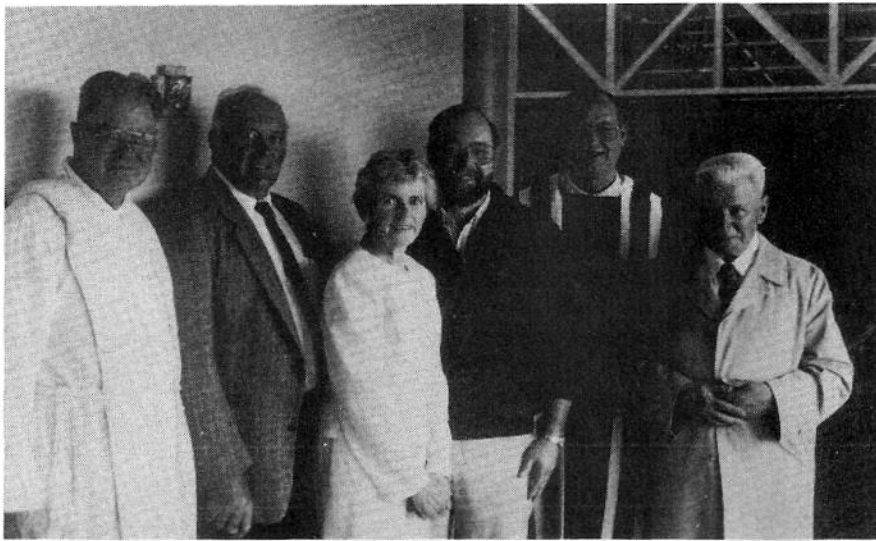


...D, archbishop of Regina.



*Mr. and Mrs. Étienne Gaboury, St. Boniface architect.*





*Making their final oblation as Oblates of St. Benedict June 22, 1991, are, from left: Al Kehrig of Watson, Mina Lieffers of Cudworth and Wayne Sturgess of Spiritwood. Enrolled as an Oblate candidate was Alex Kondorosi of Saskatoon. With them is Oblate Director Prior Albert Ruetz. Guidelines for Oblates of St. Benedict says that Oblates are men and women of peace. They use all rightful means of establishing peace in the world around them, mindful of the centuries of the Benedictine watchword: Peace. They strive to practice the truth of God in love and join all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and working to bring it about. Future Oblate days are: Nov. 16, 1991, March 21, June 20 and Nov. 21, 1992.*

chickens and an unknown number of cats. The chickens have already matured enough to be roasted and the egg layers have been producing for some weeks now.

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Have you heard or seen any good bells for sale lately? The bell tower for the new abbey church awaits construction, and the monks are looking for a set of bells to purchase. The old clunker in the college steeple, which over the past 70 years has become an object of great sentimental value, must have been cast somewhere in the Far East — the note it produces is between E and E flat, a quarter tone. Even if it were practical to remove it from the top of the college building, it could not be used with other bells. The monks are looking for a set of at least three bells — and they must be “in tune” or pitch. If you know of any such bells please contact Abbot Peter Novocosky at (306) 682-5521 or Fr. Andrew Britz at (306) 682-5215. You may also write

the Church Building Committee, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask., S0K 2Y0.

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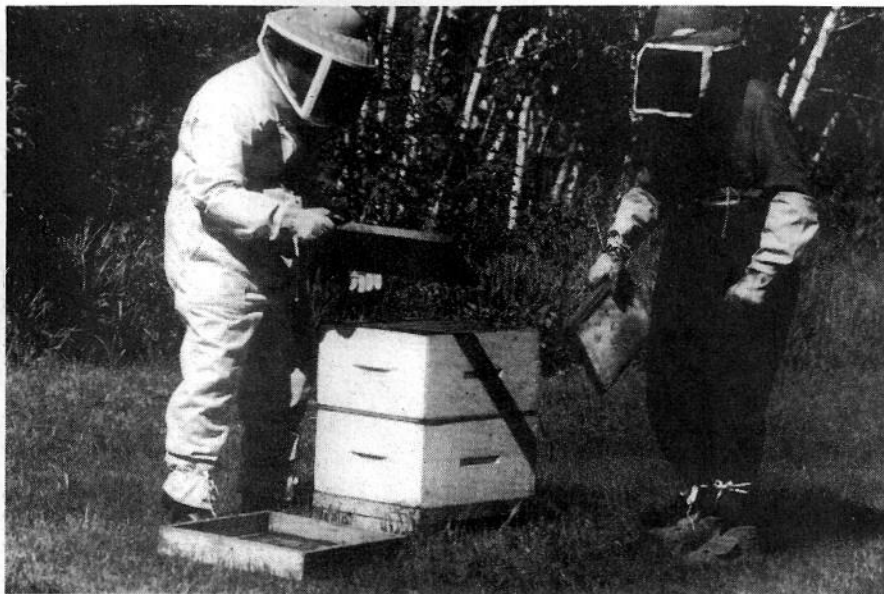
Br. Richard Meidl is back at St. Meinrad's Abbey/Seminary for the final year of seminary studies. His ordination to the ministerial priesthood will take place on Aug. 15, 1992, in our Abbey Church of Sts Peter & Paul. Should you wish to phone Br. Richard, he has his own number in his room: (812) 357-6738. His address is St. Meinrad's Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN 47577, U.S.A.

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Monastery beekeepers — Fr. Xavier has been beekeeper since 1957. The bee operation was started by Fr. Xavier's brother, Tony Benning, some time before 1957. Br. Demetrius has been involved as Fr. Xavier's helper since 1988. This year we had 17 hives or colonies of bees in the bee yard at St. Peter's. The honey collected, or rather harvested, was just under 2,000 lbs. The honey, which we hope will last a full year, is used by the abbey.

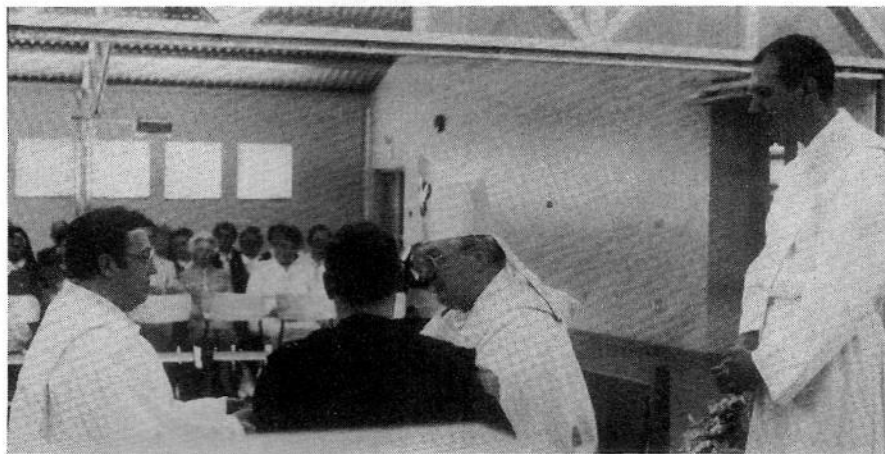
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In the past week we have endured two serious blizzards. The first snow storm caused cancellation of univer-

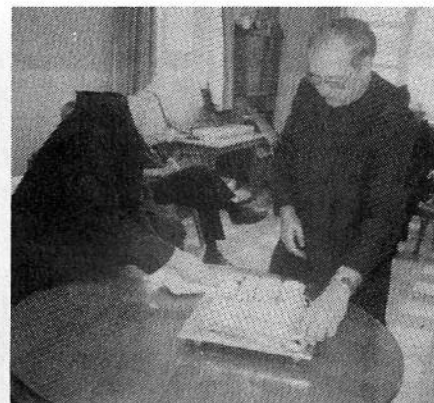


*Beekeepers Fr. Xavier Benning and Br. Demetrius Wasylyniuk — only they know which is which.*





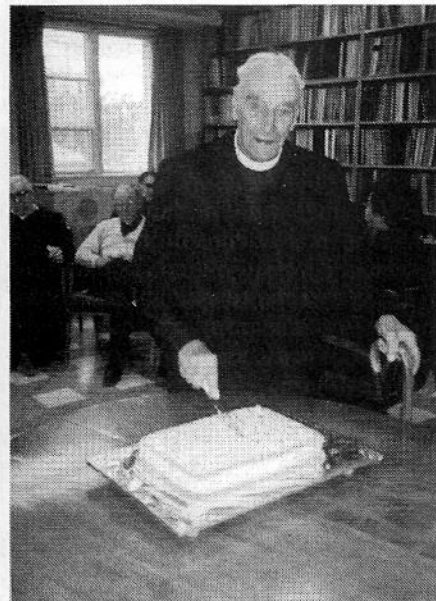
*Bishop James Mahoney ordained Br. Richard Meidl to the diaconate June 15, 1991. Deacon Don Bolen of Regina assisted the bishop.*



*Abbot Jerome Weber celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination to the ministerial priesthood this summer.*



*Fr. Demetrius Dumm, OSB, second from right, returned to St. Peter's for the monks' annual retreat, June 10-14. Fr. Demetrius is from St. Vincent's Archabbey.*



*Fr. Matthew Michel, 94, celebrated his 70th anniversary of ordination to the ministerial priesthood this summer.*



*St. Peter's College reunion, Aug. 4-5, attracted some old-timers from the first days of the college.*

sity classes for the day, and on the same day a visit by the Tibetan monks from India was cancelled. The last blizzard of the week prevented some pastors from going to their assigned parishes. The court yard between the two walk-ways to the Abbey Church is quickly filling up with snowbanks.

\* \* \*

The Pipe Organ Project: Progress is being made. On Oct. 21 Fr. William Thurmeier presented the architect, Msgr. Gaboury, with drawings of three designs for the organ. In their



*St. Peter's College Director Tony Saretsky and College Dean Deborah Sarauer register a student on registration day, Sept. 4. Over 200 full-time and part-time students make this year's class the largest ever.*



*Saskatchewan Writers' Guild used the vacated St. Scholastica Convent for their 1991 summer colony. Shown on the steps of the convent are guild members: Liz Philips, Peter McGehee and Keith Daniels.*

discussions they chose one of them. After Gaboury Associates receive the weights of the various parts of the organ, they will design the steel structure which will support the organ eight feet off the floor behind the altar. Then work will begin on rebuilding the

console which should be finished and installed in the church by St. Benedict's feast March 21. Work on the windchests, wind system and pipes will begin after that. Fr. William is designing and building the organ.

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*New candidate Patrick Lee Leslie of Edmonton speaks with Fr. Stefano Penna of Saskatoon.*



*With the assistance of many rains, Br. Wolfgang Thiem produced the largest tomatos — up to two pounds!*





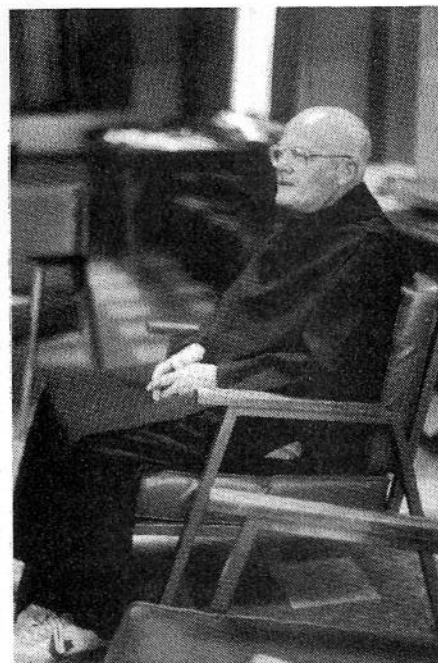
*Br. Richard Meidl with his mother, Harlinda, on his day of ordination to the diaconate June 15, 1991. Harlinda made the deacon's alb.*



*Br. Randy Senecal made Solemn Vows to Abbot Peter and the community on July 11, 1991.*



*Seldom seen by the public is the southern view of the new abbey Church of Sts. Peter and Paul.*



*Fr. Harvey Wingfield of St. Martin's Abbey, Washington, has joined the list of abbacy pastors, taking the Englefeld parish.*

# Monks involved in social justice

Any serious involvement of the monks of St. Peter's Abbey in social justice began with the publication in 1931 of Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (Forty Years After). That encyclical, also called "Reconstructing the Social Order," marked the 40th anniversary of the first great social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labor) which was issued on May 15, 1891, by Pope Leo XIII.

There is renewed interest this year in that first great encyclical for on May 15 of this year Pope John Paul II issued a new encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (Hundredth Year) on the centenary of the 1891 encyclical.

The Spring Newsletter traced the involvement of St. Peter's Abbey in social justice from 1931 to the founding in 1967 of the abbacy Brazil Mission. That mission has involved the three religious congregations of the abbacy, the Benedictines, the Ursulines and the Elizabethans. Our mission team, in the words of the Spring Newsletter, found Brazil "a veritable laboratory course in social justice."

The story of our Brazil Mission will be resumed later. It started in the same year as another development entered the social justice scene. That "development" began with the publication on March 26, 1967, of Pope Paul VI's great encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples).

The key idea of Pope Paul's encyclical is summed up in a phrase in the last paragraph of the document: "The new name for peace is development." Inspired by that phrase the bishops of Canada already in 1967 set up our Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace.

That title is an accurate description of the organization. However, even when shortened to Development and Peace or CCODP it is a very bland title for a great organization. Members of the abbacy who attended the Diocesan Spring Assembly on June 6 will remember how Al Gerwing, fresh

from a stint in our abbacy Brazil Mission, pleaded for a more expressive name for our development organization, a name with as much zing as *Misereor*, the word the Germans use for their organization. Any ideas?

The abbacy, like most other dioceses of Canada, lost no time in appointing contact people for CCODP. However, interest in world development took off quite slowly in those relatively prosperous times.

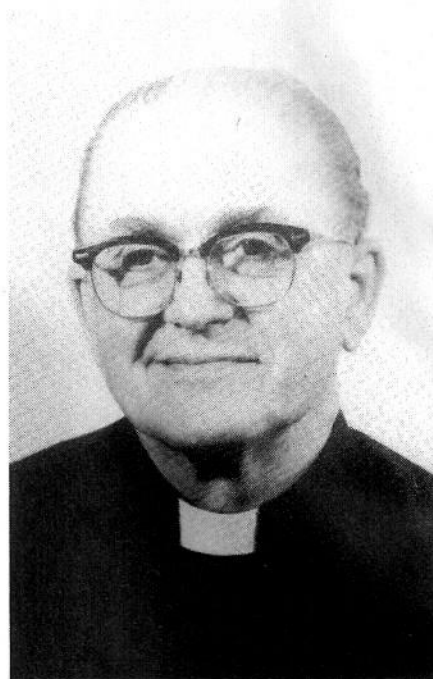
The first contact person in the abbacy who actually did any work with our development organization was Fr. Philip Loehr, while pastor at Bruno and later at Cudworth. He was convinced that rural life in Canada was also very much a social justice issue — a "development" issue in fact. He knew that parallels between the at-the-moment prosperous people of rural Canada and the exploited rural people of the Third World were bound to emerge.

The only farm organizations that seemed to show any awareness of those parallels were the Farmers Union organizations in the various provinces of Canada. These were planning to go "national" in 1969.

Loehr sold the idea to the Saskatchewan Farmers Union of having Romeo Maione, the executive director of Development and Peace, as the key-

note speaker at the founding convention of the National Farmers Union in Winnipeg in July 1969. It took even more persuasion to convince Maione that he was the right man to speak to the farmers: "I hardly know a plow from a cultivator," said Maione. "But you have a thorough understanding of how the world does business," Loehr told him. "You know when the farmer is being cultivated and when he is being plowed."

Although Maione accepted the invitation with some misgiving, he gave a masterful address to the farmers. That marked the beginning of an active association of Development and Peace with issues of rural life in



Fr. Philip Loehr, OSB

Canada. The National Farmers Union invited Maione back a few years later. He gave a brilliant description of the economy the farmers are working in, and his address was printed word-for-word in the next issue of the Union Farmer.

There will be more about the abbacy's involvement in Development and Peace later in this series.

Around this time Loehr was already working with the Sociology Department of the University of Regina. This began when he was invited by Professor Bob Stirling to address his sociology class at the university and also an off-campus class at Moose Jaw to introduce "the rural sociology that is not yet in the textbooks."

Loehr at this time also worked with a variety of people, sometimes with farm leaders, sometimes also with Regina University professors like Jim McCrorie, Don Mitchell and Joe Roberts, in workshops for farmers in various parts of Saskatchewan, even on occasion in Alberta and Manitoba.

In early March 1971, Loehr was sent



into the Peace River region by the National Farmers Union to take part in a week of workshops for farmers. They were held in places as far-flung as Fort St. John on the Alaska Highway, Manning on the Mackenzie Highway and the friendly francophone community of Falher on the east edge of the Peace River farming area. There were also workshops at Beaverlodge and Fairview.

The best turnout was at Falher, where Oblate pastor Clement Richer and the whole community took part in the workshop.

In 1972 Loehr was invited to join the first Canadian Agricultural Mission to China in the Mao era. This delegation was organized by Roy Atkinson, the president of the National Farmers Union, who had been a member of the Canadian Trade Mission the previous year. Stuart Thiesson, executive secretary of the NFU, was the guide of the tour in which 15 farmers from four Canadian provinces spent the whole monsoon month of August in China. They visited most of the agricultural regions of China including

areas which have been producing good crops for 8,000 years.

Some accounts of that experience appeared in a series of articles in the *Prairie Messenger* in subsequent months of 1972 and 1973. The way in which the Chinese have kept their agriculture sustainable for many millennia in at least some areas of their country has been an important element in Loehr's series on agriculture and rural life which appeared in the *Prairie Messenger* from October 1989 to December 1990.

Later in 1972 Loehr was invited by Roy Romanow, the attorney-general of the province, to be on the newly formed Human Rights Commission. There Loehr found kindred spirits particularly in two of the five members of the Commission: the late Chief Hilliard McNab of Gordon Indian Reserve near Punnichy, and the late Bill Gilbey of Regina, a labor organizer with a vision far beyond mere labor concerns. Both men had a keen social awareness. Loehr served a five-

year term on the Commission from 1972 to 1977.

By this time Father Werner Renneberg was already active in issues of social justice. He had studied social doctrine at the Coady Institute in Antigonish, N.S., during the school year of 1969 to 1970.

In the winter of 1972-73 the Department of Sociology of Regina University set up rural study groups at a number of centres in the province. Renneberg, then working in Humboldt Parish, conducted the workshop of half a dozen sessions in Humboldt. Loehr, then resident at Cudworth, conducted a similar series at Archerwill, at which Vic and Cecily Althouse were regular participants. (Althouse, already active in rural issues, went into federal politics a few years later, and has become the agricultural critic of his party.)

The next winter, 1973-74, professors from Regina University took turns conducting half a dozen workshops at St. Peter's College. The most interesting workshop was that conducted by Professor Don Mitchell, who was at that time in the process of writing his book *The Politics of Food*, which later became recommended reading for Ten Days for World Development. Not all of those workshops were conducted by Regina professors. Twice storms north of Regina kept the visiting professor from leaving the city, and Loehr had to fill in. (To be continued.)

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*This article was prepared by Father Philip Loehr, OSB, who is engaged in social justice today.*

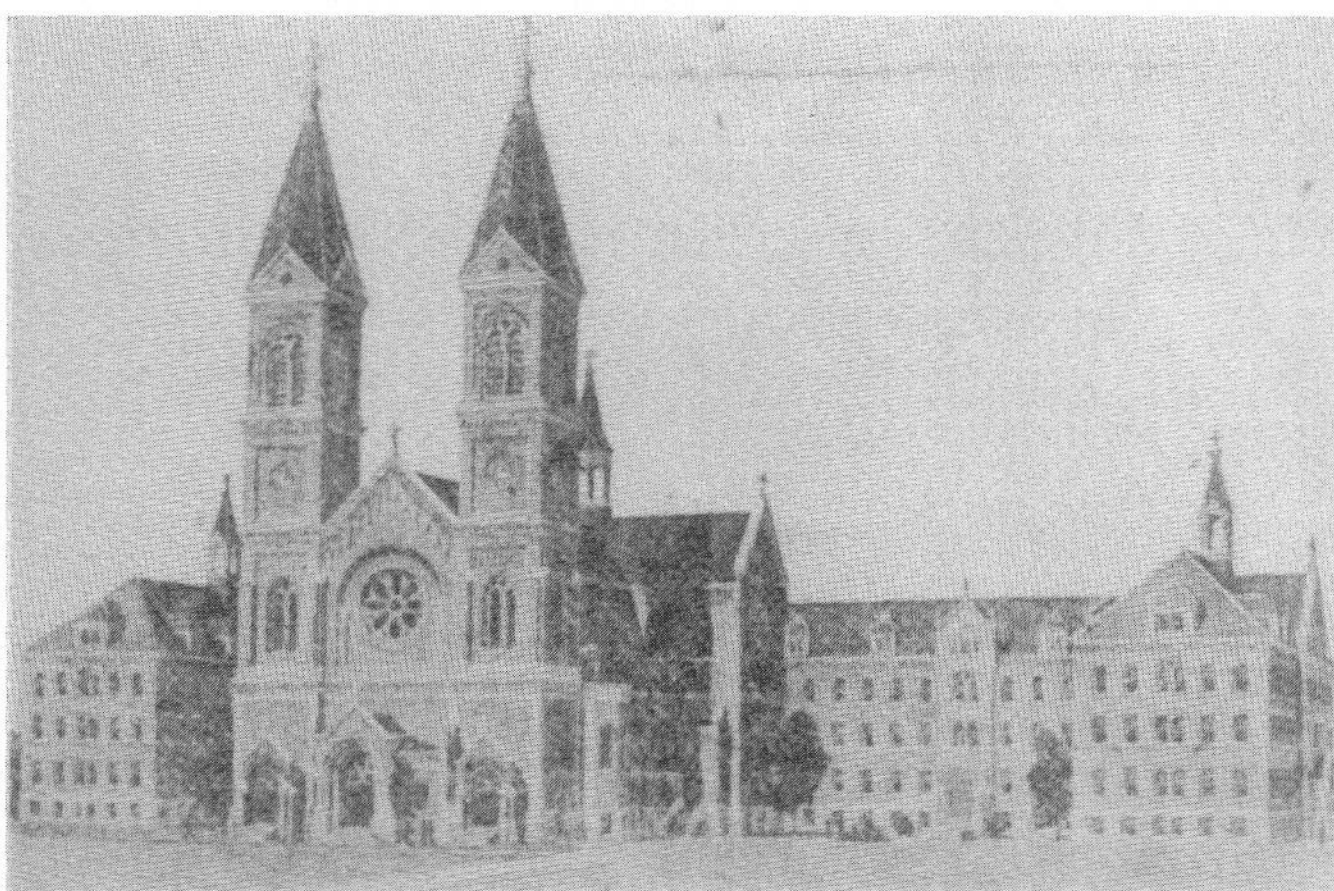
#### ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER

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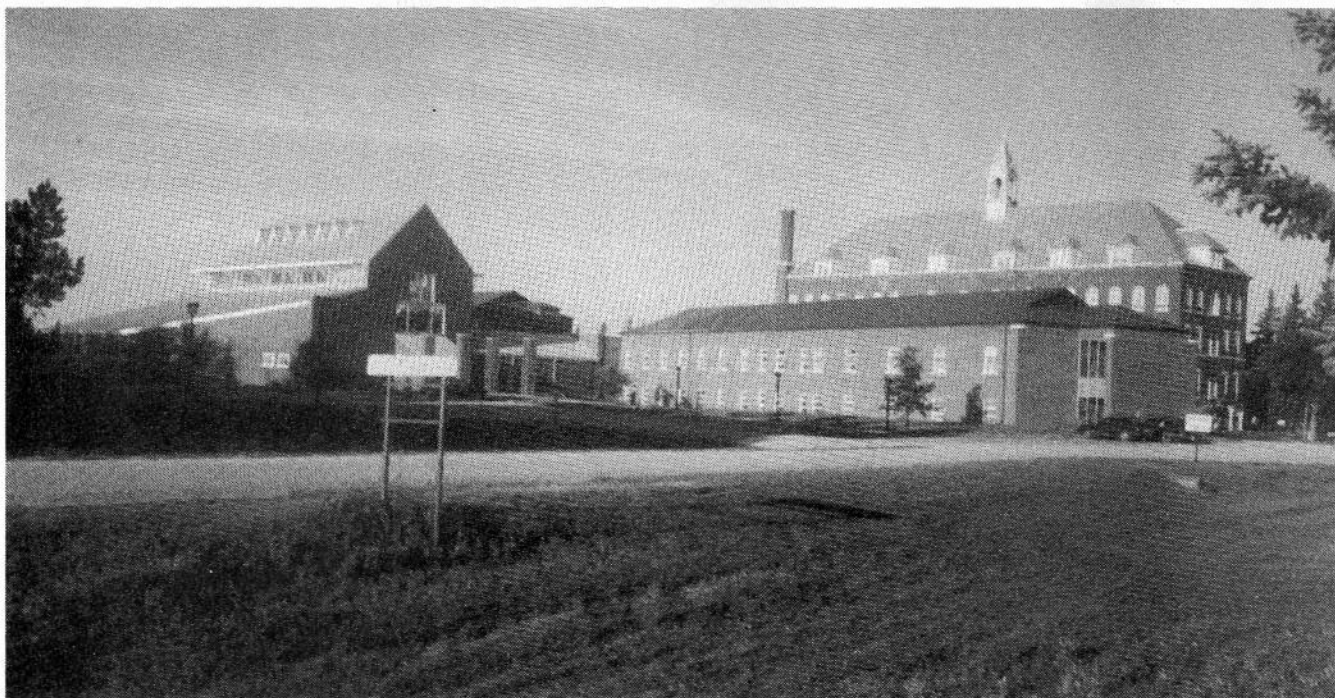
*Logo designed by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.*





St. Peter's Bote, 1920

*An architect's dream in 1920 for St. Peter's College, church and abbey. The church would have been about three times as high as the present college.*



*St. Peter's Abbey, college and church — 1991*