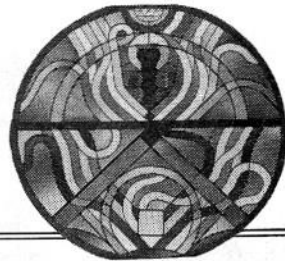




St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter

Vol. 15 No. 1 Winter 1992



Special Oblate Issue

Most people when they hear the name "Oblate" immediately think of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), which is a religious order of missionaries very prominent in the early days of the West. Today this order of men is involved in every imaginable apostolate from missionary to seminary, from pastors to printing. Other than sharing our resources, there is no connection between the OMIs and the Oblates of St. Benedict. And to make it even more confusing, there are within the Benedictine Order, two kinds of Oblates: *Secular Oblates: men and women associates living outside the monastery, and Cloistered Oblates: men who live inside the monastery, as the name implies.* This special issue will deal with both kinds of Benedictine Oblates. We will talk about the thriving Oblates of Mary Immaculate in a future issue. — Editor

Cloistered Oblate profile — Br. Francis

By Br. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB

On June 24th of this year Br. Francis Fortney will celebrate his 28th year as a Choir or Cloistered Oblate of St. Benedict.

Francis, who was born at Simmie, Sask., in the Diocese of Gravelbourg on March 9, 1930, first came to St. Peter's for high school in 1954. Before coming

to St. Peter's, he farmed with his parents; there were four brothers and three sisters in the family. School did not prove to be a high point in Francis's life and so he remained at home after his first year at St. Peter's College.

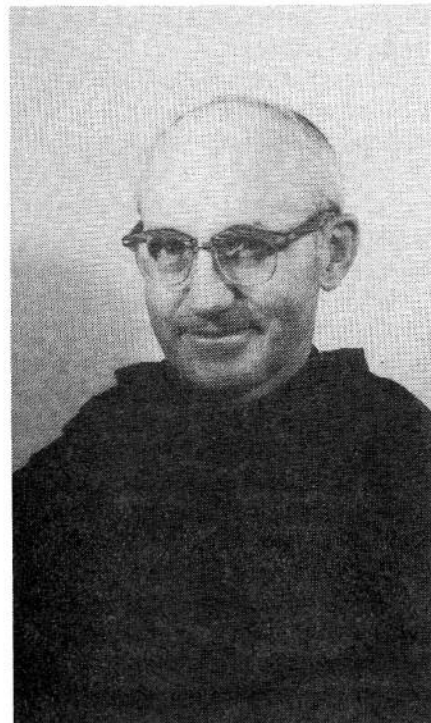
In November 1956, Francis first entered the monastic community of St. Peter's, and his first assignment was to work on the farm along with Al Lange. During the 36 years since entering the monastery, Francis has worked in every department of our large complex.

We all have special people who help us with our discernment, and for Francis "Mamma Ebbes" was this special person. Mr. and Mrs. Ebbes lived on the abbey property and worked with the dairy herd on the farm, and Mamma

was Francis's coffee-time companion. We also have special incidents that happen to us in our work which may or may not be part of our vocation discernment.

Br. Francis told me the incident that occurred in the hog barn. A particular boar was constantly asserting his authority on everything in the barn, including Br. Francis. He tried many different methods of dealing with the boar but finally decided that direct force was necessary. Francis had to move the boar by striking him with a pitch fork handle. The boar challenged Francis and charged him, knocking him backward on the floor of the barn.

Continued on next page



Br. Francis Fortney, OblSB

Oblate spirituality

By Marikay Falby
Oblate of St. Benedict, Saskatoon

Oblates of St. Benedict are laypeople living in the world who are affiliated with a nearby Benedictine abbey. St. Peter's Abbey has 100 Oblates who act as a "spiritual arm" of the community, reaching out into all areas of life and sharing with others what they themselves gain as Oblates.

Out here in Western Canada, Oblates of St. Benedict are often con-

fused with Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who are a religious order of men. People are somewhat disconcerted to hear there are women in the "Oblates." Consequently, we often call ourselves "Secular Benedictines" to differentiate ourselves from the other order.

Another misconception is that Oblates of St. Benedict are a Third Order, much the same as the Third Order of St. Francis. We are not a Third

Continued on page 7



After every snow storm, Br. Francis is out with the snow-blower before anyone has had a chance to pack the snow down by walking on it.

The boar stood over the prostrated Francis, in stubborn defiance. Francis could have been seriously injured by the boar but by divine providence nothing happened. In spite of the scary experience, Br. Francis continued to work on the farm until the fall of 1958.

St. Peter's College offered a high school program as well as an arts program, and the building provided residence space for about 150 - 170 students; someone was required to help

maintain the dormitories. Cleaning up after that many students seemed a rather awesome task but Br. Francis met the challenge head on. He recalled that the boys never seemed able to put away boots and shoes where they belonged. That didn't seem to be a major concern for the boys.

Francis continued his discernment of monastic life until 1964, when he applied for cloistered Oblate status. The constitutions of the American Cassinese Congregation define cloistered Oblates as "men who seek God by following the Rule of St. Benedict in a manner adapted to their status and by sharing in some measure the common life of the monastery."

For six years Br. Francis had discerned the call to monastic life. He lived through the turmoil and turbulence of the changes in the church brought about by Vatican II. The monk, whether brother or priest, makes solemn vows at the end of a three-year period of temporary vows. Francis felt that his challenge was that of a cloistered Oblate rather than a professed monk.

Br. Francis felt that choosing to be an Oblate was a privilege for him. His mother influenced his choice of a religious vocation and after deep reflection on his situation he was guided to the decision of being a choir or cloistered Oblate of St. Benedict in 1964.

His talents and abilities are numerous, including electrical, heating, farming, carpentry and a host of others. It would take a book to tell all the facets of Br. Francis's activities. I personally know his great ability in caring for the sick and elderly of our community. He has been involved with the sick and elderly for many years. As acting infirmarian, I often seek his advice as to the care of a particular monk. I marvel always at his ability to fit baths and meal trays for the elderly into his already over-taxed schedule.

People sense in Br. Francis a caring, generous spirit. The elderly and the sick readily respond to his gentle, honest nature. He has accepted the challenge of religious life with all its current demands. Seldom does one hear Br. Francis mention his own struggle with asthma.

Br. Francis believes that we all seek to become better than we are and to seek greater perfection. This perfection is one challenge among the many challenges of our lives. The challenge for Francis is being a cloistered Oblate. He said that "it was the hat for him that fitted."

We all have our challenge, our journeys; for Br. Francis, being a cloistered Oblate at St. Peter's Abbey is his challenge, his journey.

The spirit of Vatican II casts out fear

By Art Babych, editor of the Prairie Messenger, Feb. 17, 1992, editorial

Fear is a crippling emotion that often leads to irrational and violent acts. It was fear that led Herod to seek the death of the Christ child; it was fear that led Hitler to seek the death of all Jews; and it was fear that led to the Spanish Inquisition.

Unfortunately, there is also a great deal of fear in the modern-day church, a fear which, according to Father Edward Hays, "has compromised our vocation as a pilgrim church." It is a fear that, as Dominican Father Matthew Fox says, has allowed the evil spirits of racism, sexism, colonialism, envy and

homophobia into the church.

Among the phobias in some quarters today is the fear of new ideas, new theories, new ways of relating and responding to God.

Unless the freshness they often bring to a sometimes stale environment bears the imprimatur of the institutionalized church, it appears, they must surely be works of the devil and they must surely be silenced, condemned, ridiculed, banned or, worse, ignored altogether. It was so when Jesus Christ preached the Good News of salvation and was crucified; it was so when Martin Luther tacked 95 theses to a church door and was excommunicated; and it was so when Thomas Aquinas

dared to think differently about God and was condemned.

What is particularly distasteful is that, in their zeal, the guardians of the faith are so quick to reject in total everything that the prophets of the day preach, forgetting that by silencing that which may be offensive they also silence that which may be of immense relevance and value to the pilgrim church of today.

It is this fear of new and fresh ideas that cripples the spirit of Vatican II; it is well for us to remember that just as an unexamined life is not worth living, so too is an unexamined faith.

A Benedictine foundation in Brazil

By Lawrence DeMong, OSB

The feedback from our community regarding the possibility of beginning a Benedictine foundation in Brazil has a sizable group asking for more input. I believe it would be appropriate to present a paper on the issue and possibly several, perhaps arguing both for and against the proposal.

At our present moment in history a representative group among our more recent members believes that we ought to drastically reduce our external apostolates, especially our abbacy involvement. Among these a certain number simply negate the very thought of beginning a monastery with a pastoral thrust similar to our own in Brazil. It is a logical deduction, considering their own feelings toward our pastoral work here in the abbacy.

The kind of monastery they envision for us happens to be similar to many monasteries already established in Brazil, such as Olinda, Salvador, Sao Paulo, Garanhuns, etc. In that case it would seem a redundancy to establish another, especially from here in Canada.

My own conviction is that north-eastern Brazil desperately needs a monastery along the lines of our own for these reasons:

1) As a country, Brazil is terribly macho — religion, prayer, “church” is for women, not men. Fr. Manu, the Trappist in southern Brazil, whom several of our team know, and who used to be a Dominican, worker priest, novice master, says the most important reality needed in the Brazilian church is **men at prayer**. A monastery is men at prayer.

2) The type of work which a monastery engages in is another issue; Benedict’s motto of *Ora et Labora* can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

Sometimes I believe the present concern that St. Peter’s become more “contemplative” is somewhat superficial, but at the base of this concern I am convinced is something we must look



Fr. Lawrence DeMong, OSB, speaking on the topic of a foundation in Brazil. Al Gerwing and Fr. Leo Hinz, OSB, also spoke.

at, our over-extendedness in work. Fr. Leander Dosch at Holy Trinity Abbey in Utah can tell us with eloquence that the type of work is not the issue: the issue is a balance between work and prayer. This balance must be constantly reviewed both by communities and by individuals. Chickens or eggs or hay, or my pastoral involvement can become the supreme value, not only over prayer but even over charity. Every community must struggle with this.

When Quebecers used to bug me about not being *un vrai moine* (a true monk) by contrast with St. Benoit du Lac, I would sometimes answer, “Some monks make cheese, others try to make Christians!”

I sincerely believe that a major problem in the Brazilian church is a radical split between a “contemplative” life, or should we say a contemplative way of life, and pastoral involvement. On the one hand the “contemplatives” are the Benedictines such as Olinda and on the other is a diocesan clergy or religious orders engaged in the apostolate who do not visibly witness to a contem-

plative, prayer, dimension of their lives.

That is the unique contribution that a monastery growing out of our American Cassinese tradition could, I suggest, bring to Brazil: to close the split and to show that **men who pray** (that ought to be visible to anyone stepping into a monastery) can also be involved creatively in pastoral action.

Every church must have a missionary dimension. I believe the 25 years of our involvement in Brazil has been an immense blessing for St. Peter’s Abbey. To say a brief word for our own needs in this matter, I believe that as long as we continue to have an abbacy we should also continue to have a relationship with Brazil. Ideally, a monastery of our stripe, with an active apostolic dimension, would be an excellent source of cross-pollination and encouragement to us here in Canada.

1992 Oblate days

March 21

June 20

November 21

Letters from Brazil

Dear Confreres:

It has been great to have Abbot Peter, Sr. Maureen and Al Hergott here for a few weeks. And they have given prime time to discerning about our monastic foundation in the not-too-distant future. I am sure Abbot Peter will give you a first-hand report.

I am more optimistic than ever, in spite of all the difficulties of personnel at the abbey and in the abbacy. I for one am willing to make tremendous sacrifices so that St. Peter's can contribute in a much more powerful, specifically Benedictine way to the church in Alagoas.

I am sorry if I have not used my opportunities to the full, to obtain also the maximum of desired co-operation at our home abbey.

On the other hand, there is 25 years of material to chew on, and a great need which we can fill, different from diocesan collaboration. What can I really say that has not been said many times?

Discernment here leads clearly to beginning as soon as possible.

Discernment is not the same as counting votes. And the word "monk" is often seen as "alone," by oneself. But discernment is not about what each one wants "alone," by himself, for himself, but rather in prayer and true dialogue discovering what the Spirit is indicating to the church of Muenster, with its sister in Alagoas.

Here it became clear that there is awareness of the need for a monastery as oasis for priests, sisters, laypeople who want to see a group of people enthusiastically praying and applying the Sacred Scriptures to the pressing needs of our people.

If in former times *fuga mundi* became the battle cry for monks, today the people beg for a place where they can sense God incarnated in the monks at prayer, at work, at meeting the people, etc.

God sent his Word. But many people are not really interested in God's Word. Let us together find the way to breathe, pray, meditate and practice the Word in a way that makes sense to the



Sr. Bernadine Fetter, OSU, will spend three months in Brazil this summer.

suffering people of Latin America.

Instead of "aloners," we need people who set out to live community life intensely; instead of simple followers, we need great men who can serve God's people by reflecting critically on current struggles in the church and the world, living profoundly the conversion to the kingdom.

Candidates? Let's build bridges!

In Christ and St. Benedict
Fr. Sylvester

Dear Brothers:

I'm in Marchal Deodoro with Abbot Peter and Fr. Sylvester.

We've had a number of meetings and outings these last couple of weeks. Since Abbot Peter won't be back for a couple of weeks yet, I'll be sending this letter with Sr. Maureen.

At the beginning of last week we had a number of meetings especially about the St. Joseph's Parish in Maceio and the monastic foundation. For the moment St. Joseph's remains as is. It would be foolish to want to change that right now.

The monastic foundation will need the presence of at least one and preferably two other monks from the abbey. If and when those monks come, then I too would be willing to be part of the foundation. At the moment we're thinking of Alagoas and the Maceio Diocese as the place of the foundation. The reason for a monastic foundation is to be a centre for evangelization in the state of

Alagoas.

Everyone is agreed that the monastery needs a scriptural focus. We're thinking, too, of a balance of the active and contemplative life. Pastoral life would need to be balanced. At the same time the foundation's presence would need to be socially involved in the needs of the people of the poor Northeast.

My situation in all of this for the moment is to continue in Uniao dos Palmares until at least one person from the abbey comes. Also involved at that stage are the desires of the foundation group, the abbey's and Abbot Peter.

Fr. Emil April is going home at the end of April to take holidays and celebrate his 25th anniversary of ordination. That means I'll have lots to do for the next few months.

Abbot Peter will report to you more fully on his visit when he gets back. He spent a good deal of time in Uniao, from Thursday afternoon until Sunday afternoon. Besides visiting the famous Mountain of Zumbi (the Negro slave leader) and other parts of the parish, he had close contact with a group of 20 young people who were celebrating first communion and one of them also baptism.

We've enjoyed his visit and send now and with Abbot Peter wishes for all the best.

In Christ and St. Benedict
Fr. Bernard



Sr. Maria Doecker, OSU, a missionary from Brazil, speaks to the monastic community on a Benedictine foundation in Brazil.

Faithful staff worker dies

Mary Torborg, former kitchen staff manager, died on Saturday, Feb. 15, after a five-year struggle with stomach cancer. She was 66 years of age and was predeceased by two children through two separate traffic accidents in 1972, and her husband, Leo, two years ago. Mary's mother, Mrs. Anne Dutka, is a resident of St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt. Surviving members of the immediate family are two daughters: Carol Knaus of Strasbourg and Gail Perry of Humboldt.

Fr. Lawrence DeMong, pastor of St. Peter's Cathedral, celebrated the funeral mass, with six priest-monks concelebrating.

Fr. Andrew Britz was homilist; he recalled many interesting events in the life of Mary and Leo while they were employed by the abbey. Fr. Lawrence, before conducting the final rites of the funeral, invited Mary's two daughters to feel welcome at the abbey, as their mother was always welcome.

Abbot Jerome Weber, who was abbot for all of Mary's time at St. Peter's, conducted the graveside

prayers. He recalled how he often visited Mary on his birthday each year. Mary's daughter, Lynn, who died tragically in a car accident, shared the same birthday as Abbot Jerome.

Mary was buried from St. Peter's Cathedral on Feb. 18.

For Mary and Leo, St. Peter's was their life — their "raison d'être." Both spent many hours each day working for the college and abbey: Mary in the kitchen as manageress and Leo in the sports complex filling in any and all positions when needed, providing security day and night.

Many monks can attribute their extra pounds to Mary's cooking. She was a hard-working manageress — she had little time for supervising.

Her occasional abruptness was a coverup for her tender sensitivity, which showed itself whenever she was honored by guests and monks. Her faithfulness to duty — to St. Peter's — was evident numerous times. In order to keep ahead of the demands of her work she would do some baking at home, store it in her freezer until need-



Mary Torborg on the occasion of Leo's farewell dinner.

ed at the abbey.

Only Mary knows how much she cooked at home for the monks. Whenever a monk's nameday arrived, there was always a decorated cake sitting on a table in the kitchen before breakfast. Another of Mary's specialties was perogies — a Ukrainian delicacy, we are told. She made these in the privacy of her own home.

The best illustration of Mary's dedication to St. Peter's occurred during the winter months. If there was the slightest chance of a snowstorm and blocked roads, Mary would stay in the large dorm over the sports complex so that she could be here for the monk's breakfast in the morning.

The guestmaster offered her a nice room in Severin Hall, which was available most of the time, but Mary didn't want to impose on anyone; she would rather sleep in a corner of the wide-open cold and lonely dorm.

Mary may have been imbued with the spirit of the pioneers; she certainly worked pioneers' hours for St. Peter's. May she rest in peace.



The entire kitchen staff attended the farewell dinner for Lorraine Jaeb. Seated are Abbot Peter Novecosky, Lorraine and her husband, Alois. Standing behind the head table are: Viola Kuervers, Ruth Servinski, Loret Tameling, Doreen Szautner, Ann Kiefer, Br. Thomas Ward, OSB, Loretta Loehr and Jane Bernauer. Vanessa Gzenda is missing from the photo.

Secular Oblates of St. Benedict

There are three kinds of Oblates:

- Secular Oblates
- Cloistered Oblates
- Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Oblates of Mary Immaculate are a religious order of men, most of whom are well-known to people of Saskatchewan. The OMIs are a missionary order which christianized Western Canada in the early pioneer days and, other than being members of the same church, have no connection with the Benedictine Order.

Cloistered Oblates, sometimes called "Choir" Oblates, are laypeople who live in a monastery with monks or nuns. This category of Oblates is described elsewhere in this issue of St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter.

Secular Oblates, the most commonly known and most popular group, will be described briefly in this article. Many of the quotations are from an introductory pamphlet: *Oblates of St. Benedict*, and from the *Oblate Constitutions*.

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian men and women admitted into spiritual union and affiliation with a Benedictine community of monks or nuns, so that they may share in the spiritual life, prayers and good works of the community.

Secular Oblates do not live in the monastic house of the community, yet they remain one with the community while they continue faithfully to carry out the duties of their particular state in life and occupation, wherever they may be.

Oblates strive to lead full Christian lives enlightened by personal efforts to understand Christ's teaching in the Scriptures as interpreted by St. Benedict in his Rule for monks. Oblates are guided and inspired by their continued spiritual association with the monastic community. The Oblates of



Saskatoon Oblates in this 1988 photo are, left to right: Sr. Mildred Kaufman, SMS (not an Oblate yet), Marie Schneider, Eric Wolfe, Leatta deTerra, Jim Penna, Marion Penna, Margaret Christenson, Petronella Anderson. Seated are: Marikay Falby, Mary Boddy and Katie Bohnke.

St. Peter's Abbey are invited at least three times a year for a day of prayer, instruction and feasting with the monks.

Secular Oblates are a "spiritual arm" of the Benedictine community, reaching out into all areas of life, seeking to share with others what they themselves gain as Oblates of St. Benedict. It is chiefly by their Christian example, even by their very presence among others, that they hope to bring St. Benedict's ideal of service to God and his people into the world where they live and work.

As their states in life permit, Oblates make use of various means for improving themselves spiritually, intellectually, culturally and socially by making a retreat, a day of recollection or renewal, attending a workshop, seminar, lecture or prayer meeting, as occasion offers from time to time. The Oblates of St. Peter's Abbey are encouraged to spend a few days each year in private retreat in the abbey's guestwing. Severin Hall sleeping rooms are available to Oblates free of charge when used for this purpose. Donations are suggested to cover the cost of food con-

sumed.

Whether on retreat at the abbey or in the privacy of their own homes, Oblates make the study and reading of holy Scripture an important part of their lives, concentrating especially on the Gospel teachings of Christ, as suggested by Vatican II decrees on the Laity, 16, and Revelation, 21.

Oblates follow the first instruction of St. Benedict in his Rule ("Listen carefully to the instructions of the Master . . ."), by listening to the public proclamation of the Word of God at mass, and to the homily of the priest as he shows how the Word of God is applied to daily life (Vatican II).

People of prayer

Besides the celebration of the eucharist, secular Oblates strive each day to pray some part of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours, as the circumstance of their lives permit, although there is no obligation for an Oblate to do this.

One method of harmonizing their private and public prayers and devotions

Continued on page 10

Order. St. Benedict did not write a separate Rule for laypeople. Rather, we follow the same Rule of St. Benedict as do monks and nuns, with modifications for our way of life.

There are many excellent commentaries on the Rule, written for Oblates, some of which are: *Household of God* by Parry, and *Spirituality for Everyday Living* by Taylor. Most Oblates try to own at least one of these commentaries, and with it are able to apply specific monastic sections to life in the world.

For example: in Chapter 29 of the Rule, St. Benedict writes about "readmission of brothers who leave the monastery," and the compassion to be shown by the abbot to such a monk.

We do not live in a monastery but, as it says in one of the commentaries on the Rule: "There are some people for whom pressures are too great and temptations too attractive. They take flight. When the phone call comes to my home or to yours and the person at the other end asks, 'May I come back?' — we reply, 'Sure. Come home.' " (from *A Share in the Kingdom: a Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict for Oblates* by Benet Tvedten, page 53-



Oblates Marg Christensen and Gilbert Mansbridge in 1983. Mr. Mansbridge, a former Anglican priest, passed away a few years ago. He was featured in an Abbey Newsletter at the time.

55.)

Being an Oblate of St. Benedict means becoming knowledgeable about the Benedictine way of life. The motto "that in all things God may be glorified" becomes our mainstay, and gives a sense of purpose to our work and relationships.

Although we do not live in the monastery, we are a part of the monas-

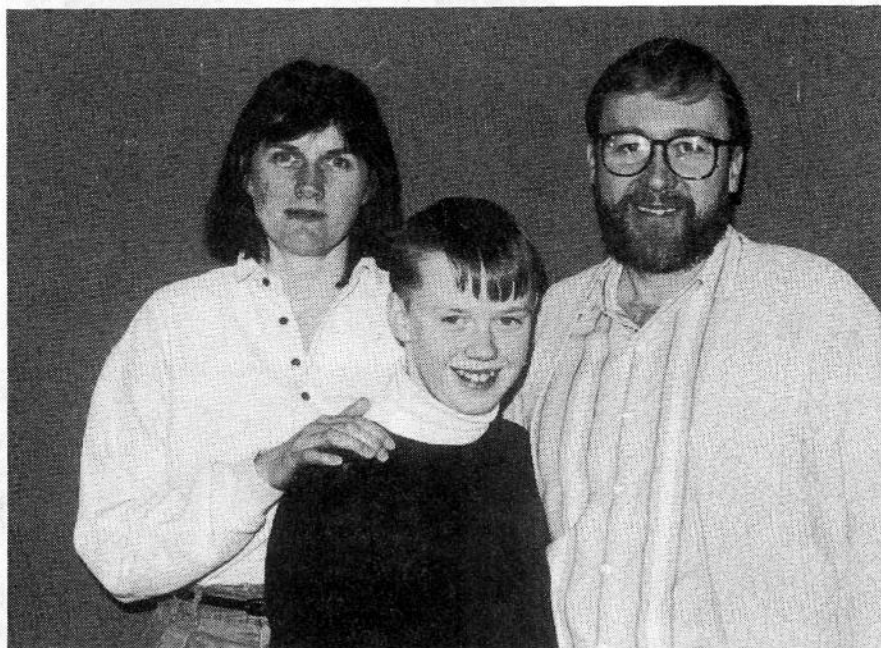
tic community, and pray with and for our brothers there. Our prayer life revolves around the Liturgy of the Hours and we try to pray at least Morning and Evening Prayer daily, joining in spirit with the monks in chapel.

Bringing St. Benedict's ideal of service and hospitality into our homes and workplaces may be one of the most concrete ways to live out what being an Oblate means. Nothing flashy, just Christian welcoming. Benedict stressed moderation, and the Oblates are encouraged to seek small ways to share their faith with others.

Being involved with Christians of other faiths and listening to them with a spirit of openness and understanding fosters the Benedictine spirit in a most wholesome manner.

We can all try to live in the presence of God as we go about our work and play. We can all try to see Christ in the people we come in contact with. That's the Benedictine way.

The porter in monasteries used to fall to his knees when a traveller arrived, aware that this certain traveller might be Jesus in disguise. That's the posture of the Oblates of St. Benedict — spiritually kneeling before the Jesus hidden in the people around us.

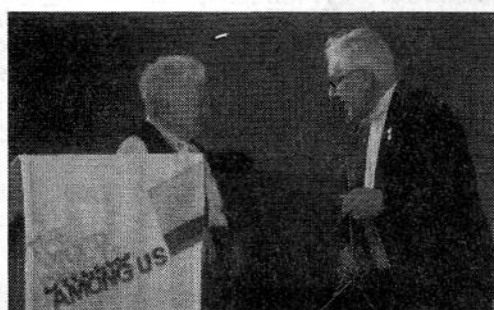


Oblates and benefactors, Donna and Ian Erickson with son Noel on a recent visit to St. Peter's Abbey.

Elizabethans celebrate 80th



All the surviving Elizabethan sisters who at one time worked at St. Peter's for students and monks. The photographer apologizes to Sr. AnnaMarie Lange, OSE, for "cutting" her off the group picture.



Anniversary at St. Peter's Abbey



Severin Hall guests appreciate their stay

The guestmaster is grateful to the many guests who write about their experiences while in Severin Hall, our guest department. St. Peter's guestwing is primarily for those individuals who require time and quiet for relaxation, reflection, spiritual rejuvenation and discernment. Some of the testimonials received recently from former guests appear below.

I want to extend my thanks to your community for the hospitality I experienced during my stay. I found the time quite fruitful. It certainly helped to be in a place where prayers are sung and said, and lived. As a person just beginning to learn about prayer and about community, I found St. Peter's Abbey a good place to listen and learn.

May I express my gratitude to the Benedictines for allowing me a place of

solitude and prayer. It has allowed me to re-connect with myself, my Creator and all creation. Amidst the silence I have developed a new "listening" spirit. . . .

These past several days spent with you in your community search for God have been relaxing, enjoyable and quite inspiring, actually.

Many thanks to you and your fellow monks for making my stay at St. Peter's so full of pleasure and profit. It was a privilege for me to be part of your community.

I really am thankful for your hospitality and the chance for some solitude and quiet space. It was a real gift for me and I greatly appreciate it.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the abbey and was edified by the atmosphere and prayerfulness of the community.

The whole atmosphere of the abbey is "restful" and "relaxing."

Your concern for us is a much appreciated aspect of our week here at the abbey.

Thanks for the help and hospitality. It's good for my soul and your salvation. Amen!

Thanks for sharing your community and spirit.

Br. Gerald, wishes to thank all those who took the time to express their gratitude by letters and cards which he has shared with the entire community of St. Peter's Abbey.

SECULAR OBLATES

Continued from page 6

with the liturgical season and feasts of the year is by following Benedict's motto: pray and work. For Benedictines, prayer and work become one. This is easily accomplished with the use of the Jesus Prayer, recommended by John Cassian and other early Christian fathers.

When possible, secular Oblates offer their services to the monastery to which they are attached through volunteer work. At St. Peter's Abbey the monetary donations of its Secular Oblates have paid for all the furnishings of the new church of St. Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter's Abbey is most grateful to its Oblates for their generosity.

Oblate spirituality

With the Rule as their guide, Oblates adopt values that are part of the very fabric of Christian spirituality, as spending time daily reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures; cultivating an awareness of the presence of God in silence;

devoting time to the praise of God; performing acts of service and mortification. The director of Oblates, presently Fr. Albert Ruetz, OSB, provides direction and instruction through letters and the tri-yearly meetings mentioned above.

Today, throughout the world, there are thousands of secular Oblates pray-

ing and working in spiritual union with Benedictine men and women of various communities and receiving spiritual

For further information you may contact the Oblate Director, St. Peter's Abbey, Munster, SOK 2YO, or phone (306) 682-2581.



In December of 1988 the Saskatoon "Bernys" met in one of the Oblate's homes; left to right are: Bob Lemke, Jim Penna, Marion Penna, Bette Lemke, Leatta deTerra, Marikay Falby, Katie Bohnke and Mary Boddy.

Cloistered Oblates

Cloistered Oblates (sometimes called choir Oblates) differ considerably from "external," or secular Oblates (those who live outside the monastery).

Live-in Oblates have a long tradition in most monasteries, but frequently they were considered as a "convenience" for the community. Today cloistered Oblates enjoy most of the spiritual, social, work privileges as the other members of the community.

When a candidate for cloistered Oblate enters a monastery he receives the same training and instructions, and follows the same schedule as other candidates.

At the end of the probationary period, the abbot, with the consent of the monastic chapter, admits the candidate into the community. After one full year the candidate makes a promise of obedience to the abbot in the presence of the community, but does not take the three Benedictine vows: stability, obedience and conversion of life.

Oblates make a written contract, valid also under civil law, that they will undertake the work or service the abbot requires of them in full obedience and without claim to payment of any kind. He does retain ownership of his temporal possessions — however, the use of them is curtailed in order to enter into

the spirit of poverty of the community.

This promise of obedience may be terminated by the Oblate at any time, in which case he will leave the monastery. The obligation of obedience, which is a "promise" rather than a vow, is terminated when an oblate leaves the monastery.

While the cloistered Oblate will follow the custom of the local monastery in respect to religious garb, the Oblate's habit is sometimes slightly different from that of the monks. At St. Peter's Abbey there is no difference in the religious garb worn by cloistered Oblates.

The life of a cloistered Oblate is one of prayer and service; he fully shares in the spiritual benefits of the monastic community. Should he wish to change his status from an Oblate to a "vowed" member with full voting rights, he would simply apply to the abbot, who with the advice of the council of seniors, and eventually the entire community, be allowed to make the traditional Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life.

The cloistered Oblate program is another form of monasticism which appeals to those who for various reasons are not ready to make a full commitment as a professed monk. Some conditions which make the cloistered



Br. Francis helps with the supper dishes just about every night.

Oblate lifestyle more attractive are: unresolved marital status; inability to dispose of property for legal reasons, or desire to make a temporary commitment, i.e. for long-term discernment of vocation.

In some sense the Oblate lifestyle is easier; however, the spiritual benefits offered to those who embrace the life are very rewarding and fulfilling. The aspect of more "freedom" appeals to many people.

For more information contact the Vocation Director at 682-2581.

Deceased monks

Join us in prayer for our deceased monks on their anniversary date.

April

6 Fr. Aurelius Rader (1948)
7 Br. Alexius Krippeler (1960)
13 Fr. Luke Boeckmann (1970)
17 Br. Edmund Lendway (1937)
22 Fr. William Gehlen (1977)
25 Fr. Joseph Wickel (1947)
29 Br. John Brodner (1990)

May

3 Fr. Benedict Steinberger (1962)
5 Fr. Marcellus Mayer (1955)
8 Br. Anthony Wisniewski (1962)
11 Fr. Damian Yaskowich (1989)
27 Fr. Maurice Weber (1990)

June

12 Abbot Bruno Doerfler (1919)
15 Fr. Augustine Nenzel (1987)
27 Fr. Mathias Steger (1931)
Fr. Fridolin Tembreull (1939)
30 Fr. Lawrence Steinkogler (1950)

July

4 Fr. Bernard Schaeffler (1961)
11 Fr. Leo Ojdowski (1936)
12 Fr. Casimir Cismowski (1940)
Fr. Theodore Doecker (1966)
18 Br. Bonaventure Montvydas (1967)

Nov. 13/91 — A community meeting on the topic of a monastic foundation in Brazil was held today. Invited guests to address the community were Al Gerwing, who had recently returned from Brazil, Sr. Maria Doecker, part of the Brazilian team from the abbacy, and Sr. Maureen Maier, superior of the Ursulines of Bruno, as well as Sr. Bernadine Fetter, who has also done missionary work in Brazil.

Nov. 16/91 — Oblate Day. Five candidates made their final oblation today as Oblates of St. Benedict. They were: Frank Boser, Muenster; Ian and Donna Erickson, Saskatoon; Martin and Marie Schofield, Rosetown. Abbot Peter celebrated the eucharist and Fr. Albert presented the new members to the gathering of about 50 Oblates and monks. Future Oblate Days are March 21, June 20 and Nov. 21, 1992.

Nov. 19/91 — Ian Erickson of Saskatoon, one of the new Oblates from last Saturday, began a St. John's Ambulance First Aid Course for interested monks and staff of St. Peter's.



New Oblates — Nov. 16, 1991: left to right: Frank Boser, Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, celebrant, Ian and Donna Erickson, Fr. Albert Ruetz, OSB, and Marie and Martin Schofield.

The class was quickly filled and some had to be turned away. Ian's wife Donna, is also an Oblate and a frequent visitor to St. Peter's.

The second monk to become a nonagenarian is Fr. Xavier Benning. On

Dec. 6, 1991, Fr. Xavier became 90. The following day, Dec. 7, Fr. Matthew moved one year closer to 100; he turned 95. Fr. Xavier still goes out to a small parish on Sundays, St. Gertrude's; he oversees the Benedictine "ordo" listings and distribution for St. Peter's, as well as honey for the abbey. Fr. Xavier says an early mass daily in the abbot's chapel for the early risers, and attends all the Divine Office with the monks. At the rate he is going, Fr. Xavier could catch up to Fr. Matthew!

Dec. 10/91 — Sr. Dolores Jansen of the Order of St. Elizabeth died tragically in a train-car accident. She was on her way from Saskatoon to Unity, Sask., to visit her mother in hospital when the accident occurred.

Sr. Dolores was 61 years of age and fifth oldest in a family of 14 children.

She was a member of the order's council and resided in Saskatoon; she was recently elected to the Sask-Vocations executive.

Sr. Dolores was buried Dec. 16, 1991, from St. Augustine's Church in Humboldt. Over 30 priests and Bishop Mahoney attended the funeral. Abbot



Sr. Dolores Jansen, Rose Mildenerger, Mrs. Marie Mildenerger, Srs. Wendeline Senger, Johanna Huber and Magdalene Walter at St. Peter's in 1987.



Ian Erickson of Saskatoon demonstrating during a first aid class for staff and monks.

Mahoney attended the funeral. Abbot Peter Novecosky presided. Three Franciscans from Lumsden, Sask., Brothers Bernard, Dominic and Sr. Madeline, attended both the wake at St. Elizabeth's Convent chapel and the funeral the following day.

Burial took place in the Sisters of St. Elizabeth cemetery in Humboldt.

Brother Michael returned from Edmonton on Dec. 10, the day Sr. Dolores was killed. And Brother Richard returned from St. Meinrad's Archabbey on Dec. 16 just in time to attend the

funeral for Sr. Dolores.

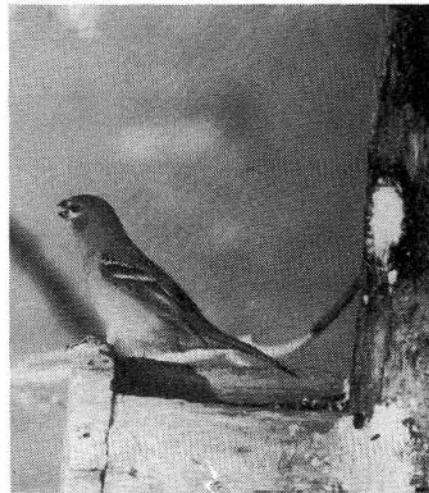
Dec. 27/91 — The monks of St. Peter's honored the Sisters of St. Elizabeth on the 80th anniversary of their arrival in St. Peter's Colony. Musical selections and carol singing preceded a skit written to celebrate St. Elizabeth's Hospital anniversary earlier this year.

About 40 sisters came for the conventual mass with Abbot Peter as celebrant, and joined the monks, including many pastors, for the noon meal.

The Sisters of St. Elizabeth, who

were invited by Abbot Bruno Doerfler in 1911, have been associated with St. Peter's Abbey since the college/abbey was built in 1921. The last sisters to leave St. Scholastica's Convent on our property were Sisters Martina Gramlich, Valerie Scheiber and Victoria Koenig who is the abbey switchboard operator.

Jan. 18 — Subprior Br. Basil Schaan returned from Saskatoon's City Hospital today, just one day after having a gall-bladder operation. A new operating technique, using laser surgery, simplified the removal of gall stones. The same day, Abbot Peter Novecosky left for a Canadian Bishops



Nuthatches do not usually feed from the hand as the chickadees do. Ask the guest-master for peanuts to feed the birds from your hand. Photo by Sr. Doreen Smith, CSJ.

Social Justice meeting in Ottawa. Br. Thomas Ward spent a week in Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital undergoing tests in early January.

Jan. 28 — A farewell supper was held for Lorraine Jaeb who has worked in the kitchen for the past five years. See photo of all kitchen staff taken after the banquet.

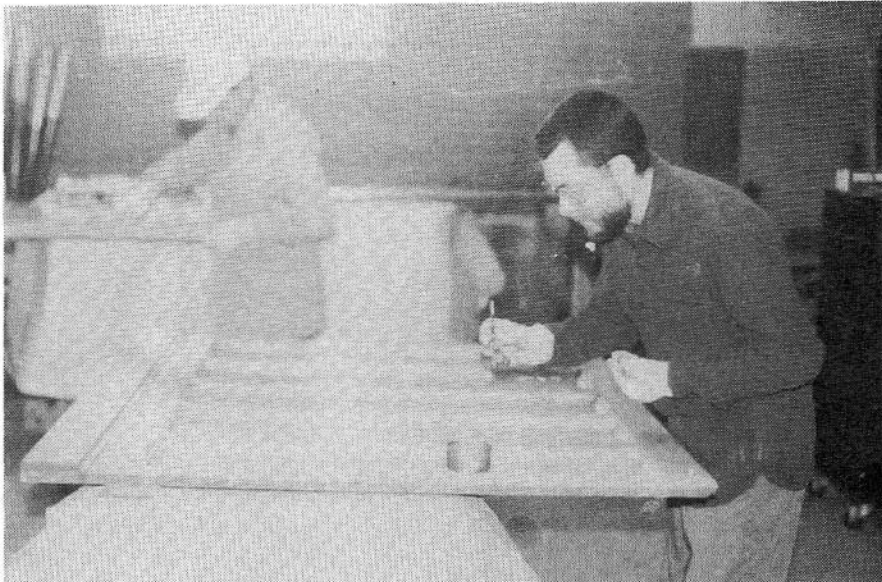
Feb. 3 — Abbot Peter attended the American bishops' meeting in Dallas, then continued on to Brazil where he spent two weeks with the members of the abbacy Brazil team — Ursulines and Benedictines. On Feb. 21 he attended the abbots' meeting at St.



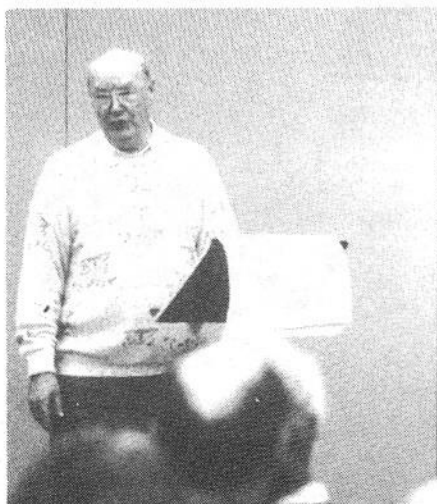
Br. Michael MacAllister feeding a chickadee this winter. Photo was taken by Sr. Doreen Smith, CSJ, of Saskatoon.



Assisting Fr. William with the woodwork is his father, Frank Thurmeier, of Saskatoon.



Fr. William Thurmeier staining the outer panel for the organ console.



Al Gerwing (left) and David Hagel perform in a two-man show of song, comedy, cartoons and stories about the Third World. Al, who lives in Prelate, Sask., and David, whose home is in nearby Lancer, visited Brazil recently where they touched the hearts of the less privileged through music. Mr. Gerwing, who has directed many musicals in the Muenster district, and Mr. Hagel, a talented guitarist, united in "perfect harmony" to bring home to Canadians the plight of the poor in the Third World with their artistic talents. Fr. Lawrence DeMong commented in the *Prairie Messenger*, "Bravo, Al! And David, thanks for not running off to Hollywood. We need more farmers and school bus drivers like you." We echo these words.

JOIN US IN PRAYER

Do you have any intentions you wish the monks to pray for? Send us your prayers of Petition, Thanksgiving, Gratitude and Praise to:

Prayer Petitions
St. Peter's Abbey,
Muenster, SK. S0K 2Y0

For information on Secular Oblates (for men and women)

Contact:
Oblate Director
St. Peter's Abbey
Muenster, SK
S0K 2Y0

SEVERIN HALL GUESTWING

at St. Peter's Abbey
a place of peace and quiet
(offerings accepted)

Guestmaster (306) 682-2581

Be a cloistered Oblate
Live as a monk

Contact:
Vocation Director
(306) 682-2581

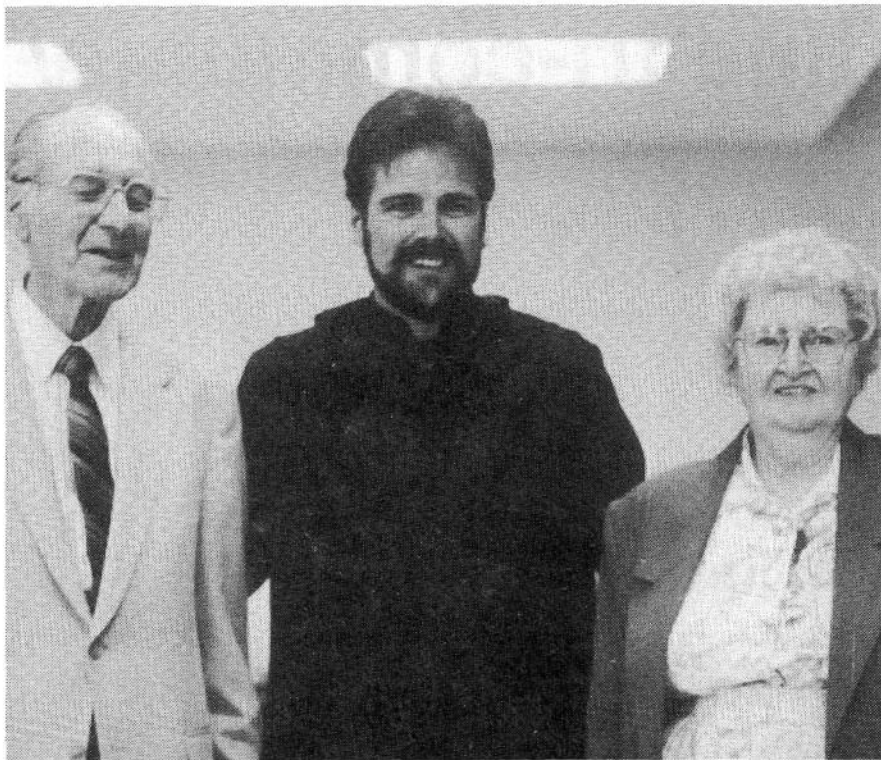
Now available
All Occasion Cards
Series A

Reproductions of Photographs by
Fr. Damian Yaskowich, OSB

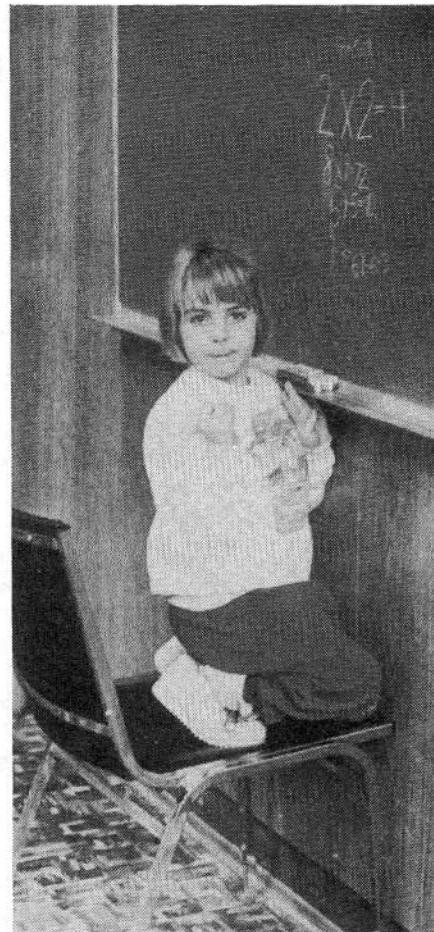
Package of 8 assorted cards - \$6.50
GST included
Volume discounts available.

Fr. Damian Yaskowich, OSB, a monk of St. Peter's Abbey, was well known in St. Peter's Abbey and beyond for his artistic eye. He took many pictures for St. Peter's Abbey and the *Prairie Messenger*. He died an untimely death in a car accident on May 11, 1989. These cards, reproducing slides taken by Fr. Damian, have been printed to honor his memory.

To order write: St. Peter's Press
Box 190,
Muenster, Sask.
S0K 2Y0



Proud parents, Paul and Elaine Senecal, pose with their youngest son, Br. Randy, on his solemn profession day, July 11, 1991. Mr. Senecal, who had just been released from hospital the day before, was full of smiles, as usual.



Grade 1 student, Elaine Will, daughter of Mary Pat and John Will, and niece of Br. Randy Senecal.



Along with his parents, Br. Randy also had his sister Mary Pat and brothers Darrel and Jack present for the celebration. A sister, Marilyn, was out of the country at the time.

Book your next conference,
workshop, seminar or retreat in
our abbey guestwing.

Reasonable rates

Phone: (306) 682-2581
ask for Guestmaster

ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER

Published by the Benedictine community of St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Saskatchewan, S0K 2Y0, three times a year: February, June and October. Deadline: the 15th of the previous month.

Editor: Gerald Moran, OSB. Regular contributors: Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB; Albert Ruetz, OSB; Bernard Lange, OSB; Tony Saretsky. Photo credits: Babych, Falby, Moran, Smith.

Logo designed by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.

A Benedictine tri-community

St. Peter's Answer to Brazil?

Holy Trinity Monastery at St. David, Arizona, about 50 miles south-east of Tucson, is a Benedictine community made up of monks, sisters and laypeople. It was founded in 1974 by Fr. Louis Hasenfuss who is now the prior.

The monastic community is involved in a variety of apostolates. Some of the activity during 1991 are listed in their monastery newsletter and include something for/by everyone: retreat and oblate programs, art festivals, museum and art gallery, large gift shop and library of Christian collections totalling over 80,000 books.

The Oblate program now totals 750 members plus, and the newsletter mailing list numbers over 4,300. The recent RV Park is firmly established, according to the editor. Priest members serve in surrounding parishes and the entire community is very involved with the local people both in Arizona and across the border in Mexico.

In the Vol. 17, No. 1 issue of the H.T.M. newsletter appears a short article which gives some insight into the reasons for community growth.

The item reads in part:

Community building lies behind much of our achievements over the past year and its success has brought a new maturity to Benedictine monastic life here. . . . Fr. Louis (Prior) expressed his happiness with our growth and emphasized that the initial vision of the HTM community has not changed:

"We are and continue to be unique in that we are a tri-community of monks, sisters and laypeople all who are equal and all monastics who operate under and within the Holy Trinity."

While each community has a separate cloister, they share common areas as well as the monastic life of work and prayer in common.

Each is truly Olivetan Benedictine and they have received full approval of the Olivetan Congregation's Abbot



Thanksgiving Day display in Holy Trinity Monastery Church (1984).



Exterior view of Holy Trinity Monastery Church in Arizona taken in 1984.

General.

Holy Trinity Monastery was founded Sept. 3, 1974, and is one of North America's newest monastic foundations. The editor of the Abbey News-

letter visited Holy Trinity in November 1984.

Would a tri-community be St. Peter's answer to a foundation in Brazil? — GM