



# St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter

Vol. 19 No. 2 Fall 1997



## 75th anniversary of Mt. Carmel pilgrimage

By Marian Noll, OSU

MUENSTER, Sask. — Mary the mother of Jesus is a most powerful model of faith for believers, Bishop James Weisgerber of Saskatoon told some 1,500 pilgrims at the 75th annual Mount Carmel pilgrimage July 20.

"Mary received Jesus as a mother, holding him in her womb and in her arms," he said. She also received Jesus as a disciple, he added, thus becoming our model of discipleship.

The strength and power of Mary's

faith, expressed in the Magnificat, recognizes and acknowledges and thanks God's love and action in her life and that of her people, Weisgerber said.

Faith experiences and events do not just pass Mary by, the guest homilist noted. She "ponders them in her heart," remembering them over and over again, and continually offering thanks. And suffering, he added, does not undermine but strengthens her deepening awareness of God's love and presence.

As we imitate Mary in faith,

Weisgerber said, "we begin with the recognition and awareness of God's action in our world and in our lives."

"Today we come as pilgrims," he said, "our hearts and lives ready and poor. We approach this sacred place of pilgrimage to pour out our needs and to remember God's many gifts, following Mary's example of faith and prayer."

After the eucharist, Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, introduced a short program to mark the special anniversary. A brief history of the site noted that some 3,000 pilgrims participated in the Sept. 10, 1922, dedication of Mount Carmel, and that since then pilgrimages have been held every summer without exception.

About 20 pioneers received certificates noting their presence at the first pilgrimage, and, as their special part in the festivities, the children released some 260 multi-colored balloons into the blazing sky.

A talk by Novecosky on the jubilee year introduced the afternoon program. This is the first of three years of preparation for the Year 2000, he said, and Pope John Paul has designated 1997 as a year to focus on Jesus, our Lord and Savior. The remaining years are dedicated to the Spirit and to the Trinity.

Youth of the Muenster Diocese presented a short, sensitive skit on how people meet Jesus, and how sin thwarts that relationship.

After the customary way of the cross, benediction and blessing of the fields and of the sick, pilgrims shared happily in a special 75th anniversary cake.



# A report from Abbot Peter's desk

By Abbot Peter Novecosky

Dear friends,

At the time of writing, autumn is upon us in full force. The harvest is in full swing and the students are returning to school. According to reports, *El Nino* will be giving us a fairly mild winter, to compare with the warm summer and fall we've had. We'll wait and see.

According to reports from Br. Bernard the harvest is going surprisingly well considering the spell of hot weather we had in July. And it's been one of the best years for harvesting, coming as early as it did.

This year has a variety of highlights for our abbey. Certainly one of them is the receiving of four candidates for monastic life this fall. They were received as candidates on Sept. 8, the feast of the Birth of Mary.

Earlier this year I attended a joint meeting of Benedictine abbots and prioresses. It's been four years since we had our last meeting together. This year we met at the Mexican abbey of Tepeyac. There were more than 100 men and women superiors there. The meeting took place from Jan. 31 to Feb. 4.

From Mexico I flew to visit our mission team in Brazil. I was able to spend two weeks with the Ursuline sisters in Maceió as well as with Fr. Bernard Stauber and the Saskatoon team in União dos Palmares. Also visiting at the time was Sr. Miriam Spenrath, OSU, Bishop Jim Weisgerber and Fr. Murray Chatlain of Saskatoon. It was the beginning of Lent while I was there and the pastor of St. Rita was gone so I celebrated the Ash Wednesday liturgy about six times, in broken Portuguese! I was also able to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation with 25 young people in one of the outlying communities. They all seem to have a lot of life. And they were all catechized by the Ursuline sisters.

One of the difficult decisions we made while I was in Brazil was to have Fr. Bernard return to the abbey. He had given 24 years of service in Brazil, the

last few years with the Saskatoon team. Fr. Bernard returned home in March and has taken on duties in the Parish of Marysburg and is helping to build the abbey pipe organ.

Another significant topic that has come up this year is the matter of the Muenster Diocese joining with the

This may also free us to move in new directions in the future.

It is a little unclear at this time when a final decision will be made. The Saskatchewan bishops are meeting in October and after that things should be a little clearer, if not completely finalized.

Another important event that took



*Canadians attending the Benedictine superiors' meeting at Tepeyac Abbey, Mexico City, were, from left: Prioress Jean Ann Berning of Nanaimo, B.C., Abbot Peter Novecosky and Prioress Virginia Evard of Winnipeg, Man.*

Saskatoon Diocese. At the present time a group of representatives from the five Roman Catholic dioceses in Saskatchewan is working on plans on how to re-divide the province to correspond to present-day realities. A number of people have asked how this will affect the abbey.

I want to clarify that this won't affect the abbey as such. What we will be giving up is being in charge of the Muenster Diocese. However, some of our priest-monks will still be pastors in some of the parishes. And we will still have the college, the farm, the press, etc. We will continue to do as we have been doing in the past. However, as we are no longer able to staff the parishes, it will now be the responsibility of the Saskatoon Diocese to staff the parishes.

place for our community was the visitation that took place at the beginning of August. Abbot Neal Roth of St. Martin's Abbey and Fr. Jonathan Licari of St. John's Abbey spent a week with us, interviewed each monk and then gave the community their feedback. Visitations are a regular part of monastic life and they are a way to assess the community's monastic life and to provide assistance.

Finally, this coming year marks the final year of my commitment to the Catholic Women's League of Canada. In 1993 the Canadian bishops asked me to be the national spiritual adviser. This means attending about five meetings a year. My five-year term is up in August, 1998. It has been an enriching and rewarding experience.

# Fr. Philip – A man of many talents

By Jerome Weber, OSB.

Fr. Philip was a man with many talents: a keen, inventive and original mind, conversant on a great variety of topics, wide interests, and a very good memory for details. He was able to utilize all of these during his lifetime as a student, monk, priest, pastor, and a friend to many people in the abbacy and far beyond.

My acquaintance with him began at the monastery school near the cathedral, staffed by the Ursuline sisters, and occasionally by laywomen. He was in a lower grade than I was, but skipped one sometime, and we graduated from Grade VIII in 1929.

We began as students at St. Peter's College in Sept. 1929. Fr. Philip joined the monastic community of St. Peter's Abbey in July 1935, and was sent for novitiate to St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., along with George and Martin Brodner, both of whom had also been classmates since 1929. After the year of novitiate he continued his studies at the university there and graduated with a B.A. in 1938.

Abbot Severin then sent him to study theology at the Collegio Sant' Anselmo, in Rome, a college set up for Benedictine students from many different abbeys in the world. He came to love Sant' Anselmo, and frequently spoke of the monks and professors he met there.

His plans to complete his theology course there were suddenly changed when Italy joined the Second World War in 1940 as an ally of Germany, with which country Canada was at war. He thought it best to leave Rome as quickly as possible and so began his journey, first by car, and then, when gas was hard to come by, by bicycle, through Italy, southern France, Spain and Portugal where he was able to board a freighter, which took him to the United States. He returned to St. John's, where I was at the time and we were glad to see him safe and sound. He would gladly relate to anyone who was interested all the details of that dangerous journey during which, especially in France, he had to make it clear that he was not a spy, but a cleric and a Canadian citizen.

After his course in theology and his



ordination as a priest, on May 30, 1942, he returned to St. Peter's Abbey. There he joined the teaching staff of the school and taught various subjects: Greek, Latin, math, and the sciences. He continued on the staff until 1956. During those years he was sent often to the parishes where the pastor needed help. In 1956 he became a pastor and served in the abbacy: Peterson, Dana, Middle Lake, St. Benedict, Carmel, Bruno and Cudworth. During that time he took a sabbatical, and studied at Divine Word in London, Ont. It was also during that time on a trip to Regina that a car struck him while he was trying to enter his car. It took many months for him to recuperate. From 1988 to 1990 he was resident chaplain at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. In Sept. 1990, he became pastor of Marysburg, and resided at St. Peter's Abbey.

While working with the people of the rural parishes he became very interested and concerned about the problems facing farmers and about social justice. He became director of Rural Life in the abbacy, and was a member of the Abbacy Rural Life Committee and worked with Jake Bendel who spent many years in helping farmers in crisis, and with Paul Brassard, the director of the Saskatchewan Bishops' Rural Life Committee and with others on the committees, like George Burton, and Dolores Stroeder. He was also personally acquainted with men and women, provincially and nationally, who were working to foster rural life. His interest took him beyond Canada to learn about agriculture and farming in China,

Yugoslavia and England. He translated, with the help of Sr. Patricia, from French, a book, written by Bishop Drainville, about problems of rural life in Quebec.

Besides these journeys he had others. With Fr. Francis he travelled by car from Paris through southern Europe, Greece, Turkey, to the Holy Land, and then back to Paris. On another occasion he travelled from Paris, by Renault, with Abbot Peter and Fr. Alfred, to Rome. On other occasions he travelled by car to Ottawa, Toronto, St. Benoit du Lac Abbey, Que., and westward to Alberta and B.C., to visit relatives. When it became impossible to get parts for the Renault in Canada he managed to get some from Holland.

It was his persistence and ingenuity which was principally responsible for the water supply serving the abbey, and many residents in the district. As a young boy, living half mile east of the abbey, he saw how much water passed their land each spring when the winter's snow thawed and emptied into Wolverine Creek. Later on, at the abbey, he was aware of the many problems connected with the hard, deep well water. He suggested building a dugout to store the annual snow water which went right by the abbey. His persistent efforts to do this finally succeeded when a huge reservoir, holding millions of gallons of water, was finally built about 25 years ago.

At the hospital, where I reside as chaplain, I meet men and women who remember Fr. Philip very well and it is gratifying to hear the many good things they have to say about him.



# Honeybees and St. Peter's Abbey

by *Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB.*

Honeybees and monasteries seem to have a long and complimentary history. I have been in correspondence with several monastic beekeepers in North America and in Europe. The European beekeepers have informed me that their abbeys have had honeybees for one to three centuries.

At St. Peter's Abbey, the history of honeybees (or the apiary) can be traced back to the middle 1940's. My bee teacher and monastic mentor, the late Fr. Xavier Benning, told me some years before his death that Tony Benning (Br. Anthony at that time) had caught the first swarm of bees accidentally. Tony (alias Br. Anthony) built the honey house that is still used for extraction of the honey from the comb and for storage of hives and equipment.

Several monks have been beekeepers since the 1940s: Br. Oswald King, Br. John Brodner, Br. Wolfgang Thiem, and of course Fr. Xavier Benning. I became involved with the honey bees in 1989, when Br. Wolfgang became busy with building commitments for the abbey church. Fr. Xavier asked me if I would be interested in the bees. He took on the task teaching me the art of beekeeping. He was an excellent teacher.

In June of 1992, Fr. Xavier died. The senior council of the abbey decided that the honeybees (apiary) should be continued. Br. Kurt Van Kuren decided to give beekeeping a try. Br. Kurt and

myself have been working together in the care and maintenance of the honeybee colonies (hives), and also the harvesting and extracting of the honey.

The honey from the ten to fifteen colonies (hives) is used in the monastic kitchen in cooking and baking. The honey is now used in place of some of the sugar in our breads and pastries. Honey is also available in the monastic and guest dining rooms.

In the last couple of years, an innovation in the use of our honey has occurred. Mead, a strong wine in the

Norse and Viking tradition, is made from honey. Fr. Rudolph Novecosky, with some assistance from the abbey beekeepers, has come up with a recipe for mead that has pleased both monks and guests. If you would like a copy of this recipe, contact him at his parish in Annaheim.

Honeybees are both a monastic tradition and a hobby at St. Peter's Abbey. Please come and visit our honey house (remember to wear long sleeves, because of stray bees!) and, if you wish, the honeybee yard itself.



*Fr. Demetrius checking the bee hives.*

## Update on Home Page

by *Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.*

The new St. Peter's Abbey home page is on the 'net and can be viewed by using the following uniform resource locator(URL):<http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/sain/index.html>. Sorry it's such a long string of letters, but that's life on the Internet.

Underneath the home page title you will find a clickable image map of the new abbey church entrance. Just point on a building and click your left mouse button twice, and the Guided Tour brochure will load onto your computer. It's the same tour for every building, so once you load it, it runs very fast after. I tested the pages on my slowest 386, and they downloaded in less than eight

seconds.

Below the map are the buttons and text for various abbey departments. A note to remind you: everything that looks like a button acts like a button on my pages, that is every button-shaped thingy responds to a left-button mouse click. The departments are: Abbey; College; Diocese; Guilds; Guest House; Vocations. St. Peter's Press is not included because they will most likely have their own web page up in September, under their own name. Below that is the Other Benedictine Sites button, taking you to Benedictine houses mostly in the United States.

At the very bottom you will discover our email address. Please feel free to drop us a line.



*Br. Kurt pailing the honey.*

# People and events around the abbey

by Martin Brodner, OSB

I would not be exaggerating too much to say that we've had winter since our last newsletter. The winter actually

began in early November and proved to be as cold as the year before with the snow hardly melting by mid-April.

But the rapid thaw had the waters flowing in a few days filling our

reservoir by April 20, with Fr. Philip coaxing its flow across our eastern fields. We could even start seeding our fields by May 12 (compared to May 29 last year).

1997

## The Gentle Priest-Fr. Philip

by Rev. Al Hingley  
Westminster United Church, Humboldt

As silently as spring slips into summer, dawn becomes day or the river seeks the sea, he left us. Now the activities of fall engage us again and Fr. Philip Loehr, will not be in his customary place amongst us and we will miss him.

I first met the gentle priest who would become my special friend at a meeting of the Humboldt and District Ministerial Association. That seems so significant now as that is how I remember him: constant in attendance and faithful in the execution of all responsibilities assigned or undertaking, whether it be the duties of treasurer or secretary or bringing some delicious item from the abbey kitchen for a pot-luck meal.

I recall the occasion when, on behalf of our association, I invited him to speak at the concluding Week of Prayer Worship to be held in Westminster United Church. With that characteristic way in which he smiled and his whole face shone, he replied: "I'll do that gladly Al. You know I am considered an honorary member of the United Church."

Behind that remark were years of involvement in co-operative work and joint committee meetings with members of various denominations, not only mine. For that was ecumenism for Fr. Philip, doing together what needs not be done alone. The common good was his constant pursuit and the inclusivity of the Gospel was his source of both his direction and his energy. And what energy he had for the task as in his humble way he gave of himself to, for example, the agri-

cultural enterprise, addressing rural issues, with the twin demands of the production and the distribution of food. His fluency in languages involved him in translation efforts which in turn also made valuable contribution to the cause at hand.

I shall always appreciate the manner in which he creatively listened to the other's expression of an idea before his carefully articulated verbal response was helpfully offered.

In response to questions about the "here after," someone once said that they believed in living in one world at a time. I think Fr. Philip would have liked that.

Without him, how shall we engage in the continuing issues and concerns for which he displayed such enthusiastic commitment? May I suggest that we will properly do him honor as we take his example and give ourselves to them too.

Jan. 5 — Epiphany marked the opening of the abbacy three year preparation for Jubilee Year 2000. A framed PROCLAMATION is posted in all our parish churches and places of worship to remind us of our 1997 theme: GROWING INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Jan. 30 — Abbot Peter left for the Benedictine abbots and superiors workshop in Tepeyec, Mexico. After which he continued his journey to our Brazil Mission.

Feb. 1 — St. Peter's Abbey was given an award for the excellent bell tower structure, which has been ringing out the prayer time for the monks since 1995.

Feb. 10 — St. Scholastica. St. Peter's College honors its Benedictine monks. It was an informal "Honor the St. Peter's monks Day," cooked up by Campus Ministry.



"Honor the monks of St. Peter's." Phyllis Thompson is seen here with Prior Roman Schneider.

# People and events around the abbey

Feb. 18 — Abbot Peter, on his pastoral visit to Brazil FAXED us: "On Tuesday, Feb. 18, we will transfer the bones of Fr. Sylvester to a new tomb prepared by the Ursuline (Mission) Sisters." Fr. Syl had been run over by a transport truck Nov. 21, 1992 while he was enroute to Saturday evening masses.

Feb. 21 — Two veteran cribbage players, Br. Neil cut himself a "28" cribbage hand which Br. Michael had dealt him! (As rare as the first cloning of a sheep in England, Feb 24!)

Feb. 27 — Hand rails installed by Allan Vedress, our handyman, on the main floor corridor of the abbey. That's the floor on which the elderly monks eventually congregate. A great blessing for them.

March 12 — Fr. Bernard Stauber returned from our mission in Brazil after 25 years of work in Maceió and União.

March 13 — Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI., addressed the people of our abbacy at the abbey in the ongoing series on Christian Community Formation. At the time he was provincial of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

March 24 — Our Chrism Oil was blessed this year by Bishop James Weisgerber in Saskatoon. The Oil was brought to the abbey for the Mass of Oils at the Cathedral on Tuesday, March 25, during which Abbot Peter blessed the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens. These oils were taken back to the parishes by the parish representatives.

March 25 — Frank Boulet (St. Boniface) was invested as a novice during Vespers. He was given the name "Br. Frank."

April 1 — Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk was appointed guestmaster



*Novice Frank Boulet with Formation Director-Fr. Richard Meidl.*

to succeed Br. Gerald Moran. The latter remains on as assistant guestmaster because of our growing apostolate of the guest department.

April 5 — Oblate Day. Marcel and Therese Roy (Hoey, Sask.) made their final oblation. Alice Ramsay and Etta Deutscher (Humboldt, Sask) became Oblate candidates. Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, spoke to both the monks and the oblates.



*Marcel and Theresa Roy, Hoey, Sask. (left) made Final Oblation as Oblates on April 5 while Alice Ramsay and Etta Deutscher, Humboldt, were enrolled as Oblate candidates.*

April 19 — Diocesan Pastoral Council and reps from every parish in the abbacy gathered to become informed on the study of changing

DIOCESAN BOUNDARIES in Canada, which was requested from Rome in 1995. Oblates and readers of our newsletter will want to be well informed on this change of boundaries which may place our abbey and abbacy within the Saskatoon Diocese. No decisions have been made yet.

April 23 — Fr. Philip Loehr, dies quite unexpectedly after a short alert of heart trouble which ended with heart failure in the early hours of Wednesday, April 23. He offered his last mass on April 21, his 80th birthday.

May 9 — Cantor workshop. For several weeks the monks tried out chanting parts of the Divine Office "a cappello," i.e., without accompaniment of organ. This added to the reverence and life of our common prayers, as you will experience it when you come and join us in choir in proclaiming the praises of God four times daily. Your hearts will be "lifted up."

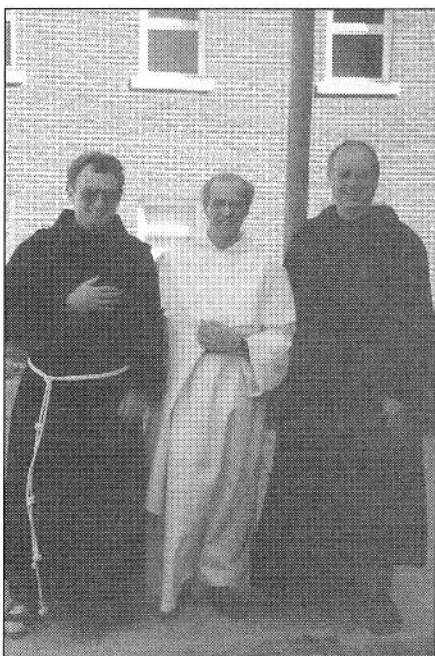
May 22 — St. Peter's Press had "open house" to demonstrate a COLOR PHOTO COPIER which it is leasing on a monthly basis. This means that it was



# People and events around the abbey

not only a red letter day but a multi-colored day for the press. Come and have your color photos enlarged with great precision.

May 25-29 — Monastic Retreat animated by Fr. Guy Rivard, OP., who is prior of the Dominicans at Montreal at this present time. He led the monks to reflect on the Blessed Trinity in our lives, and especially on Jesus, the Suffering Servant of the Father, as part of our three year preparation for Jubilee 2000.



*Abbot Peter Novecosky with Fr. Guy Rivard, OP, and Fr. Brian Bums, OFM, at the end of the Monastic Retreat.*

May 26 — Fr. George Brodner was admitted to the hospital where he was, off and on, for a month. The chief reason was double pneumonia, as well as fainting spells and readjustment of diabetic medication. He needed a pacemaker and received one on June 25. He has rallied quite well and was able to resume Sunday services at Naicam on July 20.

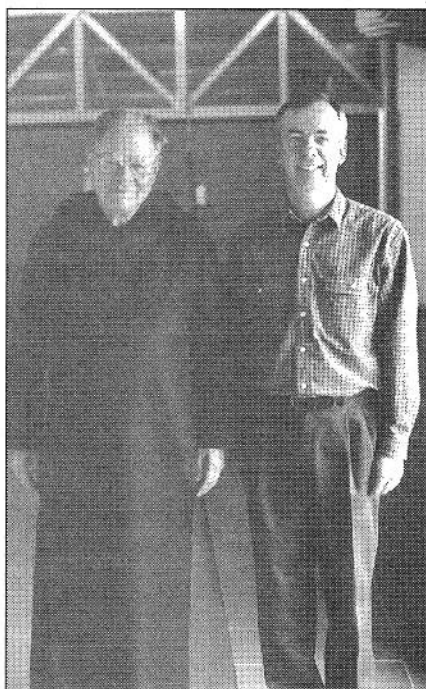
May 30 — Br. Wolfgang Thiem leaves for Germany for the burial of his sister, Friedl Schwing, and to visit his homeland and relatives.

June 8 — Abbot Peter finishes his Conformation tour for this year. On the same afternoon he presided at the jubilee wedding anniversary celebrations of 65 couples of the abbacy (25, 40, 50, and over).

June 12 — Br. Neil Pitzel took part in the two-week junior formation program at Conception Abbey, Conception, Mo.

June 16 — Br. Bernard Lange and his two sisters left for Germany for a first visit to the homeland of their parents.

June 18 — Fr. Francis Lohmer (94), had successful eye surgery. He took the chance. He had been blind in one eye since his youth. A failure would have meant total blindness.



*William Young of Calgary made his final oblation on June 20.*



*Angela Loyer, Camrose, Alta., made here final oblation on June 28. Fr. Kragbe Legre, her pastor and also on Oblate of St. Benedict, was present.*

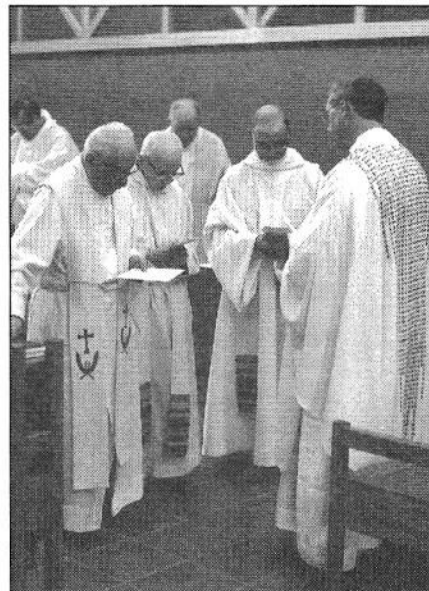
# People and events around the abbey

June 27 — Frs. Roman Schneider and Demetrius Wasylyniuk were installed and blessed as prior and subprior respectively.

June 28 — Oblate Day. Angela Loyer (Camrose) made her final oblation. Bill Young (Calgary) made his final oblation on June 20, since he was not able to be present on June 28.

Newman Theological College, Edmonton, Alta.

July 11 — The Feast of St. Benedict is our customary time for celebrating jubilees. The following celebrated profession jubilees this year: Frs. Francis Lohmer (75), Jerome Weber (60), James Gray (50). And two celebrated ordination jubilees: Frs.



Frs. Francis, Jerome and James renewing their vows in front of Abbot Peter.



Fr. Roman celebrating the Eucharist on his 50th anniversary of ordination. Frs. Richard, Werner, Albert, Daniel & Jerome concelebrated.

July 7 — Br. Thomas Ward attends two-weeks of liturgy classes at

Roman Schneider (50), Werner Renneberg (40).

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July 20 — Mount Carmel 75th anniversary annual pilgrimage. (See article, page 1).

Jan. 6 — Sr. Josephine Brost, OSE.

Jan. 14 — Harold Dyck, one of our workers.

April 23 — Fr. Philip Loehr, OSB.

May 23 — Sr. Lucy Stang, OSE.

May 30 — Friedl Schwing, sister of Br. Wolfgang Thiem.

June 9 — Sr. Monica Spengler, OSE.

June 27 — Susan Mowchan, mother of Sr. Suzanne Mowchan, one of our hermits.

## Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

*In your last will and testament please remember  
St. Peter's Abbey. Our legal title is:*

*ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT  
Muenster, Sask. S0K 2Y0*