



St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 20 No. 2 Spring 1998

New Beginnings



Br. François Boulet with Novice Jean-Luc Cotto and Novice Paul Paproski.

A report from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends,

Spring is in the air. And doesn't that make us all glad?

Spring marks a number of changes around the abbey. First of all, we celebrated Easter. And we light the Easter candle during our daily prayers, to remind us that Christ is the light and the centre of our community and of all that we do.

St. Benedict put it nicely when he said, "May we prefer nothing whatever to Christ." In all our work and our prayer, we try to keep that foremost in our minds. Sometimes, we forget. But the Easter candle refocuses our attention every day.

Another change takes place at the college. The university students have their exams during the month of April. So there's a change of tempo in the college building; there is less activity as professors no longer come and go. Meanwhile Ken Janzen gets into every classroom with his scrubber and waxer and gets it nice and shiny for the fall influx of students.

The farm experiences a big change too. Br. Bernard examines the future price of wheat, canola, barley and oats and has to decide what proportion of each to plant this spring. Will there be an influx of wheat midge this year? What will be the price of canola?

This spring we got onto the land much earlier than last year. We tend to blame most things on El Niño this year. So the warm spring weather in April gave El Niño a good name among farmers. We got some seeding done already in April. Usually Br. Bernard waits until May 10.

Another theory I've heard is that it's time to seed when the poplar leaves come out. And another theory, based on the amount of fog we had this winter, forecasts lots of rain for the second half of May. We'll have to wait and see on that "prophecy."

The Prairie Messenger as well will slow down its schedule soon, as it switches into a summer schedule and a



In August, 1997, Abbot Peter Novecosky was made an "honorary Newfie" during the national CWL convention in St. John's, Nfld. Part of the ceremony included "kissing the cod." Not sure who looks more surprised!

paper every two weeks. Sr. Marian Noll will be leaving the paper after 12 years. She was elected superior of the Ursuline Sisters this spring. That will bring about a change in her life and a change at St. Peter's Press.

Sr. Yvonne Billesberger is also retiring from the Abbacy Centre after 14 years as co-ordinator of religious education. Both Ursulines have been a welcome addition to our community at daily morning Mass. We will miss their presence and participation.

Another regular participant at our monastic liturgy who will be missed is Phyllis Thompson, a Benedictine Oblate. She is retiring to Nanaimo with her husband, Claud. She taught English at the college, was campus ministry co-ordinator and did lots of PR work.

And the guest department has a slight change in personnel, though it retains its focus of service to all the guests and visitors who come here. Br. Gerald retired this spring after giving 11 years of faithful and dedicated service. He has become well known for his

generous service to all who pass through our doors. Fr. Demetrius and Br. Thomas will now be the main custodians of hospitality to our guests, with help from the rest of the staff and volunteers who work there.

There are other changes, of course, in staff, long-term guests and other personnel. We can't note all of them here and I don't mean to offend anyone by leaving out any names. Some of the other changes are noted in the rest of this newsletter. More will be mentioned in the next one.

We thank God for the generally good health community members have enjoyed this past winter.

Our oldest monk, Fr. Francis Lohmer, shows the way by continuing to be an active pastor at the age of 95. He celebrates Mass daily at St. Mary's Villa and then he celebrates on Sunday at St. Scholastica in Burr. Celine Wolsfeld, his housekeeper, deserves a lot of credit for keeping him in good health as well as in good humor.

Monastic vows resonate in the heart

By Andrew Britz, OSB

After years of wrestling with God, a young man from St. Boniface made his first profession as a monk at St. Peter's Abbey on March 21.

François Boulet, 37, had been unchurched for 10 years. Seven years ago he began wondering about his life. He started to read books on eastern religions. Gradually he began to attend church again.

His readings in eastern thought led him, he said, to think about monasticism. I was more curious than seeking, he told the *Prairie Messenger*. "I didn't know anything about monks. I saw them portrayed in movies. I had a stillshot of monks — in the scriptorium or ringing bells."

"One and a half years after coming back to the church, I set out to visit monasteries," Boulet said. "I intended to give it my best shot."

That was more than six years ago. One day in church two years ago, he said, his mind kept going back to the same thought: "I should enter a monastery."

"I told myself, this can't be the Holy Spirit. If this were so, I should have gone



Br. François Boulet, Abbot Peter with Gerard, Jacqueline, and Annette Boulet.

to the monastery years ago," he said.

"But you can't wrestle with God," he laughed. "I told myself I would give it another shot. I drove home from Ottawa and phoned Muenster."

Boulet sees his monastic vows "as a confirmation that I am on the right path. The vows resonate with the echo in my heart. My heart is now at peace."

"No one would stay in a monastery," he added, "if one's heart were not at peace."

Asked about his future, Boulet shook his head. "I have learned that God is a God of surprises. I can't predict what God will be asking of me in a year or two. My vows are to mean that I will allow God to surprise me again."

Reprinted from the Prairie Messenger

Pastoral changes announced for 1998

Abbot Peter Novecosky announced the following pastoral changes for monks in the Muenster Diocese. The changes will be effective July 5, 1998.

Fr. Leo Hinz will have pastoral charge of Cudworth and St. Benedict.

Fr. Werner Renneberg will have pastoral charge of Watson and Englefeld.

Fr. Bernard Stauber will have pastoral charge of St. Gregor and LeRoy.

Fr. Rudolph Novecosky will have pastoral charge of Annaheim and Naicam.

Fr. Joseph Ackerman will have pastoral charge of Bruno.

Fr. Daniel Muyres will have pastoral charge of Pilger, Middle Lake and Fulda.

Fr. Roman Schneider will have pastoral charge of Muenster and Marysburg.

Fr. Lawrence DeMong will work one

year in Brazil with the Saskatoon team, to give Fr. Emile April a sabbatical year.

A Saskatoon priest will have pastoral charge of Humboldt.

Two roofs need repair in 1998

There will be some construction and repair work going on at St. Peter's Abbey this summer.

Two roofs need repairing: the roof over the gym-arena foyer and the roof over the library and main entrance. Both are flat roofs and are beginning to leak. The monastic community has decided to undertake the repair this summer before the situation gets worse.

The roof over the gym-arena will be retarred. The roof over the library and main entrance area will be rebuilt, with a sloping, metal-clad roof similar

to the roofs added to the abbey and the guestwing about 15 years ago. This should give a more permanent solution to the problem of leaking than the present flat roofs.

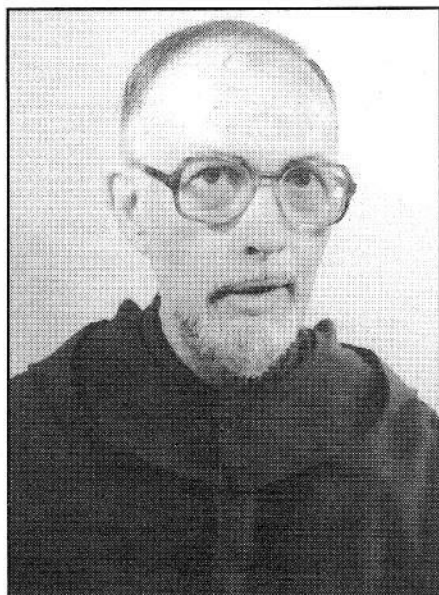
The estimated costs for the respective roofs are: \$35,000.00 for the gym-arena foyer and \$65,000.00 for the library and main entrance area.

If any readers of this newsletter feel they can help out and contribute to the cost of this major repair bill, the monks would be most grateful.

A tax receipt will be sent out to all donors.

Severin Hall † Listening Post † 1997

by Gerald Moran, O.S.B.



Br. Gerald Moran

On April 1, 1997, Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB, was named guestmaster and I was named his assistant. This is the first step in my request to play a lesser role in a department which has seen increased activity over the past 10 years. It is my wish to gradually retire completely from the guest department because of poor health, but also to make room for new monks with new ideas and energy. Severin Hall guestwing has seen more than 2,500 guests (students excluded) pass through its doors in 1997. Next year, according to the number of reservations, promises to be a very busy year for us.

Input from guest cards and reports indicate that guests have been very pleased and grateful for time spent at St. Peter's. Guest comments have been a great source of encouragement to me over the past 10 years. While we had a number of high-ranking church officials visit the abbey in 1997, it was the ordinary, grateful, lay people who helped make the year so successful and so pleasant to serve.

I owe a great amount of apprecia-

tion to retired Abbot Jerome Weber and his council for placing me in charge of Severin Hall more than 11 years ago. I came to St. Peter's in January 1985 after a 30-year career in the hotel industry in three large Canadian cities. It is not fair to compare Severin Hall to a hotel, however, the experience on the front desk of a hotel can be extremely valuable in operating a retreat house, and generally dealing with people. Such an experience can "sensitize" one to be a better listener, counsellor, observer, and more service conscious oriented.

The pioneer monks came to Saskatchewan in 1903 to serve the German-speaking Catholics as pastors in this area. We are still called to serve, but in a different way. With the decrease in church attendance, and the increased interest in hospitality, in contemplative living and prayer, in retreat work, I believe we will now be able to perform more of our service to the public through our guest department.

It has been my vision for the guestwing:

1) That we give priority to individuals who are looking for peace and quiet, relaxation and time for reflection in silence.

2) That guests enjoy the liberty to "do their own thing" — providing it does not interfere with other guests, monks, students or staff.

3) That guests can be assured of being accepted even if they dress differently, think differently, worship differently.

4) That our guestwing be an ecumenical facility.

"The surest sign of true openness to God is an openness to all." (R&C 74)

An important part of my dream as guestmaster has been to increase the role of the guest department in the growth and development of our Benedictine monastic community, which I am proud to be a member. Some time ago it was suggested by a monk that we initiate a one- or two-year program of "monastic live-in" similar to the Buddhist custom where they have

young people living for two years in community to develop their spirituality before going out to get married. This seems to be a good way to instruct/train young people in the basics of the spiritual life, something that would be useful for the rest of their lives, and their children's lives.

I believe that a person does not enter monastic life "just for himself"; rather, he enters "for others" — his relatives, friends, all people God brings to our guest department. Guests, while they should not be too demanding, have a right to a monk's time. Therefore, based on my experiences, it is my strong belief that a monk serving in the guestwing/retreat house must **be present, be a listener, be available, be open and honest.**

Allow me to quote my friend, Tony Saretsky (July 25, 1995),

"The guest department is a vital link with the outside world."

(Editor's Note) Br. Gerald officially resigned from the guest department on Feb. 25, 1998. He now continues with barbering, organ, house plants, and care of the gift shop.

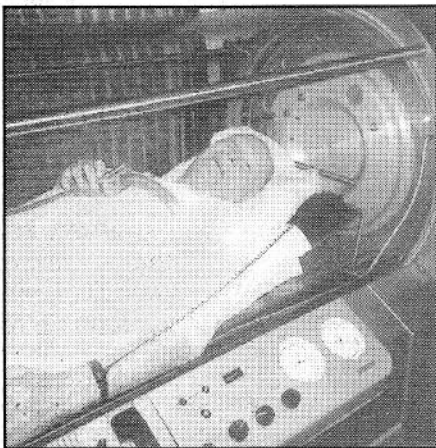
**"... that
in all
things
God
may be
glorified."**

— Benedictine Motto

People and events around the abbey

by Martin Brodner, OSB

1998



Jan. 09 — Fr. Martin Brodner went to Moose Jaw to have one month of oxygen treatment in a Hyperbaric chamber, to speed up the healing process before undergoing surgery on his left jaw. The jaw had been damaged by previous radiation.

Jan. 29 — JUBILEE 2000. The people of the abbacy gathered at the abbey for the winter session in our continuing education series of Celebrate Christian Community, to hear Fr. Erik Riechers, SAC, of Red Deer, Alta.

This session centred on THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: The work of the Spirit in the life of the Church. He said that there are four main ingredients for building a Christian community, longing, searching, surrendering and refraining from quenching the spirit which keeps open the desire for the first three.

Feb. 03 — ABBACY — SASKATOON DIOCESE AMALGAMATION. With the new diocesan boundaries finalized, the process was continued at the abbacy presbyterate meeting to which Fr. Paul Donlevy (Saskatoon) was invited.

Feb. 10 — Fr. Martin went to the Royal University Hospital, Saskatoon, for jaw surgery. He went to Moose Jaw for two more weeks of oxygen treatment, returning to the abbey March 3. The healing process has been excellent since then.

Feb. 11 — World Day of the Sick took on greater significance at the abbey, as four monks received the anointing of the sick, namely; Br. Gregory, Frs. Norbert, Martin, and Demetrius.

Feb. 13 — Sr. Ana Lucia Duarte, OSU, of Maceió, Brazil, while staying at Bruno, came for a visit to the abbey and to meet the monks.

taken from his parish house in Naicam, Sask., to Melfort Hospital with a blood sugar count of 26.5. He returned to his Naicam parish after two and one half weeks with hopes of restoring some of his lost energy!

March 4-9 — Abbots Peter and Jerome attended the annual meeting of the Western Conference of Bishops in Edmonton. At the same time Fr. Leo Hinz, representing the abbacy, attended the Western Council for Priests which also had a joint meeting with the Western Bishops.

March 6-8 — Fr. Werner Renneberg was on the lead team for the World Wide Marriage Encounter held at the abbey.



Sr. Ana Lucia & Sr. Maureen visit with the monks after supper.

Feb. 14 — Ten members of the Saskatchewan Writers Guild were here for the annual winter retreat. The S.W.G. are here for two months in the summer, and for two weeks in the winter.

Feb. 25 — Br. Gerald Moran retires from the guest department. Many thanks to Br. Gerald for building up the guest department over the past eleven years to what it has become today.

Feb. 28 — Fr. George Brodner was

Eighteen married couples made this encounter.

March 13-15 — Lent seems to bring to our guest facility more groups than usual for workshops, retreats, etc. This weekend for example, we had three groups: United Church Conference, Youth Group Programme (SADD) and a Buddhist Meditation Group.

March 19 — We had a double OPEN HOUSE — at St. Peter's Press and our water system.

People and events around the abbey



Open House at St. Peter's Press with 75 people in attendance throughout the day.

St. Peter's Press is busily engaged throughout the year printing our weekly PRAIRIE MESSENGER and doing other job printing including books. Their second annual open house demonstrated the Laser full-color copier, also a new Canon Laser copier-Fax-Printer-Scanner all in one machine.

On March 13, in Humboldt and March 15 in Regina the Prairie Messenger held fundraising dinners to help meet the deficit of this apostolate. Fr. Andrew Britz has been the editor of the PM since April 1983. Bishop Gerald Wiesner, OMI, of Prince George, B.C., was the

main speaker at the dinners.

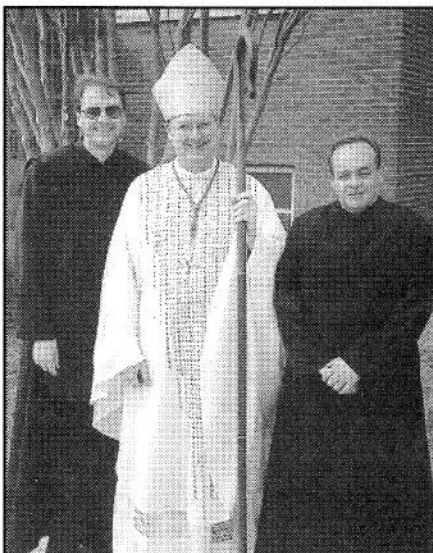
The open house was also time to show off our Power/Water Filtration House. We have just installed this larger filtration system last fall because of the larger amounts of water being used by our own complex and by many neighbours who appreciate the water in our reservoir from the spring snow run-off.

March 19 — The Abbacy's Annual Diocesan Spring Assembly drew together 70 parishioners. There was a feeling in the assembly that this would

be our last assembly as an ABBACY (diocese) before we are officially joined to the Saskatoon Diocese later this year.

This feeling surfaced in the various DPC Committee Reports and formed the main theme of Abbot Peter's report. Many questions were answered as the Abbot showed and explained the new diocesan boundaries.

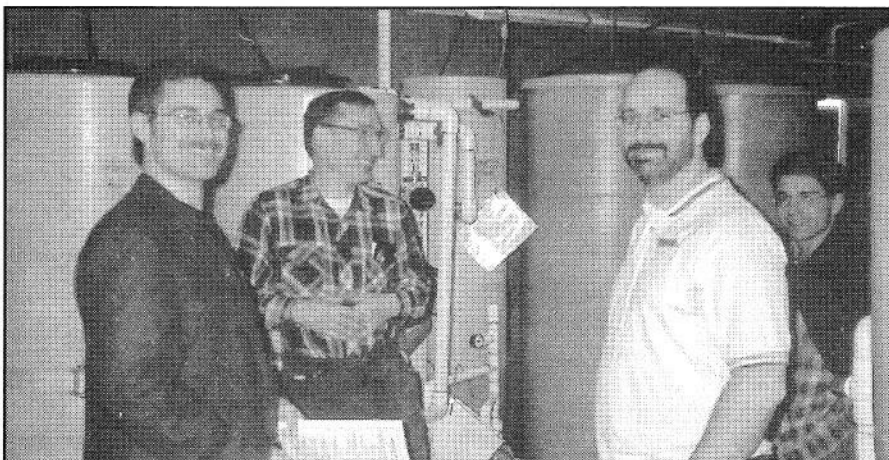
Fr. Andrew Britz continued our JUBILEE 2000 series, Celebrating Christian Community. In this year of the Holy Spirit he chose as his theme the Holy Spirit and Community.



Abbot Peter with Novice Paul Paproski & Novice Jean-Luc Cotto.

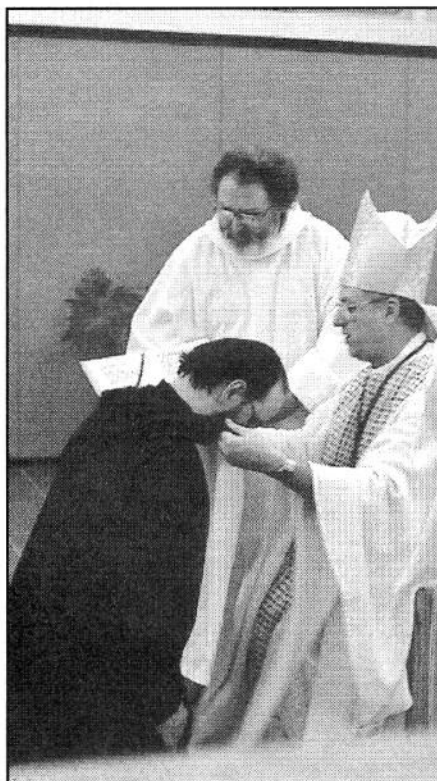
March 20 — Was a truly happy and grateful day as the Benedictine community welcomed two candidates as novices into its midst: Julio Cotto (Montreal) as Br. Novice Jean-Luc, and Bruce Paproski (Hudson Bay, Sask.) as Br. Novice Paul.

March 21 — Feast of St. Benedict. On this feast day Br. Novice François Boulet completed his novitiate and professed temporary vows for three years.



Open House of the water filtration system.

People and events around the abbey



Br. François receives monastic hood.

It was also Oblate Day. Two oblates made their final oblation: Alice Ramsay and Etta Deutscher, both of Humboldt, Sask.

March 29-31 — This week brought us back to outdoor activities. A major job is the renovating of several buildings on the farm and demolishing an old grain bin which had been our first printing shop near the cathedral, and was moved to our new abbey grounds to serve as our carpenter/blacksmith shop, and then as a grain bin.

March 29 — Solidarity Day. Special day for the abbey and college as monks, staff and students gathered for the traditional year-end liturgy, and shared lunch together. The CCODP and Share Lent focus this year was on Brazil, particularly on Sem Terra, a movement that helps landless peasants reclaim



Alice Ramsay (left) and Etta Deutscher (right) with Oblate Director, Fr. Albert Ruetz and Abbot Peter.

their land.

April 07 — Abbot Peter presided at the Mass of Oils at St. Peter's Cathedral. This was the seventh and the last Mass of Oils to be celebrated here before the abbacy is joined to the Saskatoon Diocese in the near future. Bishop James Weisgerber had consecrated the Chrism Oil in Saskatoon on April 6, at which Abbot Peter concelebrated.

Representatives from each of our parishes took the blessed Oils back to their respective parishes.

April 12 — Br. Thomas Ward was named as the new Assitant Guest Master, replacing Br. Gerald Moran upon his retirement.

April 14-19 — Fr. Richard Meidl participated in the Formation Directors



Left to right: Hugo Isaza from Columbia, Marilyn Tebbe, housekeeper, and Br. Gerald Moran, former guest master.

People and events around the abbey



Maxine Moore with some of the members of St. Peter's Adult Chorus.

workshop at Mt. Angel Abbey, Mt. Angel Oregon.

April 19 — Over 150 youth gathered at St. Peter's Abbey for "Wind of the Spirit," a daylong youth rally for those preparing for confirmation in the abbacy. At the end of the day parents joined Abbot Peter for an information session while the youth ate supper. The day concluded with a large celebration in the gym with a youth/parents competition, song, and prayer.

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Photo Credits: Moran, Thompson, Ward.

Logo by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.

April 26 — St. Peter's Adult Chorus celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a



Fr. Bernard Stauber with William Thurmeier and Br. Wolfgang Thiem building the swell box for the organ.

concert in St. Peter's Cathedral, followed by a banquet and program in the Jerome Assembly Room at the abbey. There were 125 members present.

April 28 — The Called by Name Program was again sponsored in the abbacy. Of the 28 names of persons sent in, 12 responded by gathering at the abbey, attending Vespers with the monastic community which was followed by supper and exchange of ideas on the theme of vocations.

Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

March 23 — Sr. Rita Berthold, OSU.

May 4 — Sr. Martha Hauber, OSU.

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

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