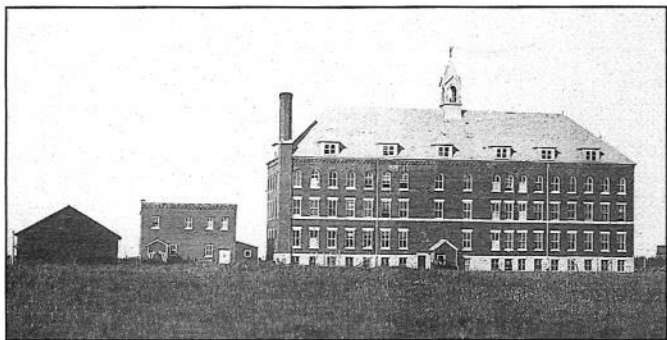


# St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 20 No. 3 Fall 1998

## St. Peter's Abbey-Nullius ceases to exist Sept. 14, 1998 — after 77 years



*St. Peter's Abbey/College — May 6, 1921*

On May 6, 1921, six months before St. Peter's College opened its doors to the first students (Nov. 1921), the territory of St. Peter's Colony was raised to the status of St. Peter's Abbey

and St. Peter's Abbey became St. Peter's Abbey-Nullius.

During the first 18 years the colony of 50 townships was settled with over 10,000 German Catholics from the Northern States, and grew into approximately 24 parishes. The colony formed the southern part of the diocese of Prince Albert. It was under the jurisdiction of its first bishop, Albert Pascal, OMI. After May 21, 1921 the colony's parishes came directly under the jurisdiction of the abbot (Michael Ott) who now had the title and office of abbot-ordinary.

The recent rural depopulation and lack of new vocations to the priesthood to carry on this pastoral apostolate contributed to the decision of the monks to return this jurisdiction to a diocese. Rome had also requested the readjustment of the Saskatchewan diocesan boundaries. Through this both the Diocese of Gravelbourg and the abbacy would cease to exist, the abbacy being joined to the Saskatoon Diocese.

## St. Peter's becomes a 'normal' abbey again

*By Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB*

The community of St. Peter's Abbey has experienced a number of changes in its century-long history. And another major change just happened this fall.

The monastic community was first founded in 1892, near Wetaug in southern Illinois, under the name of Cluny. Ten years later, in 1903, the community was transferred to Muenster in the Northwest Territories, as Western Canada invited in new settlers.

It was known as St. Peter's Monastery or St. Peter's Priory and during this time it had two superiors: Prior Alfred Mayer and Prior Bruno Doerfler.

In 1911 St. Peter's Priory changed its status and became St. Peter's Abbey.

And in another 10 years, on May 6, 1921 its status was changed once again, to St. Peter's Abbey or St. Peter's Abbey-Nullius.

As head of an abbey-nullius the abbot also acted as "ordinary" or head

*Continued on page 2*



*St. Peter's Abbey — Sept. 14, 1998*

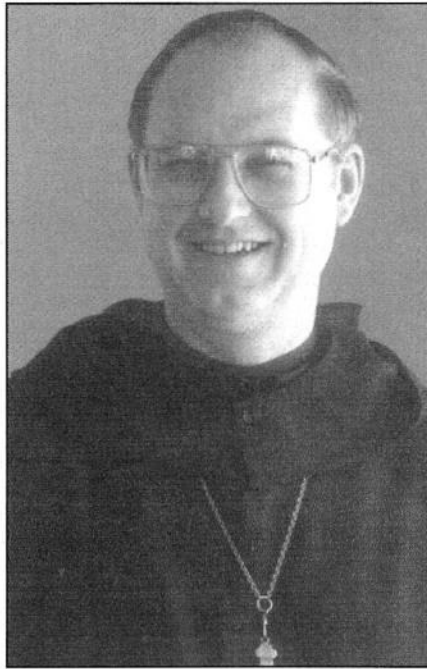
# A report from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends,

The year 1998 will be remembered as the Year of the Holy Spirit. It will also be remembered, fondly in Saskatchewan, as the Year of El Niño. El Niño gave us one of the mildest winters and best summer and fall on record. While we watched in horror TV pictures of natural disasters in other parts of our planet, whether it was floods, mud slides or hurricanes, we enjoyed a good year as far as the weather went.

Our community is also blessed with a good crew in formation. At present we have two junior monks, two novices and three candidates. There are others who have inquired about our monastic life. We count this as God's blessing and we ask you to continue to pray for the life and development of our community as we seek to serve the church, in old ways and new.

As I look on our newcomers, I don't see any of them being inspired by "millennium anxiety." The new millennium is less than 500 days away. This is indeed an historic time to be living in. Some people, of course, have gotten caught up in and anticipate an unprece-



ented apocalyptic time of "doom and gloom" crisis. We have Pope John Paul II to thank for pointing us into another direction to celebrate the year 2000. He calls it a Jubilee Year, the "mother of all jubilees," to use an old phrase. It's a time of renewal and joy rather than a

time of fear and dread.

And, of course, while this is the first millennium we are living through, it's not the first millennium Benedictines are living through. We were around the last time, the year 1000. And in St. Benedict's time, the 500s, there were also strong rumors of the end of the world being imminent because of the political and economic chaos of the time. The Roman empire was in a shambles. I like the guidance St. Augustine gave to the church of his time when he wrote: "It is by design that Jesus hid the last day from us — so that we'd be on the lookout for him every day of our lives." This gives us a better perspective into which to put our millennium celebrations.

Finally, 1998 is an historic year for St. Peter's Abbey because on Sept. 14 we gave up our abbacy and became an abbey. The monastic chapter voted on Oct. 30, 1997 to make this change. This means that we are now an abbey in the Saskatoon Diocese. We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in making good use of the opportunities that may be presented to us in service to the local church.

## St. Peter's Abbey joined to Saskatoon Diocese

*Continued from page 1*

of the diocese. This meant that he governed the abbacy or diocese in the manner of a diocesan bishop, as its proper pastor. From 1921 to 1998, for 77 years, the status remained the same.

The abbot of the monastery, as head of an abbey-nullius and "ordinary" of the diocese, was a member of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and took part in all its activities, including the Ad Limina visit to Rome every five years. St. Peter's Abbey was sometimes called the Muenster Diocese, to clarify the fact that the "abbacy" referred to the "diocese" and not to the "abbey" or monastery.

As of Sept. 14, 1998 the status of St. Peter's was changed again as the dioc-

san boundaries in Saskatchewan were again realigned. The "diocesan" responsibilities of the abbot of St. Peter's Abbey have been transferred to the bishop of Saskatoon as the "abbacy" or Muenster Diocese" is joined to the Diocese of Saskatoon.

Since I had been a member of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, I now join Fr. Jerome Weber as a "member emeritus" of the CCCB. I have a year's term to fill out on the CCCB Liturgy Commission.

St. Peter's Abbey thus becomes an abbey like any other abbey in North America, with its various apostolates in service to the local church. The abbey is now part of the Diocese of Saskatoon. Like other abbeys, we will continue to

provide clergy to be pastors of parishes in the Saskatoon Diocese. To the ordinary parishioner in our area, it may seem as though nothing has changed. Perhaps the change will hit them when it is time to celebrate confirmation. The bishop of Saskatoon will be the presider. Another change they will notice is that the bishop of Saskatoon is now prayed for in the Canon of the Mass.

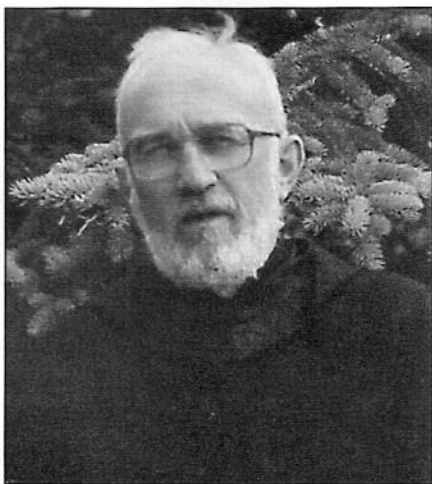
Meanwhile, back at the abbey, our monastic life goes on as usual. For me, it will mean fewer meetings to attend. However, despite the change, I'm sure there will always be a special place in our hearts for the people of this area who have been so good to us and whom we have tried to serve to the best of our ability.

# 1998 Junior Monastic Institute

*By Novice Br. Jean-Luc Cotto*

Fall is here and the trees are rendering their gifts of color, blanketing the earth for the sleep of winter to come. But in my heart, I can still envision the sea of black and the joyous smiles that accompanied the 20 American junior brothers visiting St. Peter's Abbey for the summer's 1998 Junior Monastic Institute.

This was a wonderful opportunity for me, as a novice, to visit with other monks from the Swiss and Cassinese Congregations. Experiencing the customs and traditions of other abbeys provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on the monastic vocation and examine the charism of one's own abbey through the eyes of these gifted young monks. The experience proved to be extremely valuable to me, as it confirmed my vocation to St. Peter's Abbey. Visiting the local culture and geography of the region surrounding the abbey was another great opportunity to appreciate God's gift of nature. This provided several of us with our first view of the northern lights.



*Fr. Terrence Kardong, OSB*

Week-long conferences also proved to be valuable. The continuity of having one speaker per week, Terrence Kardong, OSB, and Bede Healy, OSB



*Participants in the Junior Summer Institute*

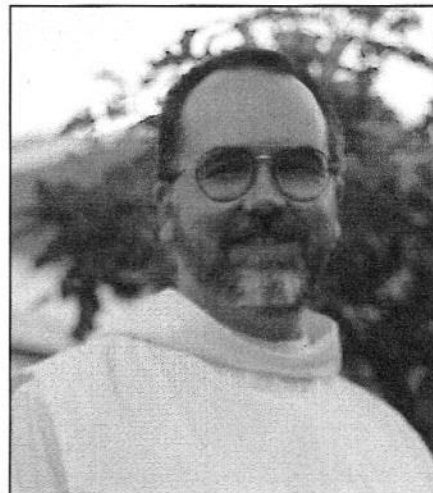
Cam., proved valuable as it seemed more focused. The length of the lectures and overall schedule encouraged a balance of study, prayer and leisure. The topical content of the lectures, focusing on community life, was very helpful while the monastic and psychological approaches complemented one another.

Overall I am convinced of the institute's value on several levels. It builds fraternity and a spirit of cooperation by bringing monks of the Swiss and Cassinese Congregations together. The institute encourages the strengthening of a man's commitment to monastic life by giving him the skills necessary to assess the strengths and weaknesses of his own monastic observance. Junior monks benefit from the institute because, as they reflect on the conditions of their personal abbeys, they realize things are more normal than they first thought. Finally, the institute fosters in juniors and we novices the common identity of a Benedictine tradition in the Americas.

This experience will always remain in my heart, for as a novice I am con-

vinced that God is in us bringing us to life, drawing us incessantly on to that place where we become everything we can be.

I thank you, my American brothers, for your gift of wisdom and fraternity. And, though you are no longer here with me in choir, you will be eternally in my soul, that place where the human meets the divine.



*Br. Bede Healy, OSB Cam.*

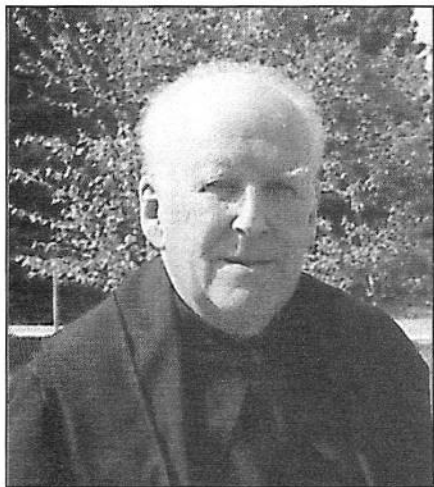


# People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

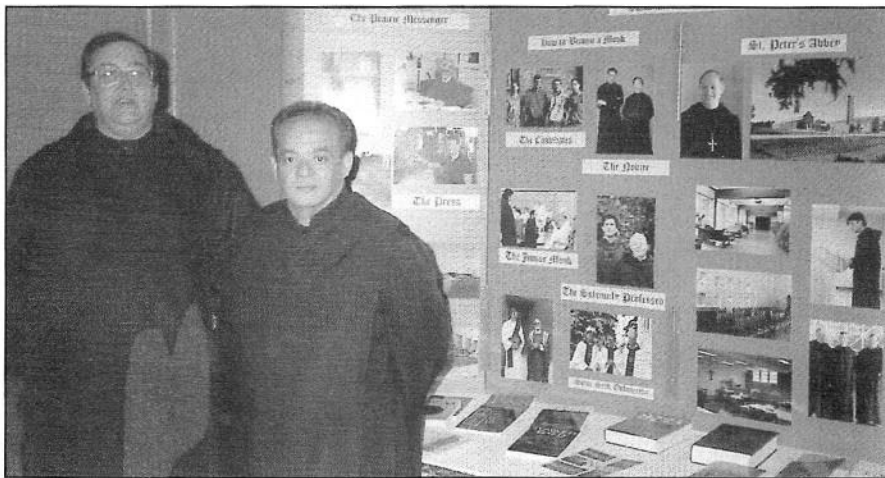
May 14 — Earliest date for completing seeding, recalling that two years ago we began seeding on May 29! May 18 brought a most welcome rain of 1.6" after a very dry situation up until then.

May 25 — Monks' annual retreat: Retreat master was Fr. Dominic Milroy of Ampleforth Abbey, Yorkshire England.



*Fr. Dominic Milroy*

May 31 — Celebrate Pentecost — Fr. Richard Meidl, Novices Jean-Luc and Paul, manned a Vocations booth before and after Mass at Saskatchewan Place,



*Fr. Richard Meidl and Novice Jean-Luc Cotto at Celebrate Pentecost. Missing is Novice Paul Paproski.*



*Srs. Maria, Claire, Ana-Lucia and Maureen visiting with the monks.*

Saskatoon. More than 800 children were confirmed at this celebration. Br. Thomas was one of the six MCs for the celebration.

June 1-20 — Abbot Peter began a tour which included CWL annual conventions at Yorkton, SK. and Ft. Nelson, BC., as well as a liturgy commission meeting in Ottawa, ON., and general chapter at St. Anselm's Abbey, Manchester, NH. Fr. Richard Meidl was our delegate to this chapter.

June 3 — The PM (June 3/98) carried a first 'kernel' description of the beginnings of our SPC Centre For Rural

Studies and Enrichment, a new major phase of studies at SPC. My first hope, on reading it, was that all of you readers could read it and become informed on it. During the summer months Room 102 (Michael Hall) has been equipped with resource material in preparation for the new school year this fall.

June 5 — Fr. Don Hamel (Saskatoon Diocese) has been appointed pastor of St. Augustine Parish, effective July 5. He replaces Fr. Lawrence DeMong who joined the Saskatoon Diocese mission team in União, Brazil for one year while their missionary Fr. April is on sabbatical. Fr. Hamel is the first diocesan priest taking over one of our parishes.

June 8 — Sisters Maureen, Maria, Claire and Ana-Lucia came for Vespers and supper, then visited with the monks before Sr. Ana Lucia returned to Brazil.

June 11-24 — Twenty-one junior monks from 11 monasteries in the USA gather for the 1998 OSB Junior Summer Institute. It was a wonderful experience to have them share our monastic life of prayer and work.

June 12 — Br. Gregory's pacemaker held out for 16 years. Finally he needed a new battery for it . . . "new spark plugs" as the nurse told him!

# People and events around the abbey

June 19 — Five deacons were ordained to the priesthood for the Saskatoon Diocese. Several of these made their retreat here at the abbey in preparation.

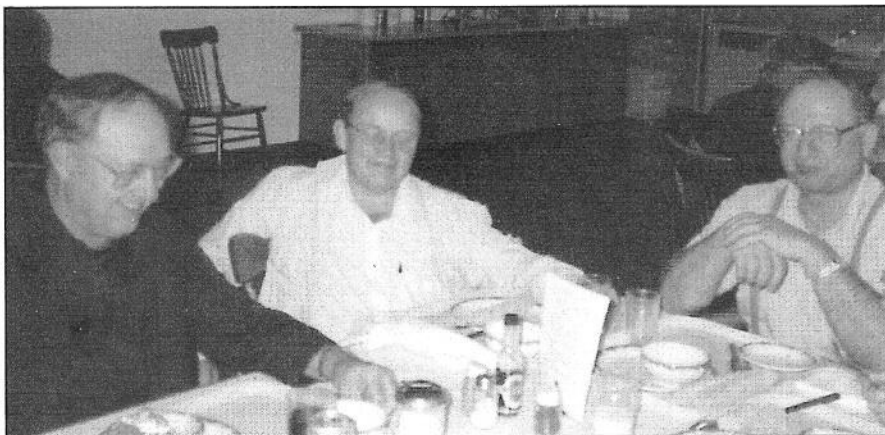
June 22 — Our maintenance crew began the major job of putting a metal sheeting gable roof over the library and the main entrance. The flat tar roofs caused much water-leaking problems over the past 35 years. Br. Basil, plant manager, assisted by Br. Wolfgang, Allan Vedress and Alan Stewart, spear-headed this work.

June 24 — Our DPC Administrative Council for the abbacy, will cease to exist in mid-September. At the farewell supper appreciation was expressed to Sr. Yvonne Billesberger, OSU, who was in charge of the Abbacy Centre for 14 years.

June 25 — Farewell for Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, as associate editor of the *Prairie Messenger* and best of luck in her new placement as superior of the Ursulines of Bruno as of June 28, 1998.



*Farewell and best of luck to Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, seen here with Maureen Weber cutting the cake.*



*Fr. Don Hamel with Abbot Peter and Fr. Rudolph*

June 26 — The Rite of Consecration of a Virgin is not well known, but treasured. One of our Oblates, Rosemarie Fowler, of Edmonton, AB received this consecration on this day.

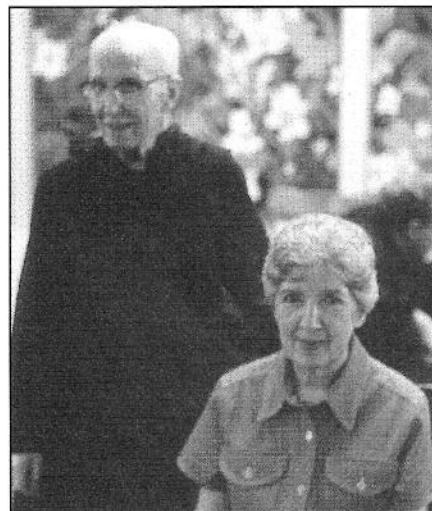
June 27 — Oblate Day. Bonar ("Sandy") Gow of Edmonton, AB was enrolled as a Benedictine Oblate for our abbey.

June 29 — Abbacy personnel met with Saskatoon Diocese in Saskatoon to study their joint collaboration in our Brazil missions.

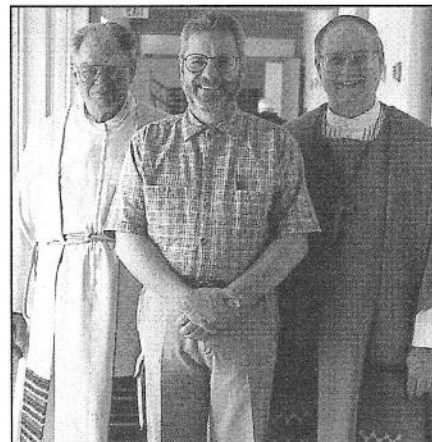
July 3 - Aug. 2 — Br. Thomas Ward, our newsletter editor, continued his Summer School in Liturgical Studies at Newman Theological College, Edmonton, AB.

July 5-19 — The abbey grounds were again very much alive with about 150 youngsters (age 8-16) who took part in the two weeks of the Sask. Choral Federation Camp. Again the monks were privileged to share in the 1/2-hour rehearsal by the group the two Fridays, in our abbey church after evening Vigils. What wonderful singing the youth displayed after only five days of the weekly camp.

July 8 — Fr. Lawrence DeMong left for Brazil, to join the Saskatoon Mission Team for one year.



*Rosemarie Fowler with Fr. Jerome Weber.*



*Oblate Day — Sandy Gow with Fr. Albert and Abbot Peter.*

# People and events around the abbey

July 11 — Solemnity of St. Benedict — During the Eucharist Br. Wolfgang Thiem renewed his monastic vows on the 25th anniversary of his profession.

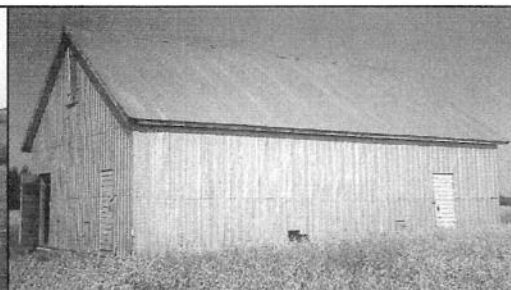
In the evening a tornado was threatening in the Humboldt area. It did strike in the Viscount area. At 9:30 pm an alert was sent to St. Mary's Villa (Humboldt) to move the residents from the western to the eastern part of the villa. No damage was done. The crops suffered somewhat from the strong wind and rain.

The mid-July rains and heat also advanced all crops so that an early harvest is anticipated.

July 14 — An historic day. Our first printshop had been built in early 1905 (after the railway came through). The first St. Peter's Bote was printed on the new press on Sept. 5, 1905. When the new St. Peter's College was completed in November 1921, this printshop was moved to its new location southeast of the college in 1922. It served as our carpenter-blacksmith shop until 1961 with



*In 1922 the first printshop was moved to the abbey farm (left). In 1998 it was moved again to its final resting place next to Assumption Church, Marysburg (right).*



Br. Justus Trettl as its competent "boss." (Br. Justus of St. John's Abbey had joined our community in 1924 and was in charge of it until his retirement.)

In 1961 a larger shop was built west of the Abbey Centre and the old printshop was moved to the farm where it served well as a large grain bin until the present time.

On July 15 the actual moving took place as the Glen Taphorn crew whisked it away from the farm to its newest location east of Assumption Church, Marysburg. It is one of the two buildings surviving from all the buildings that had sprung up on the present cathedral site. It will be part of the Earthcare Connections project that is located there

under the leadership of Duane Guina.

July 24 — Lawrence and Rita Trettl and children, Marlys and Ken of Royalton, MN, came to visit the grave of their uncle, Br. Justus Trettl. They live close to North Prairie, MN, where Br. Justus was born. Br. Justus died in 1976 at age 86.

August — After many group workshops using the guest house this spring and early summer, these very hot summer weeks brought more people who came singly for a few days of rest, retreat and renewal.

Aug. 4-14 — Abbot Peter concluded his five-year term as national CWL spiritual adviser by sharing in the annual CWL convention at Ottawa.

Aug. 5 — Fiddlers on the Roof of the abbey? Not really. Rather it was our hardy crew of workers who were setting up the gable roof over the present library (former chapel). The 80 rafters which were made in Anaheim arrived here on Aug. 5. On Aug. 6 they were conveyed by crane to the top of the flat roof and set up. Next day these were covered with sheets of plywood.

In the weeks before this, the crew closed in the area over the main entrance which required 63 rafters. The metal sheets arrived on Aug. 24.

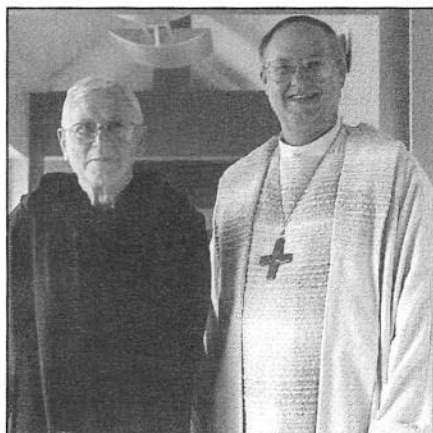
Aug. 6 — The swathing of the barley today gets our harvesting off to a very early start. Excellent weather has made our corn ready for sale by Aug. 24, two weeks earlier than usual.



*Fiddlers on the Roof, from left — Alan Stewart, Christy Hansen, Robert Clark, Br. François Boulet, Allan Vedress and Br. Basil Schaan.*



# People and events around the abbey



*Br. Wolfgang Thiem with Abbot Peter*

Aug. 13-17 — Fr. Demetrius, our guest-master, had further surgery for cancer.

Aug. 28 — Fr. Don Hamel, the first diocesan priest of the Saskatoon Diocese to take over the Benedictine parish of Humboldt, was officially welcomed by the Benedictine community at Vespers and supper.

Aug 31 — The harvesting finished today. This is a new record for getting the harvest off.

Sept. 3 — Fr. Francis Lohmer along with Celine Wolsfeld, his faithful housekeeper for over 30 years, celebrated his 96th birthday with his monks at the abbey. He is still pastor of St. Scholastica Parish and also takes care of St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt during the week.

Sept. 8 — Registration day as the school year opens for 1998-99 with enrolment of 100 (slightly down from last year). We also have a new president of the college, Colleen Fitzgerald, Saskatoon, who was also a teacher here a few years ago. Welcome back, Colleen!

Sept. 12 — At the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Prairies, Holy Spirit Church, Saskatoon, a dozen of our monks sung Solemn Vespers of Mary and other sacred music.

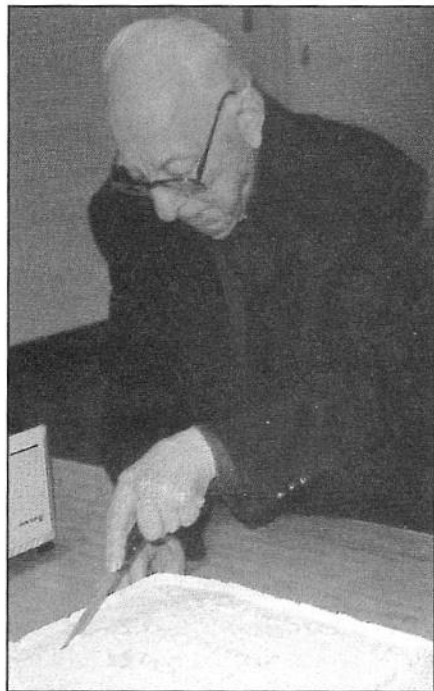
Sept. 13 — At Vespers three candidates Patrick Meehan (Trochu, AB), Alan Stewart (Grande Centre, AB), and Michael Speers (Orangeville, ON) — received the community's blessing and welcome as they begin the six-month candidacy.

Sept. 14 — St. Peter's Abbey-Nullius (abbacy) officially ceases to exist today. The new Saskatchewan diocesan boundaries and the amalgamation of the Saskatoon Diocese and the abbacy had been approved by Rome in early August. The public announcement of this takes place in Regina today by the Saskatchewan bishops.

This is an historical occasion for us. Our Abbey-Nullius was officially established May 6, 1921, and ceases to exist today. It is now incorporated into and becomes part of the diocese of Saskatoon under Bishop James

Weisgerber. The Benedictine monks will continue to take care of parishes as long as personnel are available.

As a note of 'trivia': Abbot Michael Ott was the first abbot-ordinary and Abbot Peter Novocosky was the last. Both happened to be elected as abbot on the same date, July 23!



*Fr. Francis Lohmer, 96*



*Our candidates: Alan Stewart, Michael Speers and Patrick Meehan*

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

**— Benedictine Motto**

# Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

April 15 — Fr. Alfred Koestner, OSB, 86, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

April 27 — Fr. Leo Carter, OSB, 72, St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, Ala.

April 20 — Fr. Francis Broderick, OSB, 89, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

May 20 — Fr. Julius Muggli, OSB, 77, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

May 21 — Alfred Renneberg, brother of Fr. Werner

May 29 — Annette Boulet, mother of Br. François

May 30 — Fr. Gregory Oravec, OSB, 80, St. Andrew's Abbey, Cleveland, Ohio

June 9 — Ron Back, brother-in-law of Br. Bernard

June 16 — Br. Aloysius Shaima, OSB, 81, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Co.

June 20 — Fr. Harold Glentzer, OSB, 88, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Co.

June 29 — Paul Senecal, 83, father of Br. Randy

July 5 — Fr. John Fitzgerald, OSB, 78, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Ill.

July 12 — Fr. Julian Stock, OSB, 86, St. Anthony's Abbey, Puerto Rico

Sept. 6 — Richard Lohmer, 91, brother of Fr. Francis



One of the main abbey projects this summer was putting a new roof on the library and main entrance. These pictures show the roof in various stages of its construction. The roof was completed by early October.



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

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