

# ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER

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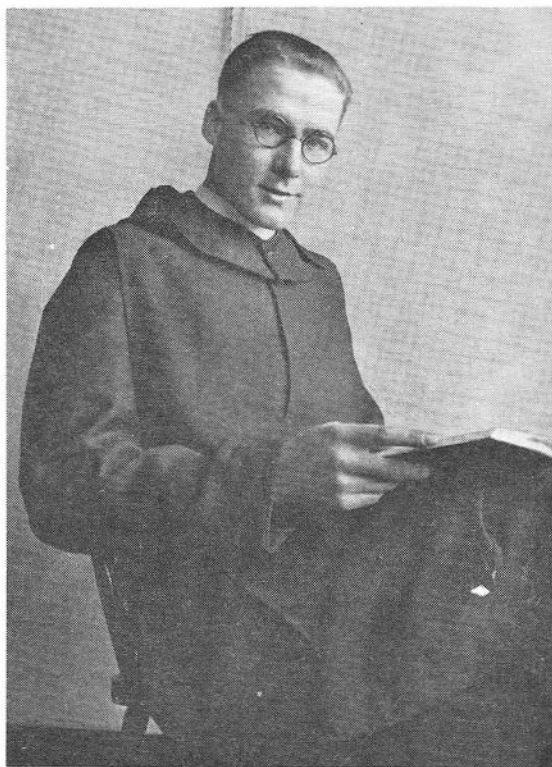


# Monks celebrate ordination anniversaries

On June 29, the monastic community celebrated three anniversaries of ordination to the priesthood: 50th anniversaries for Fathers Aloysius and Xavier, and a 25th anniversary for Father James. The celebration took place on the last day of the community's annual retreat. It included a concelebrated Mass, a festive meal, and a delightful afternoon program at which many reminiscences from the past were shared. The following accounts of their lives are by Father Norbert Schwinghammer.

## Aloysius Herriges, OSB

If St. Peter's church, Muenster, had a memory, one of its fond recollections would be that of a 14-year-old boy wiping a drop of bright paint from his cheek after taking a brush whisked to him from



Father Aloysius Herriges as a teacher in the 1920s.

the hand of Count Berthold von Imhoff, finishing off one of the 400 oil paintings which he donated to this church.

Born in Madison, Minn., Aloysius Herriges came to Englefeld with his parents in May, 1906. Since there was no boarding high school between Edmonton and Winnipeg, he applied to St. Peter's monastery, adjacent to St. Peter's church, for instruction in the basic high school subjects, especially Latin, before going to St. John's, Collegeville, Minn. After classes he and his few companions did chores, which during the fall and winter of 1918-1919 and the following summer often meant being at the service of the great painter up on his scaffolding in the church.

After one year at St. John's (1919-1920) he attended St. Peter's College the first year it opened, in late November, 1921.

He joined the Benedictine community of St. Peter's Abbey in 1922, made his seminary studies there under the Rome-trained theologians Abbot Michael Ott and Joseph Sittenauer, OSB, and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph Prud'homme on June 29, 1928 in St. Peter's cathedral.

Immediately after pronouncing his first vows, July 11, 1923, Father Aloysius became a member of the pioneer staff of St. Peter's College. He taught a large variety of high school and commercial subjects, and he was associated as director or participant in the incredibly numerous school activities of those days — a public speaking and debating club, a literary society, a band, orchestra, and students' glee-club; a dramatic society; a photography club with its own developing laboratory; and a taxidermist's studio, the products of which are still on display in the college museum.

During this time he was given charge of the physics department, which he soon provided with a well-equipped laboratory. One of the projects of the physics department during this period was a study of the northern lights involving a series of photographs taken simultaneously by the St. Peter's College team and the University of

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### COVER

Jubilarians celebrating their anniversaries of ordination to the priesthood this year are, from left: Fathers Aloysius Herriges, James Gray, and Xavier Benning.

Saskatchewan team, with telephone communication between the two.

After his ordination to the priesthood, Father Aloysius, like the other priests at the abbey, received frequent assignments to give assistance in the parishes, especially during the festive seasons. During the depression of the '30s, when the abbey boasted only one roadworthy automobile, he was chauffeur for Abbot Severin Gertken on his pastoral trips.

The association of Father Aloysius with St. Peter's Press goes back to his school days in the old monastery adjacent to the church. Not every after-school chore carried as much prestige as that of painting a cathedral. Often it was that of serving as "printer's devil" in the old hand-setting room of the war-time bilingual St. Peter's Bote and St. Peter's Messenger. In 1938 he became business manager, a position which included the tasks of shop manager, press foreman, layout artist, job printer, circulation manager, accountant, and general assistant to the editor.

In 1944 he volunteered to be chaplain in the Canadian Army. He served at Regina, Camp Shilo, Man., Montreal, and Depert, N.S.; and overseas in Sussex, England, and in the army of occupation in North Germany. He was demobilized in 1946, with the rank of captain.

Immediately after his return to St. Peter's he resumed his teaching duties, with ever more frequent assignments to assist aging and ailing pastors. After assisting Father Joseph Wickel at Annaheim for about one year, he took up residence at St. Augustine's rectory, Humboldt, in 1947, to be full-time assistant to Father Dominic Hoffman, until the latter's death, in January, 1950.

He has had the following assignments as pastor: Humboldt, 1950-60; Lake Lenore and St. James rural church, 1960-71; Watson, 1971 to the present.

Beginning at St. Augustine's, Humboldt, during the period when he was assistant to Father Dominic, he organized youth clubs, trained youth and adult choirs, and frequently directed the congregational singing.

If one had to select the two outstanding characteristics of Father Aloysius during the 50 years since his ordination, these would be priestly responsibility and pastoral availability.



*Father Xavier Benning as a prefect in the 1920s.*

## **Xavier Benning, OSB**

Father Xavier Benning was one of the group of students at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn., who answered the appeal of Abbot Michael Ott for missionary-minded young men to staff St. Peter's College, still in construction, and to augment the meagre manpower of St. Peter's Abbey to provide pastoral care for the parishes of St. Peter's Colony, newly raised to the status of St. Peter's Abbey.

Born in Arcadia, Wisc., he entered the Benedictine community of St. Peter's Abbey in June 1923, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 29, 1928, by Bishop Joseph Prud'homme.

Immediately after his first religious vows, July 12, 1924, he joined the teaching staff, on which he remained for the next 44 years (1924-68), with the interruption of only a single year, for studies at the University of Saskatchewan.

During the first few years he taught a variety of subjects and gave piano lessons. For the remaining years he taught chemistry and Latin, his "pet class" being Special Latin, an intensive up-grading course for priesthood students. He continued his music also for many years, playing as accompanist in the college orchestra. In his teaching he was highly esteemed for the thoroughness and clarity of his approach, and for his unbounded patience.

During 18 years of his teaching, he was simultaneously boarding-school prefect, a position which combined that of supervisor, sports director, infirmarian, and counsellor. During these years he used his close association with the students to foster the St. John Berchman's server's society,

thereby contributing much to a greater appreciation of the Mass and the priesthood in many generations of students.

Father Xavier's most influential contribution to the school was his long period as rector, or principal (1935-60), coinciding during all those 25 years with his heavy load of teaching, and during the first seven years (1935-42) with the position of prefect. The first 10 years of his rectorship covered two crucial periods in the history of St. Peter's College — the first five years, the depression of the '30s; the next five, the war crisis and the beginning of the post-war expansion.

During the depression years he spent the summers canvassing for students in and beyond the abbacy. One of the fruits of these labors was the arrangement whereby St. Peter's College functioned as the minor seminary for students sent by Bishop Gerald Murray, CSsR, of the newly erected diocese of Saskatoon. Among those sent to St. Peter's at this time are Bishop Mahoney of Saskatoon, and Rev. Don McGillivray, senior member of the Saskatoon mission team in Brasil.

During his years of rectorship Father Xavier sought to maintain a high standard of teaching by

encouraging advanced studies, and assuming a still heavier teaching and supervising load during the years of absence granted to various staff members.

Simultaneously with his heavy duties in the school, Father Xavier held positions in the monastery: that of sub-prior, 1946-60; prior, 1960-68; and novice master, 1943-58.

Like the other priests at the abbey, Father Xavier assisted in the parishes of the abbacy when help was needed, especially during the festive seasons. He has held the following pastoral assignments: assistant to Father Leonard Benning in the parishes of St. Scholastica and St. Gertrude, 1947-62; pastor of St. Scholastica, 1964-71; pastor of St. Scholastica and St. Gertrude, 1967-71; and pastor of St. Gertrude, 1971 to the present.

Of all the contributions which Father Xavier has made to St. Peter's, the one that is most immediately noticeable and most widely appreciated is the complex of evergreens, flower beds, orchard, and bee-yard which constitutes the abbey grounds. Especially the splendid groves of Colorado blue spruce, started from seeds brought up by confreres from St. John's Abbey, Minnesota, are a standing ovation to his astonishingly tireless service to his community.



On May 22, the community, plus some friends of the abbey, celebrated Mass at the site of the first Mass celebrated on abbey grounds, May 21, 1903, feast of the Ascension. Prior Alfred Mayer celebrated that first Mass 75 years ago. Others present were: Fathers John Balfrey, Rudolph Palm, Meinrad Seifermann, Brother Adolph Steiger, Novice Bruno Fuchs, Candidate Aloysius Gleissner, and two homesteaders, Fred Distel and Anton Eimer. Serving as an altar was a cairn built by Brother Wolfgang Thiem in the fall of 1974 to mark the spot. The outdoor Mass was followed by a picnic lunch.





*Father James Gray, about 10 years ago, while Prairie Messenger editor.*

## **James Gray, OSB**

Father James Gray is probably as closely associated with the Carlton Trail as any living person in this Carlton Trail Community College district. One of the routine tasks of his father, Sergeant William Gray, RCMP, was to patrol on horseback that segment of the trail which briefly joined present Highway 5 at the historic site marker a little west of Humboldt, and then snaked through the Carmel hills to Bruno, Dana, and Vonda.

Father James (William) Gray was born in Humboldt (Feb. 6, 1927), and, with the exception of a few years at Biggar, when his father was with the RCMP detachment there, he spent his childhood and youth at Muenster.

He received his primary education at Ives rural school, his high school at St. Peter's, Muenster, and his seminary training at St. John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn.

He made his first profession of vows as a member of the community of St. Peter's Abbey on June 11, 1947, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 7, 1953, by Bishop Joseph Klein of Saskatoon.

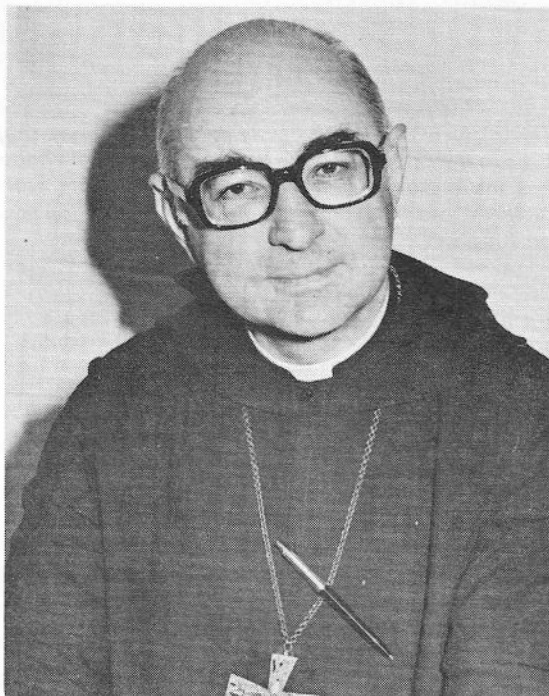
Before joining the teaching staff, he was given a year's leave to study at the University of

Minnesota. Returning in the fall of 1954 with an MA degree, he took over junior college English, which he is still teaching today. A feature of his teaching which has deeply influenced many generations of first-year university students is his concern to stimulate independent thinking and critical evaluation, not only of literary works, but also of the society whose image they reflect.

He became associate editor of the *Prairie Messenger* in June, 1960, and editor in August, 1962. As editor, from 1962-72, he carried on and developed the policy of his predecessors, Fathers Wilfred Hergott and Augustine Nenzel, of involvement in social issues.

In the monastery he held the position of sub-prior from 1966-71. During his tenure of this office he visited the St. Peter's Abbey mission team in Maceio, Brasil, where he deepened his concern for the poor and powerless.

Since 1972 he has lived in a hermitage on abbey grounds, joining the community at daily Mass.



*Abbot Joseph Gerry, abbot of St. Anselm's Abbey, Manchester, N.H., preached the monastic retreat this year, June 25-29. The main theme of the retreat was the basic elements of monastic life.*



*This picture shows the newly renovated abbey chapel, with the choir area in the foreground, the altar area in the middle and the Blessed Sacrament chapel behind the reredos. The chapel now faces west and has the entrance from the east, off the main entrance of the abbey. Also part of the chapel, but not pictured, are two sacristies and a reconciliation room. The community began using the renovated chapel on June 3.*

## Personnel notes

Abbot Jerome Weber attended the Western Canadian Bishops meeting in Thompson, Man., April 10-12. On April 18 he attended a joint meeting of the Anglican and Catholic bishops of Saskatchewan to discuss the joint statement on the Eucharist. He, as well as Father Albert Ruetz, conducted a number of directed retreats at the abbey this spring.

Father Paul Kuehne left on May 8 for a six-week vacation in Germany.

Father Leo Hinz left for Edmonton on June 5 to take part in a one-day meeting of canon lawyers from Western Canada to discuss the new Code of Canon Law.

Father James Gray left on April 30 for the Thomas Merton Centre, Magog, Que., for a two-month retreat.

Father Lawrence DeMong took part in a SEARCH program in Winnipeg the May 14 weekend. Brother Peter Dougan had taken part in the same program on the April 9 weekend.

Father Andrew Britz preached two retreats this spring: to the Elizabethan Sisters at Humboldt, beginning April 30, and to the Regina archdiocesan priests, beginning May 8.

Father Peter Novecosky was named novice master in early June.

Bro. Douglas Schmidt returned in early June with his BA from St. Anselm's College, Manchester, N.H. He requested a dispensation from his



*This is the chapel as it looked a few years before it was renovated. It had faced east.*

temporary vows and left the community in mid-June.

On May 22 four candidates were accepted as novices, to begin their novitiate on Aug. 5: Lawrence Genoia of Toronto; George Hunt of Corner Brook, Nfld.; Joe McSheffery of Bath, N.B.; and Guy Herriges of Engelfeld. On July 2 Carl Perreca arrived from Calgary to be a candidate for next year's program.

Father Philip Loehr was recently appointed a member of the board of directors of the Carlton Trail Community College, Humboldt. This year he retired from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, on which he served since 1972.

Sister Charlotte Vogel, a hermitess at the abbey for the past five years, returned to her home in Buffalo, N.Y. on May 23 to take care of her invalid mother. On May 6 Sister Rosemarie Stevens, originally of California and recently of Zambia, arrived to experiment living as a hermitess.

## Around the abbey

One of the visitors to the abbey this spring was Father Paul Chinappan, rector of a minor seminary in India. He spent several weeks in the area, principally to visit the Bill Hergott family of Humboldt, who sponsored his seminary education. Before he left, the abbey gave him a donation to help support poor students coming to the seminary.

Other recent donations made by the abbey include 300 bushels of wheat to the Mennonite World Food Bank and a donation for the Canadian Special Olympics being held in Regina this year.

Other visitors to the abbey recently include Steve Carthy of Cambridge, Ont., Pat Onofrio of Montreal and Philippe Lavigne of Saskatoon.

Fathers George and Martin Brodner and Werner Renneberg were recently named to a committee to propose a policy for cars bought by the community.

# Brother Thomas' guestmaster's diary

The spring months were slack ones in the guest wing this year. An abbacy marriage encounter, several fellows for an abbey live-in (including Leslie McCann of Toronto, Robin Terry of Victoria, Jim MacDonald of Edmonton, and Lorne Keller, OMI, of Edmonton), and a homemakers workshop were the sum total of groups for April. Even individuals have been scarce this spring: Ted Wood of Regina, Barry Marco of Humboldt, Bill Prebeshewski of Saskatoon, and Sister Catherine of Russell, Man. for April.

May started with a bang: 50 United Church animators on a communications workshop. Brother Bede Hubbard conducted one of their seminars: the preparation of newspaper reports.

United Church minister, Rev. Allan Shaw of

Nipawin, brought two different groups of Nipawin students to visit the abbey in May. On each occasion the guestmaster spoke to the students on monasticism and St. Peter's.

James and Syme Brewer spent four lovely May days at St. Peter's completing work on the play depicting the early history of the colony: With Plough and Prayer. Luckily they were still here on May 22 when the community celebrated an outdoor Mass at the cairn on the Wolverine Creek marking the spot where the monks celebrated the first Mass on abbey grounds 75 years ago.

Sion Open Community spent the second June weekend at the abbey on retreat. The Sisters of St. Elizabeth and the St. Peter's monks in parishes also used the guest rooms for retreats in June.

On June 15 and 16 the Sask. Teachers' Federation executive held policy meetings at St. Peter's. Also during June many elementary school classes from the area came for a tour of the abbey press, farm and especially museum on this jubilee year. The monastic candidates were mainly responsible for showing them around.

And now the guestmaster is bracing himself for July: not only is he expecting lots of guests, but his office is the nerve center of the colony's 75th jubilee celebrations. Who's the protective saint for people under stress?



Brother Thomas Gerwing tries out the new organ for the abbey chapel. The Rogers organ, model Columbian 700, arrived on April 7.

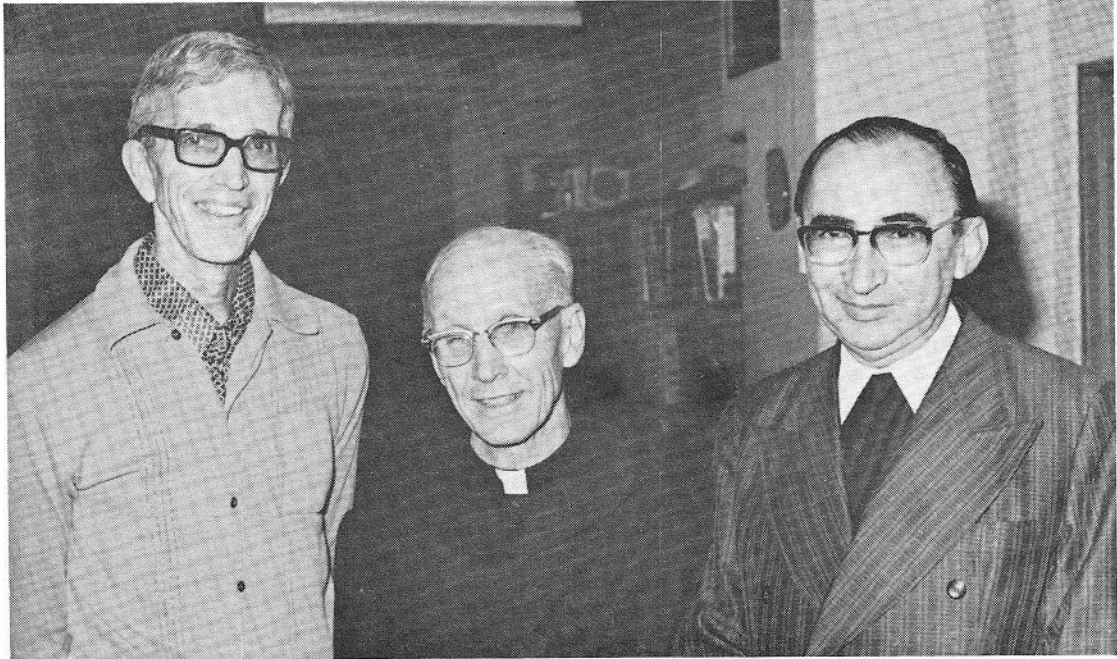
## Visit from Brasil

Archbishop Dom Miguel Camara of Maceio, Brasil, met with the community on the evening of June 14 during his visit to the abbey. He said he came principally to "say thanks" for the help of the abbacy mission team working in his diocese the past 11 years.

He told the community how impressed he was with the team's commitment to the spirit of poverty. Seventy percent of the diocese's population lives below the subsistence level, he said. Because of the team's unity with the poor, they are a sign of hope and joy to the people and to the other clergy and Religious working in the diocese, he said. Father Don McGillivray translated the bishop's remarks for the community.

The archbishop concelebrated at the community Mass before he left on June 15.





Posing with Abbot Jerome Weber during a June 14 visit to the abbey are Archbishop Dom Miguel Camara of Maceio, Brasil (right), and Father Don McGillivray, a member of the Saskatoon mission team at Uniao dos Palmares, Brasil.

## Home from Rome

*Father Maurice Weber shares the following reflections after his return home on July 14.*

It was finally over, this task that had occupied my thoughts and time for the last three months. My thesis or "tesina" for a License in Theology with a Specialization in Monastic Studies, at the Pontificium Athenaeum Anselmianum in Rome, was on the idea of *Zelus Bonus* in Chapter 72 of The Rule of Saint Benedict. The title is: "Benedictine Good Zeal Interpreted by Selected Commentators—Three Contemporary Writers and Smaragdus".

Looking over the finished product of 126 pages now it seems to me to be quite a simple exposition. The task involved a comparison of the Rule of Saint Benedict on the subject of Good Zeal. The three contemporary commentators were Ambrose Wathen, OSB, Adalbert de Vogue, OSB, and John-Eudes Bamberger, OSB. The first had written in English and the latter two in French. I compared their interpretation of Benedictine Good Zeal with

that of Smaragdus, a Benedictine Abbot who wrote a commentary about 820. This ninth century abbot used a method which might be best described as a scriptural florilegium approach, whereas modern commentators employ scientific and critical analysis. It was a surprise to discover that after getting underneath the skin of Smaragdus' methodology, so to speak, he actually came up with an interpretation of *Bonus Zelus* that appeared to be more complete than that of the current writers.

In substance, all the commentators see Good Zeal as one of Benedict's unique contributions to monastic literature. I came to the conclusion that for Saint Benedict *Bonus Zelus* is really "true love fully lived". "Love" is more than theoretical, it involves an affection for, an attachment to, or even a submission to another person. It is "true" only when the other person is, in the ultimate sense, Christ. It is "fully lived" when it influences all the nitty-gritty situations of daily life.

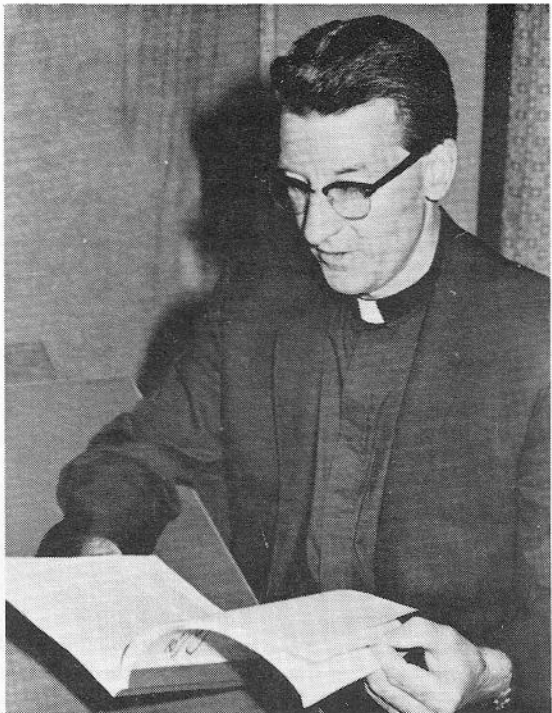
Examinations were over by July 2. The work was demanding but also interesting and inspiring. The languages involved had proved one of the major obstacles but I had managed to learn enough Latin, German and French to pursue the work.

After July 2, I quickly took a train to Germany to visit my relatives near Freiburg. Then back to Rome to pack and make a visit to Monte Cassino. Then I flew to Montreal. After short visits to some friends and relatives I made it back to Saskatchewan on July 14.

Two years of studies and travels had passed by very quickly and I had appreciated many things in Europe. However, it was good to transfer from near St. Peter's Basilica to St. Peter's Abbey, from Italy to Canada, from Rome to home.



Father Rudolph Novecosky was presented with a chair by the parishioners of St. Gregor during a visit, April 30, to the parish he helped serve for five years.



Father Maurice Weber looks over the tesina he wrote to conclude two years of study at Sant' Anselmo, Rome.

## Prior returns home

Prior Rudolph Novecosky returned from the University Hospital, Saskatoon, on May 12 to stay at the abbey. He had come home on weekends several times previous to this. He had been in the hospital for seven months, since his gun accident Nov. 3.

He is still experiencing pain in his legs and feet, severe at times. Doctors say that it is a good sign: that the nerves are regenerating. He has been doing daily workouts at the abbey to strengthen his muscles.

One of the abbey cars has been fitted with manual controls for the gas pedal and brake to enable him to drive on his own. In the past few weeks Father Rudolph has also been spending some time with his parents at their home at Burr.



*Alumni carve the barbequed beef at the alumni reunion, July 9.*

## SPC student reunion

St. Peter's College organized an alumni-alumnae reunion on July 9, to kick off the St. Peter's Colony jubilee celebrations at the abbey. Over 325 former students registered for the reunion, beyond the expectations of college principal Father Andrew Britz. In all, there were over 600 people here to renew acquaintances, tour the buildings and grounds, reminisce about old times, relive the old days through a picture display, and enjoy a beef barbeque supper.

In the evening an hour-long program was held, with Daryl Kazakoff as MC. During the program Bishop James Mahoney, a former student, had the audience laughing in their seats as he joked about the teachers and prefects. Father Xavier Benning was honored for his 25 years as rector, and longer as teacher, by being presented with a typewriter. The evening was completed with a presentation of H.M.S. Pinafore by the St. Peter's Community Players.

Brother Stanley Vindevoghel, who helped to organize the reunion, said that about 2,000 alumni and alumnae have now been located. The addresses of about 350 are still unknown.

The afternoon began with a Eucharist with Father Xavier as the main celebrant and Father Albert Ruetz as the homilist.

## Deceased brethren and relatives

Brother Maurus Alois Huettinger, 74, St. Bernard Abbey, St. Bernard, Alabama, died on March 28.

Father Christopher Lawrence Bayer, 78, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., died on March 29.

Father Joseph Staudinger, 80, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas, died on May 19, after suffering a stroke.

Father Gerard Brady, 61, Saint Leo Abbey, Saint Leo, Florida, died on May 19, after suffering a stroke in 1974.

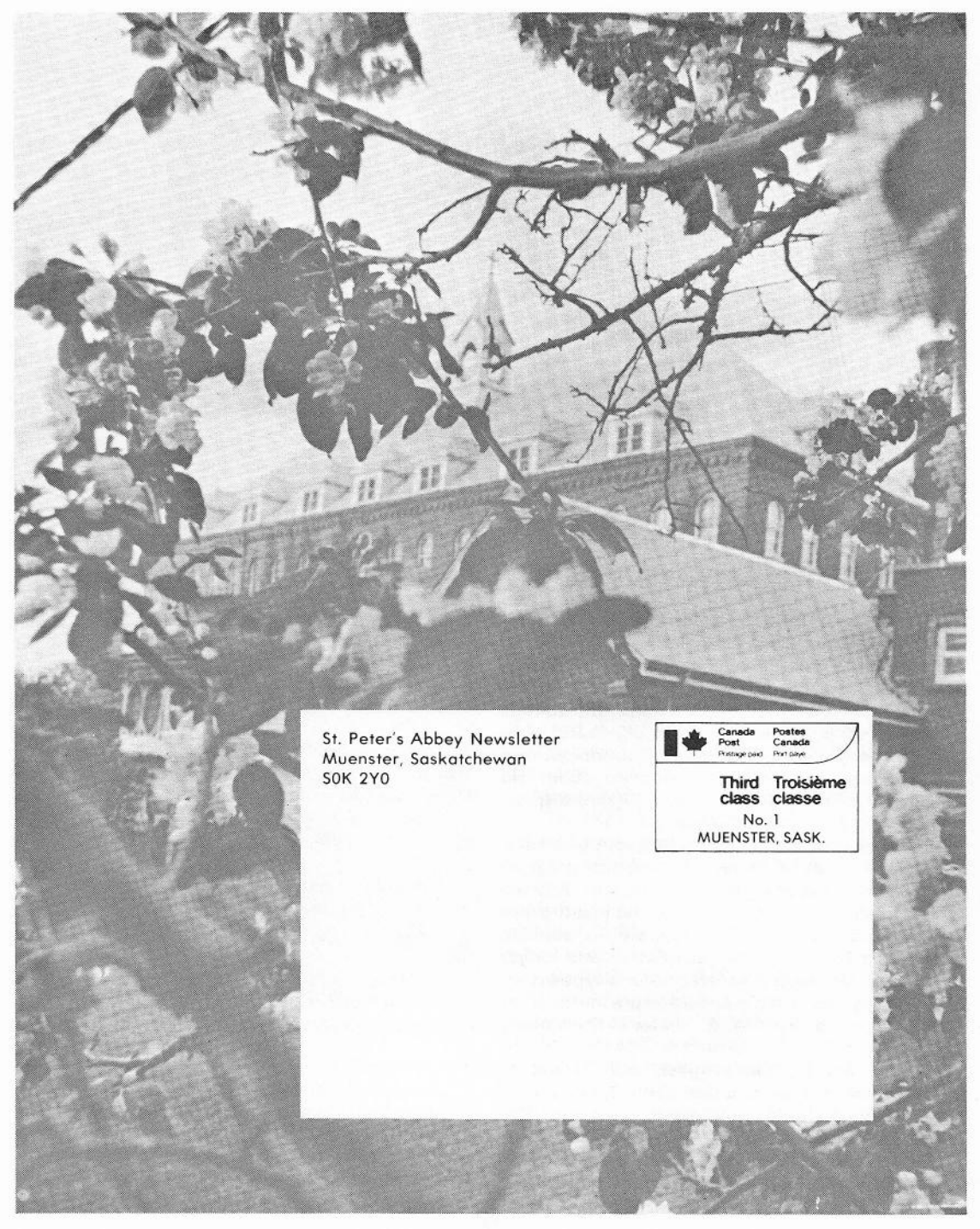
Father Sylvester Theodore Harter, 91, St. John's Abbey, died on May 30.

Father Damian William Milhone, 77, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois, died on June 7, following a brief illness.

Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch, 85, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Illinois, died on June 11.

Friederich Distel, 75, brother of Brother Dominic died in Hochemmingen, West Germany on April 27.

Mrs. Emelia Newman, 83, mother of Father Joseph Ackerman, died in Regina on June 17.



St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter  
Muenster, Saskatchewan  
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