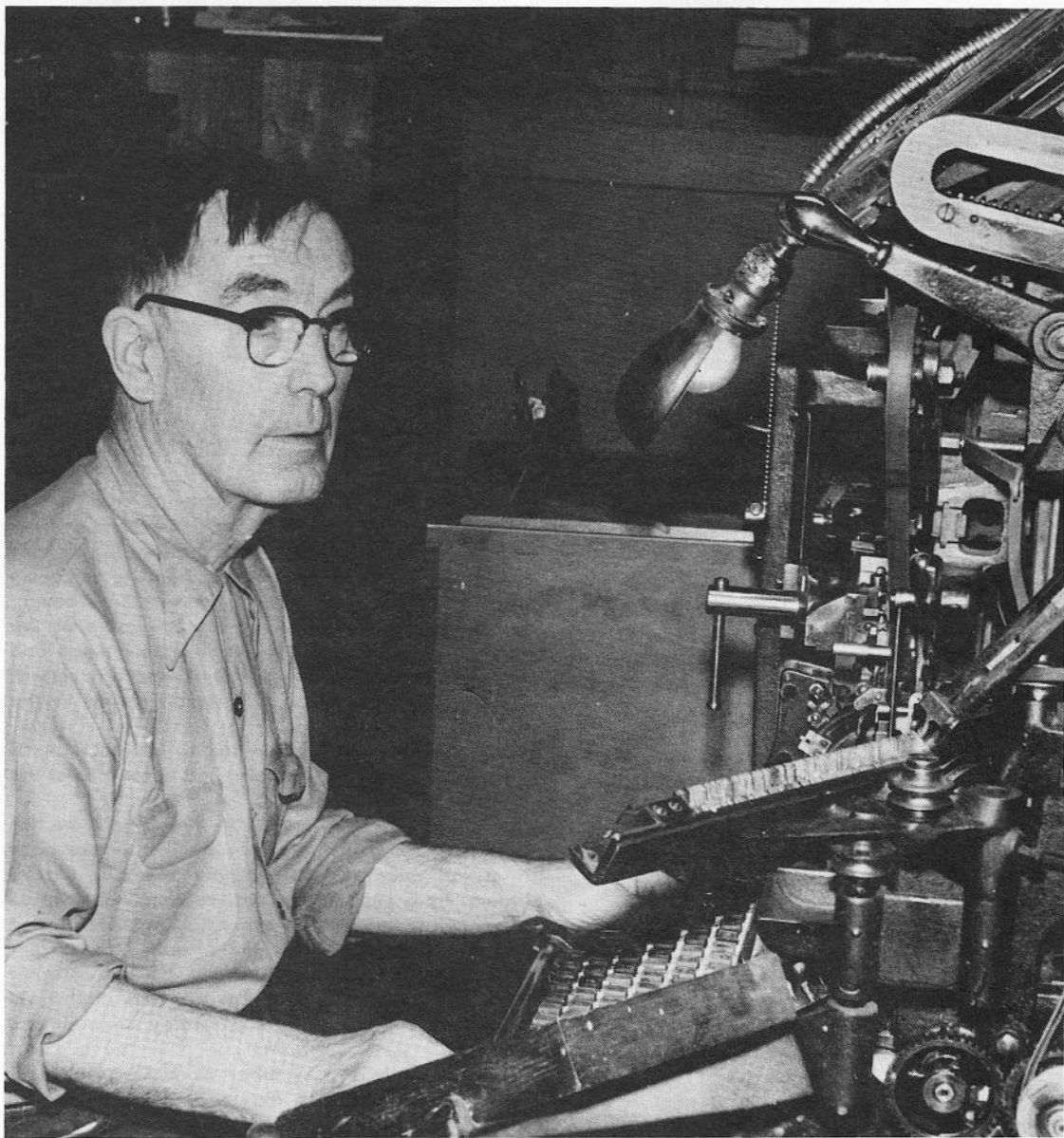


# ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4, no. 1  
Spring, 1979



# 50 years service in print shop

On March 21 this year Brother Dominic Distel celebrated a unique anniversary: 50 years of work in St. Peter's Press.

He began working at the press on March 21, 1929 under Prior Peter Windschiegl. That was when the press was in its cramped quarters beside the present laundry building. His first job was to set type and to put the lead slugs into the forms used to print the St. Peter's Bote, which he learned from Albert Zapf.

Brother Dominic recalls that he was the second monk to work at the press. (The first was Brother Edmund Landway.) There were also three hired men on staff at the time. The work day began at 7 a.m. and continued, without coffee break, until 11:40. The afternoon work period was from 1-5:30. Occasionally there was some work to be finished up in the evenings.

Later Brother Dominic was joined by other monks. He has worked with Brother Conrad Abs for 40 years. Another long-time fellow worker is John Stewart, who has worked at the press for 30 years.

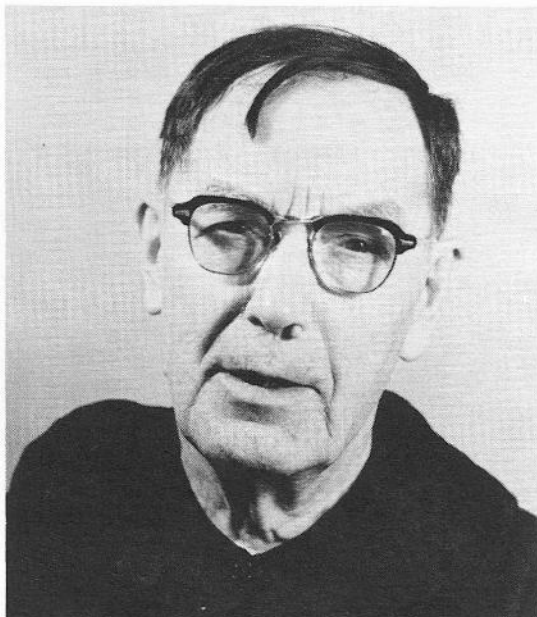
Brother Dominic set all the type for the St. Peter's Bote and later also some for the Prairie Messenger. He didn't know English when he began work at the press. He had come to Canada in 1923 and joined the monastery on Dec. 28, 1928. The St. Peter's Bote, with a circulation of 1,500, and the Prairie Messenger, with a circulation of 3,000, were printed and mailed on Wednesday and Thursday.

In addition, Brother Dominic helped with the press job work. For many years this involved printing the catechetical courses for schools prepared by the Ursuline Sisters at Bruno. The press also printed a number of yearbooks for nursing schools while Father William Gehlen was press manager.

Brother Dominic worked at the press without any holidays until 1963. That year, and again in 1975, he returned to his native Germany to visit relatives and old friends.

One of the major changes at the press for Brother Dominic was the introduction of offset printing, which required new and different skills.

While Brother Dominic no longer works at the



press full-time, he still helps with the weekly Tuesday mailing of the Prairie Messenger, sets type on the intertype, takes Prairie Messenger copy from the abbey to the press building and gives the press floor a good cleaning every Saturday.

He also spends many volunteer hours at the main desk each week answering the phones and greeting visitors. In summer he likes to take care of his small garden near the Marian shrine in the woods.

While Brother Dominic has spent most of his time at the press, he has also had other jobs at the abbey.

For 47 years, from 1932 to the present, he has faithfully rung the bell to wake the monks each morning, once at 4:40 and now at 6 a.m. For 28 years, from 1930-58, he was sacristan and would often serve two Masses every day, besides getting all the altars set up for the private Masses. For about 30 years, from 1930-60, he and Brother Conrad were responsible to get the mail from Muenster, on foot, three times a day, summer and winter.

With a chuckle, Brother Dominic credits his good health today to that daily exercise to get carrying the mail.

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COVER

Brother Dominic Distel, 73

# Around the abbey

The winter of 1979 will be remembered as a long and cold one. Abbey weatherman, Brother Oswald King reports that we experienced 115 consecutive days of sub-zero temperature, from Nov. 9 to March 4. That's a record for consecutive cold days as far as he can recall. The coldest the temperature fell during that period was to -37 C on Feb. 4 and 16. The winter ended with several severe storms in March. By the end of March Brother Oswald recorded 52 inches of snow for this winter.

The cold weather didn't stop the water haulers, however. Brother Gregory Brodner estimates that from October to the end of March neighboring farmers hauled about 750,000 gallons from the abbey water supply.

The snow also kept Brother Bernard Lange busy on the snow plow. At times he was out before 6 a.m. to open the roads for workers and students coming here or for pastors going out for parish work. After a severe storm on March 26 most pastors reported that only about half the normal congregation was present.

With the cold spell, one of the water mains froze eight feet below ground and it took Brothers Oswald Brodner, Oswald King, Francis Fortney, Peter Dougan and Wolfgang Thiem several hours to thaw open the 100 feet of frozen line. An experiment also took place in the abbey to preserve heat: the ceilings of Father Andrew Britz' and Brother Stanley Vindevoghel's rooms were insulated and covered with tile on the top floor of the abbey. It seems to have made quite a difference.

Ed Stevens, Sister Rosemarie's father, was here for a couple months' visit. He and Father Lawrence DeMong combined their mechanical skills to put into working order two second-hand Renault cars. Mr. Stevens returned to California on Feb. 10.

Named to a committee to prepare for an October visitation this fall were Fathers Roman Schneider and Maurice Weber and Brother Bede Hubbard. Fathers Peter Novacosky and Andrew Britz and Brother Thomas Gerwing were named to a committee to investigate the abbey's sponsoring some Vietnam refugees.

On March 4 August Toennis, workman on the



*Brother Oswald King makes one of his twice-daily checks of the weather station.*

farm for 23 years, returned to Germany for a six-week visit.

This spring the novices and candidate, under the supervision of Fathers Andrew Britz and Rudolph Novacosky, cleaned out some of the storage rooms on the fourth floor of Michael Hall (old college building) to make way for the transfer of the museum there from the third floor. Rooms on the third floor will be needed for classrooms, etc. this summer and fall.

Brother Wolfgang Thiem is again growing tomatoes in the greenhouse this spring. He started the first plants in his room in early January and transplanted them on Feb. 22. He is also experimenting with a solar heater this year.

On March 25 Sister Suzanne Mowchan, hermitess at the abbey, received the solemn consecration of a virgin at the community Mass.

Meanwhile, another hermit, Father James Gray, has not been spending all his time in meditation or teaching English 102 to the university students. He is also doing his bit to protect the trees from the rabbits. This year he has reduced the bush rabbit population by 39, bringing his two-year total to 127.



A scene in *The Music Man* during the early February performance. Fathers Peter Novocosky and Lawrence DeMong and Brother Thomas Gerwing were part of the cast while several other monks were part of the stage crew.

## Brother Thomas' guestmaster's report

The guest wing, Severin Hall, again experienced a quiet quarter. Many groups booked for January and February cancelled their meetings, sometimes because of cold or stormy weather, sometimes because they could not recruit sufficient numbers.

The Anglican diocese of Saskatoon conducted a youth retreat here in January and the Catholic diocese of Saskatoon an engaged encounter in February. These were the only sizeable groups for these severe winter months.

Lots of individuals were here on retreats, however, and some of the cast of *The Music Man* lived-in over weekends until the production was over. Lead actor Jean-Pierre Fournier stayed here a full four weeks before the performances.

Robert and Joan Rajotte of Wainwright, Alta., and their five children came to see *The Music Man* as did the Dan Beveridge family of Regina, Muriel Leeper and her son Cyril, from Saskatoon, and Helen MacFarlane and two friends from Regina.

The Rajottes spent their honeymoon at the

abbey 14 years ago, pitching in with such fun things as gardening and kitchen help. Their children, it turns out, have the same joie-de-vivre as do papa and mama.

Business began picking up by mid-March. Wascana Institute conducted a hog-management course for 21 young would-be hog farmers March 12-30; the NFU held a day-long convention on March 17; the United Church held a fruitful conference on supervision of student ministers, March 26-28; the community colleges of Saskatchewan held a conference, March 19-21; and on the last two weekends we hosted two marriage encounters, one from the abbacy and one from Saskatoon.

Brother Bede Hubbard's parents spent two nights at the abbey in March and Helen MacFarlane has been a frequent winter visitor on various Prairie Messenger and CCODP projects.

The last three weeks of March saw as much guest wing activity as the preceding three months. Maybe mentioning it here will help groups to choose slack months another year.

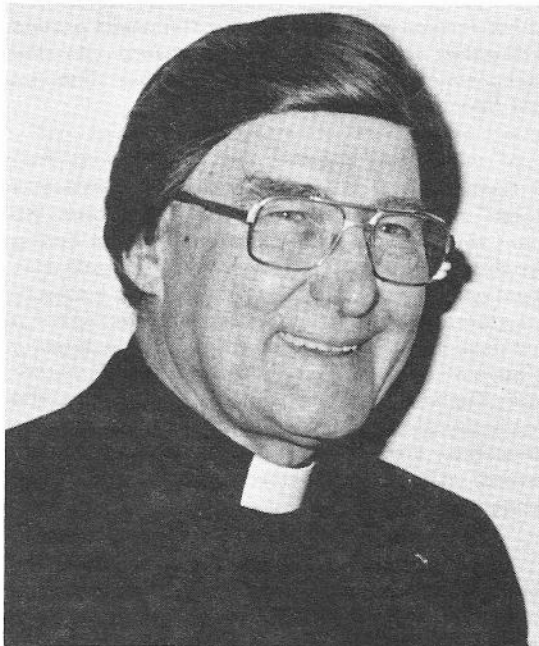


# Versatile monk dies

On March 31 the community of St. Peter's Abbey was surprised and deeply grieved by the news that Father Aloysius Herriges, OSB, had died at St. Elizabeth's hospital shortly after midnight.

Apparently in good health until then, Father Aloysius was hospitalized on March 9, when he had a severe attack of abdominal pains. After a number of indecisive tests, he was temporarily discharged, pending an exploratory operation, for which he returned on March 28. He seemed to be recovering normally from this operation when he died from what is suspected to be a blood clot near the lung.

Born in Madison, Minn., July 2, 1904, Aloysius Herriges came to Englefeld with his parents in May 1906. He took his basic high school studies at St. Peter's monastery. After classes he did chores, which, during the fall and winter of 1918-19, included such disparate tasks as the following: handing brushes to Count Berthold von Imhoff as he mounted the 400 oil paintings which he had done for St. Peter's church; and serving as "printer's devil" in the old hand-setting room of the war-time bilingual St. Peter's Bote.



Father Aloysius Herriges

After a year at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn. (1919-1920), he attended St. Peter's College, Muenster, during the first year after it opened, in late November 1921.

He joined the Benedictine community of St. Peter's Abbey in 1922, made his seminary studies here under the Rome-trained theologians Abbot Michael Ott and Father 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 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 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.

In 1938 he became business manager of St. Peter's Press and general assistant to the editor.

In 1944 he obtained permission to answer the ever more urgent call for volunteer priests to be chaplains in the Canadian armed forces. He was demobilized, subject to recall, in 1946, with the rank of captain. He remained an active member of the Humboldt branch of the Canadian legion.

After his return to St. Peter's he resumed his teaching duties, with ever more frequent pastoral 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.

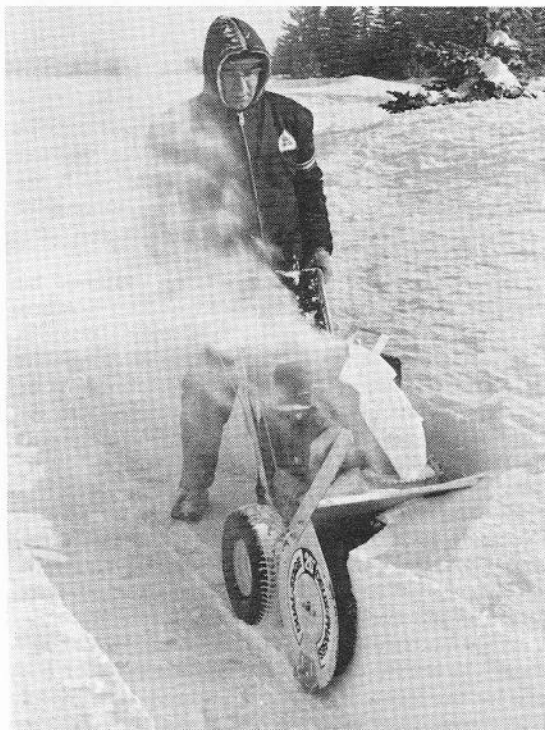
He had the following assignments as pastor: Humboldt, 1950-1960; Lake Lenore and St. James, 1960-1971; Watson, 1971 to the time of his death. Since August 1978 he also cared for the Quill Lake parish, in the archdiocese of Regina.

In his ministry Father Aloysius' first interest was always to create and sustain a deep respect and love for the Mass, together with an understanding of its imperatives in family and community life. He gave an exhortation to this effect during the celebration last summer of the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

## Personnel notes

Abbot Jerome Weber attended a couple of meetings early this year: of the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy in Ottawa, Feb. 22-23; and of the Western Canadian bishops in Edmonton, March 11-16. This latter meeting included a study session with Father Raymond Brown on New Testament Christology and ecclesiology. On Jan. 11 he and Father Florian Renneberg took part in a celebration with the Basilian Fathers at St. Thomas More, Saskatoon, marking the 1,600th anniversary of the birth of their patron, St. Basil. Abbot Jerome gave two talks on prayer at a recollection day for the Saskatoon diocesan priests, Jan. 15. He also attended a three-day meeting with 80 religious superiors from Western Canada, discussing religious vows and their legal consequences, in Saskatoon, Feb. 5-8.

Father Edward was busy this spring with plans to build a new church in Englefeld.



Father Daniel Muyres finds the new sidewalk snowblower faster and less strenuous than shovelling by hand.



Abbot Jerome Weber cleans the sidewalks around the abbey after a March snowstorm. In the background, the snowbanks are higher than the first floor windows.

Father Edward Benning was one of several monks visiting the hospital early this year. He spent several days in St. Elizabeth hospital during March with pneumonia. Father Alfred Engele also spent several days in the hospital fighting a case of the stomach flu. Father George Brodner spent a few days in St. Elizabeth hospital in early January to have an operation on an infected hernia. Father Paul Kuehne made a couple of trips to the University Hospital, Saskatoon, for checkups on glaucoma. Brother Francis Fortney also made several visits to the doctor to check on his chest congestion trouble.

Father Norbert Schwinghammer, chauffeured by his faithful driver, Brother Peter Dougan, made many visits to various parishes on weekends and week days to substitute for pastors who were sick or busy elsewhere.

Fathers Philip Loehr and Lawrence DeMong were co-chairmen of a panel on land use at a national People's Food Commission hearings in Humboldt, Jan. 24. Father Lawrence was also instrumental in scheduling and animating several CCODP meetings in abbacy parishes on the land use issue. He helped rewrite the Canadian Catechism grade 6 home program for the correspondence course in Regina, April 7-10.

Father Leo Hinz spoke to the priests of the Saskatoon diocese Feb. 13 on various pastoral canonical problems during a week of reflection for them.

Fathers Werner Renneberg and Daniel Muyres attended the Western Conference of Priests meeting in Victoria, Jan. 29-Feb. 1. The topic was, "Priestly ministry in a changing world".

Father Rudolph Novecosky helped give a retreat to junior high school girls at Bruno, Jan. 19-20.

Father Andrew Britz spent several weeks in February and March visiting high schools in the area to publicize the St. Peter's College Continuing Education program. In another initiative he worked out the details for the first summer school university credit classes to be taught here this summer.

Bro. Bede Hubbard attended a Catholic Press meeting in Toronto, Feb. 2-4, and was chosen to a committee which will study the formation of a Canadian Catholic press organization.

Brother Thomas Gerwing was heavily involved in staging, directing and taking a leading part in the February production here of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, with a cast of 60 people.

Father Bernard Stauber is making plans to return to Canada from Brasil for a summer visit. His last visit home was in 1976.

Novice Guy Herriges decided to discontinue the novitiate program on Jan. 24.

On Feb. 8 two candidates for the monastic life arrived: Barry Fitzgerald of Kirkfield, Ont., and Roland Courteau of Prince Albert. Roland decided to leave after several days at the abbey.



Father Rudolph Novecosky practices walking with his crutches.

## Slow progress

Father Rudolph Novecosky continues to make a slow recovery from his hunting accident on Nov. 3, 1977.

He will celebrate his first anniversary of coming home to the abbey from the University Hospital on May 12. During the past summer he had another six-week stay at the hospital.

Otherwise he has continued his recovery at the abbey, exercising daily and getting about very well by himself in the wheelchair. He has taken his regular turn at celebrating the community Eucharist since last fall and joining in community activities. Since February he has been teaching two classes a week to the monastic candidate, Barry Fitzgerald.

He still experiences continual nerve pains in his legs and feet, sometimes excruciatingly painful. He is looking forward to walking around the abbey grounds this summer, with the aid of two crutches and doing more pastoral work.



*From left, Brother Emanuel, Father Sylvester Vredegoor and Father Jose stand in front of the chapel at Serra Clara monastery in southern Brasil. The two monks are in work habits.*

## Father Sylvester writes from Brasil

I have received letters from Fathers Damian Yaskowich and Peter Novecosky recently. I hope that in the meantime several others have sat down to write me some words of brotherly wisdom!

I must admit that the hills, springs, waterfalls and people keep enchanting me, but I am afraid of a little Waterloo: the flea. I have scratches and sores all over. I have tried every suggestion. But obviously I am more sensitive to this enemy than the monks here and the local people.

Apparently they come from the bush, carried by rats and rabbits. I hardly slept a wink last night. I had put all my clothes high off the floor as a safety measure, and when the lights went on at 4:20 am there was one of those *buggers* sitting on top of everything!

When I tried to catch it, it took a great jump into the unknown.

A few minutes later, bowing for the Gloria Patri in chapel, I felt a sharp bite at one of my ankles. I

lifted the habit and pjew, away jumped another!

If I can't beat them by Holy Week, I'll beat it for a different place! I am not Job. And without external peace, the internal will be harder to acquire.

I want to share some thoughts on this monastery of Serra Clara. I have done so in former letters to the community but here I would like you to listen a moment to the guestmaster, Brother Emanuel Mignone Cheibu who came here nearly five years ago at the age of 26, after having obtained his degree in literature.

"Serra Clara was founded in 1957 for the purpose of exclusive consecration to God without any parochial or educational apostolate. To today's agitated and nervous society which seeks to build itself up on temporal terms, the monastery speaks of an existence of praying and being alone with God and working in brotherly communion.

"Mankind needs human work, but equally



needs the integration of prayer and fraternal life. With our Benedictine lifestyle we challenge society to think of certain invisible but essential values. The monastery is a reminder that well-being and material organization are not the be-all and end-all of everything.

"The church, too, needs the monastery, since there is a danger of summing up her mission and message in terms of social progress. The contemplative reminds her that she can achieve her full realization only in transcendence, which human society by itself cannot obtain.

"The consumer civilization, the system of material efficiency, is devouring the temporal city, making it believe in what it buys and sells (power, pleasure, production). Against this the monastery puts its priority on prayer and begs society not to absolutize material values. To the temporal city, which creates utopias for stimulation and ends up believing in them, the monastery speaks of searching for God and of destroying the idols. We monks cannot identify with the world; we'll forever question it. That is our mission at the very heart of the world."

I asked Brother Emanuel if he thinks the world still respects the monastery. In his opinion there is way more blah-blah about secularization in today's theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology than what is put into practice.

"To speak of the extinction of monasticism as a result of secularization would be capitulating to

empty slogans. Though we should adjust the externals of monastic life to the present-day world, which is being secularized, we must safeguard the great values of silence, prayer, brotherhood, simple lifestyle, etc.

"Thus Serra Clara is firmly set on the fundamentals of the monastic vocation within a society which might not be impressed with our asceticism but which does appreciate our simplicity, our readiness and hospitality to anybody and everybody. Serra Clara tries to return to the springtime of monasticism."

Mind you, confreres, I personally do not see eye-to-eye with everything. First of all, I had hopes to see a real Brazilian monastery, having forgotten that at the turn of the century there were almost no Benedictines left in Brasil. Belgium and Germany filled the gap with solid European stock.

The prior here clearly shows a European outlook on the monastic life, coupled with a Brazilian "engenho" mentality. It could hardly be otherwise, historically speaking.

What do I mean by "engenho" mentality?

Well, for the last 500 years the Brazilian economy consisted mainly of engenhos, plantations, normally not too extremely large. The owner was the only man who knew anything, decided anything, donated anything; he bought and sold his cattle and slaves. Most often he was a very gentle person, very kind to everybody; everybody looked up to him almost like to a father.



A herd of up to seven deer came ranging for food on abbey grounds in the latter part of March and early April. Some of them can be seen here crossing the garden behind the abbey.

The slave trade was halted 90 years ago, but until today the mentality continues everywhere.

There isn't a monk in Brasil that doesn't reverence his superior in that line. There isn't a factory or farm worker that doesn't reveal the same mentality. There isn't a university graduate or farmer that doesn't almost automatically want to identify with yesterday's highly respected "dono de engenho", plantation owner.

Of course I am generalizing. But, believe me, one sees it everywhere. That is why the *comunidades de base* (grassroots communities) are such dynamite: because they seem to be the key to break away from the engenho mentality, this built-in slavery.

In the *comunidades de base* there is no big-shot of any kind present, normally; and so all members are on an equal footing. Soon the group starts to feel the strength of a united group, where each values the others.

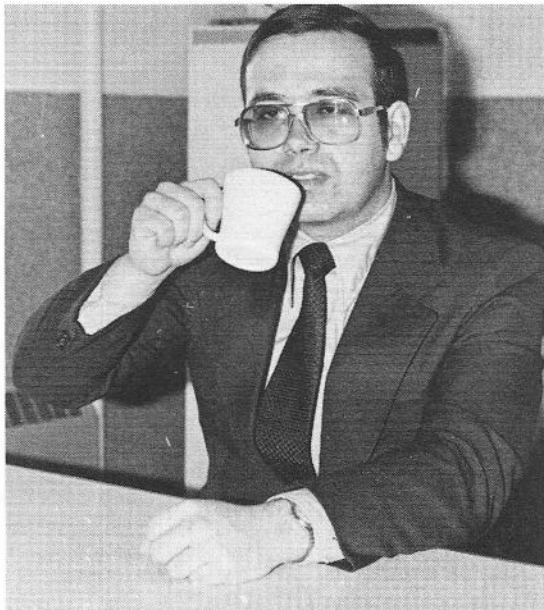
This always led to uprisings among the slaves and in church circles where the confraternities had a lot of power in days gone by. Rome "cleaned up" the mess near the turn of the century and squelched centuries of being Catholic in a Brazilian fashion. Now the *comunidades de base* start to sense strong links with their own past.

Sorry, fellows, for not making myself very clear yet.

But that is why I cannot get sold on traditional Benedictinism in Brasil. I would rather like to think of a small group of men and women who want to be a very vital community, but because of the historical hang-up, would not be able to follow St. Benedict on the abbatial aspect.

If we could really break the chains of this slave-mentality, engenho mentality, wouldn't that be a great contribution to the people around the monastery!

I have my doubts that it can be done in accepted monastic terms. Yet I do not want to burn for ever for having prolonged slavery while having seen the light.



Barry Fitzgerald of Kirkfield, Ont., arrived Feb. 8 as a monastic candidate.

## Deceased brethren

Father Raymond A. Burns, 84, St. Anselm's Abbey, Manchester, New Hampshire, died Nov. 21, 1978.

Father Paul Milde, 84, Belmont Abbey, Belmont, North Carolina, died Jan. 7.

Father Florian (Fredrick) Bergmann, 84, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, died Jan. 21.

Father Sylvester Healy, 87, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Illinois, died Feb. 7.

Brother Philip Joseph Heitkemper, 80, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, died Feb. 11.

Father Matthias (Aloysius) Marschall, 61, St. Vincent Archabbey, died Feb. 24.

## Confrere's addresses

Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor  
Mosteiro de Serra Clara  
C.P. 37  
37,500 Itajuba, M.G.  
Brasil

Fr. Bernard Stauber  
C.P. 161  
57,000 Maceio, Alagoas  
Brasil



A CBC-TV film crew from Regina, under the direction of Don Humphries, was at the abbey, April 2-3, to make a documentary. Here the crew films the food preparation done by Sisters Gertrude Marie Twordik, OSE, and Ottilia Saretsky, OSE.

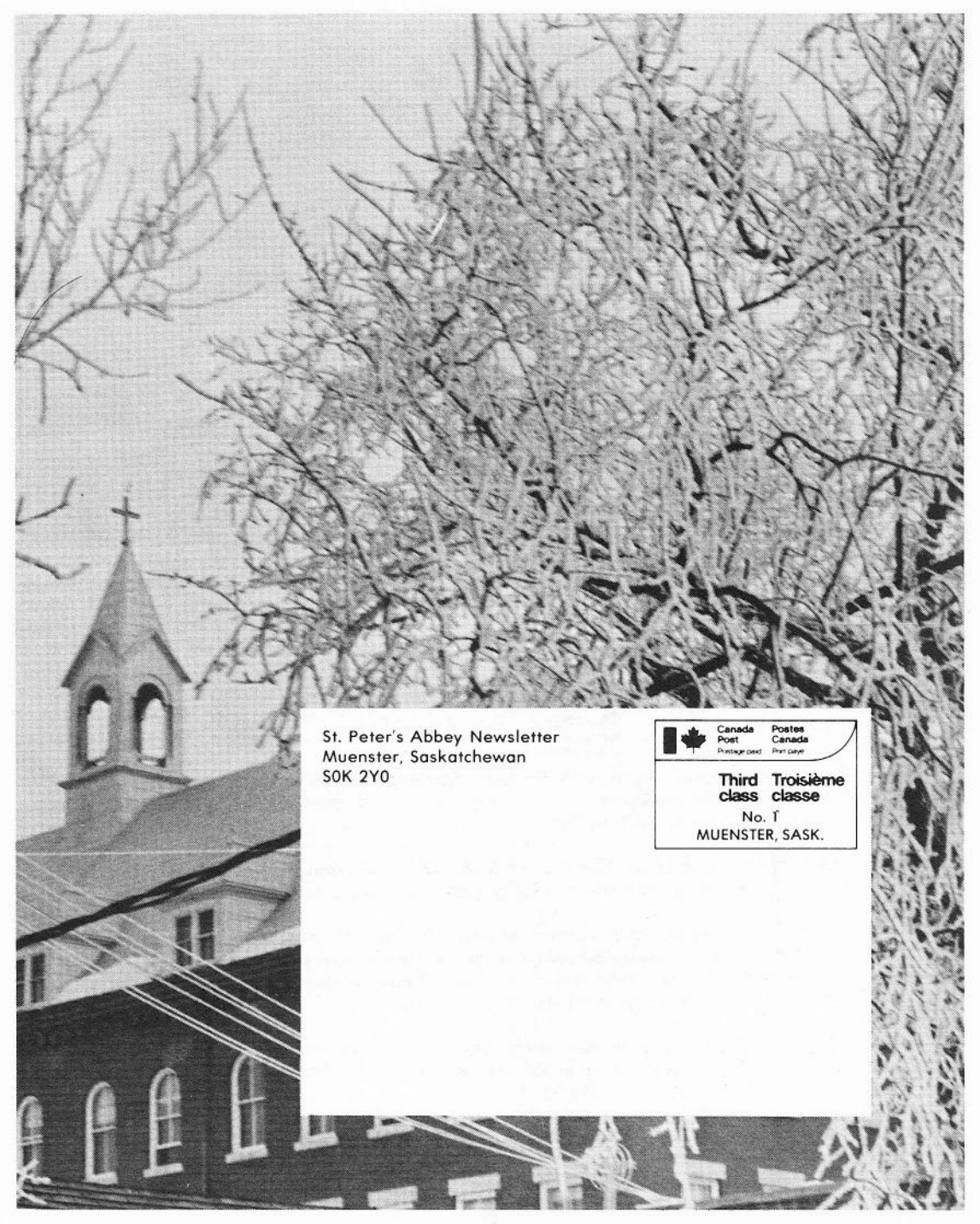
## Dates to circle

June 16: Father Norbert Schwinghammer will celebrate his 50th anniversary of monastic profession.

June 25-29: Father John Main, OSB, Montreal, will preach the annual monastic retreat.

July 3-Aug. 8: Father Leopold Sabourin will teach a summer school class on The Theology of Luke-Acts at St. Peter's College. There will also be classes in education and music.

Nov. 2-4: Father Barry Glendinning will be the main speaker at the Christian Faith Conference, on liturgy.



St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter  
Muenster, Saskatchewan  
S0K 2Y0

