



"Ut In Omnibus Glorificetur Deus."
 "That in all things may God be glorified."
 (1 Peter 4:11)

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter

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Winter 2021



"Ora et Labora"
 "Prayer and Work"
 (Benedictine Motto)

Studying at St. John's School of Theology and Seminary

By Br. Denys Janiga

I am pleased to announce that I have successfully completed my first semester of monastic priesthood studies at Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary in Minnesota. During the fall, I pursued classes in the New Testament, Christian history, moral theology, asceticism, prayer and discernment, and seminary formation. My understanding of the early Church has increased; my knowledge of Holy Scripture has deepened; and my monastic and priestly vocations have flourished.

I did find the first few weeks to be stressful as I needed to acquire a rhythm

in order to balance the numerous demands of study, as well as life in a new monastic community that is much larger than my home here at St. Peter's Abbey. St. John's Abbey has over 100 monks and is situated on a university campus with more than 2,000 students. Thus, it has a much busier feel. I study with students from across the United States, Tanzania, Vietnam, Ireland, India, and Australia. Fellow seminarians are from Benedictine, Cistercian, and Crozier communities. My professors thus far have been rather outstanding. It is a privilege and pleasure to learn from such excellent Catholic educators.

Each week involved about 15 hours of class time, numerous hours at the library, the daily monastic schedule of prayer and Mass, plus time spent hiking the 20 km of trails. I have seen many deer, wild turkeys, rabbits, squirrels, and the largest turkey vultures imaginable. The first time I saw them flying in the sky I thought I had was in Jurassic Park. St. John's Abbey has been blessed with a gorgeous landscape.

The monks at St. John's provide a welcoming environment that truly exhibits Benedictine hospitality. Moreover, it does not matter what one's title happens to be, each monk (from Novice to Abbot) is involved in serving food during meals and cleaning up afterwards. One drawback about St. John's is that the food is just too good; I have unfortunately put on a couple kilograms (I blame it on the delectable ice cream).

The fall weather was rather warm in Minnesota and did not help prepare me for the -35 Celsius temperatures that were waiting for me when I got back home for Christmas! Trust me: acclimation is a *real thing*.

For the Spring term I am studying NT, sacramental theology, homiletics, and the Book of Psalms. I began volunteering with monks in the Health Center back in October and will continue to do that until the end of the Spring. Both the school and abbey have taken strong precautions for Covid and the incidents of infection on the campus have been quite low. We are generally required to wear our masks in all public spaces.

Depending on travel restrictions, we seminarians will be traveling to the Holy Land in May for two weeks. I appreciate everyone's prayers and look forward to re-connecting in June 2022.



Br. Denys arrived at St. John's Abbey on Aug. 26 to study for the priesthood. He is seen with Fr. Michael Patella, rector of the Seminary.

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Fr. Joseph Ackerman died Sept. 22

Baptized “Liborius Peter Ackerman” at his birth in Balgonie on Sept. 20, 1924, and known by his second name, Peter added the name “Joseph” at his confirmation in 1938. Then he legally changed his name to Peter Joseph Liborius Ackerman in 1952. When he joined the monastery, he was given the monastic name “Joseph.”

Fr. Joe was one of 15 children in the family of Andrew and Emilia Ackerman. His father was employed by the Canadian Pacific Railroad Co., which necessitated moving to various locations in Saskatchewan. Fr. Joseph wrote: “Many of these places were ‘mixed faith’ communities, and from them we learned a great deal of tolerance towards those of ‘our faith’.”

He received his early education in Wolseley, Estevan and Regina. After a brief period of employment, Fr. Joseph enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 23, 1943. He took basic training in Brandon and was then posted to different stations in B.C. In January, 1945 he was posted overseas to England and at the end of the European war, he volunteered for the Pacific war zone. Due to



In 2013 Bruno named a new park/playground for children after Fr. Joe, their long-time pastor.

the surrender of Japan, he did not go, but was given an Honourable Discharge on Oct. 13, 1945.

A new direction was taken by Fr. Joseph in 1947 when he attended St.

Peter's College and later became a novice along with Jim Gerwing. He took his seminary studies at St. John's Abbey,

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On Aug. 21, 2014, more than 250 parishioners and visitors celebrated the 110th anniversary of the St. Bruno Parish and the 90th birthday of Fr. Joseph Ackerman, OSB, pastor. The celebration included a festive Mass and potluck supper.

Br. Denys enjoys variety at St. John's



St. John's Abbey is blessed with a gorgeous landscape. It even attracts wild turkeys to the backyard lawn.



Br. Denys joins his seminarian classmates in a class with Fr. Michael. Starting from the left, clockwise: Br. David, Br. Paul, Br. David-Paul, Br. An, Br. Denys, Fr. Michael, Fr. John, Br. Benedict and Br. Amadeus.

Fr. Joseph was popular in our parishes

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Collegeville, Minn. and was ordained to the priesthood on June 8, 1958 at St. Peter's Cathedral, Muenster. Following

ordination he taught at St. Peter's, assisted in various parishes, served as assistant business manager at the Abbey and became pastor of the Muenster and St. Gregory parishes.

In 1970, he went on a sabbatical to study at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., and then at Duke University, Durham, N.C. In 1971 he was appointed pastor of St. Anthony and St. James parishes, Lake Lenore. His next assignment was the Pilger and Middle Lake parishes. He then served the parishes of Bruno and Peterson for 19 years. He retired as a full-time pastor in 2016 at the age of 91. In 2017, he moved to Prairie View retirement home in Bruno.

Known for his sense of humour and gentle disposition, Fr. Joseph was well liked by his parishioners. He joined them at coffee row and at sports events. A local park in Bruno was named in his honour. Fr. Joseph loved reading and sharing his knowledge and wisdom in his homilies. Wherever Fr. Joseph served, he was active in parish and community groups. He enjoyed the outdoors having a fondness for hunting, fishing, skating, hockey and golf.

He was admitted to Humboldt Hospital Sept. 5 with a low pulse rate of 25. He died on Sept. 22, two days after celebrating his 97th birthday.



Fr. Joe retired in Bruno at Prairie View in 2017.

People and events around the abbey

2021

Aug. 1 – The kitchen crew goes on holidays for three weeks and Joseph Do takes over preparing our meals, with the help of Terrie Mcneal of St. Gregor for noon meals.

Aug. 2 – Fr. Mau of Regina brought his nephew Truc van Nguyen to the abbey to begin his job as cook.

Aug. 4 – Bunz Electric and SaskPower connect the solar garden panels with SaskPower's new transformers.



The abbey had a good corn crop this summer and U-Pick attracted many customers starting on the Aug. 8 weekend.



A tame rabbit was dropped off at the abbey this summer, much to the delight of Chi and Lan Nguyen.

Aug. 16 – Geoff Bennetto Geekie arrives from Edmonton for a two-week live-in experience at the abbey.

Aug. 19 – An abbey crew, plus some volunteers, picked a good crop of potatoes. We filled 109 pails, which amounted to more than 3,000 pounds of food for the Winter. Br. Kurt kept the plants healthy this summer by disposing of the potato bugs.



The monks had a good harvest of potatoes this year. The potatoes were picked on Aug. 19 and have been stored in the cellar for use during the winter.

Aug. 20 – Fr. Demetrius completed the bee honey harvest with 360 lbs.

Aug. 25 – Br. Denys flies to St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn. to begin his theology studies. There was a farewell for Krystal Shutko of St. Brioux who is retiring as student advisor at St. Peter's College.

Aug. 27 - 30 – Dominican Fr. Guy Rivard of Vancouver visited the abbey during his annual vacation.

Aug. 28 – Resident students for St. Peter's College start arriving today and over the weekend. We've had to expand from Severin Hall to Scholastica Residence to handle the increased number of residents – up to 24. Registration is on Sept. 1 and classes begin Sept. 2.

Sept. 5 – Fr. Joseph is taken to the doctor because of a low heart rate. After three days in Watrous hospital, he is taken to the Humboldt Hospital.

Sept. 6 - 10 – Abbot Peter preached a retreat to the Prince Albert clergy at Queen's House in Saskatoon.

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Abbot Peter handed out \$108,000 in scholarships and bursaries to students of St. Peter's College the week of Sept. 20. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the annual Scholarship Awards ceremony and banquet was cancelled for the second year in a row. One of the recipients was Harry Salmon.



More than 100 students attended the orientation session for St. Peter's College at the beginning of September.



Abbot Peter inspects the controls of the Solar Garden at St. Peter's Abbey. The solar panels were activated on Sept. 13.



Joseph Do arranged a beautiful Thanksgiving Day display at St. Peter's Abbey Church. The monks have a lot to be thankful for this year on Thanksgiving Day, Oct. 11, 2021.

Sept. 20 - 24 – Abbot Peter takes part, via zoom, in the annual meeting of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sept. 21 – The community held a zoom meeting with Br. Denys who is studying at St. John's Abbey in Minnesota. Modern technology helps us keep in touch.

Sept. 22 – Fr. Joe Ackerman died in Humboldt Hospital early this morning. He celebrated his 97th birthday two days earlier. At age 97, he was the oldest monk of St. Peter's Abbey. The funeral on Sept. 28 was preceded by a wake the night before, both at St. Peter's Cathedral.

Sept. 22 – Br. Don Claerhout, OMI, of Edmonton visited the abbey to volunteer to cut down some dead trees, mainly elm planted 90 or more years ago. This will allow new growth in the groves near the arena.

Sept. 23 - 26 – The deacons of Prince Albert Diocese and their wives came for a retreat in our guest wing. The three-day retreat was led by Fr. Kevin McGee of Saskatoon.

Oct. 10 – About 200 parishioners and friends gathered at St. Peter's Cathedral for a Memorial Mass for Fr. Paul Paproski. Fr. Paul's last assignment was being pastor at St. Peter's. Bishop Mark Hagemoen presided.

Oct. 25 – St. Peter's College students had a "Halloween Spirit week," which included a pumpkin-carving contest and dress-up days.

Oct. 30 – The gathering of Benedictine Oblates was cancelled because of the Covid concerns.

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Sept. 13 - 17 – Nine writers come to the abbey to write poetry, sponsored by Sage Hill program.

Sept. 13 – After a month's delay, Sundawg connects the Solar Garden to our power system. Horrah!



The College students showed their creativity on Halloween.

People and events around the abbey

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Nov. 3 – Br. Basil and Fr. Cosmas helped Murray Loehr break up the cement foundation with his backhoe of two hermit houses (Mary House and Leo Collins house). The houses had not been used for many years and were falling in.

Nov. 5 – Fr. Lawrence and abbey crew harvested 263 squash and 10 gallons of garlic.

Nov. 6 – St. Peter's College held an open house for students and parents in the area. There was a good turnout.

Nov. 7 – The first big snowfall this fall produced 3 inches.

Nov. 8 – Geoff Bennetto of Edmonton, 39, was accepted as a candidate for St. Peter's Abbey.

Nov. 10 - 15 – Abbot Placid Solari of Belmont Abbey and Prior Brad Jenniges of St. John's Abbey visited St. Peter's Abbey to conduct a Visitation (Monastic evaluation). This Visitation had been postponed from a year ago due to Covid regulations.



Two monks from the United States visited St. Peter's Abbey Nov. 11-14 to conduct a visitation. The visitors were Prior Bradley Jenniges of St. John's Abbey (Minnesota), centre left, and Abbot Placid Solari of Belmont Abbey (North Carolina). A visitation is a periodic examination of monastic life as lived at St. Peter's. They discussed their report with the community on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 14.

Nov. 10 – Neil Adam of Allan made application to be a brother candidate for St. Peter's Abbey. He arrived on Nov. 22.

Nov. 26 – Geoff Bennetto of Edmonton arrived at the abbey to become a candidate.

Monks put up Christmas decorations in the abbey, dining room and church.

Dec. 27 – A foot of snow fell and the big snowblower was put into action by Br. Basil. Fr. Demetrius used the small one to clear the paths.



Two men arrived at the Abbey to begin life as monastics the week of Nov. 21. Neil Adam of Allan, left, is a live-in and Geoff Bennetto of Edmonton is a candidate.

Dec. 16 – The monks and abbey staff got together for a pre-Christmas party.

Dec. 17 – The "O" antiphons are sung at Vespers, and reminder plaques are posted.

Dec. 20 – Br. Denys arrived home after a semester of study at St. John's School of Theology. He returned Jan. 8.

Dec. 24 –

Continued on next page



The special "O" antiphons are sung at Vespers beginning Dec. 17. They are always sung a week before Christmas to remind us of the coming of the Messiah. These beautiful sketches are a gift of the Ursulines of Bruno.



The Monks and the staff of St. Peter's Abbey got together on Dec. 16 for a pre-Christmas celebration in the afternoon.

Dec. 28 – During a week of severe cold weather after Christmas, Joseph Do recorded a temperature of -35C at the abbey.

Dec. 29 – Br. Benedict's mother and sister (Margaret) arrive from Winnipeg for a visit and stay until Jan. 1.



Each Advent season the abbey community celebrates with an Advent wreath in the dining room. Joseph Do lights the candle for the first week of Advent on Saturday, Nov. 27.

Jan. 1 – Monks welcomed in the new year 2022 with a prayer service starting at midnight (initiated in the year 2000).



This lovely poinsettia display was put together in the abbey church by St. Peter's Abbey Oblate Annette Zawada and Dayo Oyinseye, a former SPC student.

Muenster celebrates Memorial Mass for Fr. Paul



St. Peter's Cathedral parish, Muenster, celebrated a Memorial Mass for Fr. Paul Paproski Sunday, Oct. 10, Thanksgiving Day. Bishop Mark Hagemoen presided and Fr. Paul's parents, sister, and brother-in-law attended, along with pastor Fr. Demetrius.



November is the traditional month to pray for the dead. During the month the pictures of the deceased monks of Saint Peter's Abbey are displayed in church. Fr. Paul and Fr. Joseph were the monks who died this past year.

Home to God

By Jo-Ann Pethybridge, Edmonton

A monk and a priest, our brother, our friend
Paul answered the call from God up above
Our hearts filled with grief when his life had to end
It's hard to let go of the ones that we love

Memories abound of this soft-spoken one
A smile that would warm and a laugh that brought joy
Uneasiness masked by his use of a pun
To cover his fears – not meant to annoy

A history buff, his passion he shared
The past seen through his eyes came alive
The present preserved with a journalist's flair
By his camera and his critical eye

Weed whacker in hand, rubber boots on his feet
Paul delighted in taking on chores
A leap into choir to land in his seat
He found peace whether in, or outdoors

Always available to offer his aid
Generous with his faith and his time
Wanted no recognition, never dismayed
His trust in God's purpose sublime

Lou Gehrig's disease was a tough cross to bear
One he dealt with, with patience and grace
His faith never wavered; his strength found in prayer
All offers of help he did warmly embrace

We miss you dear Paul, we bid you adieu
Your absence a void that feels odd
Your suffering over, you've started anew
A monk of our house has gone home to God

History of developing St. Peter's Abbey grounds

Fr. Xavier Benning gave this report to the community on Feb. 21, 1988 on the history of planting trees on the abbey grounds (1923-1980s). The area looked quite different when Fr. Xavier arrived here in 1923 and helped start beautifying the grounds. The trees planted in the 1920s and 1930s are reaching the end of their life-span and some pruning was done this summer. Br. Don Claerhout, OMI, volunteered his assistance.

When I came to St. Peter's in 1923 the Abbey building stood on the bleak prairie with the Sisters' quarters beside it (now called St. Placid Hall). The power plant was housed in the basement of this building. The only other building was the press and it was located where the present power house stands.

There were a few large piles of dirt from the excavations. All the land between the creek and the north-south road to the east was native bush and prairie. A small plot had been opened for a garden. A cemetery had been laid out at its present location and the remains of Abbot Bruno, Father John Balfry and Br. Rhaban Cononge had been transferred from St. Peter's cemetery.

Tree planting began, I think, in 1925. Father Stephen Mohorko did considerable work on the grounds and with some tree

planting. My brother Anthony Benning took a keen interest in the laying out of the grounds. A fairly large grove of evergreens was planted where the press and the parking ground to the west are located. The trees were obtained from a nursery at Indian Head, Sask. Around the same time the elm trees along the road to Muenster and toward the cemetery were planted. Last summer some dead branches were noticed on some of the trees. In the States and in eastern Canada the Elm disease is killing all the elm trees. Some of the elm trees across the creek did not survive.

A small orchard was started out in the bush, east of the green house. Potatoes were planted in this area this past summer. The trees were not of good quality and were taken out. The row of Manitoba maples north of the large orchard are the remains of the first trees

grown from seed.

It was around the early thirties that the ground was broken up for the large orchard and the planting began. The first crab trees were planted on a trial basis and my brother had an understanding with a nursery that he would send a report to the nursery on the growth and the hardiness of the trees and the kind of fruit. Most of the trees did not prove hardy, nor was the fruit of good quality.

Winters were quite severe in the past, more so than now. A few of the better varieties are: Rescue, Trail, Heyer No. 12, Battleford. The last two are large apples. A few new varieties have come on the market. We have some of these trees, but none have fruited yet.

Years ago, we had many kinds of plums in the orchard and we gathered a lot of fruit. Then for some reason or other the trees began to die and we can no longer succeed in getting plum trees to grow. We also had currants for several years. A pest came on the bushes, so we discontinued them. For a time, we had sand cherries. These cherries were small, about the size of a dime. A very good jelly could be made of these.

The best of the small fruits are the raspberries. We have cultivated these for many years. The last two years they yielded very heavily.

I have been growing tomatoes for many years. Our seasons are rather short for the full development of the fruit on the vines. But tomatoes can be taken in green and left to mature and ripen inside. We have had some excellent crops over the years. Many varieties have been developed and newer varieties are coming on the market.

I think that it was in 1934, or thereabouts, that my brother got his first swarm of bees. He taught school in the College for several years and was given a swarm by one of his students. He took a keen



This healthy elm west of the gym was part of the fall clearing process.

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Br. Don Claerhout, OMI, came to the Abbey Sept. 22 and volunteered to cut down some dead trees and trim dead branches. The trees were planted some 90 years ago.

interest in the bees and the following year he got 6 swarms. These averaged 200 lbs. apiece. Then the following year he increased the number to 18. In 1937 he left the community to start farming. He continued with the bees until becoming allergic to the sting. He almost lost his life through a bee sting.

Br. John Brodner took over from my brother and looked after them until he also becoming allergic to their sting and had to give up. Br. Oswald then looked after the bees until 1957. He was planning to give up the bees. That is when I felt that we needed to keep the bees for pollinating the gardens and the fruit trees and berries.

Three things are very important in the production of honey: suitable weather, warm in spring to enable the hives to build up strong swarms, warm and sunny during the summer with low winds and a good source of honey. Good hives produce as much as 300 lbs. or more. Br. Wolfgang has been a good help the last few years and will be ready to take over entirely soon.

A lot of time was spent in tree-planting as Br. John well knows. Most of our trees were raised from seed. Most of the seed came from St. John's University in Minnesota. Fr. Edward Benning was

studying at St. John's at the time and picked the seed for us. This seed was planted in beds 3 x 8 ft. My brother had 8 such beds and each bed would have up to a few thousand little trees. After a few years, when the little trees were a few inches high, they were planted in nursery rows and left until they were about three or more feet high. Then they were planted in a permanent place.

We also sold many trees to people interested in getting them. Most of our trees are the Colorado spruce and the color ranges from a beautiful blue to a bright green. We also have a number of cedar hedges. In the beginning these cedar bushes would freeze back in the winter. With time, however, hardiness developed so that for years there has been no sign of freezing back.

We also have some Scotch pine. Pine has coarse needles, whereas the spruce needles are fine.



The elm trees planted near the arena 90 years ago are dying out from inside rot.



Abbot Peter helped organize and attended the retreat for bishops of Western and Northern Canada at Westminster Abbey at Mission, B.C., Jan. 10-13.



With the Advent season over, the monks at St. Peter's Abbey got ready to celebrate Christmas of 2021. Brothers Kurt and Benedict put our Nativity Scene on display at the entrance to St. Peter & Paul Abbey Church.



Joseph Do arranged a "Bethlehem display" in the abbey dining room.

Donations and Bequests

We seek to provide prophetic witness through a monastic lifestyle of prayer and work that gives priority to the praise of God. We embrace service to God's People through hospitality to guests, involvement in parish ministry, education and sustainable agriculture. (Mission Statement)

Please remember the monks of St. Peter's Abbey when considering making donations to charities or bequests.

Donations will help, in particular, towards helping us finance needed improvements to our infrastructure, promoting vocations and providing for the needs of our elderly.

Donations can be sent to: St. Peter's Abbey, Box 10, Muenster, SK, S0K-2Y0 or e-transfer to: pvanginkel1@gmail.com

Tax receipts will be issued for donations.

For credit card donations please visit either:

canadahelps.org and search Order of St. Benedict

or www.stpetersabbey.ca and click on the Donate Now button on the right hand side of the page.

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Abbot Peter Novocosky, OSB

