

# *St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter*



Vol. 22 No. 3 Summer/Fall 2000

## **Three priests celebrate jubilees**



*Fr. Leo Hinz (50), Fr. Francis Lohmer (75) and Fr. Norbert Schwinghammer (65).*

# A message from Abbot Peter's desk

This has been a busy summer at the abbey. Many visitors have come to visit or stay at the abbey for a while. The main events will be reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

One of the highlights for me this Jubilee Year was the Benedictine Abbots Congress in Rome, Sept. 4 - 13. The abbots of the world meet every four years. This year there were some 230 abbots at the meeting in Sant Anselmo, our international centre in Rome. About 120 stayed at Sant Anselmo and the rest stayed in neighbouring religious houses. I stayed in a Ukrainian Basilian house, about an 8-minute walk down the hill from Sant Anselmo.

The congress was timed to coincide with the beatification of Benedictine Abbot Columba Marmion (1858-1923). He was a major and influential spiritual writer in the early 20th century. He was one of five people beatified by Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, Sept. 3. Another was Pope John XXIII, whose tomb I was able to visit later.

Starting our congress with this major

event was a good reminder to us of the main goal of Benedictine life – which is to grow in holiness. St. Benedict puts it this way in the Prologue to his Rule: “Clothed with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him who has called us to his kingdom.”

I liked one of the quotes used from Abbot Marmion in the beatification ceremony. He said, “Joy is the echo of God's life in our souls.”

One of the unscheduled events of the congress was the resignation of Abbot Primate Marcel Rooney. His doctors told him his health could not take the stress of the job any longer. We elected Abbot Nokter Wolf as the new abbot primate. He has lots of international experience and speaks about five languages.

The congress had a pilgrimage character to it in that all the abbots visited the four major basilicas in Rome, and went through each of the Holy Doors. We celebrated Vespers in each basilica, in turn: St. Peter's, St. Paul's Outside the Wall, St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major. Of

course, it helped that we were able to be bussed to each one in turn.

There were other significant visits as well. On Friday, Sept. 8 all 250-plus monks and guests had an audience with Pope John Paul II. This was the first time many of the abbots had met him and many were quite excited. We had seen him, of course, at the beatification on Sunday. Other major trips included a trip to Monte Cassino on Sunday, Sept. 10 and a trip to Subiaco on Sept. 12. Subiaco is the cave where Benedict began his monastic life as a hermit and Monte Cassino is the mountain-top monastery he began some 1,500 years ago.

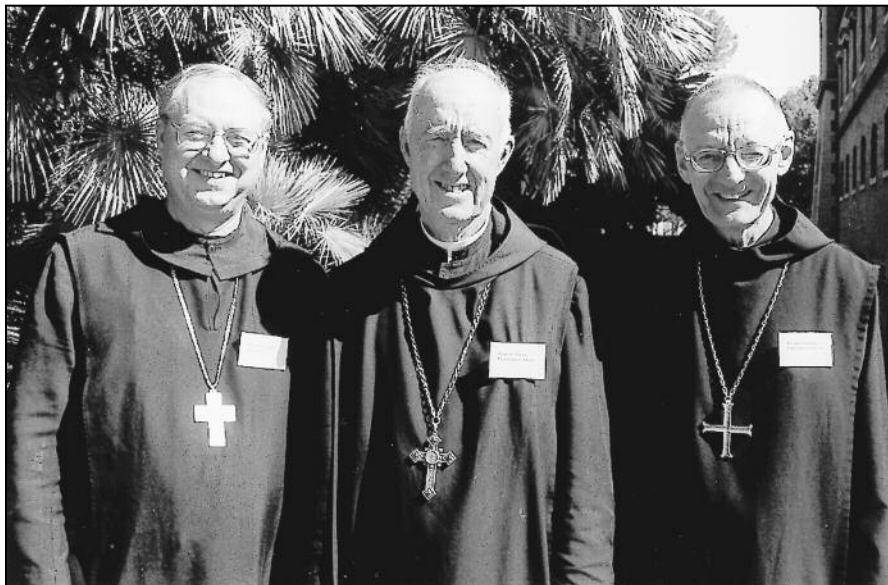
There was the usual discussion of the affairs of Sant Anselmo at this congress. Sant Anselmo has three main components: the abbey which is a monastic residence for the students; the philosophy, theology and monastic programs which are the academic part; and the abbot primate, who is a reference point for all 250 Benedictine monasteries of the world.

Sant Anselmo has to rely on the good will of monasteries to supply professors and staff. Additional lay staff has to be hired, more so in recent years. This also increases our expenses.

The congress was a good time to make international contacts and renew acquaintances. Some abbots have been at eight congresses already. This was my third one.

Abbot Alcuin of Tanzania asked me if some of his monks could come to study at St. Peter's next year. It would be a good way to help out his community. Of the 130 monks in his community, only a couple have a university education.

St. Benedict reminds us that a monastery is a school for the Lord's service. This service happens on the local level; it happens on the provincial and national levels; and it also happens on the international level. The congress is one way of remembering all the variety of ways Benedictines serve the church throughout the world.



*Three Canadians attended the Abbots' Congress in Rome: Abbot Peter Novocosky, St. Peter's, Muenster, SK., Abbot Maurus Macrae, Mission, BC, and Abbot Jacques Garneau, St. Benoit du Lac, PQ.*

# Marmion's spirituality serves as a bridge

By Lawrence DeMong, OSB

In the 1970's the local community of Endermine in Ireland petitioned their County Council to name their new bridge after the saintly Dom Columba Marmion.

Marmion Bridge may be just another passage across a river, but it is also a beautiful image to capture the spirituality of this saintly Benedictine abbot. Like St. Paul but in an age when spirituality was impoverished by a lack of biblical focus, Marmion centred everything on Christ. His book titles like *Christ the Life of the Soul*, *Christ in His Mysteries* or *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* show how his thinking made the Lord Jesus absolutely central.

The true "Marmion Bridge" is Christ just as St. Paul could say that for him "living is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). In the vision of Marmion this bridge would be like the spokes of a wheel, uniting all members of Christ's body with himself and joining, lifting them upward to God the Father in the Holy Spirit.

On Sept. 3, 2000, Joseph Columba Marmion was beatified, declared blessed and through this solemn Church declaration held up for us as an "Ideal for the Monk" or, as he presented Christ in another of his books, an "Ideal for the Priest." He is someone to be imitated, his writings are appropriate guides to holiness. Indeed, during the beatification ceremony the pope called for a rediscovery of his writings for our times.

One of the problems in bringing about this reconnection with Marmion's thought is the abstract tone of his works. Unfortunately, like Thomas Aquinas, one of his mentors, Marmion uses concrete language sparingly. In addition, Marmion's books are mostly reconstructions from his conference notes, for he was immensely popular as a speaker, even though as abbot of the Belgian monastery of Maredsous, his French was never without a fairly heavy Irish accent.

Perhaps what is needed today is a compendium of Abbot Marmion's best thoughts, a book of pithy sayings that captures the best of what he said.

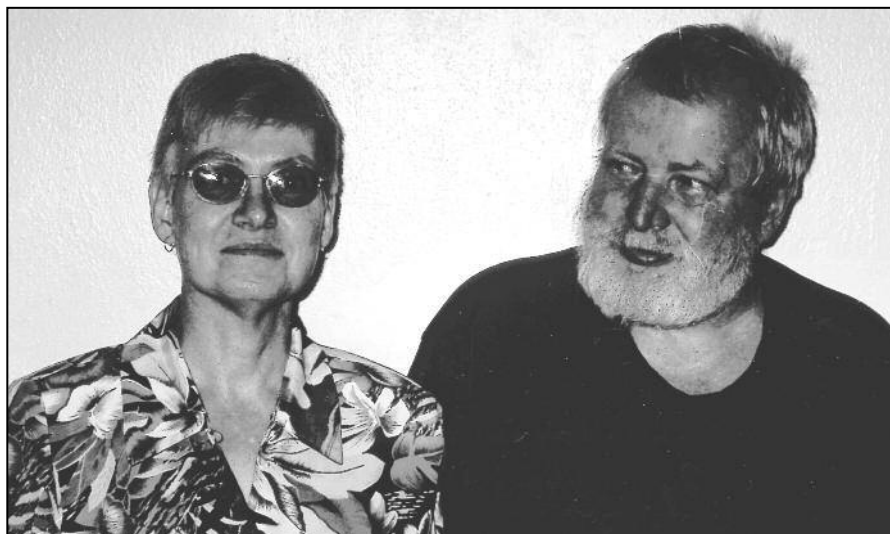
As a sample of some of his best, here is a lengthy quote from the opening section of *Christ the Ideal of the Monk*: Let us imagine ourselves in a great city like London. At certain hours of the day the streets are thronged with people; it is like a moving army. It is the ebb and flow of a human sea. Men are coming and going, elbowing their way, passing to and fro, and all this rapidly — for "time is money," — almost without exchanging any signs among themselves. Each one of these innumerable beings is independent of the others, and has his own particular end in view. Quid quaerunt? What are they seeking, these thousands and thousands of men who are hurrying in the City? Why are they in such haste? Some are in search of pleasure, others pursue honours; these are urged by the fever of ambition, those by the thirst for gold; the greater number are in quest of daily bread. From time to time a lady goes to visit the poor; a Sister of Charity seeks Jesus Christ in the person of the sick; unnoticed, a priest passes by, the pyx hidden upon his

breast, as he carries the Viaticum to the dying ... But out of this immense crowd pursuing created things, only a very small number are working for God alone (pages 1, 2, Herder, 1926).

Marmion goes on to challenge the monk to do just that, to seek God alone. After a powerful introduction to the meaning of the theological virtues, virtues that are gifts of God, "virtues of our state as children of God," he says, Faith is like the root, hope the stalk, and charity at once the flower and the fruit of the supernatural life (page 6).

Seeking God is loving God and centring our entire lives on this single quest.

A half century ago, Marmion's writings were immensely popular. Thanks to Dom Columba, long before Vatican II, thousands of priests, monks, religious and laity were formed in a healthy biblical spirituality. Today too, there is much we can learn from this caring confessor and counsellor, this saintly guide who led so many to a deeper experience of God in Christ. As the only foreigner in an abbey that elected him abbot, he humbly chose as his motto, "Magis prodesse quam praesere," to serve rather than to rule. Sounds like "Marmion Bridge" is a pretty safe way to go.



*New vision for the abbey — resident lay people. Oblate candidate Nancy E. Gordon and her husband Bob Crompton are doing volunteer work at the abbey since June.*

# Making a movie at St. Peter's Abbey

By *Demetrius Wasyluniuk, OSB*

*Solitude* — screen play by Robin Schlacht & Connie Gault.

The groundwork of the project (movie) began in the latter part of 1999.

Robin Schlacht and Heather Malek approached Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, regarding St. Peter's being the site of a movie entitled *Solitude*. The screen play of this movie is derived from a book by Connie Gault. Gault wrote parts of the book at St. Peter's at the Saskatchewan Writers Colony.

The script for the screen play was read by Abbot Peter, Dr. Colleen Fitzgerald, college president, and myself. The project was brought to the monastic community in November of 1999 for approval. Abbot Peter struck a committee to handle details and be liaison for the film crew. Fitzgerald and I were appointed to the committee and acted as liaisons.

The production as such did not begin until July of this year. The production coincided with the Saskatchewan Choral Federation Choir Camp. The choir camp was also part of the screen-play of the movie. The guestwing, the kitchen, the college and gym complex, and the abbey grounds and farm were beehives of activity.

Most of the cast and crew of the movie were housed in the guestwing along with the choir camp facilitators. The choir campers were housed in the gym. The Bella Vista and Pioneer Hotel in Humboldt also housed members of the crew and cast of the movie. The overall numbers for the kitchen with both choir camp and film crew averaged about 150 people per meal (sometimes more). It was truly amazing how the kitchen staff were able to look after this crowd. The kitchen staff efforts to accommodate these groups were extraordinary and exemplary.

In the guest department housekeeper Marilyn Tebbe was kept hopping and was able to keep the guestmaster on track as to what room we make up next. Marilyn's dedication to the guest department is truly a gift to all.

The college staff and monks adjusted to interruptions and change of routine and all are to be commended for their patience and help. Some of the monks appeared in the different scenes as (you guessed it) monks. Some local people appear in the movie as actors as well as members of the Sask. Choral Camp. The members of the choir camp used in the movie were from the local area under the direction of Sr. Lenore Moldenhauer, OSU.

The cast included the following personnel:

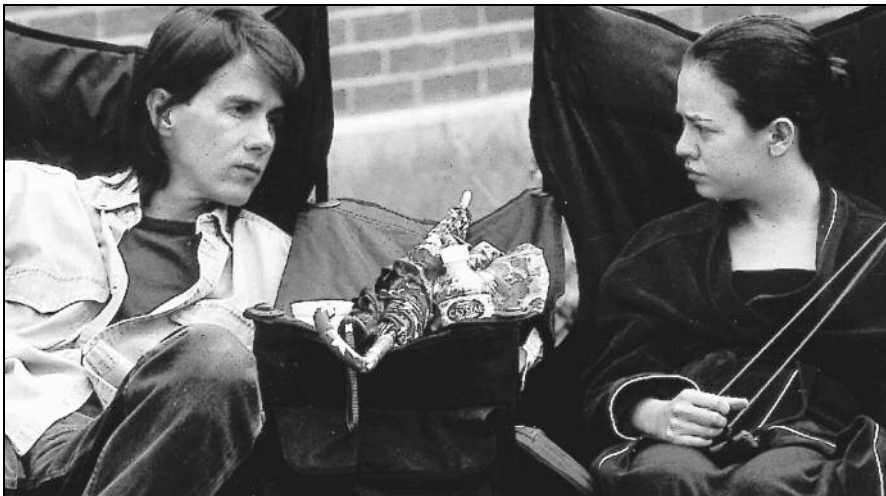


*Wendy Anderson of Regina played Linda.*

Michele — Vanessa Martinez, Dallas  
Linda — Wendy Anderson, Regina  
Br. Bernard — Lothaire Bluteau, Montreal/New York  
Storekeeper — Bruce McKay, Saskatoon  
Geraldine — Louise Handford, Regina  
Fr. Gregory — Eugene Lipinski, Toronto  
Br. Peter — Bill Hugli, Regina  
Fr. Morris — Maury Wrubleski, Humboldt  
Br. Daniel — Michel Marchildon, Regina  
Abbot James — Demetrius Wasyluniuk OSB, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster

The movie will be shown in its final form in about 8 to 10 months. Zima Junction Productions from Regina which produced and edited the film will be informing the abbey where and when the premier of this movie will be. It is hoped that it will be shown locally.

I am not totally sure how a movie fits into the genre of a monastery, college and guestwing. I do know that Benedictines for centuries have been supporters of the arts, so one could say that St. Peter's is carrying on this tradition. The film crew and cast were very interested in the abbey and its apostolates. They were very respectful of their surroundings. It could be said that the whole production experience was a good one.



*Lothaine Bluteau played Br. Bernard and Vanessa Martinez played Michele.*

# People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

May 2 — With the college over many summer activities are getting underway. The northern part of the basement in Michael Hall is getting a complete renovation which should see completion by September, the start of another year of university classes.



*Br. Randy Senecal renovating the basement of the college with Devin Schlosser.*

The foundations for the college president's house are being poured about a mile north of the college. This will be the new home for her family which is living in Saskatoon.

May 3 — Our hermit, Fr. Robert Gannon, was enrolled as a candidate for the Oblates of St. Benedict.



*Fr. Robert Gannon becomes a claustral oblate candidate.*

May 8 — With a very early dry spring the farm seeding was begun and completed in record time by May 20.

May 12 — The staff of the Saskatoon Catholic Centre gathered at the abbey for a one-day retreat conducted by Abbot Peter.

May 15-19 — Abbot Peter preached the retreat for the Saskatoon and Prince Albert clergy at Queen's House of Retreats, Saskatoon. He was also at the CRC annual meeting at Moncton, NB, till June 6.



*Br. Marcelo Gomes comes to St. Peter's.*

May 19 — Br. Marcelo Gomes, a Benedictine monk from Olinda Abbey, Brazil, arrived at the abbey to study English during the coming year.

May 23 — A Saskatoon crew undertook the job of repainting all the brick work on our college building, Michael Hall.

June 3 — Brian Woolliams of Calgary was enrolled as a candidate for the Oblates of St. Benedict.

June 7 — Bishop James Weisgerber, bishop of Saskatoon for the last four years, was appointed archbishop of Winnipeg. What a shock to us Saskatoonians.

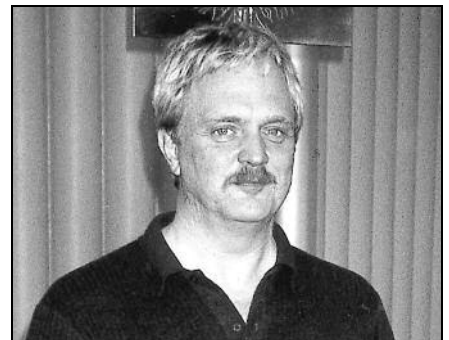
June 8 — Our Oblates and others



*The repairing of the brick work of Michael Hall.*

have dreamt of possibly coming to the abbey simply to live as volunteers. Oblate candidate Nancy E. Gordon and her husband Bob from Stewart, BC, have arrived as the first such volunteers to join us in our work and prayer.

June 9 — A much needed rain on May 22 was followed by a two-inch downpour today to break the dry spell of this spring. (By the end of June we were blest with about six inches of rain.)



*Brian Woolliams becomes an oblate candidate.*

# People and events around the abbey

June 10 — The Saskatoon DPC (25 members) met at the abbey for the day.

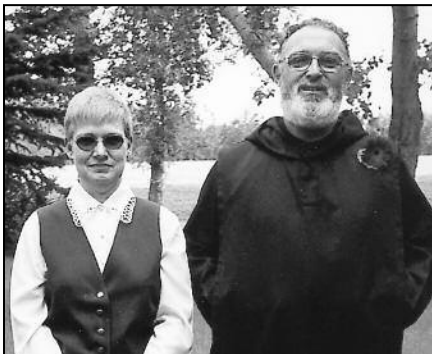
June 11-25 — Our Juniors, Brs. François Boulet and Paul Paproski, attended the annual Junior Formation Workshop at Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, Calif.

June 25 — Family Day 2000 for families of staff members and monks.

June 25-July 2 — Fourteen members of the Bruno Ursuline community gathered at the abbey for the annual retreat with Fr. Albert Ruetz, retreat master.

June 29 — Our patronal feast of Sts. Peter and Paul was also community jubilee day of priesthood for Frs. Francis Lohmer (75), Norbert Schwinghammer (65), and Leo Hinz (50).

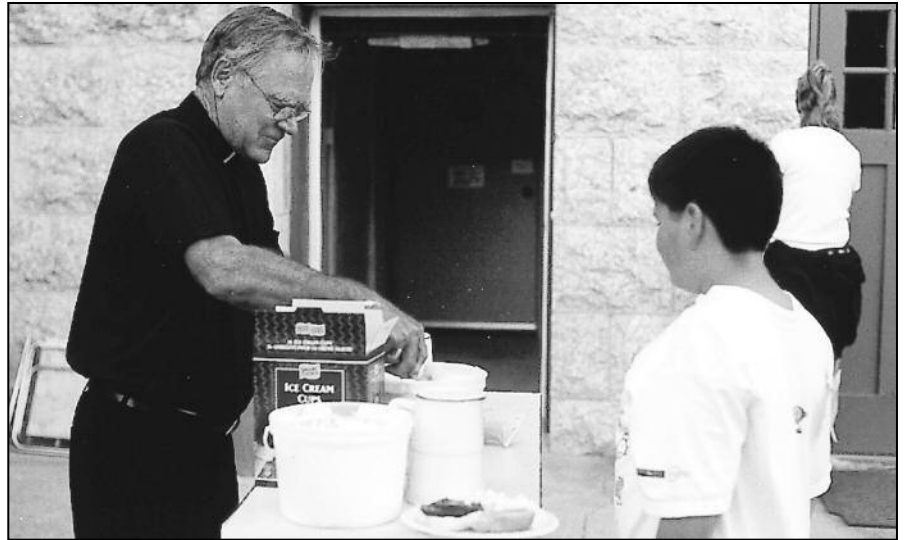
July 1 — Br. Thomas Ward drove to Edmonton to continue the Summer School in Liturgical Studies at Newman Theological College. Br. Thomas and Oblate candidate Nancy E. Gordon graduated on July 27.



*Oblate candidate Nancy E. Gordon and Br. Thomas Ward graduated from Summer School in Liturgical Studies at Newman Theological College.*

July 1-31 — A new experience! Zema Junction Production (Regina) moved onto the abbey grounds to film the movie *Solitude*.

It is the tale of two women and a



*Bishop James Weisgerber serves ice cream to the Saskatchewan Junior Choir Camp members on July 12 at the abbey.*

monk exploring questions of faith and purpose right here in Saskatchewan . . . but not truly a Hollywood calling card. Linda in the movie is Regina actress Wendy Anderson. After July it will enter the post-production stage in Regina with hopes to complete the work by next spring (see page 4).

July 2-15 — The Saskatchewan Choir Camp again graced our abbey grounds. The Teen Choir with 88 members from July 2-8, and the Junior Choir with 82 members from July 9-15.

July 5-6 — Lloyd and Mary Jane Thunstrom of Anchorage, Alaska., grand-nephew of Abbot Bruno Doerfler, visited here. This couple must have the spirit of adventure, venturing so far north, as did their grand uncle, Bruno, pioneering up north onto our wide open western prairies in 1902!

July 10 — Saskatoon Diocese Farewell Week to our beloved Bishop James. These farewells included the following groups: for clergy (July 10); for diocese (July 13); for religious (July 14). The abbey was privileged to have the bishop here on July 12 for a farewell

evening and supper.

The bishop left for Winnipeg July 21 and was installed Aug. 24. He presided at our Mount Carmel Pilgrimage July 9. May the Lord prosper his work in his new field of ministry. Our loss is certainly Winnipeg's gain!



*Lloyd, grand-nephew of Abbot Bruno Doerfler, and Mary Jane Thunstrom.*



*Bishop James Weisgerber presided at the Mt. Carmel pilgrimage with Fr. Richard Meidl assisting.*

July 11 — The Solemnity of St. Benedict was also our Oblate Day. With three different groups at the abbey the Oblates and the monks shared a potluck noon lunch in the gym.

Our pipe organ has been completed and fine-tuned, and played for the first time at today's eucharist.

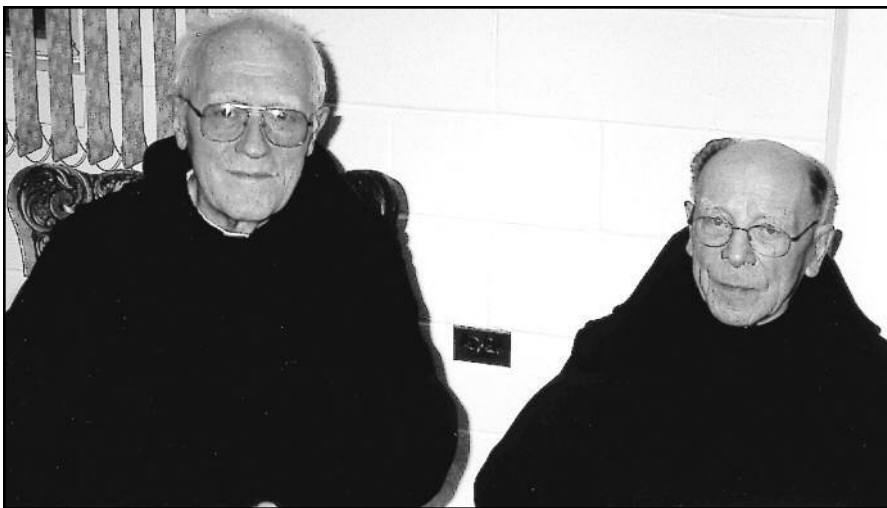
July 30 — Our exceptional jubilarian, Fr. Francis Lohmer, celebrated the 75th anniversary of priesthood in St. Scholastica

Parish, of which he is still the pastor.

Fr. Francis also celebrated the eucharist at St. Mary's Villa on Aug. 2, the actual date of his ordination.

Moreover, he celebrated his 98th birthday on Sept. 3. All this should definitely qualify him for a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

July 30-Aug. 2 — The Sisters of Mission Service were at the abbey for their annual retreat/workshop.



*Frs. Werner Renneberg (left) and George Brodner retire to the abbey.*

July 31-Aug. 3 — Abbot Peter Novecosky, Knights of Columbus State Chaplain for Saskatchewan, attended the annual KC Convention in Boston, Mass.

Aug. 2 — Seems to be the traditional time for pastoral changes.

Fr. Werner Renneberg, 76, experiencing difficulties in his back, retired to the abbey. The new pastor for Watson-Englefeld is Fr. James Moss, the second diocesan priest to take over former abbacy parishes.

Fr. George Brodner, 86, resident pastor at Naicam since 1982, will also return to the abbey because of his bout with diabetes, while Fr. Rudolph Novecosky of Annaheim takes over completely at Naicam.

The Muenster Resource Centre for religious education and Earthcare were moved from the abbey to Humboldt, a more central place, on July 26.

Thus we see the continuing assimilation of the abbacy into the Saskatoon diocese — with two of the most easterly parishes and Humboldt now under diocesan pastoral administration.

Aug. 10-13 — Fr. Richard Meidl attended the Convention 2000 of the American Benedictine Academy at St. Meinrad Archabbey. The theme of the convention was The Good News of the Monastic Life: Reading the Signs of the Times. The goal of the convention was to expose the many creative and exciting things that are going on in Benedictine life today and that monasticism is not coming to an end but merely changing.

While Fr. Richard was at St. Meinrad, he had the opportunity to renew acquaintances with the monks and others with whom he studied and lived during his days at St. Meinrad Seminary.

Aug. 13 — After the Sunday eucharist at St. Scholastica Parish, Burr, Fr. Francis Lohmer fell down the outer stairs by the sacristy and cracked his femur. Admitted to St. Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon, the doctor put a steel pin in, to firm up the hip. After two weeks he was transferred to St. Elizabeth Hospital for continuing physiotherapy.

# People and events around the abbey

Aug. 15 — The Ursulines hosted the tri-community gathering of the religious of this area at the Ursuline Bruno Campus. A highlight was the tour of the building renovated by the U. of S. It has been used since early spring for many programs and activities.

Aug. 21 — Early start to the harvesting. Our harvest is looking very promising after the abundant rain of this past summer. We finished on Sept. 17.

Aug. 23 — Br. Paul Paproski left for Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn., to take up studies in philosophy and theology for the coming years.

Aug. 24 — Abbot Peter Novecosky and Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk attended the installation of James Weisgerber as the sixth archbishop of Winnipeg at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Aug. 29-Sept.14 — Abbot Peter Novecosky attended the World Congress of Abbots in Rome, which is held every four years.

On Sept. 3 the abbots had the privilege of taking part in the beatification of the Benedictine Abbot Columba Marmion (1858-1923). Columba had been abbot of Maredsous in Belgium for the last 18 years of his life. Popes John XXIII and Pius IX were also beatified on this day.

Sept. 3 — Fr. Francis Lohmer observed his 98th birthday, surpassing



*Br. François and Ken Mansfield help stack bales of hay.*

the previous record of 97 set by Fr. Matthew Michel (†Jan. 21, 1994).

Sept. 5-7 — Bishop Weisgerber had already planned to call a Saskatoon Diocesan Congress at Queen's House of Retreats. An extended discussion took place over the question of Diocesan

Ministerial Redistribution in view of the fact that by June 2001 there will be seven to 10 fewer priests.

Sept. 5-8 — University classes began with three Orientation Days. The first figures of the number of students appear to be down slightly.

## Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

**April 25** — Fr. Charles Reiner, OSB, 87, Saint Bernard Abbey, Cullman, Ala.

**May 14** — Fr. Florian Fairbanks, OSB, 91, Assumption Abbey, Richardton, ND.

**May 18** — Bernie Lang, 60, Colonsay, SK., brother of Br. Bernard Lange.

**May 25** — Sr. Ambrose Nenzel, OSU, 92, Humboldt, SK, sister of deceased Fr. Augustine.

**June 20** — Fr. Placidus Reischman, OSB, 73, Saint Martin's Abbey, Lacey, Wash.

June 28 — Fr. Bede Butler, OSB, 76, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colo.

**June 29** — Br. Brendan Murphy, Obl.OSB, 74, Assumption Abbey, Richardton, N.D.

**June 30** — Fr. Andrew Winczewski, OSB, 84, Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

**July 10** — Oblate Rose Mary Dierker, 90, Cudworth, SK.

**July 14** — Anna Maria Thiem, Germany, sister of Br. Wolfgang Thiem.

**July 29** — Br. Raymond Pfeiffer, OSB, 64, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

**July 30** — Fr. Alfred Grotzinger, OSB, 87, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

**Aug. 2** — Oblate Mary Wasserman, 82, Muenster, SK

**Aug. 5** — Al Lange, 67, Muenster, SK, brother of Br. Bernard Lange.

**Aug. 13** — Sr. Claudia Pulvermacher, OSU, 85, Humboldt, SK.

**Aug. 13** — Fr. Anselm Ober, OSB, 85, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

**Date N/A** — Fr. Bernard Watrin, OSB, 86, Abadia De San Antonio Abad, Humacao, Puerto Rico.

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