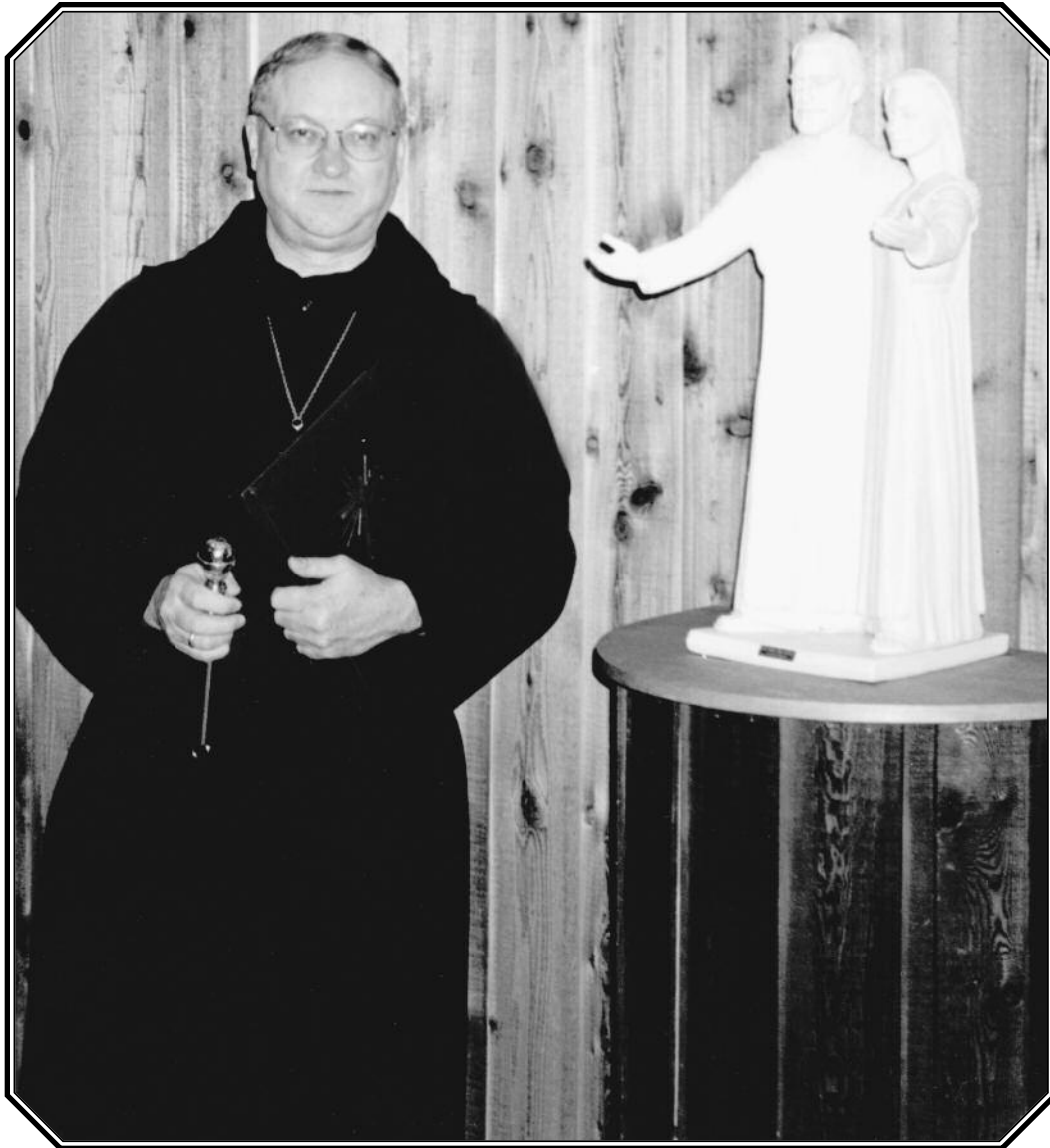


St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 23 No. 1 Winter 2001



Abbot Peter Novecosky blesses the statue of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica.

*"St. Benedict reminded his monks to see Christ
in all the guests who come through our doors.
By welcoming our guests, we welcome Christ himself."*

A message from Abbot Peter's desk

We often think of a Benedictine monastery as a family. They have many similarities. They also have some differences. One difference is that this family is all male.

But, like a family, a Benedictine community has people of all ages living together. That mix can be delightful, as well as challenging. We have people with a variety of gifts and temperaments. We have people who are inclined to be leaders and those who are more inclined to be followers. We live under one roof and share all our resources in common. Somehow, by the grace of God, we've all been called to live this life which aims, above all, to "seek God" and to learn how to live better in the school of the Lord's service.

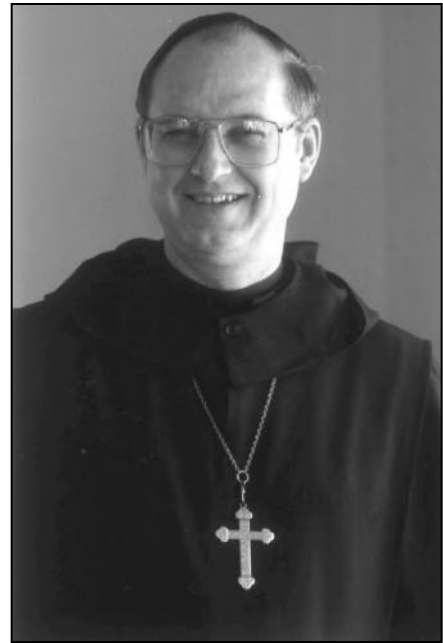
One of the ways in which we are family is that we include our elderly and sick members in our daily living. Fr. Francis, 98, gets around in a wheelchair. Br. Gregory, 95, gets around on a scooter. Fr. Norbert, 90, uses a walker to get around. And Fr. Leo, 75, who broke his hip before Christmas, is using a walker to do some rehabilitation at the abbey.

We are blessed in that none of our monks is bedridden. They can all get by with help from fellow monks, volunteers or the help of home-care aides who come in daily. For this we are most grateful. They are all able to join us in our daily routine of prayer, work and community life.

When we first built our monastery, we didn't have any monks in wheelchairs. Fortunately, the monks in the 1960s had the foresight to include an elevator in the monastery. This certainly comes in handy today. However, the monks didn't plan for a monastic infirmary for those who are sick or infirm. This means we've had to adapt some rooms to make them more amenable.

When we go for prayers or meals, there are at present four monks lined up at the elevator. And there are two elevators to take when you go from the church to the dining room. This can make quite a procession.

Living together as a family helps us grow in virtue. The elderly are great examples of fidelity, commitment and a lifetime of service. They have been

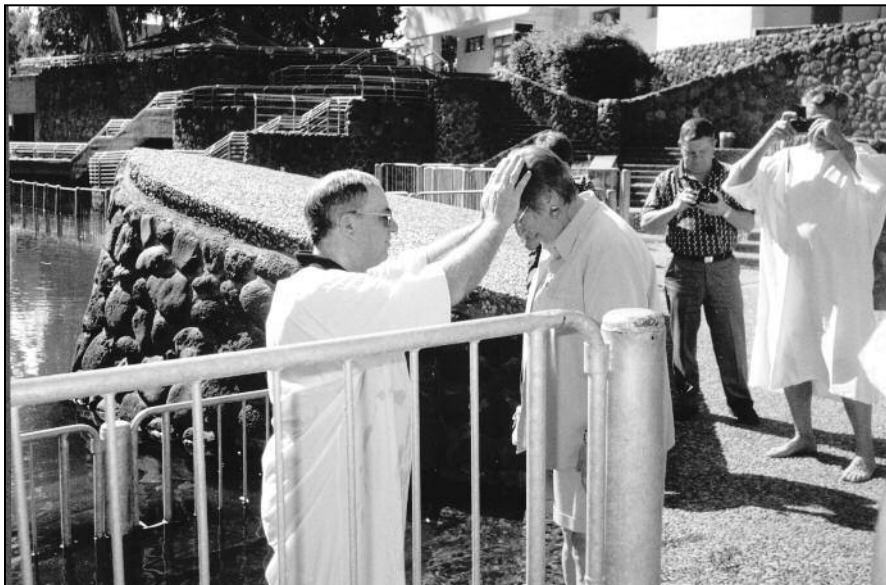


formed and moulded by living the Rule. They continue to offer humble service to us through their prayer and volunteer work. With their presence all have a chance to practice patience, to be flexible, to be attentive, and to offer loving service.

St. Benedict has a special chapter devoted to the sick (Ch. 36). He begins it by saying: "Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ, for he said: 'I was sick and you visited me,' and 'What you did for one of these least brothers you did for me.'"

When we serve one another, we see that our family is much bigger: it is the whole Body of Christ.

As the photo on this page indicates, I had the privilege of visiting the Holy Land during the Jubilee Year. The pilgrimage with the Catholic Women's League of Canada was most enriching. It was a special time to be in the Holy Land. We were blessed with good weather, good guides, and few visitors (because of the current hostilities). And the 39 people on the tour came away with precious memories and new friends.



Abbot Peter blesses Agnes Tropic at the Jordan River during the pilgrimage to the Holy Land Oct. 29 - Nov. 7.

How Scripture becomes Word of God

By Lawrence DeMong, OSB

Recently I sat across the dinner table from a dear friend who told me about a homily she was preparing. The Gospel story of the day was about Jesus welcoming a sinner and being severely judged by an onlooking Pharisee.

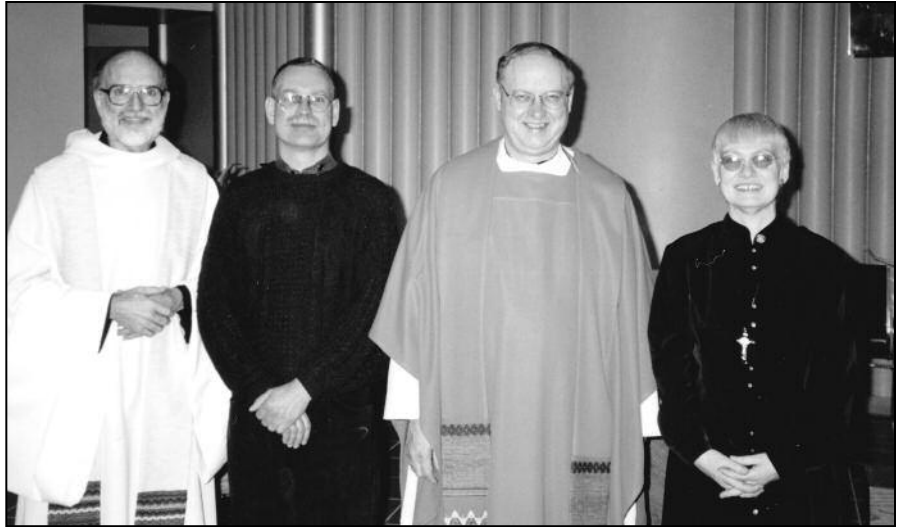
Connecting with an incident in her own life, she recalled with tears welling up in her eyes (and soon mine too!) how these words suddenly hit her like a thunderbolt: “You are that Pharisee!”

As I reflect on this incident I realize that these dramatic moments of insight and conversion are moments of grace and we can never presume to arrange them for similar results. Nevertheless, as Benedictines we practise what we call *lectio divina*, “divine reading” in order to bring about what St. Benedict surely hoped would have the same overall effect, deeper insight and personal conversion.

Lectio divina is a way of bringing about the intersecting of Scripture and personal experience in the hope that the Word of God may become exactly that in our lives, God speaking to us. We read, we mull over the text like a ruminant chewing cud, we reread and consider again, letting our heart and mind lead us into the heart and mind of God.

Every homilist at least attempts to connect the Scriptures with people’s personal experience in the hope of bringing about the same intersecting of God’s Word and the listener’s inner life. Jesus himself is a master of this art.

Some years ago we had a series of conferences on *lectio divina* in which the speaker suggested that non-scriptur-



Arvid-Peter Sprung and Nancy E. Gordon made Final Oblation on Oct. 21. They are seen here with Fr. Lawrence DeMong and Abbot Peter Novecosky.

al reading and even a good novel could become *lectio*. The Word of God is not necessarily boxed into the covers of the Bible. It is much greater than that.

Once we get into this broader understanding of God’s Word we can see how not only non-biblical texts can be the subject of “divine” reading but the whole of life can become a great book of God’s Word speaking to us through every moment of every day. Once we’ve discovered how life itself is a word from God we will see clearly when we go back to the Bible that before being a printed word it was first a word of life in concrete human experience and then only in a second phase did it become a word in a book. The circle is completed only when that word of Scripture becomes a dialogue with our own life, when it becomes a lived word, a direct

experience of God!

Lectio divina then is a special way used widely by monastics to “prime the pump” as it were, to encourage a dialogue between ourselves and the God revealed in Jesus. Christians through the ages have always proclaimed the Word of God so that no one would miss hearing the call of God. As for private “divine” reading, there has always been the added support of art work, from illustrated manuscripts to stained glass windows to magnificent music designed to support the process of connecting life with our God who wants to be heard.

St. Benedict had a special concern for monks who could not read, hoping that they too would be able to profit from the leisure time designated for encounter with God’s Word. One could ask what Benedict might suggest for the dyslexic monk today. Would he perhaps arrange for a library of audiotapes or videos to accomplish the same objective? My guess from his creative approach to other practical matters would lead him to affirm these non-readers and yet extend a helping hand so that their lives could be illumined with God’s Word, becoming a permanent dialogue with the divine.

“... that in all things God may be glorified.”

— Benedictine Motto

People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

Sept. 5-8 — University classes resumed for the new school year. The year finds Fr. Albert Ruetz retired from teaching Mathematics for 50 years. Monks who are still teaching are: Fr. Lawrence DeMong (French) and Br. Kurt Van Kuren (Psychology). Assisting in the library are Brs. Thomas Ward and Neil Pitzel.

The renewal of teaching also brought to completion the extensive renovation of the northern portion of the basement of Michael Hall.

Sept. 20 — A “Welcome Home” evening for Frs. Francis, George and Werner who have retired to the abbey.

Sept. 30 — Abbot Peter visited St. Vincent Archabbey where Br. Paul Paproski is studying philosophy/theology, and St. Meinrad’s Archabbey. From there he visited our former Cluny monastery site near Wetaug in Southern Illinois. It was a centennial trip also because in 2003 it will be 100 years since our pioneer monks moved from there to our St. Peter’s Colony.



Back row, l-r: Jana and Greg Thomas, Debbie and husband Fr. Ivan Nohashewski. Seated: Fr. Leonard Ratushniak, CSsR, holding Magdalen Ann Thomas. Magdalen was baptized on Oct. 15 at the Abbey Church of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Oct. 10-12 — Abbot Peter conducted a mission for St. Francis Xavier Parish, Saskatoon.

Oct. 13-15 — The Saskatchewan Ukrainian Youth for Christ Retreat at the abbey. On Sunday the monks and guests participated in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, during which Greg and Jana Thomas had their baby Magdalen Ann baptized, confirmed and she also received holy communion. Magdalen Ann is the grand niece of our Fr. Damian Yaskowich.

Oct. 14 — Our abbey grounds were chosen as an ideal place for the Saskatchewan high school provincial cross country three and five km races. The race path led through some of the scenic paths through our woods.

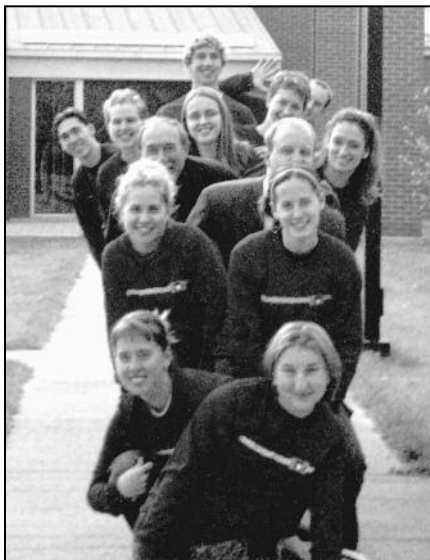
Oct. 16 — St. Peter’s College received a grant of \$185,000 from the Provincial

Government’s “Centenary Capital Fund” — as part of our Saskatchewan Centennial Celebrations — 2005: to support key infrastructure needs in rural post-secondary education. Presentation was made by Mr. Glenn Hagel, Secondary Education and Skills Minister.

The book *Our Bruno* goes to press soon. This brief biography of Bruno Doerfler, our first abbot (+1919), can alert us to other preparations in progress for the centennial celebrations of St. Peter’s Abbey/Colony (1903-2003).

Oct. 21 — Oblate Day. Final oblations were made by Arvid-Peter Sprung of Brandon, Man., and Nancy E. Gordon of Muenster.

Oct. 27-28 — A second provincial event took place on our grounds; the provincial high school soccer play-offs.



The core group for the Ukrainian Youth for Christ, Oct. 13-15.

Oct. 27-29 — Br. Thomas attended the Western Canada Conference for Liturgy in Calgary, Alta. The presenter this year was Sr. Theresa Koernke, IHM, from Washington, D.C. She talked about “The Lived Reality of Liturgy.”

Oct. 29-Nov. 7 — Abbot Peter, past national spiritual adviser, accompanied a group of CWL members on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in this Jubilee Year 2000.

Nov. 3-4 — To assure a sufficient water supply for this winter we had to take two urgent steps. First, we closed sale of water from our reservoir to our neighbouring customers. Second, we pumped about 1.5 million gallons of water into the reservoir from a nearby dugout. The reduced spring water runoff and the dry summer had considerably diminished our water supply.

Nov. 9-12 — Two major events this November were the two Anglican Cursillos with 55 participants in each. The first one was for the men and the one on Nov. 23-26 was for the women. These were the first Cursillos to be held in Saskatchewan.

Nov. 23 — Community Continuing Study Day. Mark Burch of Winnipeg



Mark Burch of Winnipeg talks to the community on “Voluntary Simplicity.”



The local community came for Mark Burch's talk in the evening, Nov. 23.

spoke on “Living Simply as Religious” in the afternoon, and on “Voluntary Simplicity” in the evening to the public.

Nov. 24 — Many of our community members remember their days at St. John's Abbey, and send their congratulations as we all do to Fr. John Klassen, elected 10th abbot of St. John's Abbey.

Nov. 26 — Appreciation supper for

parish housekeepers, Celine Wolsfeld and Sr. Walburga Brodner, OSE. Celine was 37 years with Fr. Francis Lohmer, and Sr. Walburga, eight years with Fr. George Brodner.

Nov. 27-Dec. 1 — The priests of the Saskatoon Diocese met in Banff to study and plan for a church with fewer priests. At the present time eight members of our community serve in the diocese with most of them over the age of 65.



Sr. Walburga Brodner, OSE, and Celine Wolsfeld pictured here with Abbot Peter were honoured for their years of being housekeepers for Frs. George Brodner and Francis Lohmer.

People and events around the abbey



Staff Appreciation — l-r, Randy Weber (25 years), Myrna Hofmann (10), Lucille Stewart (15), Gail Kleefeld (10), Loretta Loehr (10), Doreen Szautner (20).

Dec. 1 — Staff Appreciation supper — A fitting acknowledgment of the splendid work and co-operation the staff are bringing to our abbey departments. Randy Weber, 25 years; Doreen Szautner, 20 years; Lucille Stewart, 15 years, and Loretta Loehr, Myrna Hofmann, Gail Kleefeld, 10 years, received gifts in appreciation for their many years of service here.

Dec. 3 — First Sunday of Advent. — A big surprise awaited us near the altar in the church: the stump of a tree, three feet tall and two feet in diameter with a small plant beside it. Why! That's the "stump of Jesse" from which "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Is 11:1). That shoot was Jesus the Saviour. This is certainly a large healthy symbol for Advent. Each week a larger plant would stand next to it!

Dec. 8-10 — Fr. Lawrence DeMong and Br. Basil Schaan attended the three-day seminar at the Humboldt Uniplex on Exploring Sustainable Agriculture. This was a most urgent study of our land and environment which are being so threatened at the present time.

Dec. 12 — The community rejoiced in celebrating the feast day of Our Lady

of Guadalupe, now Patroness of the Americas. On Jan. 23, 1999, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, Pope John Paul II "declared that on Dec. 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated throughout America with the liturgical rank of feast."



A tree stump in church during Advent reminded us of the root of Jesse.



The Horse's Mouth provided the entertainment at the Staff Appreciation supper, Dec. 1.

Dec. 15 — Fr. Leo Hinz, pastor at Cudworth, slipped on the icy road, breaking the thigh bone on his right leg. The surgery at the Royal University Hospital on Dec. 17 led to the surfacing of heart complications. On Dec. 28 plans were underway for possible heart surgery. On Jan. 1, he was discharged from the hospital and came back to the abbey to allow his leg to heal.

Dec. 24 — On this Christmas Eve before Vespers the statue of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica in a "welcoming posture" was set up and blessed by Abbot Peter in the reception area of the main entrance. The inscription at the base of the statue is "Welcoming our guests." Br. Wolfgang Thiem had constructed the fir panelling on the west wall and the pedestal. The statue was sculpted by Helen Norman of Belair, Man.

Dec. 27-28 — The long cold spell has been broken with drizzle and sleet. However, our snowfall has been small in comparison with areas farther south and east.



Monks gather for the Christmas gift opening, Dec. 25.

Dec. 31 — At midnight the monks and some people from the neighbouring communities brought in the new millennium with readings from Scripture, hymns, psalms and the Solemn Proclamation of the Date of Easter. Lunch followed in the monks dining room.

2001

Jan. 7 — Jubilee Year 2000 closed with Solemn Vespers with a special introduction at the Jubilee Doors, then the bells rung out as the community processed through the doors into the

church. At the end of vespers the community sang Praise is Yours, O God, Forever (*Te Deum*), words by Raymond J. Lahey, bishop of St. George's, Nfld. This was followed by a festive supper.

Passage to the New Millennium 2001



The Saskatchewan Benedictines

invite you
to experience

Monastic Life

by living with the monks at
St. Peter's Abbey

To assist you in discerning your life vocation share some time with a community of Benedictine monks by contacting:

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Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0

Ph: 306-682-1791 / Fax: 306-682-1766

E-mail: frichard@stpeters.sk.ca

see our Web page at www.stpeters.sk.ca



A simple Thanksgiving display.

William Thurmeier tunes pipe organ

The abbey pipe organ was designed, built and tuned by William (Bill) Thurmeier, his second pipe organ, Opus 002.

Heavy-duty construction work was done by carpenter Br. Wolfgang Thiem and machinist/welder Br. Bernard Lange as well as by Harold Dyck.

The design and construction were spread over a number of years, since most parts had already been used and had to be restructured.

Before work on the pipe organ began, an electronic antiphonal organ, also designed by Thurmeier and intended for use with the pipe organ, was in use while the pipe organ was being built.

Although there are five ranks still to be added, the pipe organ was initiated on the feast of St. Benedict, July 11,



William Thurmeier fine tunes the pipe organ.

2000, by abbey organist Br. Gerald Moran and has been used ever since. Br. Anthony Nguyen and Zita Maier, OSU, are also abbey organists.

An official “opening” of the organ will take place when the remaining ranks have been installed later this summer. — GM

Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

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

Sept. 30 — Fr. Emeric Pfiester, OSB, 78, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Oct. 3 — Abbot Placido Reitmeier, OSB, 78, Abadia del Tepeyac, Bosques del Lago, Mex.

Oct. 5 — Gerard Boulet, 78, Winnipeg, Man., father of Br. François Boulet.

Oct. 16 — Abbot Valentine Skluzacek, OSB, 85, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.

Oct. 18 — Br. Anthony Costello, OSB, 31, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Nov. 2 — Mathias Schneider, 87, Calgary, Alta., brother of Fr. Roman Schneider and uncle to Fr. Richard Meidl.

Nov. 15 — Fr. Raymond Matulenas, OSB, 87, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Ill.

Nov. 20 — Fr. Benjamin Stein, OSB, 90, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Nov. 25 — Fr. Lambert Morrow, OSB, 90, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colo.

Nov. 30 — Fr. Brendan Donnelly, OSB, 80, Saint Anselm, Manchester, N.H.

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Br. Thomas Ward gets back to his old trade and carves the Christmas turkey.