

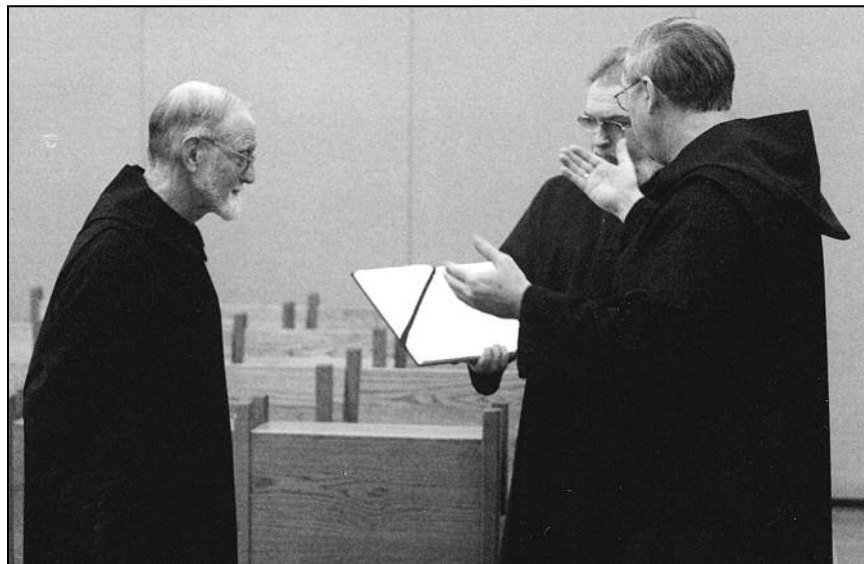
St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 24 No. 2 Spring 2002



*Christ is risen,
He is risen indeed!*



*Our new novice director Fr. James Gray is blessed
by Abbot Peter Novecosky.*

A message from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends,

This spring we lost one of our elder monks. Fr. Norbert Schwinghammer died March 3. His association with St. Peter's goes back a long way. He became a student of St. Peter's College in 1924, just a few years after it opened. He went on to become a teacher and organist for many years, for the students and for the monks. Many alumni recall the antics they played in his classroom.

In his later years he was bedridden at the abbey; I thank all those who cared for him. His life spanned four of our abbey's five abbots. A living memory has gone to his eternal reward.

As I write this, the college has completed another year. Classes and exams are finished and the staff is looking ahead and planning for next year.

From all reports, it was a good student body this year. The college staff is looking forward to increasing our student population in the future.

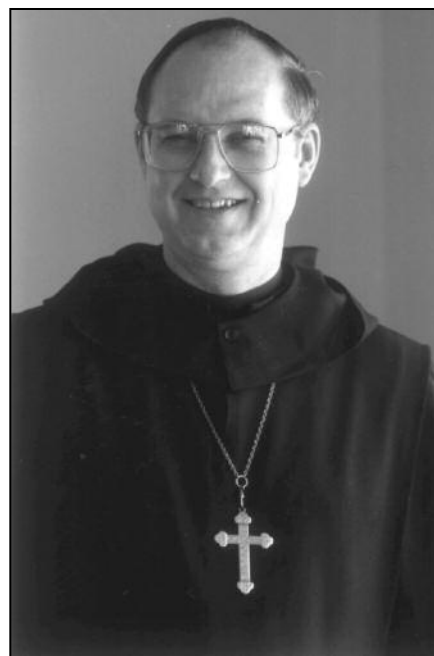
In a conversation with an older student recently, I was told that students probably don't realize how lucky they

are to have St. Peter's so close at hand. A professor told me the marks of her students were quite a bit above average and she might have a hard time explaining that to her department head. But, she said, that's the quality of the students she has.

That's all good news, of course, and I hope the college will continue to offer its good services for many years to come.

Spring is always a time of some tension in a rural area. Farmers wonder what to seed and how much. This year has the added threat of a drought. We had a dearth of snow this winter and there is fear that the drought our province experienced last year will continue this year. We had no spring runoff into our water reservoir, and that means our water supply is very low.

Luckily, last fall we were able to hook into the Saskatchewan River pipeline, so we have that as a backup. This year it looks like it will be our main water supply. Other farmers and towns are planning to hook up to the pipeline as well.

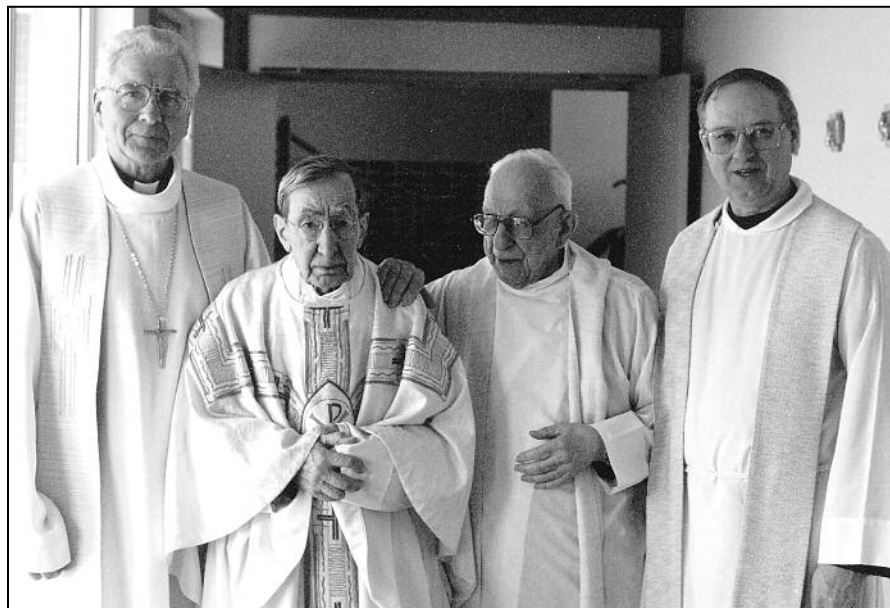


We used to take the supply of water for granted. That is changing as we hear more reports of contaminated water. It makes us realize how vulnerable we are on this earth, as well as how much our actions affect others in our human community.

This spring our abbey accepted a temporary commitment to help a parish in northern Saskatchewan. Fr. Lawrence DeMong has volunteered to go once a month to celebrate mass at Cumberland House, in the Le Pas Diocese. Our friend Archbishop Peter Sutton requested our help. The pastoral needs are many.

As we move into summer, we renew our hope again — and our trust in God's providence.

World Youth Day in Toronto is just around the corner and we pray that it brings new vitality to our church and our country.



In June of 1995 Fr. Norbert celebrated his 60th anniversary of ordination. He is seen with Bishop Gerry Wiesner, Fr. Francis Lohmer and Abbot Peter Novecosky.

*"... that in all things
God may be glorified."*

— Benedictine Motto

Unintended Gospel teachings from Fr. Norbert



BY LAWRENCE DeMONG, OSB

When Fr. Norbert Schwinghammer died March 3, 2002, at 91 we did not need to find a huge church for the funeral. His death was as unremarkable as his life. Yet that alone would qualify for success in the eyes of his mentor, St. Benedict. To use an expression of a radio personality, “He had mastered humility.”

That latter remark could sound as contradictory as the goofy lines we used to throw around during our formation years, “I’m so proud of my humility” or “You’re lucky I’m humble!” Yet when we study the elaborate Chapter 7 of Benedict’s Rule, the 12 degrees of humility — which are seen as rungs on a ladder to climb — could stand as a biography of Fr. Norbert.

I am reminded of remarks from one of Fr. Norbert’s relatives at the wake service when, in the name of the family, he apologized to the community for Fr. Norbert’s worn out clothing and his shabby travel bag whenever he was away from the monastery! That wasn’t a frequent occurrence, to be sure, but it was quite a pathetic sight. Undoubtedly Norbert had taken seriously the sixth degree of humility which says “that a monk be content with the poorest and worst of everything.”

His quirk of never polishing his shoes was probably to save on cost. I once sneaked into his room during mealtime, grabbed his one pair of shoes that were not yet worn through, and gave them a good dose of black.

We used to joke about him “double clutching” as he played the organ and insisted on moving from one piece to

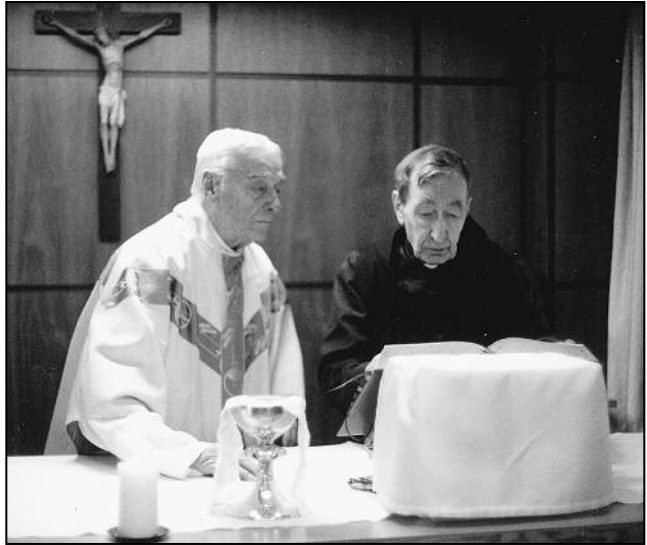
another by playing various chords to get into a new key while fighting to get his book open to the next item! The ancient organ with its chain-pulled light switch in the cord to turn on the blower was a scream. Probably out of a sense of poverty he used to pull that chain to shut off the blower whenever the music was interrupted too long to double clutch!

Among his many quiet and substantial contributions, Fr. Norbert was, without ever being named Director of Oblates (he was never given great responsibility), the one who related to them from 1966 to 1980. Unfortunately we do not have a sample of his letters and would love to find one.

When I was a student at St. Peter’s College I had the experience of being taught by Fr. Norbert. I don’t remember a whole lot except the summaries he made of Kipling’s *Kim* in our literature class, and the summaries he made of those summaries! It was a sign of his totally selfless efforts to get us to remember the material he was teaching and in which most of us did well in spite of our lack of application.

But my most significant learning experience, I have to admit, had nothing to do with class material. It had only to do with the experience of injustice that was perpetrated against Fr. Norbert. His classroom was a discipline disaster. Occasionally Fr. Xavier Benning, the rector, had to come in to restore order.

The learning experience I’m referring to was from the way some of the students treated him. Fr. Norbert became the victim of the absolutely outrageous behaviour of certain immature individu-



Fr. Norbert helps Fr. Matthew Michel celebrate the eucharist.

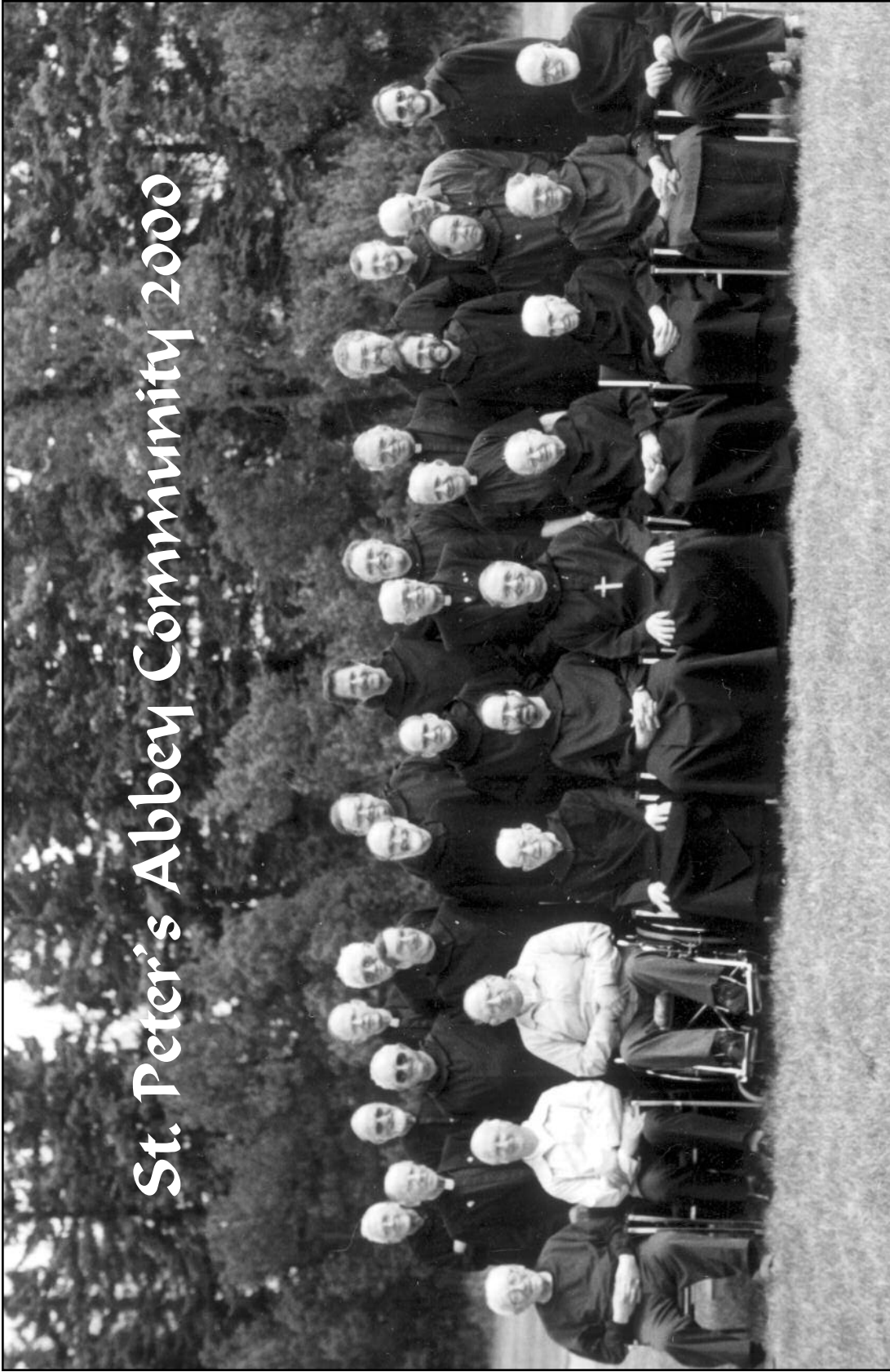
als who seemed to me back then just seeking to show off and increase their popularity. With apologies to those fellows who I’m sure look back to this with embarrassment, along with my own shame for lacking the guts to do something, I found myself wanting to choke these guys with my bare hands!

When I look back, however, I would have to say that these experiences of repeated injustice, of downright persecution of the defenseless, were the perfect training ground for acquiring a revulsion against bullying. And with Fr. Norbert as our scapegoat, I suspect he decreased the amount of bullying among the students themselves!

I’ll never forget going for a walk with an immigrant student two grades below me, who said, “If you knew what people thought of me you wouldn’t be walking with me.” I remember bristling with anger and saying, “That’s enough of a reason to walk with you!”

I’m sure I have to thank Fr. Norbert for getting me, as yet a high school student, firmly on the path of social activism and fighting for justice, having at least a gut understanding of the option for the poor. Thank you, Fr. Norbert, for being the victim who woke me up!

St. Peter's Abbey Community 2000



Front row, L-R: Br. Gregory Brodner, Fr. Joseph Ackerman, Fr. Rudolph Novecosky, Fr. Francis Lohmer, Br. François Boulet, Abbot Peter Novecosky, Fr. Roman Schneider, Fr. Jerome Weber, Fr. Albert Ruetz, Br. Gerald Moran

Middle row, L-R: Fr. George Brodner, Br. Bernard Lange, Br. Basil Schaan, Fr. Lawrence DeMong, Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk, Fr. Martin Brodner, Fr. Bernard Stauber, Br. Randy Senecal, Br. Anthony Nguyen

Back row, L-R: Br. Wolfgang Thiem, Fr. James Gray, Fr. Leo Hinz, Fr. Werner Renneberg, Fr. Richard Meidl, Br. Kurt Van Kuren, Br. Thomas Ward, Fr. Daniel Muyres, Fr. Andrew Britz, Br. Neil Pitzel, Fr. Robert Gannon, Br. Paul Paproski

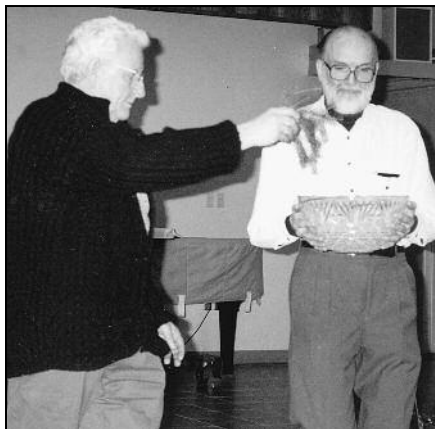
People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

2002

January — The new year started mildly and with the exception of the last two weeks in January, has continued that way into March. Snowfall was light, much of it disappearing after mid-February.

Jan. 23 — Christian Unity Week. The St. Peter's College Campus Ministry prepared the service in the Jerome Assembly Room in which college and high school, faculty, staff and monks participated. The age range was from 16 years old to 99 years young.

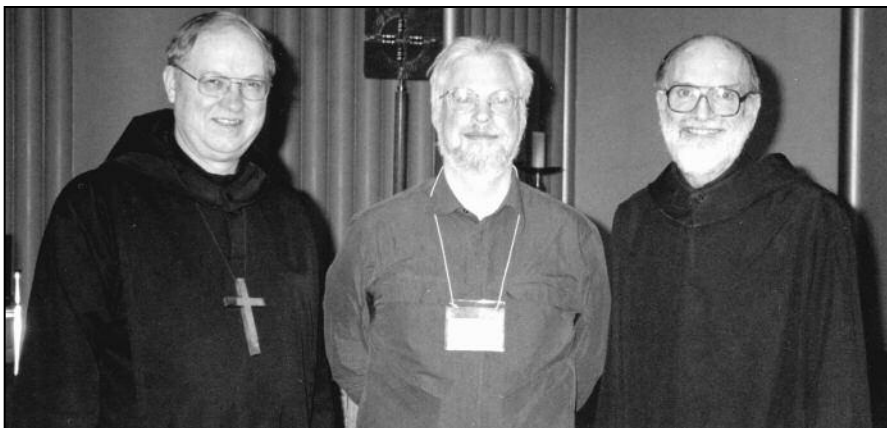


Rev. Alvin Hingley, United Church minister, assisted by Fr. Lawrence DeMong, blesses the students, faculty, staff and monks during a Christian Unity Service.

Jan. 24 — Rita Gillies of Saskatoon lectured on "A Look at Islam," its history, historic places and prayer practices. It was a very timely presentation in view of the interest in Islamism since Sept. 11, 2001.



Rita Gillies lectured on "A Look at Islam."



Oblate candidate Alan Reese with Abbot Peter Novecosky and Fr. Lawrence DeMong.

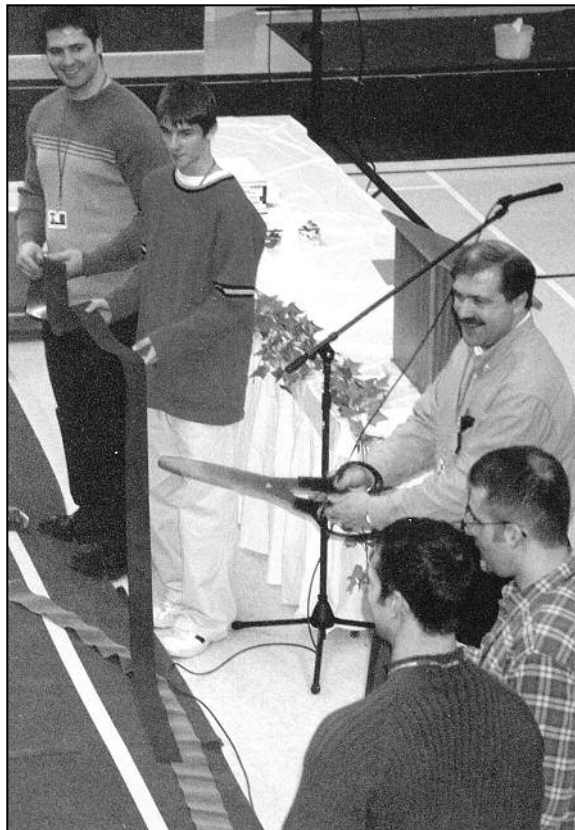
Jan. 25-27 — St. Thomas More, Newman retreat. The retreatants joined the monks for Vespers and Sunday eucharist. At Vespers on Jan. 26 Alan Reese, a professor with STM, was received as a Benedictine Oblate candidate.

Feb. 1-3 — The newly renovated gym hosted the provincial soccer tournament.

Feb. 3-17 — Saskatchewan Writers Guild Winter Colony. Seventeen members of the guild attended the winter colony. Many photos were taken of the chickadees feeding in the hand.

Feb. 11 — On this World Day of the Sick, seven of our monks received the Anointing of the Sick.

Feb. 17-23 — All facilities were fully booked for the Saskatchewan Winter Games which were held in Humboldt. The SPC gym and arena were the sites for gymnastics and hockey. Br. Thomas Ward volunteered.



Dr. Gerry Farthing, College alumni, officially opens St. Peter's College newly renovated gym. Joining him were his sons Jonathan, Joshua, Jeff and Dan.

Continued on next page

People and events around the abbey



Gymnastics was one of the events at the Saskatchewan Winter Games.

Continued from previous page

unteered four shifts at the Humboldt Uniplex as a Food Service Manager, feeding around 900 persons per meal.

At its mid-point on Thursday, Feb. 21, we had the official opening of our newly renovated gym. The program was prepared by the college. Gerry Farthing, an SPC student in the 1960s and professor of psychology for 15 years at STM, was the guest speaker. Fr. Albert Ruetz, principal for several years and teacher for over 50 years, offered the prayers of blessing of the newly renovated gym.

March 1-3 — The Lay Formation program (year one) has been continuing at the beginning of each month at the abbey during these winter months, and will continue until June.

March 2-8 — Abbot Peter is on the Visitation Team for St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan. It was the second time that he was assigned in this capacity.

We had one link with St. Benedict's when, in 1921, our newly elected Abbot Michael Ott was able to enlist Fr. Joseph Sittenauer to join our new Abbey-Nullius especially for teaching theology

to our increasing number of clerics. The two had taken their theological studies together in Rome.

On Feb. 24-28 Abbot Peter had also been to the annual Western Conference of Bishops meeting in Edmonton, as its secretary.

March 9 — Oblate Day and also the funeral of our Fr. Norbert Schwinghammer who had died on March 3, at the age of 91 1/2. It was a very cold day, as was most of March this year.



Saskatchewan Winter Games. Hockey and gymnastics were held in the SPC gym and arena.

Oblate Day continued in the afternoon with "Meet a Monk" reflections by Fr. Rudolph Novocosky and an explanation of "Centering Prayer" by Fr. James Gray. During the closing Vespers, Oblate John Clark, professor of English at St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon, made his final oblation as a Benedictine Oblate.



Oblate John Livingstone Clark makes final oblation as an Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey.



What do we treasure? The monks displayed some of their treasures at the "Solidarity Mass" on the 5th Sunday of Lent.

March 19 — During Vespers Fr. James Gray was blest as our new Novice Director.

March 20 — Ken Mansfield of Corner Brook, Nfld., was received as a claustral Oblate novice during the vigils of the Solemnity of St. Benedict.

March 30 — For the records. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother died at the age of 101.

March 31-April 5 — The Ursuline Sisters of Bruno gathered in chapter in preparation for electing a new superior. Sister Marian Noll was re-elected as superior. Councillors are Sisters Alexis, Maureen and Yvonne.

April 8 — Two major events marked the closing of the present school year.

An ecumenical service in the Jerome Assembly Room which brought together students, monks, professors and staff



Anita Renneberg, account clerk for the Order of St. Benedict, proclaims the Gospel at the ecumenical service for the closing of the school year.

of the college, press and kitchen. A hot lunch was prepared by the College Campus Ministry.

A really big Abbey-College book sale in the newly renovated gym foyer.


April 12 — The annual pro-life Teen-Aid talent show was again held in our gym.

April 18-21 — Fr. Richard Meidl, Vocation Director, attended the third Continental Congress on Vocations to the Ordained Ministry and Consecrated Life in North America. It was held in Montreal.

April — The guest department was heavily booked during this month with the following groups:

- Engaged Encounter (April 5-7)
- Anglican Clergy (April 7-12)
- Lay Formation (April 12-14)
- Anglican Cursillo (April 18-21)
- Anglican Cursillo (April 25-28)

Mid-April brought four days of rapid thaw which wiped out the little snow that we had. No water flowed into our reservoir. Our entire complex now depends on our Sask. River pipeline until the rains return.



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:

Richard Meidl, OSB
Vocation Director
St. Peter's Abbey
Box 10
Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0

Ph: 306-682-1791 / Fax: 306-682-1766
E-Mail: fr-richard@stpeters.sk.ca
see our web page at www.stpeters.sk.ca

Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

2002

Jan. 8 — Br. Gasper Renda, OSB, 62, St. Bernard's Abbey, Cullman, Ala.

Jan. 10 — Br. John Kaighin, OSB, 57, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

Jan. 15 — Sr. Martina Zoller, OSU, 91, Villa Angela, Humboldt, Sask.

Jan. 21 — Fr. Anthony Burlas, OSB, 74, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Feb. 2 — Fr. Aloysius Michels, OSB, 90, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Feb. 5 — Martilda Schaan, 80, Young, Sask. Mother of Br. Basil Schaan.

Feb. 5 — Margaret Ehl, 83, North Vancouver, BC. Sister of deceased Fr. Philip Loehr.

Feb. 19 — Fr. Clement Sobr, OSB, 81, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.

Feb. 22 — Fr. Godfrey Diekmann, OSB, 93, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Feb. 22 — Fr. Aelred Beck, OSB, 79, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

March 3 — Fr. Norbert Schwinghammer, OSB, 91, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask.

April 4 — Sr. Patricia Mackey, OSU, 86, Villa Angela, Humboldt, Sask.

*In your last will and testament
please remember St. Peter's Abbey.*

Our legal title is:

ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT
Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0



On April 4 the Benedictine monks and the Ursuline sisters shared an evening meal together.

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