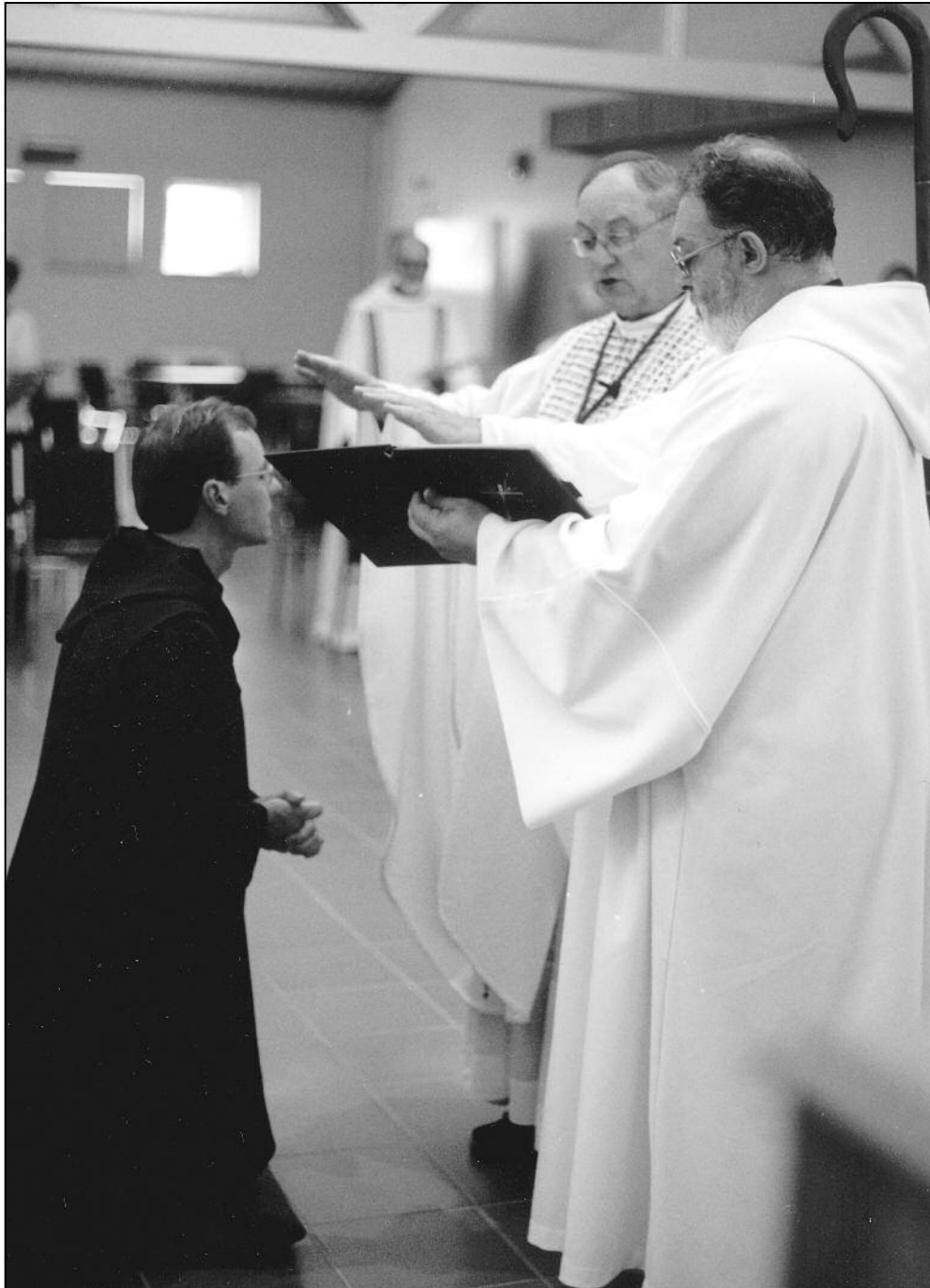


# *St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter*



Vol. 24 No. 3 Fall 2002



*Br. Paul Paproski pronounces his solemn vows  
as a monk of St. Peter's Abbey*

# A message from Abbot Peter's desk

During the month of August two men became candidates for monastic life at St. Peter's. Ron Brockman and Robert Monk were welcomed into the community after having visited us this past year. The period of candidacy lasts for six months and then they will be invited to apply to take the next step, which is to begin a novitiate for a year.

A change in formation personnel also took place in September. Fr. Lawrence DeMong replaces Fr. Richard Meidl as vocation director and candidate director. This will enable Fr. Richard to devote more time to his position as business manager of the abbey. Br. Basil was also named to assist in the formation program as *socius* and work co-ordinator.

Two monks are taking classes this fall. Br. Randy Senecal is taking classes in Humboldt and Br. Paul Paproski is beginning his theology studies at St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Br. Paul also made his solemn vows this summer and his guests enjoyed some buffalo burgers. These were from bison raised by his sister and her husband in Hudson Bay.

During the first week of August the monastic community had a monastic visitation. The last one was five years ago. Timothy Kelly of St. John's, president of

our American Cassinese Congregation, and Placid Solari, abbot of Belmont Abbey, were the visitators who came to help us evaluate our monastic life. Each member of the community had an opportunity to speak with them and voice any concerns. The visitators recommended that we evaluate our involvement in the various apostolates we are involved in.

After the visitation I appointed new officials for the monastery. Fr. Roman Schneider has served as prior and Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk has served as sub-prior since the last visitation. After consulting the community, I appointed Fr. Werner Renneberg as prior and Br. Basil Schaan as subprior for the community. I want to thank Frs. Roman and Demetrius for their service and I ask God's blessing on Fr. Werner and Br. Basil.

The week of Sept. 7-15 I spent with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto. I was asked to preach a week-long retreat for them at their motherhouse at Morrow Park. There are over 100 sisters living there and 40-plus made the retreat. This is also their retirement centre, with over 40 sisters retired here. One of their community, Sr. Mary Beth Montcalm, worked at St. Peter's as editor of the *Prairie Messenger* more than 20 years ago. Another of their sisters, Sr. Doreen Smith, used to work

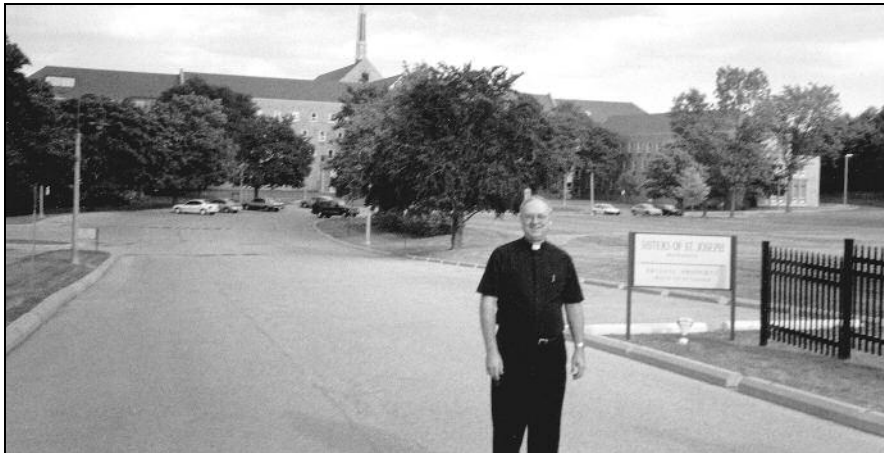
with the deaf community in Saskatoon and brought them to the abbey for an annual retreat. Mostly, the community has been involved in nursing and teaching. In Saskatchewan a good number of the sisters used to teach at Rosetown.

Morrow Park was in the news at the end of July, as this was where Pope John Paul II and his entourage stayed during his weekend in Toronto during World Youth Day. I got to hear a lot of "inside stories" of what happened during the pope's stay. The security was very tight for the week. The sisters also teased me that I was the first to stay in the pope's suite since he left a month earlier.

In the past year our community has put a lot of effort into upgrading our eldercare centre. Through the generosity of friends we have been able to begin an Eldercare Fund and to upgrade some of our furnishings. We have a couple of electric beds now and also some newer infirmary beds that can be raised or lowered as needed. We have also moved our whirlpool bath into the infirmary area and the home-care ladies make good use of it when they come to bathe our elderly monks. We have also some lifts to help the elderly monks out of bed, as needed.

I want to thank all those who have helped us upgrade our infirmary area by making donations to the Eldercare Fund. The next area that is being worked on is to renovate or replace some of the lifts that people in wheelchairs require as they move from the monastery to the church or from the church to the dining room. At one time we could all easily take the stairs, but it's more of a challenge going from building to building on a wheelchair. Each building, it seems, was built on a different level.

On Sept. 3 we celebrated a first for St. Peter's. About 100 friends and former parishioners came to honor Fr. Francis Lohmer on his 100th birthday at an afternoon come-and-go tea. Fr. Francis is the first monk in our history to reach this milestone. Celine Wolsfeld, his faithful housekeeper, continues to come and visit him every afternoon and to feed him.



*Abbot Peter Novecosky preached a retreat for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto from Sept. 7-14. He stands in front of their Morrow Park motherhouse. When Pope John Paul II stayed here during the July World Youth Day, his helicopter landed on the lawn just behind Abbot Peter.*

# Our abbey's future is in your hands

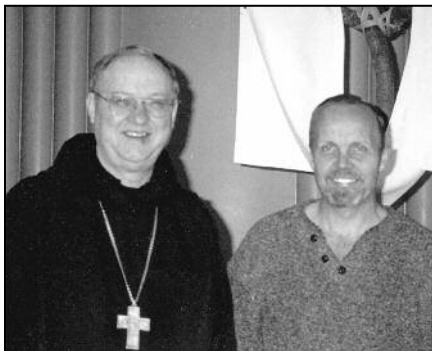


BY LAWRENCE DEMONG, OSB

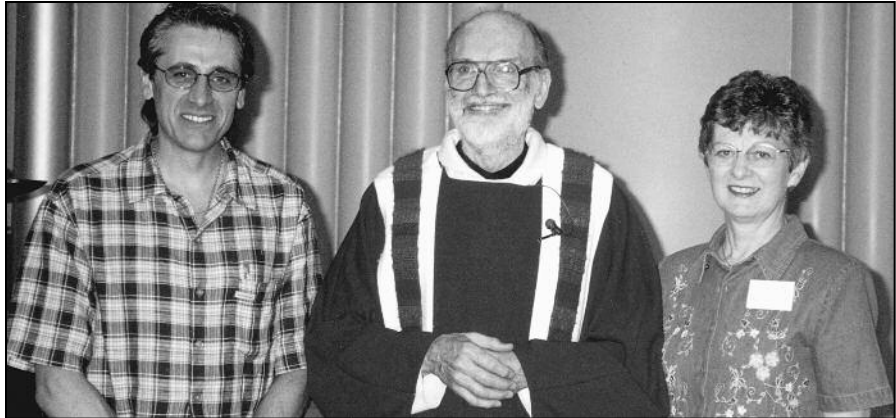
A dinner conversation the other day gave me some scary news: a sister abbey of our congregation with a history and size very similar to our own, is about to be closed down. Although abbeys have come and gone, this news brings the reality of institutional dying much closer to home and challenges us to take seriously our responsibility for the life of our own monastic community.

So what is my personal responsibility when it comes to the mysterious reality of the survival and growth of this place that I love? Perhaps even more basic, if it's important that it continue, what can I do to increase its chances of not only making it, but growing and increasing its influence as a place of blessing for everyone?

Recently our visitation, an event that happens in most monasteries every five years, outlined some of these challenges for us. The two visiting abbots who studied our own individual and collective assessment of our communal life and interviewed all monks as well as



*Ken Mansfield, seen here with Abbot Peter, is received as an Oblate candidate.*



*Steve Berg of Stony Plain, AB., and Gail Friesen of Saskatoon, SK., made their final oblation. They are seen here with Fr. Lawrence DeMong.*

some of our lay collaborators, gave us lots to think about. They warned us that one of the greatest risks when an abbey becomes smaller in numbers is overwork because so much has to be done to maintain activities that have for so long been part of our life. Another challenge for a small community is to raise up new leadership.

Recently one of our oblates who came here for a physical and spiritual uplift expressed very poignantly how she views our abbey and the responsibility she feels for its future. "I have a vested interest in this place," she said. "It's my abbey, my spiritual home." That conversation convinced me that we ought to be sharing not only spiritual gifts with our oblates and friends, but our concerns, our worries, and especially our struggles to find solutions. We must enlist you, the readers of this newsletter, to help us not just survive but thrive.

In the past month I have been asked to take on two tasks which have huge potential in determining the future of our abbey. Not treasurer, thank God, but two jobs that will relieve our treasurer, Fr. Richard Meidl, who is now giving full time to our bookkeeping and finances. My two new challenges have to do with encouraging vocations to our monastic life and supporting those who come as candidates.

Both of these tasks, director of vocations and guide to candidates, I see as collective responsibilities, that is, the work of our entire monastic family. But they are my work in the sense of the buck stopping with me. When all goes well we are doing it together; when there's a problem, it's my problem. And this is where I invite you all to be part of the process.

Fellow monks, it goes without saying that the most important source of vocations is the mutual respect and love we have for each other as we try to be the best Benedictine monastery we can be.

Co-workers in our various departments and apostolates here at St. Peter's, oblates, relatives, friends near and far, we need you, especially with your own caring support and your prayers. We need you too as ambassadors of Christ who calls people to lives of dedication. True, God's Spirit whispers in our hearts, but most people who have answered a call to consecrated life will tell you that some specific person had much to do with the decision being concretely carried through. Encourage our present candidates and, we hope, our future novices and junior monks.

To all of you but to our oblates in particular, you who have answered a specific call to live our Benedictine spirituality, we ask for your support, your ideas and, when possible, your shoulder to the wheel!

# Br. Paul professes solemn vows

By Donald Ward

Brother Paul Paproski, OSB, professed his solemn vows as a monk of St. Peter's Abbey on July 11, 2002.

Born at Lanigan, Sask., in 1963, Paproski grew up in Hudson Bay, Sask. He holds a degree in journalism from the University of Regina and worked as a reporter and photographer, then editor of the local newspaper in Hudson Bay until he came to St. Peter's in September 1997. He took his first vows in March 1999.

During the ceremony, Paproski said, he was thinking "how amazing it is that I am now a full-time member of St. Peter's Abbey. I am no longer a junior, I am no longer in formation."

He has always felt welcome at St. Peter's, but with his solemn profession he felt he had really achieved a milestone.

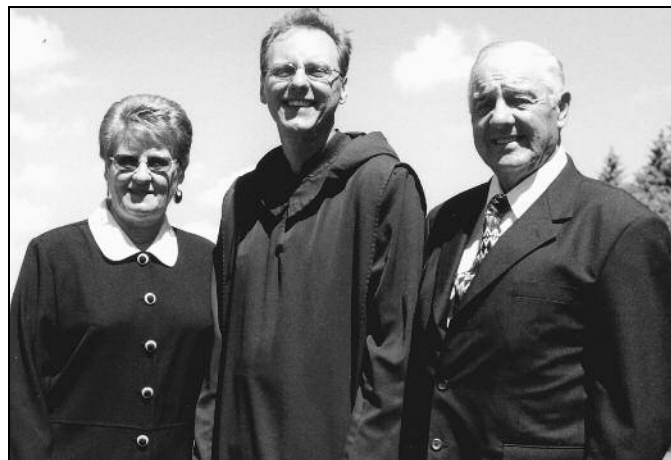
"I've made a very important commitment," he said. "It's like marriage, a commitment for life."

As far back as Paproski can remember, people have asked him if he was going to be a priest. Now studying for

ordination at St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Penn., he wonders sometimes why it took him so long to make the commitment. But then, he thinks, if he had left home as a younger man, he would have missed watching his nieces and nephews growing up.

Paproski has seven nieces and nephews, all of whom were present for the ceremony, along with his parents, Ardel and Freda Paproski of Hudson Bay, and his sisters and brother. There were many friends and other Benedictines present, as well as members of other religious orders, including the Ursulines and the Elizabethans.

Paproski was particularly pleased by the turnout — not for his own sake, but for



Br. Paul Paproski with his parents Freda and Ardel Paproski.

the faithful witness so many people were willing to bring to his own witness of faith.

As he lay prostrate on the floor of the chapel while the abbot intoned the litany of the saints, Paproski said, he was conscious of surrendering himself completely to the will of God.

"That's a very symbolic way of placing oneself in God's hand," he observed: "complete submission."

# Priest credits long life to positive attitude

By Paul Paproski, OSB

"Don't use your brain too much," joked Rev. Francis Lohmer, OSB, when asked if he had any theories on how to live for a century.

Lohmer celebrated his 100th birthday Sept. 3, having entered his 77th year of priesthood Aug. 2.

He advised more seriously that a positive attitude plays an important role in a long life. It is important not to get angry, he said in an interview two years ago, not to let things bother you too much.

Genetics is probably a factor as well; Lohmer's mother, three brothers and a sister all lived into their 90s, and two of his sisters are presently 91 and 93.

Two years ago Lohmer was still saying mass each weekday at St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt, and once a week at

St. Scholastica Church south of Humboldt. One reason he was able to continue the work for so long was because of the dedication of his housekeeper and chauffeur, Celine Wolsfeld, and parishioner Leonard Novecosky who assisted at mass.

The oldest Benedictine at St. Peter's Abbey, Lohmer entered with three other young men in July 1921 when construction of the brick building which is now



Francis Lohmer, OSB

St. Peter's College was under way. They had been students together at St. John's in Collegeville, Minn.

"We made our vows (as novices) almost immediately," he recalled — and were put to work hauling cement in a wheel barrow, for construction of the new abbey meant there was a demand for labour.

After Lohmer finished his novitiate he was enlisted as a teacher and later as a recruiter of students for St. Peter's College. He taught German, English and religion, coached hockey, and later taught violin and formed a mouth organ band.

Lohmer was ordained in August 1925 in St. Paul, Minn. He subsequently served as pastor at Lake Lenore, Humboldt, Watson, Cudworth and Annaheim.

# People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

May — The weather was definitely on our minds as the dry winter melted into spring with no spring run-off into our reservoir. And May remained cool after the rather mild winter, so that the seeding had to be postponed for several weeks till the ground warmed up.

The drought ended temporarily for us with over two inches of rain in mid-June which caused gardens and fields to “green” again with the intense heat that followed in the second part of June. But now, to go back to the beginning of May for some details.



The Lay Formation group tours the Earthcare Balloon setup in St. Peter's College gym during a class on Ecology and Christian Tradition.

May 5 — Duane Guina, director of the Earthcare program in our area, exhibited his 20-ft.-diameter “Earth Balloon” in the gym to the Lay Formation Program here at St. Peter's Abbey.

May 14 — We started seeding and gardening into rather dry ground with hope. Also stone picking on the 100 acres of our “Loehr Organic Farm” which we are starting this spring in response to the growing interest in organic farming.

May 21 — Today we began the 100th anniversary of our St. Peter's Colony.



June 11-19 — The refreshing rains have arrived! Br. Paul Paposki has also returned from his studies at St. Vincent's Archabbey, and planted 100 saskatoon trees in the garden south of the abbey. Br. Kurt Van Kuren is also totally involved in nurturing an organic garden south of the cemetery. This is also a pioneer project.

June 16-20 — The Benedictine community was on retreat, led by Fr. Thomas Acklin, OSB, of St. Vincent's Archabbey, where Br. Paul has been taking his theological studies. The refreshing retreat was centred on solid monastic spirituality.



Fr. Thomas Acklin, OSB

June 22 — Fr. Albert Ruetz returned from the hospital with a heart pacemaker. Fr. Leo Hinz has also returned to his pastoral work in Cudworth and St. Benedict after a rapid recovery from hip surgery. And on June 26 Br. Gerald Moran was able to remove the cast from a fractured right wrist.

June 23-29 — Three young men were here on retreat in preparation for ordination to the priesthood: Malcolm D'Souza and Huy Nguyen from Calgary; Eric Giddening from Winnipeg and here at the same time was Kevin Yakimoski, deacon-elect from Saskatoon.

June 29 — Summer gathering of Oblates of St. Benedict. Fr. Lawrence DeMong received the final oblations of Gail Friesen of Saskatoon, Sask., and Steve Berg of Stony Plain, Alta.

This day was special since, as Fr. Lawrence pointed out in his homily, this feast of Sts. Peter and Paul happens to be special since they are the patrons of our Sts. Peter and Paul Abbey Church, as well as the patrons of the ancient Cluny Abbey in France, which inspired Fr. Oswald Moosmueller to name the monastery “Cluny” at Wetaug, Ill.

*Continued on next page*



On retreat at St. Peter's Abbey in June were three deacons and one deacon-elect: Huy Nguyen (Calgary), Eric Giddening (Winnipeg), Malcolm D'Souza (Calgary) and Kevin Yakimoski (Saskatoon).

# People and events around the abbey



*A private concert was given in July by the teen choir for the monks and guests of the abbey.*

Furthermore St. Peter is patron of our abbey and college, while St. Paul is patron of the Saskatoon diocese of which we now are a part.

June 30 - July 13 — We again welcome the two Saskatchewan Youth Choir Camps in these first two weeks of July. The teen choir numbered 67 and the junior choir number 79. They deserve highest commendation for the work that they can accomplish in five days.

July 11 — On this Solemnity of St. Benedict, Br. Paul Paproski pronounced his Solemn (Final) Vows. He hails from Hudson Bay, Sask. Both the family and many relations from Lanigan and Burr, Sask., joined in the celebration.

Mid-July ushered in several weeks of rain of over three inches. This and the previous rains a month earlier broke the extreme drought that had set in. The result was : that it was not too late for crops and gardens which are maturing wondrously in spite of two of the hottest weeks on record. The weeds also thrived, so that many were involved in weeding gardens during this time. Special attention was given to our first organic experiments in some fields and gardens by Fr. Lawrence DeMong and Br. Kurt Van Kuren.

July 19 — Work began on the major work of enlarging our abbey handicapped lift which has proven very user-unfriendly for both wheel chairs and scooters. This involves a small extension along the south corridor leading into the church. Br. Wolfgang Thiem and Allan Vedress are the masterminds on this project.

July 21 — Mount Carmel Pilgrimage marked the 80th annual pilgrimage since its first pilgrimage Sept. 10, 1922. The hill had been donated by the neighbouring farmer John Bunko on July 22, 1921, and a small chapel built on top of the mount. A welcome rain shortened the afternoon services somewhat. Already since before the pilgrimage site became part of the Saskatoon diocese in 1998, the Filipino community in Saskatoon has been hiring a bus and coming to Mount Carmel and touring the abbey.

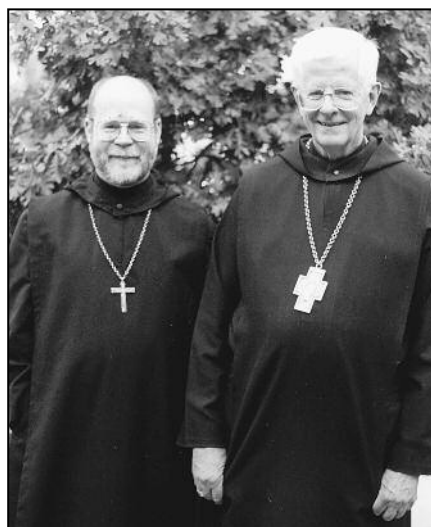
Aug. 4-8 — The community entered upon its “Visitation” process, with Visitors Abbot Timothy Kelly of St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., and Abbot Placid Solari of Mary Help of Christians Abbey, Belmont, N.C. St. Peter’s Abbey had links with both these

abbeys; hence, the visitation proved also to be a wonderful fraternal sharing.

Aug. 10-25 — Big days in the kitchen for canning garden produce: rhubarb, beans, raspberries, cabbage, cucumbers to name just a few. The rains, even though a bit late were wonderful. In fact we were blest with about 10 inches of rain from mid-June to mid-August.

Aug. 12 — The Sisters of St. Elizabeth hosted the annual tri-community meeting this year. This year it brought a special bonus: two of the young sisters had been in Toronto for World Youth Day July 23 - 28, and both Sisters Dianne and Clara let their gratitude and enthusiasm freely burst forth in praise of our faith, joy and partnership in our lives, making us the “salt of the earth and light of the world.”

Aug. 15 — This Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary was chosen to celebrate many jubilees: — of profession, Fr. Francis Lohmer 80; Br. Gregory Brodner 70; Frs. Jerome 65, Roman 60, Joseph 50; — of priesthood, Fr. George 60.



*The Visitors: Abbots Placid Solari and Timothy Kelly*



*Anniversary celebrations — L-R: Br. Gregory Brodner, 70 years profession; Fr. George Brodner, 60 years ordination; Fr. Roman Schneider, 60 years profession; Fr. Jerome Weber, 65 years profession. Missing: Fr. Francis Lohmer, 80 years profession and Fr. Joseph Ackerman, 50 years profession.*

Aug. 17 — The World Youth Day was the inspiration for a diocesan follow-up for our youth on Mount Carmel, entitled “Rock the Mount.” The celebration was from 11:00 a.m. till 9:00 p.m., with Bishop Albert LeGatt presiding over the eucharistic celebration at 5:00 p.m. Attendance was estimated at between 700 to 1,000.

Aug. 22 — Two candidates were received into the community to begin six months of postulancy which precede the novitiate: Ronald Brockman formerly of St. Benedict, Sask.; and Robert Monk of Winnipeg, Man.

Sept. 2 — Blessing and installation of new abbey officials: Prior: Fr. Werner Renneberg, Subprior: Br. Basil Schaan.

Sept. 3 — A poster announced: “100th Birthday of Fr. Francis Lohmer, OSB. Come & Go Tea 2:30 - 4:00 pm.” Fr. Francis is the first monk of St. Peter’s Abbey to reach 100 years in this first century of our existence in Canada! He retired from pastoral work only two years ago. Many former parishioners added much joy and gratitude to the occasion.

Sept. 3 — Opening of another col-

lege year with a slightly increased enrolment of over 110 students.

Aug. 2 - Sept. 4 — Marks the 100th anniversary of that first exploratory expedition which Fr. Bruno Doerfler of St. John’s Abbey made in 1902 to find a new site in the newly opened North West Territories for a Benedictine monastic foundation, which turned out to be St. Peter’s Colony.

On this first trip Fr. Bruno touched down only near Basin Lake in the north-west corner of the future abbacy. A second trip was necessary at the end of September to claim 50 townships for the influx of German Catholic settlers, chiefly from Minnesota, and also to claim homesteads for the pioneer monks.



*New Prior Fr. Werner Renneberg and Sub-prior Br. Basil Schaan.*

Our abbey visitators (Aug. 4-8) pointed out that this coming 100th anniversary of our foundation (May 21, 1903) is a good opportunity to become a ‘refounding generation’ with the renewed courage and enthusiasm of our founding pioneers of 100 years ago.

Sept. 6-8 — The Saskatoon Lay Formation Program Year 2, had its first gathering for the coming year with 34 members continuing their formation.



*Fr. Richard Meidl with the new candidates Ronald Brockman and Robert Monk.*

*Continued on next page*

# People and events around the abbey



From left, Eva Graf, Celine Wolsfeld, Abbot Peter Novocosky, Sr. Walburga Brodner and Eleanor Engele, all former priest housekeepers, joined the community for supper on July 29.



Judith Tarabek (niece of Fr. Francis) with her husband, Paul, visited Fr. Francis Lohmer in June.

Sept. 8-9 — Ten visitors from our two mission parishes in Brazil are visiting our diocese until Oct. 2 and spent two days at St. Peter's Abbey. Fr. Les Paquin who was the last to leave the Brazilian missions on June 6, co-ordinated this tour.

Sept. 14 — "Potato Day" at the abbey. After several weeks of rainy weather which boosted our gardens and crops considerably, the sunny weather of the past two weeks ushered in the harvest season. Potatoes and corn are splendid, and crops better than anticipated.

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

— Benedictine Motto

## Deaths: remember the faithful departed

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

**April 7** — Fr. Cyprian Seitz, OSB, 92, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

**May 5** — Helena Vredegoor, 70, Palmeira dos Indios, Brazil. Sister of deceased Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor.

**May 6** — Carl Fortney, 78, Simmie, Sask. Brother of deceased Br. Francis Fortney.

**May 17** — Leo Ruetz, 83, Shaunavon, Sask. Brother to Fr. Albert Ruetz.

**May 29** — Fr. Christian Cepelcha, OSB, 74, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.

**June 20** — Fr. Stephen Wagman, OSB, 81, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

**July 5** — Fr. Daniel O'Shea, OSB, 72, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

**July 7** — Lorna Renneberg, 76, Cudworth, Sask. Sister-in-law to Fr. Werner Renneberg.

**July 9** — Cletus Ruetz, 80, Gull Lake, Sask. Brother to Fr. Albert Ruetz.

**July 10** — Fr. Bede Lightner, OSB, 87, Belmont Abbey, Belmont, N.C.

**July 18** — Helen Saretsky, 88, Humboldt, Sask. Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey.

**July 22** — Elsa Wasylyniuk, 83, Watrous, Sask. Mother of Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk.

**Aug. 24** — Chris Ackerman 72, Regina, Sask. Brother of Fr. Joseph Ackerman.

**Aug. 30** — Br. Alfred Nasticky, OSB, 82, Saint Andrew Abbey, Cleveland, Ohio.

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

*Our legal title is:*

**ORDER OF  
ST. BENEDICT**

Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0