

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 27 No. 2 Summer and Fall 2004

St. Peter's Abbey in pictures: joys mixed with sorrow



(L, top to bottom)

1. Disastrous farm fire in early June. Two trucks, two tractors and other machines totally destroyed.

2. Construction of the college water reservoir for fire safety.

3. Mother fox near its den by the press building.

4. Group of young people attending a conference at the abbey.

5. A lone rabbit, guest at the abbey for several weeks.



(R, top to bottom)

6. One of the two choir camps performing in the abbey church.

7. SaskPower bringing power to the college for its expanded needs.

8. Fr. Martin in the saskatoon berry patch.

9. Frs. Albert and Leo cutting their 60th anniversary of profession cake.

10. Richard Medernach and Vijay Krishnan, abbey live-ins, preparing vegetables from our bounteous garden crop.



(Below)

11. Some of the college faculty at the academic mass.



A message from Abbot Peter's desk

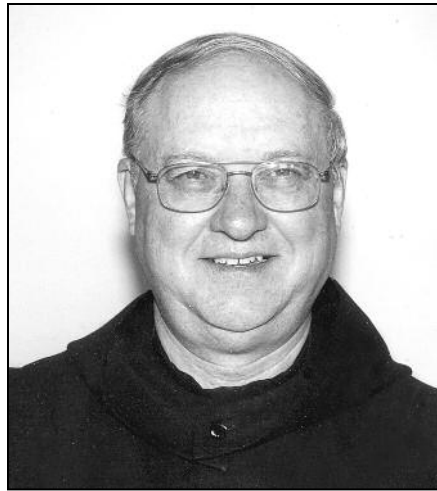
Dear friends,

Abbots from around the world met in Rome the last two weeks of August this year. An abbots' congress is held every four years. This year there were 230 abbots present from all five continents. The sessions were held at Sant Anselmo, the international Benedictine abbey and college in Rome. Besides abbots, there were 24 Benedictine sisters present as observers as well as four ecumenical guests, representing various Orthodox churches around the world.

The weather in Rome was very pleasant. This added to the positive climate of the meeting. There was an opportunity to meet abbots from around the world, or to renew acquaintances made from previous congresses. This was the fourth congress that I attended.

The theme of the congress was: Globalization: phenomena, opportunities, challenges. Two speakers addressed the topic: a German adviser to the Deutsche Bank, and a founder of the internationally known St. Egidio Community of Rome. Simultaneous translations are made in five languages: English, Italian, German, French and Spanish.

One of the initiatives of the last two decades bore fruit this year. The



Benedictine Confederation is composed of male communities only. At this congress we accepted the request of the Benedictine women's communities that we act as an "umbrella" to help them organize their own confederation.

Another big step taken was to reorganize the Abbey of St. Paul's Outside the Walls. It will be made into an international community and it will have an ecumenical focus. The new prior-administrator is an Englishman. St. Paul's has been occupied by Benedictine monks for over 1,300 years. Given its patron, St. Paul, it has had an historic association with ecu-

menical outreach in the past. It was here, for example, that Pope John XXIII chose to announce his calling of the Second Vatican Council.

Amid the many discussions at the congress, one of the highlights is the opportunity to meet other abbots and discuss issues with them. The growth of new abbeys today seems to be located especially in Asia and Africa, with an average of four new communities (men and women) being founded each year.

Other points of interest at the abbey are the two deaths that we experienced this summer. Br. Bernard Lange died May 30 and Fr. George Brodner died Aug. 31. Br. Bernard was the longtime farm manager and Fr. George spent many years working as a pastor. Both men will be missed for the knowledge and experience that they brought to our community.

Two community members are away studying this year: Br. Randy Senecal is completing his second year of an Appraisal and Assessment business course at Lakeland College in Vermillion, Alta. Br. Paul Paposki is taking his third year of theology at St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Penn. Fr. Albert Ruetz made a transition to retirement this summer from parish work.

Keep the Heat Fund to replace abbey windows

Dear friends of St. Peter's Abbey,

An abbey is never without its guests and visitors, St. Benedict tells us in his Rule. That is true, and St. Peter's Abbey is happy to receive many guests throughout the year.

We are also the recipient of a good number of donations from our friends. And for that we are always thankful as well.

The abbey has not made many direct appeals for funds. We did appeal for some help in building our abbey church a decade ago, and many people were generous. A few years ago, as the need for financial assistance for our elderly became apparent, we began an Eldercare Fund to help cover expenses for our elders.

Now the abbey wants to initiate

another fundraiser. We will call it the Keep the Heat Fund. What's it for? We need to raise funds to replace the windows in the abbey. As we all know the cost of heating is rising continually. The abbey building is 40 years old and the windows need replacing. So do the windows on the guest wing, which is an even older building.

Three years ago we began to replace some abbey windows, and the monks could tell the difference right away. No more cool winter breezes flowing through their rooms! We planned to replace all the abbey windows, but are not able to afford it. To replace the rest of the abbey windows will cost approximately \$50,000. The good news is that we have already received a \$20,000 gift for this project. If any of our readers can

be generous for this cause, we will be most grateful. It would be very encouraging to be able to complete this project a year from now: the fall of 2005.

In addition, the windows of Severin Hall, our guest department also need replacing. The estimated cost for this is \$50,000. We will be very grateful for donations for that project as well.

Charitable tax receipts will be provided for donations \$10 or more.

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

Our legal title is:
ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT
Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0

St. Peter's Abbey Junior Choir Camp

Lawrence Ewashko interview by
Werner Renneberg, OSB

"I was born to Ukrainian Canadian parents in Winnipeg. My father was an RCMP officer. I have two sisters, one older and one younger than I. When I was eight years old the family moved to Ottawa. It was there I attended school and university.

"Music and singing were not, and still are not, a high priority in the minds of many people. I was asked, 'Why not study to be a lawyer or doctor?' I said, 'No. I want to study music and singing.' My parents supported me in my ambition.

"Next, I spent six years in Vienna, Austria. I dabbled a bit in piano, but concentrated on studying singing and conducting. I worked with the Vienna Boys' Choir as teacher and director and travelled through Europe and America.

"Coming back to Ottawa, Canada, I have been working with the Ottawa Cantata Singers and the Opera Lyra Ottawa Chorus. In September we will present the opera, *Madame Butterfly* by Pucini.

"How did I get involved with St. Peter's and the Summer Youth Choir Camps? One of my first teachers, Barbara Clark, had been the first Summer Choir Camp conductor at St. Peter's Abbey. She suggested I go there. Vicky Young, the Camp co-ordinator, invited me to come in 1996. I have been here ever since, except for two years.

"Some people seem to think that it is only in Ottawa and Toronto that important things happen. But I love the



St. Peter's Abbey Junior Choir Camp conducted by Lawrence Ewashko.

prairies. My grandparents lived in Saskatchewan and my father was born here. I feel very much at home here where my roots are.

"I believe it is unfortunate that school officials in general put so little investment and energy into music and arts. Their thinking seems to be that the arts are a luxury. In their mind other things, like sports, are more important.

"Perhaps many school officials and teachers don't know that studying and practicing music and singing affect 22 disciplines in the mind and body of students. For example, they learn mathematics, how to count, to harmonize (work together). They learn discipline, concentration, where to look for beauty, etc.

"I enjoy coming here because we have children from all over Saskatchewan.

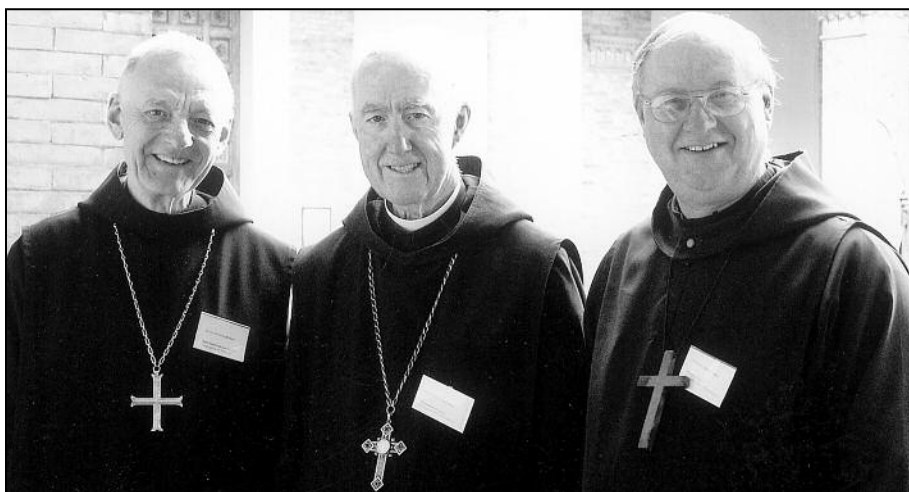
Some parents drive five hours to bring their children. We have also had children from outside the province. I enjoy spending time with young people, training them to sing and derive joy from singing. Coming to a choir camp is an investment in their future.

"Eighty-eight children wanted to come to the senior choir camp last week. We ended up with 82. We have 45 children in this week's junior camp. It is smaller than usual. Our average has been about 60 children per camp. Likely there will have to be more advertising to attract the younger set in the future.

"It is difficult to get boys to come to the senior camp. This is an uncomfortable time for them. Their voices are changing. Perhaps there is peer pressure as well from other boys who think that singing isn't for men. What these boys need are teachers, parents and significant others to encourage them to develop their talents for singing, as well as for other things. If they have role models to imitate, perhaps more will come. Unfortunately there is not much singing today in many homes.

"There have been some professional singers among those I have trained. Among them are counter tenors Daniel Taylor and Matthew White.

"The staff and I feel very comfortable and welcome here at St. Peter's Abbey. We are happy with the facilities we find here. My special thanks go to Abbot Peter, Father Demetrius, the Benedictine community and to the kitchen staff headed by Viola Kuervers."



The three Canadian abbots at the Abbots' Congress were, from left: Jacques Garneau, Maurus Macrae and Peter Novocosky. (Jacques Coté Photo)

People and events around the abbey

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

May 1 – We take up our chronicle after looking back gratefully at an abundant spring-thaw-water-run-off April 4-5, which filled our reservoir to the brim. Fortunately indeed garden and field seeding were completed by May 26 before abundant June rains came our way.

May 1 – On this day Bro. Scott Madigan, OP, seminarian (Toronto) arrived for a four-month stay to experience monastic life of “work and prayer.” A pleasant sight indeed in his white habit as he steeped himself into our monastic life.



Bro. Scott Madigan, OP

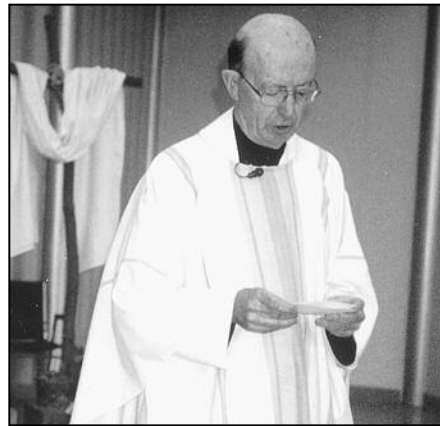
*Unfortunately, at the end of April, our bees died out on us. They had already been decimated by mites during their winter storage.

May 13 – Sister Catherine Schaan, OSE, (Humboldt) died at 77.

May 14 – New pastoral appointment for monks, effective July 6, were announced: Fr. Daniel Muyres, pastor of Muenster and Hospital Chaplain (Humboldt); Fr. Andrew, continue in Lake Lenore but with Naicam added; Fr. Bernard Stauber to Pilger and Middle Lake; Fr. Albert Ruetz retires at the abbey. Two diocesan and an Oblate pastor now care for the former abbacy parishes of Watson, Englefeld, St. Gregor, Humboldt and LeRoy.

May 16-20 – Monks on retreat. Fr. Simeon Thole, OSB (St. John's Abbey)

was our retreat master. He had been a classmate with Fr. Rudolph at St. John's.



Fr. Simeon Thole, OSB

May 28 – A two-inch rain was the beginning of rains throughout June, to a total of about six inches. Crops and gardens are flourishing. However, the accompanying cool weather until mid-July slowed down growth to the equivalent of three weeks later than usual.

May 30 – After completing seeding May 26, our Bro. Bernard Lange, OSB, went for a few days of rest and fishing to Meadow Lake, and was found dead in bed on the morning of May 30. He had had heart ailments for several years. Bro. Bernard had been farm manager since 1970. He was 74 years old.

June 2 – At 12:30 a.m. a fire was detected on the farm which completely demolished one of our “Quonset” implement sheds. In it were stored two tractors, two trucks, and other valuable machinery. The loss was estimated at about \$130,000.

June 6 – Five little red foxes were born in the culvert just northwest of St. Peter's Press. They claimed the culvert as their home for a month. They must have eyed the chickens but so far none have disappeared. The chickens are fenced in.

June 3-7 – Abbot Peter attended the CRC (Canadian Religious) annual Conference at Cornwall, Ont.

June 12-18 – Abbot Peter, along with Fr. Demetrius, participated in the gener-

al chapter for the American Cassinese Benedictines, in Lisle, Ill.

*Repainting jobs began in the first two weeks of June, Scholastica residence being the first. It had not been repainted since it was built in 1957. Other sites painted were the new canning room (off the kitchen) and the renovated corridor in the main entrance. This renovation included a ramp, steel railings, linoleum floor as well as several light fixtures obtained from the former St. Augustine Church, Humboldt. The ramp gives wheelchair access from the church and monastery to the library refectory and Michael Hall.

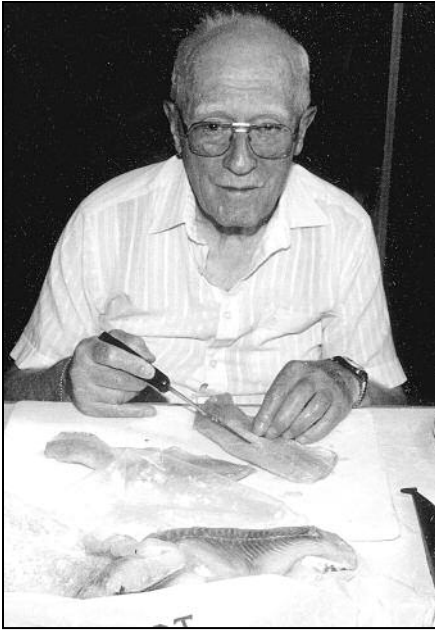
June 17 – For the records. The towering majestic old St. Augustine Church, Humboldt, was demolished. It had been condemned for use because of the moldy condition of its basement. The original structure, built in 1912, had been enlarged in later years.

June 19 – Lt.-Gov. Lynda Haverstock visited the College to present Architecture Excellence awards for 2004, for seven Provincial Sask. Heritages. The Humboldt Post Office Museum was one of the recipients. Dennis Korte, mayor of Humboldt, accepted the architecture award.



Lynda Haverstock and Dennis Korte

June 28 – For the records. The dominion elections resulted in a minority government with the Liberals gleaning only 135 (of the 308) seats. Others: Conservatives 99; NDP 19; Bloc Québécois 54, 1 independent.



Fr. Werner deboning filleted jackfish for a supper repast at the abbey.

June 29 – Solemnity of Sts. Peter & Paul, our patrons. Fathers Leo Hinz and Albert Ruetz celebrated their 60th anniversary of profession.



Fathers Albert Ruetz and Leo Hinz with Abbot Peter Novecosky

June 21 – Fr. Andrew Britz is taking several hyperbaric treatments in Victoria, B.C., which hopefully will bring relief from his Parkinson's disease.

July 2-17 – The Saskatchewan Youth Choir groups were with us again during these first weeks of July. At the close of each week of training they treated us to their rehearsal for their performance next day in St. Peter's Cathedral.

July 5 – Our solid college building (Michael's Hall) never had a fire prevention system. This is now being installed. Work began on this major project this week with excavating a water cistern in our "Stanley Park" between the college

building and Severin Hall.

*At the same time another crew is at work installing the sprinkling pipelines on all floors of the college building.

*A third project has also just been completed, namely extending a small portion of the east and west walls of the present gym. Our gym, renovated a few years ago, is very much in demand, even provincially. With these three-foot extensions the gym now provides a better playing area for soccer.

July 16-19 – The cool June weather has given way to two very hot weeks. Periodic rains have kept a good supply of moisture these past weeks. August, with its frequent rains and cool weather, cut this "short summer" off. This set our fields and gardens back by about three weeks.

Aug. 2-7 – We had the finest June berries (saskatoons) in years and picked about 25 gallons on the banks of our Wolverine Creek.

* One week later, a most abundant raspberry crop was ready, helped by the continuing rains. We were able to offer some for sale this year.

Aug. 4 – Fr. George Brodner's health had been deteriorating. He spent several weeks in the hospital due to severe diabetes and Ménière's disease. He returned to the abbey Aug. 19. His health continued to deteriorate. He died in his sleep early morning of Aug. 31.

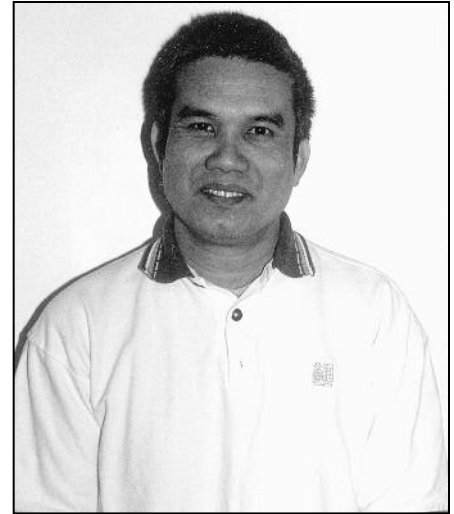
Aug. 11 – Again for the records. Work begins at St. Augustine's Parish, Humboldt, with "sod turning" for the new Parish Community Centre.

Aug. 15 – St. Bruno Parish celebrated its 100th anniversary with a two-day celebration. Bishop Albert LeGatt presided at the centennial eucharist.

Aug. 19 – Peter Tien-La (Toronto) was accepted as a candidate into our Benedictine community.

Aug. 19-20 – We experienced considerable damage to our gardens and crops from a first frost during the night.

Aug. 23 – Bro. Paul Paproski returned to St. Vincent Archabbey for his second-last year of theology.



Peter Tien-La

Sept. 8 – Orientation Day for university students for the coming year.

Sept. 11 – Sunday we celebrated the SPC academic mass with monks and faculty members present. At the lunch which followed, 26 scholarships were awarded.

Sept. 11 – Sr. Margaret (Thomas) Bernhard, OSU, 83, died.

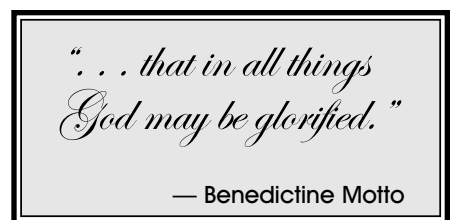
Sept. 8 – We started combining peas: the first time we ventured into this crop.

Sept. 18-30 – Abbot Peter will be at his first of two major meetings: the first at the Abbots' Congress in Rome; then Oct. 19-23 the CCCB annual meeting at Cornwall, Ont.

Sept. 21 – Arvid-Peter Sprung (Brandon) arrived to begin his candidacy to become a cloistered Oblate.

Sept. 24 – After a recent heavy rain, combining our major crops finally got into full swing at least three weeks later than other years.

Sept. 24 – 26 – The Buddhist retreat of 76 was the largest of various weekend gatherings in our guest department for this fall.



Retired Abbot Jerome Weber, OSB

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

"I was born in Muenster Sept. 14, 1915. Twelve children, eight boys and four girls, were born to my parents, Peter Weber and Cecilia nee Koett. I was the second born in the family and given the name Ferdinand. My older brother, Bernard, died of scarlet fever when I was six.

"My father always rented out his land. He was in business as a dray man, machinery salesman, Imperial Oil agent and operated a livery barn. Later he opened a grocery store.

"My father had one of the first cars in Muenster. He also had a Ford Model T truck in the late 1920s. This was used to haul grain for farmers. At age 14 I was driving that truck, hauling grain.

"I attended the Monastery School near the Muenster cathedral for my first eight grades. Ursuline nuns were usually the teachers. I made my first communion and received confirmation in the Muenster cathedral. The nuns instructed us for the sacraments.

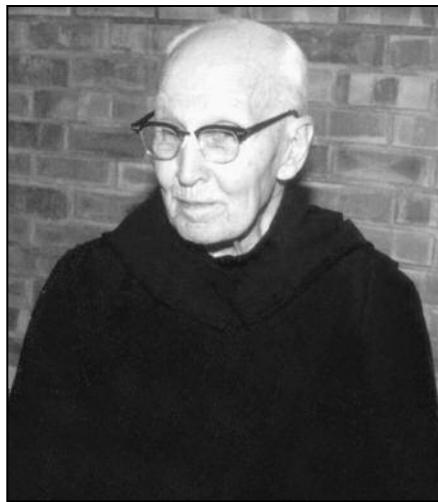
"We were living in the Muenster village a half mile from school and attended daily mass. At times I went home for noon lunch during the school year.

"Being cousins of the Nenzels, I spent a few weeks during holidays at the Nenzel farm which was two miles from town. Mrs. Nenzel insisted we attend daily mass. My cousin, George Nenzel, and I would serve mass. George was tall and I was short. We were a sight!

"Monastery school was a parish school. Both German and English were taught. Because people were forced to pay double taxes, first for the parish school and then the public school, the Monastery School became a public school in the early '30s. The people were unable to afford the double taxation. But by then I was already through grade school.

"I attended St. Peter's College from 1929 to '34, as a day student. I was interested in sports and played hockey with both the College and Muenster teams. Some of my most memorable remembrances during that time deal with hockey.

"Fr. Francis Lohmer, OSB, was one of the coaches; Fr. Alphonse, OSB, was another. One year Fr. Francis took the hockey team on a railway tour of Bruno, Colonsay, Guernsey and Viscount. We won three of



Former Abbot Jerome Weber, OSB

the games and tied the fourth. Fr. Francis took along three Bruno hockey players to bolster our student team.

"On another occasion our hockey team went to Lake Lenore by caboose. The next day we were to go to St. Brieux, but we lost our way. We stopped at a farmhouse, but the people only spoke French. Fortunately one of the students could speak French and we were given directions. We arrived late, and as it was dark, we had to play with poor temporary lights rigged up.

"I played baseball too. Being a day student I was on the Muenster team as well as on the College team. When the teams played against each other I played for the College.

"Fr. Matthew was one of our baseball coaches. Lefty Fetsch, who later became an Oblate priest, was our best pitcher. Fr. Matthew himself played second base. He was a good player.

"I was in the Arts class at St. Peter's along with George and Martin Brodner and Philip Loehr. Those three joined the Benedictine community and entered novitiate in 1935. Ted Bergemann, also from Muenster, and I decided to go to Campion College in Regina for further studies. Campion was affiliated with the University of Manitoba and there were several Jesuit instructors there.

"At Campion I played hockey and football. For football, Ted Bergemann was placed in the line and I was in the backfield. It was quite an experience being at Campion. I have always valued the Jesuits since.

"I was also able to tutor one Latin student and in that way earned some money for my tuition. This took place in the evening.

"Having obtained my B. A. at Campion in 1936, I had to make up my mind what to do next. In August 1934, I heard the words, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given to you besides." I spoke to my spiritual director at Campion, a diocesan priest. I told him I was thinking of joining the Benedictine community at Muenster. He approved the decision when I made it in April 1936.

"I came back to Muenster in May and spoke to Abbot Severin Gertken, seeking admission to St. Peter's Abbey, and was accepted. I made a retreat with Fr. Joseph Sittenauer who was subprior at the time.

"I was sent to St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., in July for novitiate. When it was time to board the train my father said, 'If you don't like it, come back.'

"Having arrived at St. John's I was welcomed by Frs. William Gehlen, George and Martin Brodner and Philip Loehr who were in the clericate. I was in the novitiate, they in the clericate. After novitiate I joined them in the clericate.

"When the director of studies received my marks from Campion, he saw that I already had taken two years of philosophy and could go directly into theology.

"I was ordained to the priesthood along with the St. John's clerics on June 8, 1941, by Bishop Busch of St. Cloud, Minn.

"Back home in 1941, my first assignment was to be a teacher and prefect here at the College. Fr. Gregory Gasser had been teaching history. He recalled a paper I had written for his class, a paper he read to the class at the time. He suggested I be sent away to obtain a degree in history.

"I attended the University of Saskatchewan in 1942-43 and also took some summer classes. I was to go back for 1943-44, but Fr. Augustine Nenzel, OSB, took ill with tuberculosis. I had to remain at St. Peter's to be prefect and teach.

"I continued my studies at the University of Saskatchewan in the 1947-48 session after which I obtained my degree in history. My residence had been St. Paul's Cathedral rectory.

"Then it was back to teaching and pre-

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fecting. Fr. Xavier Benning, OSB, was the rector. I was head prefect with Frs. George, Alfred, Florian and Albert as assistants at various times.

“As a prefect, I coached St. Peter’s College hockey squad. We played hockey against all the local teams and usually won. I remember that Watson and Attica had strong teams. Some of their players were big men and we just had high school boys.

“The big annual challenge was to play at Humboldt for the Platzer Cup. One year we had several good players from Regina and elsewhere. Daniel, Alois and Jim Gerwing were strong supporters. We also had an excellent goalie from Regina. To the surprise of many, we won the Platzer Cup.

“I was appointed prior by Abbot Severin Gertken, in December 1958, at which time I ceased being a prefect.

“Abbot Severin died on March 10, 1960. I was elected as abbot on April 6. Because we were an Abbey Nullius, which means a territory without a bishop, in which the abbot has all the authority and power of a bishop, the election had to be approved by Rome. The election was confirmed on June 28, 1960 and the Abbatial Blessing took place on Aug. 24, 1960.

“At this time the monks were residents in the tall Michael building. The connecting wing to the proposed monastery had

been built and the dormitory for students. The present monastery was completed in 1963.

“As abbot, the question arose: Should I continue teaching history? We decided to send Fr. Anselm (Jim) Gerwing to obtain a degree in order to teach that subject. Later, after he left the monastery, I again taught Arts history until the late 1980s. This was helpful in one way. It was a good excuse to miss some of the many meetings I otherwise would have had to attend.

“Being a member of the CCCB (Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops), I attended Vatican Council II. At first I stayed in a hotel with the Canadian bishops. Later I moved to St. Anselm’s Abbey, along with eight or 10 other Benedictine abbots. I became a great friend of Abbot Walter Coggin from Belmont, USA, who sat beside me in the Basilica.

“St. Anselm’s in Rome is a Benedictine monastery and school. It is the residence of the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine abbeys.

“In one way it was unfortunate that I stayed there, because I was not with the Canadian bishops at some of their meetings. Cardinal Leger of Montreal spoke several times at the general sessions.

“Of interest were a few of the several days Vatican II did not meet. On one of these occasions I went to Lourdes along

with some bishops. I roomed with a Polish bishop. He knew none of my languages and I knew none of his. We tried to communicate in Latin. It was difficult.

“Having experienced being in the Holy Land, I offered members of the community the opportunity to visit the land in which Jesus lived. Several of the monks took that opportunity.

“As Abbot Ordinary, I was called to give many conferences. I also had to attend all the CCCB general meetings.

“In 1966 Sister Florianne, superior of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth at Humboldt and Sister Jerome, superior of the Ursuline Sisters at Bruno, and I went to Brazil to explore the feasibility of sending missionaries there. This was at the invitation of Pope John XXIII who encouraged twinning dioceses. All three of us decided to send some of our members. This is another interesting chapter in the history of our communities.

“One of the traumatic moments endured by the abbey was the closing of the high school. At one of the meetings it seemed the residents at the abbey were in favor of closing the school, while those serving in parishes were opposed. Fr. Wilfrid suggested that those in parishes return to the abbey and teach and those now teaching go to the parishes. That seemed to help bring an end to the controversy.

Continued on page 8

Bill Thurmeier completing abbey pipe organ

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Bill Thurmeier has been working on the abbey pipe organ off and on since July, 1989. Because Bill is living in Saskatoon, it has been difficult to spend consistent time on the organ. However, for a number of years the pipe organ has been in use for both celebration at mass and for the chanting of the Divine Office in choir. It just had not been completed. With a little more touching up, the organ will finally be as it should. The organ is made up of two former pipe organs but also has a number of brand new pipe ranks. There are now 21 ranks of pipes, each with a different sound. It is played from an electronic console that itself has 10 different electronic stops. The two instruments may be played together or separately. It is a unique arrangement.

“Pipe organs should be played regularly so that the leathers, etc., remain pliable,” said Bill. “It is best to play the pipe organ daily, rather than the electronic.”

When asked if he was not getting tired of all the work he put into this organ he replied, “No. I would rebuild another like that, if I could. I know the system and if there are difficulties I can discover the cause and make the necessary repairs.”

Truly a master organ builder. A man who patiently brings every item to perfection. Abbey members are waiting for a concert to demonstrate what the organ can do.

When asked if Bill would like to be the artist, he replied, “I would like to play a piece or two, but I don’t practise playing enough. There are others who could do it better.”



Bill Thurmeier-Tenorio and his wife Rosario Tenorio-Thurmeier

Continued from page 7

“Also traumatic was the exodus of so many priests and religious after Vatican II. But nothing could be done if they wanted to leave. Other communities suffered the same losses.

“Approaching the age of 75, I resigned as abbot on June 15, 1990. I offered to serve as chaplain at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Humboldt. I served there until August 2003. I am now again in residence, retired, at St. Peter’s Abbey. However, I have been going to St. Elizabeth’s Convent on Sundays for their mass.”

W.R.: “What name would you apply to your present physical condition?”

J.W.: “I pushed the lawn mower at the Humboldt hospital in May 2003 and ended with a severe pain in my upper right leg. I knew what was wrong, so I didn’t go to a doctor, but I did go to a chiropractor. I had great difficulty walking and used a wheelchair for some time as well as a walker later. The sisters took me from the hospital to their convent for morning masses. For some time I sat in a wheelchair at mass and later in a regular chair.

“Since I am back at the abbey I have become better and no longer need a walker, but I do walk with a cane.

W.R.: “What stands out as the most interesting experiences in your life as abbot?”

J.W.: “This would be Vatican Council II. There were some 2,500 bishops, bishops of all shapes and colours. I was impressed with the facilities at St. Peter’s. It was quite an experience being in Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church, at one of the most important times.”

W.R.: “What do you see as being one of the most important changes to have come out of Vatican II?”

J.W.: “I think this would be vernacular

language in our liturgy. It didn’t come easily. This was debated and many were against the vernacular. At the time there was no concelebration of masses as we have today. We would each say our private mass. I offered mine in the morning at Sant Anselmo. There were many side altars. Then there would be a mass in the Basilica. Bishops from the various rites would offer mass. We didn’t receive communion, having already offered mass.

“Latin was to be the only language at the Council. One morning, to the surprise of all, a Ukrainian bishop offered mass in the English language. Later another bishop gave his intervention speech in French. Things were changing slowly but surely in the language issue. Former Abbot Baldwin Dworschak of St. John’s Abbey also spoke in favour of the vernacular, but did it in Latin. Having taught Latin, I managed Latin fairly well.

“The first session at Vatican II was right down my alley. It was on revelation. Fr. Basil at St. John’s had a doctorate in Holy Scripture and impressed the importance of Scripture on me. Ever since I had been making a lot of use of the Bible. The decree on Divine Revelation was one of the more important decrees.”

W.R.: “Do you think we need a Vatican Council III at present?”

J.W.: “I think first of all we must work on Vatican II. It takes a long time for some changes to come into effect. Many changes were quickly made by certain groups and individuals on their own. Not all have been helpful.

“Vatican II called for a deeper spiritual religious life. I would especially like to see this taken up more basically. There has been quite a drop in church attendance in the United States and Canada. I don’t know if this would have happened

without Vatican II. I think people are more materialistically minded. This may be the real reason.

“Pope John Paul II places great emphasis on the eucharist and has given us new directions in ecumenism. The pope is disappointed that not more Catholics take advantage of the eucharist.”

W.R.: “As a historian, how do you rate the present difficulties in the church?”

J.W.: “There have always been difficulties in the church — St. Paul wrote about divisions in the Church of Corinth. There were problems within the church — heresies and schisms within and persecutions from without. At the present time we read about the conservatives and the liberals and of dissenters in Canada, the United States and western Europe. We can have confidence in Jesus who said, ‘I am always with you.’

“Vatican II, unlike most of the other Church Councils, placed emphasis on similarities between Catholics and non-Catholics rather than try to prove what is wrong with the others. Following the lead of Pope John XXIII, the council tried to look at the world as it is and start building on the good that was already there. It tried to emphasize what we already had in common.

W.R.: “What is your hope for the future?”

J.W.: “I see the enthusiasm of our youth as being a sign of great hope. Since the Toronto World Youth Days there have been various gatherings of young people. Their sincerity in looking for new directions is notable. The ‘Rock the Mount’ days held at Mount Carmel for the past three years are such an indication. As well we have the very successful ‘Face to Face’ retreats for young men and women.”

Deaths: remember the faithful departed

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

May 8 — Bro. Clarence Richard, OSB, St. Leo’s Abbey, Fla.

May 14 — Fr. Richard Sigismund Cebula, OSB, St. Martin’s Abbey, Lacy, Wash.

May 30 — Bro. Bernard Lange, OSB, St. Peter’s Abbey, Muenster, Sask.

June 15 — Abbot John Eidenschink, OSB, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

June 22 — Fr. James Saul, OSB, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.

Aug. 11 — Bro. Marcel Roland Villeneuve, St. Leo’s Abbey, Fla.

Aug. 31 — Fr. George Brodner, OSB, St. Peter’s Abbey, Muenster, Sask.

Aug. 31 — Fr. Gregory Traeger, St. Leo’s Abbey, Fla.

Sept. 14 — Bro. Patrick Creamer, OSB, St. Leo’s Abbey, Fla.

Sept. 28 — Frances Britz, mother of Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB.

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