

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 28 No. 2 Summer and Fall 2006

Fr. Paul Paproski ordained in August

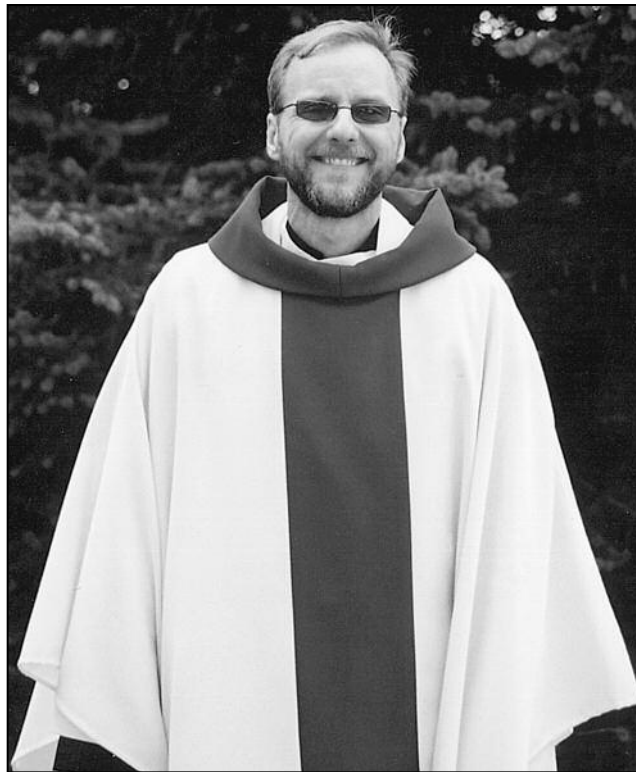
We are pleased to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to our newly ordained priest, Rev. Paul Paproski, OSB, and to wish him well in his new priestly ministry.

The last priest to be ordained for St. Peter's Abbey was Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk, OSB, in 1996. Within the past two decades most of the men who have sought entrance into the monastery have chosen the state of lay brothers.

This is actually as St. Benedict had envisioned his monasteries. Benedict himself was not ordained to the priesthood. He realized the need for priest in the monastery and arranged to have one or several of his monks ordained so that the Eucharist could be celebrated daily.

Things were different in Canada 100 years ago and in the Midwestern United States 150 years ago when the Benedictines came to the new world. The Benedictines came to the States from Germany with the intention of providing pastoral care for German Catholic immigrants. The first monastery of the Benedictine Cassinese Congregation was St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn., where Fr. Paul Paproski took his seminary training during the past six years.

St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., which celebrated its 150th anniversary this year, was the first abbey to spring from St. Vincent's. It quickly grew. Most of the vocations were for the priesthood, and in 1903 it already was able to sponsor the foundation of St. Peter's Colony with its first priory at Muenster. St. Peter's



Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB, was ordained in St. Peter's Cathedral, Muenster, Aug. 12 by Bishop Albert LeGatt of Saskatoon, to serve the people of God.

Priory was raised to an abbey Aug. 5, 1911, with Prior Bruno Doerfler, OSB, considered the most important founder of the colony, as its first abbot.

Here too, the Benedictines had come to Saskatchewan hoping to eventually establish an abbey. But their first concern was to provide pastoral services to the many German Catholics who settled St. Peter's Colony.

In fact, the hope had been to do something never tried before. The founders, both clergy and laity, wanted the sizeable colony, 250 miles long and 40 - 50 miles wide, thought to be large enough if settled exclusively by German Catholics, to be an island in Canada where the Catholic religion, German language and customs, could flourish and be safeguarded, almost in perpetuity.

The hope had been to have generation after generation of

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Fr. Paul (Bruce) Paproski was ordained to the ministerial priesthood on Aug. 12 in the parish of Muenster.

Fr. Paul is the son of Ardel and Freda Paproski. He was born in Lanigan, Sask., in 1963 and moved to Hudson Bay with his family in 1971. He grew up there with his brother Perry and his sisters Gwen and Glenda.

Fr. Paul took a degree in journalism after high school. He then worked as editor of the Hudson Bay Review for seven years before joining St. Peter's Abbey in 1998.

He took his philosophy and theology studies at St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Penn. He is the first monk of St. Peter's to take his seminary training at St. Vincent's, which is the founding abbey of our community.

Fr. Paul celebrated Mass at the abbey Aug. 13 with many relatives and friends present. He celebrated Mass at Hudson Bay on Aug. 27. He is assigned this next year to assist Fr. Leo Hinz as pastor of St. Gregor, Englefeld and Watson.

A message from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends of St. Peter's Abbey,

Abbey newsletter editor Fr. Werner Renneberg has assembled another newsletter to share events at the abbey with our friends and benefactors.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who sent me cards and prayed for me during my recent heart attack. For the record, I suffered a heart attack the afternoon of Aug. 30. I was trimming the hedge in the cemetery with my brother Leonard at the time. I felt some chest pains, but the symptoms of a heart attack were not that clear. However, I went to the hospital in Humboldt where a heart attack was diagnosed and I was prepared for an ambulance trip to Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon.

By 10:40 that evening I was wheeled into the catherization lab and an angioplast was performed. A balloon was used to open two arteries in my heart and a stent was placed in another one. Through the marvels of modern technology no surgery was required and no further surgery is foreseen.

I spent a week at the hospital resting and having the medication adjusted so that no further complications would arise.

I had no indication of heart difficulties beforehand. In fact, I had had a medical checkup a month prior to the heart attack and everything looked normal. I want to thank all those who pitched in for me at the abbey while I was in the hospital and during my recuperation.

One of the big events we celebrated this summer, and which is featured in this issue, was the ordination of Fr. Paul Paproski. Fr. Paul graduated from St. Vincent's Seminary, Latrobe, Penn., one of our founding monasteries. We were blessed with good weather for the celebrations and I want to thank all those who contributed their time and talents to make the celebration run smoothly.

I also congratulate the two novices who completed their novitiate this spring. Br. Pius Sprung made his promises as a claustral oblate on April 25 and Br. Paulus Truong Nguyen made his profession of temporary vows on May 3. Br. Pius has been assigned to work as a cook in the kitchen while Br. Paulus has been



Abbot Peter feeds peanuts to a friendly chickadee.

assigned to work at the press. Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk was appointed

junior master to be in charge of the new juniors, who join Br. Pierre Rouillard in the junior program.

Living on the Canadian prairies, we are always very conscious of the weather. This is especially significant for those living in a rural area, as we do. This summer was a memorable one. The spring began with lots of rain. Our fields and gardens were flooded. Some farmers in our area were unable to plant some fields because of excess water. And our garden produce was unusually sparse because the seeds were unable to sprout or unable to push through the crusty soil. One area north of the abbey had over 8 inches of rain one evening.

What did grow was aided by a hot summer. Our corn crop turned into a bumper crop and the late frost meant that we had lots of corn on the cob at meal-times — in contrast to the last two years. Friends and neighbours shared the bounty of our corn and potato crop, through our U-pick operation.

We had a number of working guests with us this summer again. Br. Basil Schaan manages to find work for them in the gardens or at other projects going on in the summer. And we are pleased with the number of guests who come to enjoy the atmosphere of the abbey and who also join us in our prayer.

Keep the Heat Fund

Last year the monks replaced about half the windows in the abbey. The abbey was built over 40 years ago and replacing the old windows with more energy-efficient ones is one of the steps we are taking to economize our heating bill.

This winter the monks plan to finish the job. Besides finishing the windows on all three floors of the abbey, we plan to replace the rest of the windows on the upper floor of the guest wing. The guests noted the difference made by the new windows put in last winter.

Last year we appealed to the generosity of our friends and benefactors. We were very gratified by their response. A good portion of the cost of the windows was raised.

This year we appeal again to your generosity. The cost of the project is more than \$50,000. If you are able to be generous toward this project, we will be grateful for any assistance. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations.

Send to: St. Peter's Abbey, Heat Fund, Box 10, Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0

Bishop Albert LeGatt ordains Fr. Paul

Continued from page 1

good, solid German Catholics grow up and maintain this as an ideal area of cooperation, respect for one another and little or no crime. To this end a German weekly newspaper, the St. Peter's Bote, was begun in February 1904.

Within a few years some 25 parishes and missions were established. These were spaced so that, in the horse, sleigh and buggy days, no one would have to drive farther than six miles to attend Sunday mass. By 1906 the boast could be made that all the parishes had regular, if not weekly, masses. Benedictine priests from St. John's Abbey and elsewhere laboriously did the ministry.

Thursday, Sept. 29, 1904, the first locomotive pulling railway cars arrived at Muenster and soon the track was finished for regular train service. It proved to be a real help for travel east to west, but travel to the north and south was by sleigh, buggy or horseback or on foot. In most areas roads were non-existent. There were only trails avoiding sloughs, lakes and forests.

It is human to plan. But not all plans endure. German Catholics did not flock into the colony as was expected. Protestants took up homesteads and Jews were especially prominent in the business field, in the towns. The railway roundhouse was built in Humboldt and many workers were not Catholic.

Tension existed between Catholics and non-Catholics, especially regarding schools. The Germans wanted parish schools, or as in Humboldt, a separate

school. The government tried to promote public schools, but the Germans fought this time and again.

Through the years parish schools vanished in favor of publicly funded public schools. Tension between Catholics and non-Catholics eased considerably after World War II and especially with the ecumenical movement. Inter-faith marriages also helped bring about better understanding between the various religions.

Another big change for St. Peter's Colony, or St. Peter's Abbacy as it was later named, came with the deaths and retirement of Benedictine priests and fewer priestly vocations. The abbacy is now part of the Saskatoon Diocese. A number of abbacy parishes have been closed because travel today is easier, the rural population is down, and there is a shortage of parish priests. Now only 13 of the original parishes are staffed by eight Benedictines. Diocesan priests have been gradually taking over the other parishes.

This is not unusual. An abbey nullius (so-called because an abbot is the Ordinary, with nearly all the powers of a bishop. The word "nullius" signifies the fact that no bishop is at the head) could be found in many parts of the world, especially in missionary areas where no diocese with a bishop had been established. St. Peter's Abbacy was the last to close in North America.

The early beginnings of St. Peter's Colony can be found in a series of books, each encompassing one year, translated



Bishop LeGatt anoints the hands of the newly ordained Father Paul with sacred chrism, consecrating these hands to hold ordinary bread and wine which will be changed into the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, Son of God, One with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

from the German St. Peter's Bote by Fr. Werner Renneberg, OSB, eight volumes are completed: 1904 - 1912. The ninth, 1912 - 13 is being translated.

This is raw history, unadulterated by later revisions. The Germans at the time told things as they saw and understood them. The very beginning had almost unimaginable difficulties, but in just a few years people had comfortable homes, productive fields, churches and schools. They were a proud people with high ideals. They were convinced that if all the German Catholics in Canada united, their rights as Catholic Canadian citizens would be respected. Along with this, Canada would be a model, God-fearing country. Remember that the previous few centuries had been rife with religious persecution, bitterness and defensiveness and a great deal of misunderstandings. Little did our pioneers know what economic, religious and social changes the next 100 years would bring.

Men and women who grew up in St. Peter's Abbacy have spread into all parts of the world. They carry with them something of the pioneering spirit of the German Colony founded a century ago by their parents, grand parents or great grand parents. For this we are grateful and ask God's blessing on them all.

These volumes are available from St. Peter's Abbey, Box 10, Muenster, SK, S0K 2Y0. Most sell at \$20 each, plus postage and handling. Volume 8 is larger and sells at \$25.



Fr. Paul, his parents, brother and sisters, in-laws, nieces and nephews.

People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

2006

February — One of the easiest topics of conversation this New Year was definitely the weather across our fair province. After the gentle Jan.-Feb. weather, March came in both cold and stormy, leaving us in April with about 3 feet of snow.

Then came the sudden thaw on Palm Sunday (April 9) which made most of the snow melt by Good Friday and fill to the full our reservoir for Easter (April 16), the earliest ever.

March — was spent on varied activities: renovating rooms in the abbey especially for computers, and shoveling the heavy snow from our press building and the old Abbacy Centre, recently converted into our new Earthcare Connections office.

The guest department again conducted numerous workshops these winter months: Writers Colony — Feb. 20; German Linguistic — Feb. 25; Kathy Fenwick Workshop on Healing with Humor — March 2; CARFAC — March 24; Marriage Encounter — March 10; CRSE — Rural Women — March 17; Engaged Encounter — April 14; People of Praise — April 28; United Church Conference — May 18; House of Stitches — May 30.

March 25 — Oblate meeting was well attended with lecture on *Lectio Divina* by Oblate Alan Reese.

March 30 — Abbey spring lecture by Scott Dunbas, professor of religious studies at the college: on *Challenge of Overcoming Fundamentalism*

April 3 — A computer is wired for multiple internet use. The largest project underway is scanning the *Prairie Messengers* of the past 80 years, thus making them available for computer use. Bro. Kurt is ably helped on this project by Archbishop Adam Exner, OMI, at the abbey on a sabbatical.

April-May — Several monastic professions: and appointments: Br. Pius Sprung made promises as a Claustal



Bro. Paulus, Abbot Peter, Bro. Pius and Fr. Demetrius.

Oblate April 25; Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk was installed as Junior Master; Br. Paulus Truong made his first (temporary) vows May 3.

May 13 — Saskatoon Anglican Choir chanted in Latin the Vespers for the Blessed Virgin Mary Feast.

May 14 - 18 — Abbey retreat was preached by retired Abbot Timothy Wright of Ampleforth, England.

June — Fr. John Malazdrewich was here March and June, helping us shape the future for our Abbey.

July 11 — Fathers Martin and Rudolph celebrating their 70th and 40th anniversaries of profession.



Abbot Timothy Wright, OSB

June 18 — Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB, conducted a preached retreat at Lumsden Retreat Center.



Fr. John Malazdrewich leading a study session.

June - July — Back to our astonishing weather! June turned out to be very rainy and cool, causing parts of our garden to be flooded. This was followed by a very hot July, which mushroomed all weeds to exceed any growth in the garden. Fortunately, the raspberries, corn and potatoes survived and thrived, the corn ripening three weeks earlier than usual, by Aug. 11.

June — Also was used to install a metal roof sheeting on our honey and slaughter houses.

July — In the first two weeks we again welcomed two Sask. Youth Choir

Camps in ideal July weather, as well as Sask. Writers for six weeks.

Aug. 12 — Bro. Paul Paproski, OSB, who had completed his theological studies at St. Vincent's Archabbey Latrobe, Penn., was ordained as priest by Bishop Albert LeGatt (Saskatoon) in St. Peter's Cathedral. It was our first ordination for the abbey in 10 years!

August — Activities picked up again for the guest department: Unity Connections: 106 Ukrainian Youth Conference, Aug. 24; Theological Union (various denominations) Sept. 8; Vita Nova retreat — Sept. 15; Buddhist retreat (Regina), Oct. 6; Saskatoon diocesan clergy retreat Oct. 3.

Sept. 5 — University classes begin in our college where major renovations have taken place in the bookstore, making it more user friendly for the students.

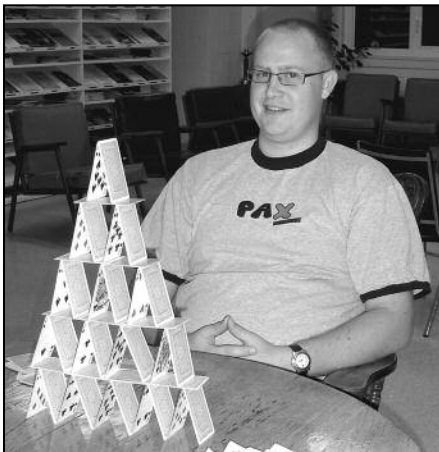
Sept. 19 — We had our first light frost this fall early today.



Abbot Peter with Fathers Martin and Rudolph, jubilarians.



The Sask. Teen Choir enjoyed a barbeque with the community.



Jeffrey Sautner, candidate, demonstrating his patience and skill.



New employee Kathy Tumback works in the business office.



Leonard Novecosky, oblate, and Fr. Daniel (on the tractor), clearing trees that impeded growth in the vegetable garden and obscured the spruce trees.

Fr. Paul Emile Langevin visits abbey

Fr. Paul-Emile Langevin was in residence here at St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, for several weeks about a year ago, because of health problems and to have a well-deserved rest.

Paul-Emile was born June 10, 1927, in Valleyfield, P.Q. He was born into a family of four, three boys and one girl.

Primary education was taken in a Catholic public school in Valleyfield and high school in Valleyfield College, an institution run by the diocesan priests.

At the end of high school Paul-Emile's bishop wanted him to study for the diocesan priesthood and sent him to the diocesan college of Valleyfield. Here he studied for two years, achieving his B.A. with a double major in Literature and Philosophy and a minor in Theology.

At this time Paul-Emile's older brother Gilles had already joined the Jesuits and Paul-Emile wanted to do the same. The bishop was not pleased. He wanted him to enter a diocesan seminary. "You can become a bishop if you become a diocesan priest," he said. This incentive was not great enough to change the young student's mind.

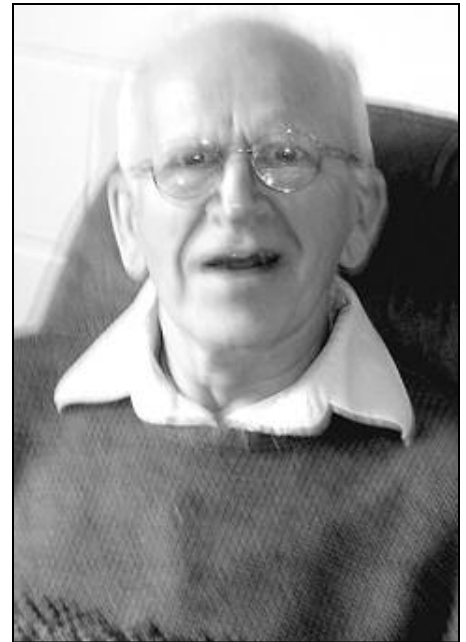
Paul-Emile went to the Jesuit Sault aux Recollete College in Montreal for two years as a Jesuit novice. Here he studied French literature.

His next move was a three-year stint at the Jesuit scholasticate in Montreal where he studied the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. An important factor at this time was to allow the superiors to discover the abilities of the scholastics in order to decide their future studies.

As a Jesuit scholastic at Regence in Montreal he studied French literature and the history of the French language for three years. His next move was to study four years of theology at the Immaculate Conception Jesuit school in Montreal. Here he was given his licentiate in theology.

Fr. Paul-Emile was ordained to the priesthood at the end of his third year in theology. He was ordained by Cardinal Leger who had at one time been pastor at Valleyfield. His mother was a good friend of the cardinal.

The next step was to study the German language in Germany for a year. Then he moved to Rome, to the Jesuit-run Biblical Institute of Literature for two years where he met and studied along with Cardinal



Fr. Paul-Emile Langevin, SJ

Bea. The effort here was to form better teachers of church history as well as literature teachers for all the church. Here Fr. Paul-Emile received his licentiate in Biblical Literature.

Then he attended the Gregorian institute, the main Catholic University in Rome, also operated by the Jesuits. His doctorate in theology was awarded here.

Finally it was back to Montreal to spend one year of tertianship, studying spirituality, especially Ignatian spirituality. Obedience to God was emphasized along with the vow of obedience to the pope made by Jesuits. This was the final part of his preparation as a Jesuit. Eighteen years of formation had been spent by Fr. Paul-Emile as a Jesuit scholastic.

For three to four years Fr. Paul-Emile taught Scripture at the Jesuit scholasticate in Montreal. His teaching career at Laval University, Quebec, spanned 50 years. During that time he taught Scripture, especially St. Paul, Acts of the Apostles and New Testament Greek. Bishop Albert LeGat of Saskatoon was his student at one time.

Fr. Paul-Emile's home is in the Jesuit residence at Brebeuf College in Montreal. His health, now much better, he bade "Good-bye" to the Benedictines and headed back to Montreal where his brother Gilles is a superior.



Elm trees lining the road to the Abbey Cemetery gradually losing their splendid glory.

Must-do activities at the abbey this fall

The abundance of snow last spring and quick melting caused the two four-foot culverts spanning the main entrance road to the Abbey to deteriorate. For some reason the metal culverts came apart at a number of their seams. This occurrence was so odd that experienced road and rural municipal workers said they had never seen the like. Not channeling the rushing water caused it to undermine the grade crossing Wolverine Creek. Fortunately the water subsided before the road became unsafe. However, it did necessitate either repairing the broken culverts or replacing them.

The first culvert had been made of cement. It served for many years. When the road grade was raised and widened, two 48 inch culverts were installed, hoping the problem was solved for good.

A 72 inch (6 foot) culvert is on site and, hopefully will soon be installed. It will allow more water to flow through than the two 48-inch culverts together. We are hoping for good dry weather and success in placing the large culvert underneath the high-pressure natural gas line that also follows the roadbed.



This culvert on the abbey road to Muenster came apart on a seam during this spring's runoff.



Above: Combine, grain elevator and grain bins waiting for good weather to complete harvesting.

Below: Fr. Daniel cleaning a combine headed for winter storage.



History books make ideal Christmas gifts

Founding and progress of St. Peter's Colony in Saskatchewan
 Interesting items from *St. Peter's Bote* — a German-Catholic newspaper edited and published weekly by monks of St. Peter's Priory, later Abbey.
 Hi-lights translated by Werner Renneberg, OSB

- Vol. 1 1904-05** - Difficult beginnings; establishing parishes and schools
- Vol. 2 1905-06** - Is dancing innocent and safe entertainment? Hardships.
- Vol. 3 1906-07** - Legacy of Prior Alfred Mayer, O.S.B.; great progress
- Vol. 4 1907-08** - Fear of socialism; struggle for Catholic schools; establishing a German-Catholic organization: Volksverein
- Vol. 5 1908-09** - Volksverein grows; involvement in politics; parish work
- Vol. 6 1909-10** - Public vs. parish schools; "Catholic Day" in Winnipeg
- Vol. 7 1910-11** - Prairie fires; socialism and social question; third "Catholic Day" in Humboldt
- Vol. 8 1911-12** - Grain marketing; Priory raised to Abbey; Abbot Bruno Doerfler, O.S.B. Volksverein grows through Western Canada

Prices: Volumes 1-7 @\$20 each; Volume 8 @\$25
 Postage and handling extra: \$8.00 per volume

Order from: St. Peter's Abbey, Box 10, Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0



Br. Kurt started baking bread for the abbey Oct. 10.



Chris Baillargeon was a candidate for several months at St. Peter's Abbey.



Carl McNally (centre) was a candidate and is now living in Humboldt.

“ . . . 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:

Jan. 13 — Fr. Ermin Smith, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Jan. 23 — Bro. Adriano Goldoni de Sa, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Jan. 25 — Fr. Henry Lacerte, OSB, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Col.

Feb. 17 — Fr. Joachim Fatora, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Feb. 25 — Fr. Benedict McKean, St. Bede's Abbey, Peru, Ill.

March 1 — Sadie Novecosky, Oblate, St. Peter's Abbey, Humboldt, Sk.

March 1 — Sister Joan Lohmer, OSF, sister of Fr. Francis Lohmer, OSB, Savannah, Mo.

March 14 — Fr. Sebastian Lewis, OSB, St. Bede's Abbey, Peru, Ill.

April 30 — Fr. Germain Lieb, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

May 1 — Fr. Michael Custer, OSB, St. Anselm's Abbey, Manchester NH.

May 13 — Fr. Peter Meaney, OSB, St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, NJ.

June 4 — Fr. Mark Schneider, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Mn.

June 8 — Fr. Alphonse Meier, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

June 18 — Fr. Damian Abbatichio, OSB, St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

June 26 — Abbot Jose Modesto Rodriguez Santiago, OSB, San Antonio Abad Abbey, Humacao, Puerto Rico.

June 27 — Fr. Terence Sullivan, OSB, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

July 3 — Fr. Gregory Sebastian, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Mn.

July 15 — Fr. Landelin Robling, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Mn.

Aug. 17 — Therese (Gyoerick-Varga) Nickel, Oblate, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sk.

— Bro. Placid Koleski, Claustral Obl. SB., St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Il.

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Logo by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB

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

Our legal title is:

ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0