

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter

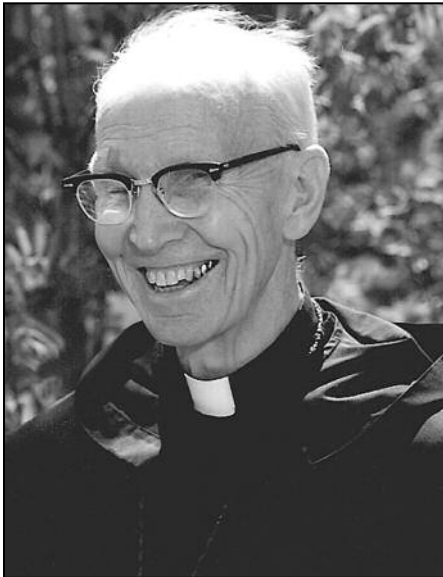


Vol. 30 No. 1 Summer 2008

Abbot Jerome Weber dies at abbey

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Quietly and imperceptibly Abbot Jerome died in his sleep in the early morning of Sept. 4. It was a fitting closure to a highly talented athlete, student, teacher, abbot and one of the few surviving Fathers of Vatican Council II.



Abbot Jerome Weber, OSB

Born in Muenster, Sept. 14, 1915, the second oldest in a family of 13 children, Ferdinand Weber exhibited extraordinary talent in sports, such as baseball and hockey at an early age. He attended primary school in Muenster conducted by the Bruno Ursuline Sisters. Continuing his education as a day student at St. Peter's College, he was on demand for playing hockey and baseball both from his home town and the college he attended. The choice was difficult, but he chose to play with his fellow students.

Following first year arts at St. Peter's, Ferdinand spent two years at the University of Regina. Sports was impor-

tant, along with his studies. He excelled on both the university's hockey and football teams.

Graduating at the end of the second year, Ferdinand needed to determine his future. With the advice of his spiritual director, he decided to return to St. Peter's, and study for the priesthood. He joined the Benedictine Order and was given the name Jerome.

Priesthood studies took him to St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn. This meant giving up semi-professional sports. It was a difficult decision. St. John's boasted a rather good football team among similar U.S. universities. There was tangible electricity whenever there was a home football game.

Jerome told me that he loved football so much that he didn't dare attend any of the games. It would be a strong temptation to return to a life of sports. This was an example of the tenacity and self-sacrifice that characterized the man all his life.

Following ordination in 1941, Fr. Jerome joined the college staff as prefect, teacher, director of athletics and coach of college teams. Later he spent two years at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon to obtain his M.A. in history. He became prior of the abbey in 1958.

Following the death of Abbot Severin Gertken, March 10, 1960, Prior Jerome was elected on April 6 to succeed him. As an abbot-ordinary of the territory of St. Peter's Abbey, he attended the sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, 1962-65. He said that, having taught Latin for a number of years, he was able to follow the sessions quite easily, which were in Latin. Being fluent in English and German, he was able to help a number of bishops with their Latin. His interest and knowledge of history were an advantage at the Council, especially when bishops met in small groups.

Abbot Jerome led the community and the people of the abbacy during this historic time in church history. In response to a papal appeal at Vatican II, Abbot Jerome sent several monks to Maceió, Brazil, to establish a Canadian mission there. During his tenure, the community decided to build a new monastery in 1963, to enlarge the recreational facilities at the college, to discontinue the residential high school in 1972, and to build an abbey church in 1989.

Abbot Jerome became chaplain at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Humboldt after his retirement as abbot in 1990 and also served as chaplain to the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

During this time Abbot Jerome's health began to fail. Poor eyesight caused him to give up his driver's licence. Because of difficulty in walking he retired to the abbey in 2003. For a few years he offered the Sunday mass at St. Elizabeth Convent in Humboldt. His general health was declining: he lost nearly all his teeth, had an upper plate fitted which helped his speech, but did little to help him chew his food because nearly all the bottom teeth were gone. He tried several different hearing aids, but none were successful.

Abbot Jerome enjoyed playing cards, especially Skaat, a German game still played at the abbey. But some months before he died, he said his eyesight and hearing were too poor to continue.

A few weeks before the end, Abbot Jerome had a bad fall. No bones were broken but he did bruise his head. He never recovered from the fall.

It was indeed sad to see how Abbot Jerome, at one time a super athlete, had to surrender his abilities one after the other. But just as long as he could, he was faithful to the daily hours of prayer in his Benedictine home, as well as celebrating the morning mass with his brothers. May he rest in peace.

A message from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends of St. Peter's Abbey,

This newsletter will bring you up to date on some of the happenings at St. Peter's Abbey this year. I want to thank Prior Werner Renneberg for editing this newsletter.

There have been some changes in our community this year. Fr. Leo Hinz and Fr. Rudolph Novcosky retired as resident pastors this summer and returned to live at the abbey. We thank them for their years of service in neighbouring parishes and welcome them to monastic life. Fr. Richard Meidl has replaced Fr. Rudolph, living in the parish of Annaheim. Other monks living outside the monastery include Fr. Joseph Ackerman in Bruno and Fr. Andrew Britz in Lake Lenore.

Other changes in our community include welcoming two new candidates this summer: Sheldon Gaetz of Watson and Jorge da Costa of Toronto. Novice Matthew Tien La decided to leave the community May 6 and move to Vancouver, B.C. We also enjoyed the retirement presence of Archbishop Adam Exner for the past three years. He decided to return to Vancouver and his Oblate community on Oct. 1.

The biggest change occurred on Sept. 4 with the death of retired Abbot Jerome Weber. Abbot Jerome, born in Muenster and our first "homegrown" superior, was a monk for 71 years at St. Peter's. He served as abbot for 30 years and he led the community and our abbacy through the challenges of the Second Vatican Council. His was a quiet, yet strong, presence. After his retirement he continued to serve the community — not least by his example of humble service and fidelity.

This year I attended several conferences on behalf of the community. The first was an abbots' conference at St. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana, near New Orleans. Fr. Sean McDonagh, a Columban priest from Ireland who spent many years in the Philippines as a missionary, spoke on climate change. He gave four one-hour sessions on the science of climate change, the Kyoto Protocol, ethical implications, and the eucharist in a time of social and ecological crisis. I was very impressed with his scientific knowledge and his approach. He noted how important it is to base any ethics on good science.

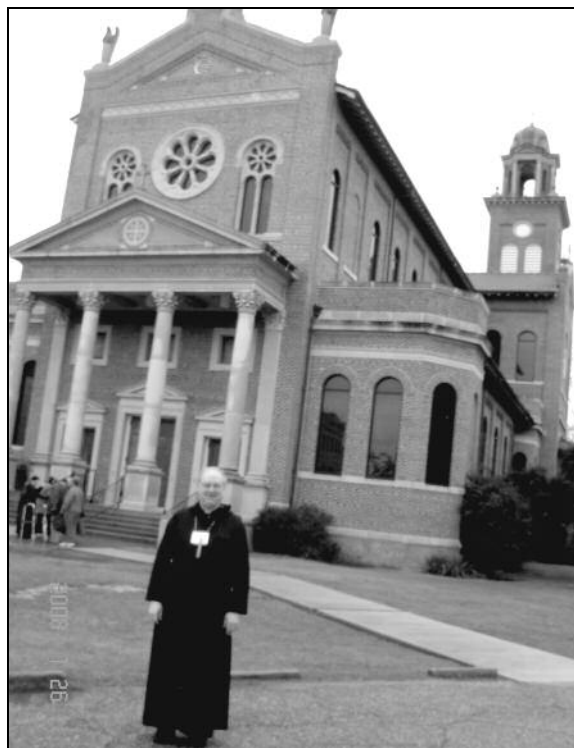


Four Canadians attended the abbots congress in Rome: From left, Abbot André Laberge of St-Benoît-du-Lac, Abbess Isabelle Thouin of Quebec, Abbot John Braganza of Westminster Abbey, Mission, B.C., and Abbot Peter Novcosky.

In June I attended the bi-annual assembly of the Canadian Religious Conference in Quebec City. The main speaker was Dominican Father Thomas Radcliffe. He gave two talks, On the Future of Religious Life and The role and Challenges of Leadership. Over 400 delegates attended the assembly and helped Quebec City celebrate its 400th anniversary.

The third meeting was the abbots congress in Rome. It was held in late September and featured two main speakers, several small-group sessions, a tour of St. Benedict's birthplace in Norcia, and an update of many projects supported by Benedictines around the world. There were 230 abbots who attended.

Some of the many other events of the year are recorded in this newsletter.



Abbot Peter stands in front of the church at St. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana.

People and events around the abbey

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

2007

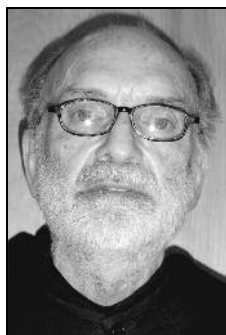
We celebrated our annual "Family Day" Dec. 26. A number of family, relatives and friends came to the abbey in the afternoon to skate, shoot basketballs in the gym, play cards or to sit and chat, while munching on the goodies the families brought.



Marlene Garcia, Mother Flor, Danielle Hernandez are Missionary Servants of the Word.

Dec. 29 - Jan. 2 — Three Missionaries, Servants of the Word, were at the abbey for a retreat as well as instruction. They were Marlene Garcia and Danielle Hernandez, along with Mother Superior, Sister Flor. The women are lay evangelizers who have taken off a year in order to reinvigorate the faith of lay people of all ages. When the year is over, they are free either to go back to regular civilian life, or ask to join the congregation. They are from Spanish parishes in the southern U.S. where this type of evangelization has proved to be successful. Since October 2007, they have been in St. Joseph's Parish, Kindersley, visiting, speaking and listening to people.

Dec. 28 — Fr. Lawrence flew to Rome to visit his sister, Darlene, a member of the Sisters of Zion. Jan. 19 - 25 he attended the annual international Worldwide Marriage Encounter convention which was held in Rome this year. He returned to the abbey Jan. 28.



Fr. Lawrence attended a marriage encounter convention in Rome.



Three Benedictine Oblates graduated from the Spiritual Director's Formation Program at Queen's House, Saskatoon: (L to R) Dr. Alan Reese, Pastor Gary Bellamy, Associate Oblate Director Ken Mansfield. Joining them is Abbot Peter Novecosky.

Jan. 1 — German TV showed a special on Canada. St. Peter's Abbey was one of the locations in Western Canada featured in the film. A DVD was sent to the abbey for us to see. Br. Wolfgang had been asked to be of assistance to the German crew. He and a few other members of the abbey were featured on the program.

Jan. 2 — Brs. Kurt, Pierre and Matthew went to Saskatoon to a supper and social sponsored by Bishop LeGatt for those in formation.

Jan. 3 — Former abbey member, Bill Thurmeier, the electronics expert who built our pipe organ, was here installing and checking new replacements on the organ system.

Jan. 15 — Abbot Peter and four pastors went to a clergy workshop in Saskatoon on the proposed new cathedral. They drove home in a blinding storm.

Jan. 19 — Some monks went to the afternoon farewell in Humboldt for Anglican priest, Rev. Joanne Deacon, who is moving to the Niagara Diocese. She will be pastor of two Anglican and one Lutheran parishes.

Jan. 24 — Abbot Peter attended the North American abbots' workshop in St. Joseph's Abbey, Louisiana. On his way home he spent a few days visiting Fr. Dan Ward, OSB, in Washington, D.C.,

and seeing the sights. Fr. Dan Ward was in the seminary at St. John's, Collegeville, Minn., with Abbot Peter.

Jan. 25 - 27 — Fr. Werner served on a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend at the Ramada Inn in Saskatoon. Nine couples made the encounter.

Jan. 26 — Fr. Paul Paposki gave one of the talks at the St. Thomas More College weekend retreat held here at the abbey.



Fr. Paul

Feb. 1 — Fr. Richard Meidl travelled to Lloydminster to be spiritual adviser for a SEARCH youth weekend.

The same weekend, Archbishop Adam Exner, OMI, in residence here, gave a weekend retreat for young adults in Regina.

Feb. 5 — The Men in Black, chaplains at the college, put on a medieval feast on the eve of Lent.

Feb. 9 — Fr. Demetrius Wasyluniuk gave a retreat to the Brandon, Man., area lay formation group. His message was based on Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas est* (God is Love).

People and events around the abbey

Feb. 19 - 22 — Abbot Peter attended the Assembly of Western Canadian Catholic Bishops in Edmonton. One of the main topics was “Theology of the Environment.”

Feb. 23 — Frs. Roman and Werner attended the official opening of St. Therese College at Bruno in the former Ursuline Convent.

Feb. 25 — Br. Mark Florianini, OSB, from St. Vincent Abbey, Latrobe, Penn., gave a powerpoint talk on the spirituality of stained glass windows. Stained glass is one of the oldest forms of art. It has been and is used extensively to teach religious truths.

Feb. 26 — Our telephone system, only about half a dozen years old, has become antiquated, obsolete, and could no longer be repaired. A new system has been installed and instructions given for utilizing it.

Feb. 28 - March 1 — Br. Kurt Van Kuren attended the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) convention in Huatulco, Oaxaca, Mexico. This was the annual meeting for representatives of all organic growers in North and South America, who are part of OCIA.

Br. Kurt found a great love and respect for organic farmers in both North and South America. There is the desire to allow entrepreneurs to own and operate small land properties and plant their own seeds, rather than get seeds from multinational corporations.

The world demand for certified organic produce is great and growing. The future for organic farmers is bright, provided there is good co-operation and management.

March 7 — Abbot Peter flew to Winnipeg from Saskatoon to visit and anoint Jon Bron, a former candidate for the abbey, who had cancer.

April 22 — Rob Harasymchuk, president of St. Peter’s College, gave community members an update on what has been happening at the college and what future hopes are. Following this, Duane Guina, head of the Earthcare Connections project which involves the abbey, gave his



A week of Saskatchewan Stitches attracted 200 women to the abbey.

report to the community and his views on what the future may hold.

March 7 - 9 — Fr. Lawrence served on the Worldwide Marriage Encounter team in Lumsden, Sask. It was sponsored by Regina.

April 25 - 27 — At a marriage encounter weekend at the abbey Fr. Werner served as team priest. Eleven couples from various parts of Saskatchewan attended.

A May visitor at the abbey was Fr. Bryan Bayda, CSsR, for a private retreat. He came as pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Yorkton, but kept his nomination as the new eparch (bishop) of the Saskatoon Eparchy to himself. He was ordained bishop in St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral, Saskatoon June 27.

May 16 - 18 — Frs. Lawrence and Werner attended the Canadian National Worldwide Marriage Encounter meeting in Montreal. Fr. Lawrence, along with a married couple from Vancouver, represented all of Canada plus the Caribbean Islands, and Fr. Werner, along with a couple from Saskatoon, represented the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

May 25 - 29 — History was made at our annual abbey retreat. For the first time the retreat master was a woman, Sister Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, a Prelate Ursuline. Sr. Teresita had recently spent considerable time walking in the footsteps of St. Paul in the Middle East area. Her talks were based on St. Paul’s mission, his successes and failures, his trials, suffering and triumphs, but especially on his teaching.



Fr. Bryan Bayda, CSsR



Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU

May 23 - June 3 — Saskatchewan Stitches. Organized by Wendy Toye's Haus of Stitches in Humboldt, the teaching and training sessions brought together Saskatchewan instructors plus one from New York City and another from Colorado. Some 200, mostly women, registered, coming from Western Canada, and one from the States. Not all were here at one time. It was a challenge for the kitchen and our guest department.

June 5 - 9 — Abbot Peter attended the CRC (Canadian Religious Conference) biannual assembly in Quebec city.

June 15 - 22 — Br. Anthony was the only community member to attend the Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City June 15 - 22. He was greatly impressed.



Br. Anthony attended the Eucharistic Congress.



The Junior choir gave a Friday night performance July 11 for the community.

June 24 — Fr. Lawrence attended a Worldwide Marriage Encounter International Convention in Ontario, Calif. Leadership couples and priests from various countries were invited to show that the movement is indeed worldwide and has done much good for the church.

June 29 - July 5 — Forty-two children (35 girls and 7 boys) attended the annual Senior Choir Camp at St. Peter's Abbey and College. The Junior Camp followed immediately — July 6 - 12. Fifty children attended the camp, again more girls than boys. Rainy weather prevented a few planned events, such as an outdoor BBQ.

Each year the groups rehearse Friday evening in the abbey church, to the enjoyment of the Benedictine community and guests for their "Grand Finale Concert" Saturday afternoon in St. Peter's Cathedral Church, Muenster.



Senior choir with conductor, Gary Ewen

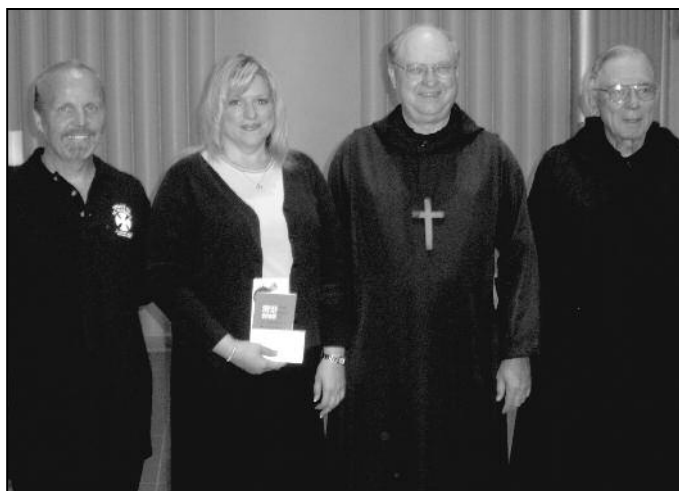
This year's guest conductor was Gary Ewen from Halifax, N.S.

July 22 — Wanda Haby was invested as an Oblate of St. Benedict.

July 23 - 30 — Eighteen Sisters of St. Ursula, along with two Sisters of St. Elizabeth, were guests at the abbey where they made their annual retreat which was conducted by Rev. Robb McDougal on the theme: "My soul magnifies the Lord."



Much retrofitting in abbey rooms is underway. Two of Abbot Peter's brothers, Arnie Novecosky (left) and Leonard Novecosky (right), helped carpenter Br. Wolfgang.



Wanda Haby of Texas and New York was invested July 22 as a Benedictine Oblate.

People and events around the abbey



The abbey float at Muenster Homecoming included Br. Basil on the tractor and Brs. Anthony and Pius and Abbot Peter on the float.

July 30 — While we were singing one of the beautiful “praise psalms” at about 8 p.m. during evening prayers, rain began to patter on the church roof. Very soon the patter turned to a mighty roar, as hail stones, some the size of golf balls, pounded on the tin roof, drowning our voices. There was little or no wind with the hail and not much garden or field damage was reported.

Aug. 8 - 10 — Village of Muenster celebrated its 100th anniversary. Abbey, press and college had floats in the parade.

Aug. 11 - 16 — Rev. Maurice Marion, a deacon from the Grouard-McLennan diocese, was here making his pre-ordination retreat.

Aug. 19 — Sheldon Gaetz was accepted as a candidate in preparation for entering the novitiate at St. Peter’s Abbey.

Aug. 20 — Brother Pierre Rouillard made his solemn and perpetual vows as a Benedictine monk of St. Peter’s Abbey.

Sept. 4 — Abbot Jerome died in his sleep early this morning. Many relatives and friends attended wake and funeral Sept. 7 and 8.

Sept. 12 — Beginning two weeks ago the abbey invited faculty, staff and visitors on Fridays for a free meatless “Veg-Out” dinner with members of the abbey. The menu consisted of garden products, potatoes, cucumbers, beets, beans, lettuce, etc.



Jorge Da Costa of Christ the King Parish, Mississauga, Ont., and Sheldon Gaetz of Watson are candidates at the abbey.



Monks and staff “feasted” on fresh vegetables from the garden on Fridays this fall.



Sister Louise Hinz, OSU

Sister Louise Hinz, OSU, one of our missionaries, visited us, had supper with us, as she was about to return to her convent in Brazil.



Mike Millar

Sept. 16 — St. Peter's College celebrated its "Gala and Awards Ceremony." Many scholarships were awarded and the drive for funds to upgrade and improve the college was highlighted.

Sept. 21 - 26 — Some 50 participants attended the Prairie Harvest Rug Hooking School here at St. Peter's. Many displayed their beautiful rugs in the Jerome room Wed., Sept. 24.

Sept. 30 — For three years we were blessed with having Archbishop Adam Exner, OMI, formerly head of the Vancouver diocese, living with us, helping with dishes, mowing the lawn, etc., joining in the prayers as well as taking his turn as principal celebrant at mass. He also served as replacement for Sunday mass in many Saskatoon diocesan parishes. He will be returning to Vancouver where he spent a number of years as bishop. His plan is to retire there, and as long as health allows, help out in parishes when needed as well as being a regular helper in one of the large soup kitchens in Vancouver that supplies free meals to thousands of unemployed and poor people.

We had a farewell for the archbishop at supper, Sept. 30 at which Abbot Peter expressed our appreciation for him as well as presenting him with a



Fr. Demetrius bringing in honey.

few gifts, one of which was a cheque to cover his travelling expenses, etc. He is driving a two-door Honda, has all his property packed in it and intends to leave Oct. 1.



Archbishop Exner, an avid golfer, receives a "back scratcher" at his farewell supper.

ST. PETER'S BOTE now translated

Fr. Werner Renneberg has translated highlights from the German-language newspaper published for the St. Peter's Colony area. This translation now makes this early history available in English. A great treasure. Translated so far are the following:

- 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
- Vol. 9 1912-13** - The colony continues to grow and expand
- Vol. 10 1913-14** - On the eve of World War I, parish schools and Volksverein are top concerns

Prices: Volumes 1-7 and 10 @\$20 each; Volume 8-9 @\$25 Postage and handling extra: \$8 per volume

CD with all 10 volumes are available @\$125

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

Fr. Joseph Ackerman marks 50 years

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Fr. Joseph Ackerman was ordained June 8, 1958, and celebrated his golden anniversary to the priesthood in his home parish, Bruno, Sask., Sunday, June 8. This was attended by members of his family, abbey members, and a great number of parishioners from the several parishes he had served.

Another jubilee celebration for Fr. Joe was held at the abbey.

Baptized Peter, Fr. Joe was born in the village of Balgonie, Sask., Sept. 20, 1924, to Andrew and Emilia Ackerman. Fifteen children were born into this family. His father was employed by the Canadian Pacific Railroad Co., which necessitated moving to various locations. The family was poor, but the parents managed to bring up a happy and united family. Peter received his early education in Wolseley, Estevan and Regina.

After a brief period of employment, Peter enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force (1943-45), served overseas, and was given an honourable discharge at the end of the war.

After a short period as a civilian, Peter attended St. Peter's College, Muenster, 1947-51, at which time he entered the Order of St. Benedict, receiving the name "Joseph."

Having completed a year of novitiate



Fr. Joe cutting golden anniversary cake

at St. Peter's, he was sent to St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., to study philosophy and theology. Fr. Joe was ordained to the priesthood in St. Peter's Cathedral, Muenster, by the late Bishop Francis Klein.

Following ordination Fr. Joe taught at St. Peter's High School, assisted in vari-

ous parishes, served as assistant business manager at St. Peter's Abbey and became pastor of the Muenster and St. Gregor parishes.

Fr. Joe was offered a sabbatical in 1970 during which time he studied at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., and then at Duke University, Durham, N.C.

On his return he was appointed pastor of St. Anthony and St. James parishes, Lake Lenore.

His next assignment was the Pilger and Middle Lake parishes. After a few years he was given the Bruno and Peterson parishes where he is still pastor.

Wherever Fr. Joe served, he was active in parish and community groups and clubs. An avid outdoors man, he enjoys hunting, fishing, skating, hockey, and golf, etc.

At 84 years of age, his health is good. God has indeed blessed him as well as the communities in which he served.

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

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

Deaths: remember the faithful departed

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

Nov. 17 — Abbot Philip Berning, OSB, St. Gregory Abbey, Shawnee, Okl.

Dec. 3 — Mary Boddy, Oblate, St., Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Saskatoon, Sask.

Dec. 22 — Fr. William Kirk, OSB, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Ill.

Dec. 30 — Fr. Augustine Ludwig, OSB, St. Mary, Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA

Jan. 8 — Fr. Philip Kaufman, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Jan. 9 — Br. David Downey, OSB, St. Gregory's Abbey, Shawnee, Okl.

March 2 — Ego Javor, OSB, Woodside Priory, Portala Valley, Calif.

April 10 — Fr. Simon Toth, OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

June 7 — Fr. John Browne, OSB, Newark Abbey, Newark, NJ.

June 21 — Fr. Thomas Devereux, OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

July 2 — Fr. David Wolf, OSB, Assumption Abbey, Richardton, ND.

Aug. 4 — Br. Gerard Klarie, OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Sept. 4 — Fr. Harvey Wingfield, OSB, St. Martin's Abbey, Lacey, Wash.

Sept. 4 — Abbot Jerome Weber, OSB, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask.

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