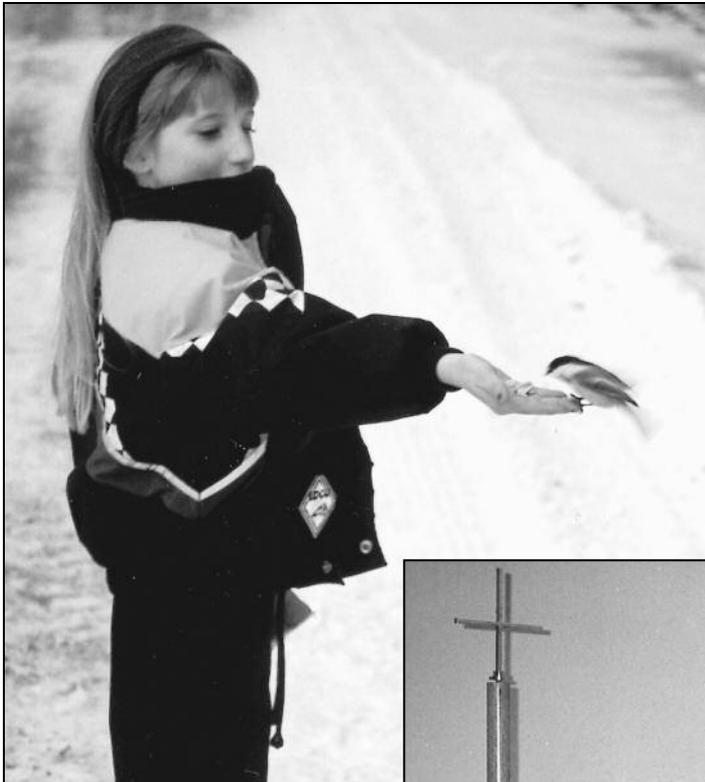


St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 22 No. 2 Spring 2000



*One of our young
guests feeds the
chickadees
(see article on page 5)*

*Abbot Peter blesses
new water from the
spring run-off and
seeds to be planted
in the fields and
gardens.*



A message from Abbot Peter's desk

Dear friends,

Spring is always a special time of year. It's one of my favourite seasons.

Liturgically, it coincides with the feast of Easter. Thus, nature reinforces the message of new life that we celebrate at Easter. The green grass and budding trees are always a welcome sight, as are the frogs, the geese and the warmer weather. This year, though we had a fairly mild winter, spring was still a welcome visitor. It's always nice to be able to walk outside without the bother of putting on a winter coat and boots.

Here at the abbey, there has been a number of activities during this spring season. One of the major ones was the arrival of 17 monks from various abbeys across the United States who are involved in formation work. They meet annually after Easter and this year the meeting was held at St. Peter's. It's the second time we have hosted this group. The late date of Easter helped, as it meant the weather would be more agreeable. And the weather did cooperate. The snow was all gone! And we enjoyed the company of the monks, many of whom were at St. Peter's for the first time.

The first week of May was the week for the monks annual retreat. Our retreat master this year was Archabbot Lambert Reilly of St. Meinrad's Archabbey. He dwelt in a very practical way on some basic values of Christian and monastic

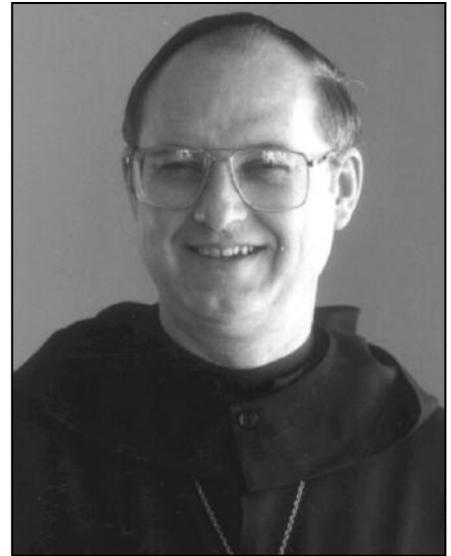
life. A theme that came up throughout his conferences was that God's ideas are a lot bigger than our ideas, and we will be a lot happier if we let God direct our lives, even if we don't always understand God's ways. We have to be ready to let go of our will.

During the retreat Fr. Robert Gannon became a candidate as a cloistered Oblate. Fr. Robert has been a hermit on our grounds for almost 30 years. He moved from his hermitage to the abbey a year ago because of the advance of Parkinson's disease. He joins the community regularly for prayer and meals. He is able to maintain his solitude as well, in his room next to the monastery. He provides a good example of humble service to the rest of the community.

Spring is always a time of change for the college. The 100+ students have written their exams and are off to summer jobs or other adventures. We wish them good luck and hope to see many of the first-year students back next year for a second year.

The farm springs into a different rhythm in spring too. As of this writing, the farm staff is in the fields putting in a new crop, amid the uncertainty of an adequate financial return in the fall. Thus we can identify very readily with the farmers in the province who are facing one of the worst financial crises since the 1930 Depression.

I noted in the last newsletter that the



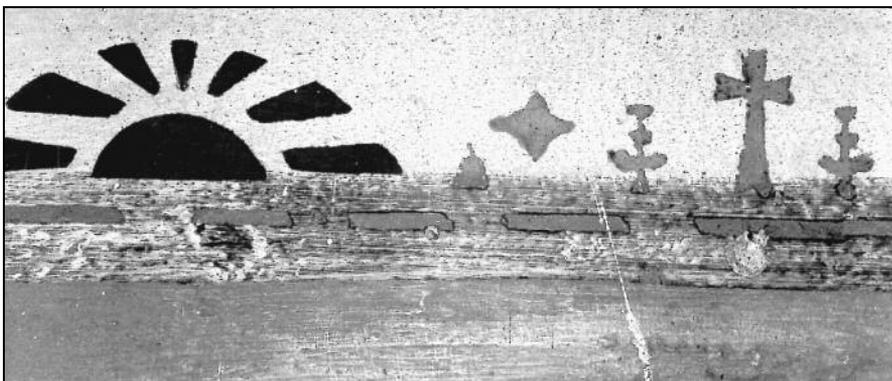
Abbot Peter Novocosky, OSB

abbot primate has suggested that Benedictines (and friends) honour the Jubilee Year with a special project of prayer and fasting. In this way Benedictines can contribute to our own renewal and the renewal of the entire Church.

He invites all the Benedictines of the world to take three weeks of this year for more intense prayer and asceticism. This includes the first and last weeks of the year for all, plus a third week. The third week assigned to St. Peter's Abbey is the week of May 28. We certainly invite any friends of the abbey to join us in spirit in this project.

My prayer for you this summer can be summarized in this Irish blessing:

- May there always be work for your hands to do.
- May your purse always hold a coin or two.
- May the sun always shine on your window pane.
- May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain.
- May the hand of a friend always be near you.
- May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.



Detail of a trimming from the 1920s, found on the abbey kitchen wall.

Our life commits us to be an ‘oblation’

By Lawrence DeMong, OSB

It was during our monastic retreat that the newsletter editor reminded me about an article focused on oblates that was due. At first it seemed like (another!) distraction from what we were supposed to be doing. Then suddenly it hit me how this retreat being given by Abbot Lambert Reilly had really only one simple message: **oblation**. Without using the word, he was saying over and over again that a monastic, every Christian for that matter, was called to be a gift: to God, to the sisters or brothers with whom one lives, to the whole world. I hope that this remembering helps get his message a little deeper into my life.

The retreat with Abbot Lambert was a wonderfully graced experience, a true delight. He lives his theology. And for every point he makes there are several stories to illustrate and to connect with life. He loves Scripture not just as texts but as experiences, as illustrations of our life story with God in Jesus. He also loves to throw in quotes especially from St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman.

He began the retreat by giving Newman’s notion that no preacher has more than one sermon. So what is Abbot Lambert’s one sermon? First story: As a young diocesan seminarian, Lambert was pushed against his will to study not close to home but at the seminary at St. Meinrad’s Archabbey. Next thing he knew an inner voice was calling him to change his plans and join the monastery. After ordination, his abbot asked him to go off preaching retreats, an awful prospect. Poor Lambert returned to his abbot and complained that he threw up after every conference. “No problem,”



Oblate Day — From left: John McLeod, Arlene Richardson, Abbot Peter, Mary Rose Wolff, Rev. David Hoffman and Fr. Lawrence.

said the abbot (“when abbots were abbots,” adds Lambert) “as long as the people don’t throw up.”

Our oblation begins in faith. Again to illustrate, Abbot Lambert told how, after many years of giving retreats he got cancer. While receiving therapy he arranged to stay at a rectory with a confrere. When he arrived and no one was home, the sun, following his chemotherapy treatment, was killing him. In desperation he found a partially opened window, climbed in, slipped on the fridge and broke his wrist! Back at the abbey he had to have his arm suspended out in front of him and with an attack of flebitis in his foot, that too had to be held out in front of him.

As Fr. Lambert was optimistically preparing to die, his abbot asked him to be prior of the monastery. “I was so sick I couldn’t be anything else but nice,” he quipped. And then an unexpected kind of “death” came his way. He was elected abbot!

With the new abbot older than his predecessor, St. Meinrad’s has something of a John XXIII as their leader. With lots of experience, humour and humility, Abbot Lambert has been able to lead his community into some unbelievable transformations.

Try this one for an oblation: get all 130 monks, those living both within and far away from the monastery, to cut out

smoking. Beginning with the evident truth that it is against good health and contrary to poverty, he challenged all nicotine addicts for a year to seek any kind of therapy and support they needed to make theirs a smoke-free community by Jan. 1, 2000. And then in a beautiful gesture of solidarity with those having trouble quitting, he fasted on bread and water for the first week of the new year.

Even the former abbot expressed gratitude that only the vow of obedience could have rid him of the habit. Addictions, crosses, obedience, oblation, it’s all the same piece of cloth and it all goes with being a Christian.

When he became abbot the monastery’s debt was so great that he called for no vacations away from the abbey for a year. They’re out of debt. But now Abbot Lambert sees that giving away the surplus is essential. Oblation again.

There’s so much more. Br. Gerald has made tapes of all the talks. I hope they circulate widely, especially among our oblates and friends who wish to know more about our Benedictine spirituality. To become a saint is to be in continual conversion, never to be satisfied with where we are, always to be straining forward to the next stage of growth in Christ who gave himself completely. Our vocation is one of unending giving, availability, oblation.

“. . . that in all things God may be glorified.”

— Benedictine Motto

Papal jubilee pilgrimage accomplished

In planning for the Jubilee Year 2000, one of Pope John Paul's deepest desires was to make a spiritual pilgrimage to various sites where God chose to reveal himself to the human race, sites which are treasured by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. His desires have been fulfilled. The monastic community and indeed the whole world followed the pope with grateful and expectant awareness.

This pilgrimage, therefore, needs to be recorded for future reference.

* Feb. 23 — Ur, birthplace of Abraham. Since it was impossible to travel to Iraq, the pope had a remembrance service in Rome in which he recalled Abraham, and his faith and obedience in his readiness to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

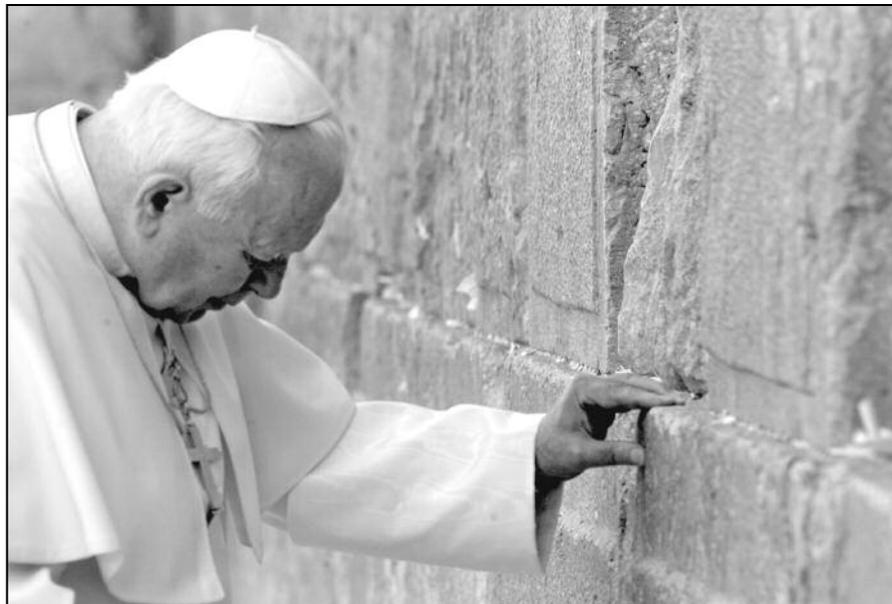
* Feb. 24-25 — Egypt-Cairo. He met with Muslim leader.

* Feb. 26 — At Mt. Sinai where God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses.

Pilgrimage to Holy Land, March 20-26

* Mon. 20 — Arrived at Amman and visited Mt. Nebo where Moses died.

* Tue. 21 — Celebrated mass in a stadium in Amman, the Jordanian capital, toured the sites near the River Jordan before making his way to Jerusalem.



Pope John Paul II places his hand on a crevice along the massive rocks of the Western Wall as he prays at Judaism's holiest site.

* Wed. 22 — Traveled to Bethlehem, celebrated mass at the place where Christ was born, and visited a Palestinian refugee camp.

* Thu. 23 — In Jerusalem. Celebrated mass privately in the Cenacle Hall, the room of the Last Supper. Visited two chief rabbis, and presided over an inter-religious meeting in the evening.

* Fri. 24 — Traveled to Galilee region,

celebrated mass on Mount of the Beatitudes, and visited nearby sites associated with Christ's life and miracles.

* Sat. 25 — Feast of the Annunciation. The pope celebrated mass in Nazareth at the site where Mary received the news that she would give birth to Christ. Later on the pope journeyed to Jerusalem and prayed privately in the Garden of Gethsemane, scene of Christ's agony, betrayal and arrest. He presided over an ecumenical meeting that evening.

* Sun. 26 — The pope visited the grand mufti (Muslim) at al-Aqsa Mosque. Then he visited the Wailing Wall nearby, celebrated mass later at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Jesus was buried and rose from the dead. He met the Catholic patriarchs and bishops before departing for Rome.



Chickweed Reunion. From left: Rebecca Campbell, Holly Borgerson Calder, Kimmy Beach and Catherine Greenwood.

**OPEN WIDE
THE DOORS TO CHRIST**

How the chickadees came to be tamed

By *Martin Brodner, OSB*

Charles Schulz had his comic strip *Peanuts* and the bird Woodstock, while at the abbey both monks and visitors have their chickadees. Here around the abbey there is a source of joy: both in reading the first, and in feeding the latter. How did this come about?

Both began over 40 years ago. Schulz began his *Peanuts* strip in 1952 and it has remained a favourite ever since. The taming of the chickadees began in the winter of 1962. It happened almost by chance.

In those days of the early 1960s we had a steady stream of novices coming to discern their vocation. They soon learned our motto “Pray and Work.” One of these works in the winter after-

noons was to chop down and clear out the dead trees in our bushes south of the abbey. This provided both fresh air and exercise. It also resulted in making over two miles of paths through this (wooded plot of land) nature spot.

One sunny day as we were getting our axes from the tool shed and eating Christmas peanuts, we noticed the friendly chickadees skipping about nearby, yet keeping their distance, and chirping all along. Some even landed nearby on some empty apple crates, stored for the winter. An idea surfaced: would they be interested in peanuts? Would this be a good diet for them?

We placed some peanuts on the boxes and withdrew some distance. And, wonder of wonders, some of these brave

birds jetted in, snatched a peanut and were gone. Soon others recognized this savory free meal and did likewise. What joy! The next day and the days after we were eager to get out at tree-chopping time to enjoy this scene, drawing a few feet closer day by day until we were within only several feet of the boxes.

The next big news during an evening recreation was: a monk had taken a stroll along the paths and noticed chickadees coming his way and chirping at him from nearby branches. He stretched out his empty hand invitingly with a “chick-a-dee-dee” call. And there was the wonder: a chickadee landing on his empty mitt!

Well, that did it. If they are brave enough to land on an empty hand, they will surely land on a handful of peanuts. The next day the novices reached out hands with peanuts, but none on the boxes, indicating that if they wanted them they must “come and get them.” And they guardedly responded. And they’ve been doing that ever since for 38 years! The discovery was shared with our visitors. The birds show no discrimination. Even five year old children can reach out their tiny hands and experience the excitement of a “bird in the hand is worth more than two in the bush”!

Charlie Brown sticks out his tongue to catch a snowflake; monks and others stick out hands with peanuts to feed the chickadees.

Deaths

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

Oct. 14 — Fr. Christian Casper, OSB, 70, St. Mary’s Abbey, Morristown, N.J.

Dec. 28 — Abbot Walter Coggin, OSB, 83, Belmont Abbey, Belmont, N.C.

2000

Jan. 7 — Fr. Antony Hellenberg, OSB, 61, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Jan. 9 — Fr. Gerard Farrell, OSB, 80, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Jan. 14 — Fr. Venard Helget, OSB, 86, St. Benedict’s Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

Feb. 4 — Fr. Michael Feeney, OSB, 80, Saint Martin’s Abbey, Lacey, Wash.

Jan. 22 — Oblate Agnes Lummerding, 90, Humboldt, Sask.

Feb. 5 — Abbot Gerald McCarthy, OSB, 87, St Anselm Abbey, Manchester, N.H.

Feb. 12 — Br. Bernard Lewitzke, OSB, 88, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Feb. 14 — Fr. Julian Burt, OSB, 91, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Feb. 16 — Fr. Bertin Emling, OSB, 94, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

Feb. 17 — Fr. Rudolph Baumberger, OSB, 89, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville Minn.

March 3 — Fr. Vincent Traynor, OSB, 83, Saint Gregory’s Abbey, Shawnee, Okla.

March 13 — Tony Benning, 94, Humboldt, Sask., brother of deceased Frs. Leonard, Xavier and Edward.

March 28 — Fr. William Heidt, OSB, 86, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

April 14 — Fr. Charles Weber, OSB, 81, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn.

May 4 — Fr. Paul Schwietz, OSB, 48, St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Published and printed by the Benedictine community of St. Peter’s Abbey, Muenster, Saskatchewan S0K 2Y0, three times per year: January - May - September.

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Logo by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.

People and events around the abbey

By *Martin Brodner, OSB*

The gratitude and hope which the opening celebrations have inspired seem to have carried over wondrously into these opening weeks of Jubilee 2000 as we recalled the precious gift of salvation which the Incarnation of the Son of God ushered in.

Even the weather of January was pleasantly mild. Before we realized it, six weeks of this Jubilee Year had passed by. Looking about, then, we can report as follows.

Jan. 5-11 — Abbot Peter was at the Western Bishops Executive Meeting in Nanaimo, BC.

Jan. 16 — Since the Ursuline Convent at Bruno closed down last summer, the sisters and their OSU associates began their regular meetings at the abbey. The 55 sisters and associates joined the monks for the Sunday eucharist.

Jan. 25-26 — Already on Jan. 12 major renovation work began in the abbey kitchen: ripping out the old tile floor and repairing the wood on the floor, and moving out all cabinets, etc. This was the first major renovation since Michael Hall was built in 1920.

Jan. 25-26 — the renovation continued with the white spray-painting of the ceiling and walls. We discovered a small portion of the north wall had not been painted over since the 1920s, and we found a remnant of a trimming along the wall which was hidden all these years by a cabinet. This portion is now preserved since Michael Hall has recently been declared an historical site. Be sure to look for this 'flash from the past' on your next visit! (See page 2.)

Jan. 31-Feb. 13 — Since it was impossible to prepare meals during these days, no meals were prepared except for the essential food for the monastic dining-room. Meanwhile the



The newly renovated St. Peter's Abbey kitchen.

renovation work progressed in the following stages:

Jan. 31-Feb. 1 — The floor was covered with plywood sheets.

Feb. 2-3 — The safety flooring was laid.

Feb. 7-10 — The process of moving in the newer dishwasher, moving the cooks' tables back, painting of the cabinets and the re-arranging of them and

the fridge. The dishwasher was put to use the first time on Friday evening Feb. 11. And the kitchen was again ready for full use.

Jan. 28-30 — The St. Thomas More Newman students gathered again at the abbey for their annual retreat. Also, the Sask. CWL executive meeting here.

Feb. 11-25 — Sixteen members of the Saskatchewan Writers Guild were here for the winter colony.



Members of the Saskatchewan Writers Guild Colony were here in February.

Feb. 12 — St. Peter's College had Open House. Prospective students were introduced to our college facilities, courses and professors.

Feb. 13 — Good Grief, Charlie Brown! Your beloved author Charles Schulz, 77, died during sleep last night and his final *Peanuts* cartoon appeared in the papers today. For further comments see page 5.

Feb. 14 — Abbot Peter was guest speaker at the Weyburn Deanery meeting. He was also at the annual meeting of the Western Canadian Bishops at Edmonton, Feb. 25-27.

Feb. 17 — The abbey hosted the Humboldt Deanery Meeting.

Feb. 17 — An evening with Don Hall, local photographer. Don's photographs have been on display in the library since Jan. 13 and were up until Feb. 24. Don's photographs were inspired by life around the abbey.

Feb. 19 — The Melfort District Pastoral Council met here.

* In fact these weeks we will have further meetings of: Birch Hills Ministerial Council (Feb. 28-29), Emmanuel & St. Chad College retreat (March 3-5), SADD gathering (March



Fr. Myroslaw Tatyryn talks to the local community.

10-12), St. Stephan's Alpha Group (March 10-12), and St. Timothy's Anglican Retreat (March 24-26).

Feb. 21-March 3 — Another major renovation job was undertaken in our abbey recreation room. The process was similar to the kitchen; removal of all furniture and shelves, removing the tiles after 35 years of use, painting the walls and ceiling, laying the linoleum and moving the furnishings back again. Br. Basil again directed this work with Br. François as able assistant. We also had the help of some Katimavik youth as well as volunteer live-ins.

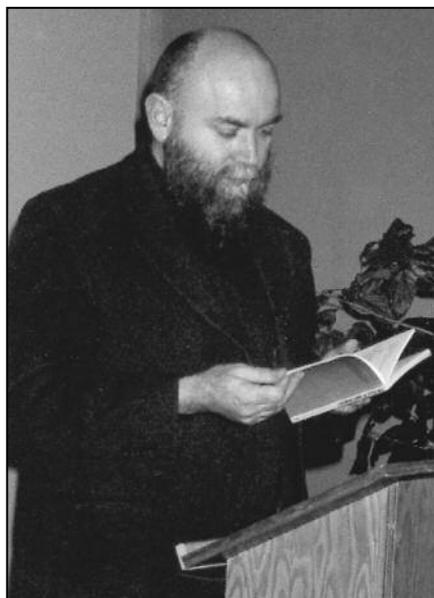
Feb. 24 — Fr. Myroslaw Tatyryn of STM, Saskatoon addressed: first, the

monks in the afternoon on Benedictine Monasticism and Eastern Spirituality; and in the evening the entire local community on "What the Western Church can learn from the spiritual treasures of the Eastern Church."

March 19 — The closing of St. Joseph Parish, Fulda. At a parish community meeting on Feb. 28 the parishioners after deliberation concluded that it was time to close the parish, which was one of the first to be opened in the Colony by Prior Alfred Mayer in the fall of 1903. This parish was first cared for by Fr. Chrysostom Hoffmann till 1905.

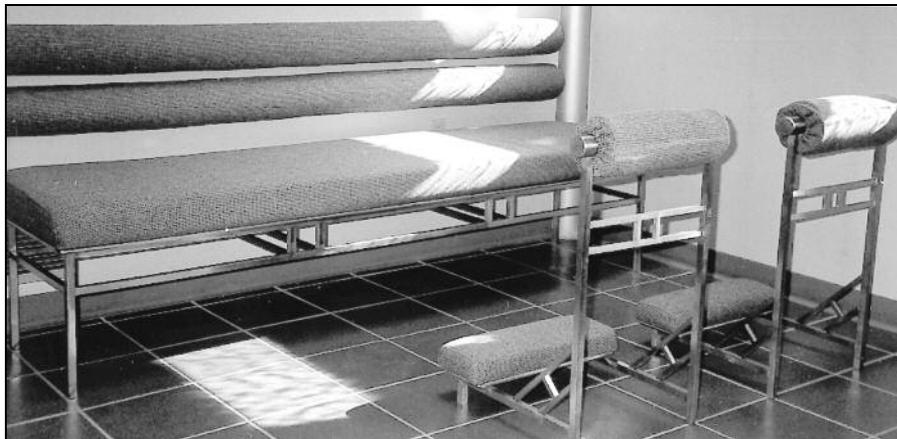


An evening with Don Hall. From left: Grant McConnel, St. Peter's College; Ken Duczek, MacKenzie Art Gallery; Shelley Sother, Saskatchewan Writers Guild; Don Hall.



Fr. Myroslaw Tatyryn talking to the monks of St. Peter's Abbey.

People and events around the abbey



New furniture for the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

March 22 — New benches have been added to the abbey church Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Try them on your next visit.

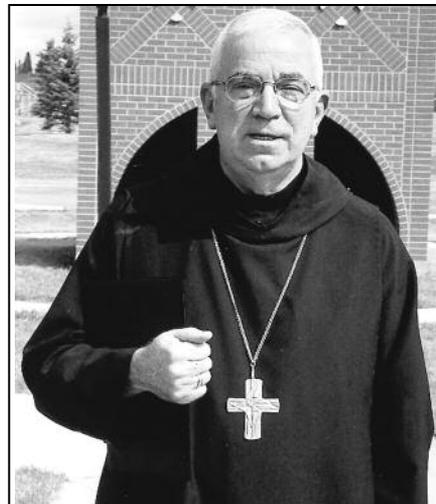
March 22-April 4 — Four of the poets from the October Sage Hill Poetry Colloquium known as Chickweed, from their Chatbook, were back here to do some more writing and have a reunion.

March 23 — Abbot Peter was special guest and speaker at the banquet in Regina on the 20th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Writers Guild. This group is pleased to use our abbey facilities several times a year for their workshops.

March 25 — Oblate Day. The balmy spring weather brought together a greater number of Oblates than usual. Arlene Richardson made her final oblation. Three applicants were enrolled as Oblate candidates: John Macleod of Lloydminster, Rev. David Hoffman of Regina and Mary Rose Wolff.

March 25-29 — Abbot Peter conducted a parish retreat in Albertville, Sask.

March 26 — For the first time in many years with little winter snow we have had only a very small spring run-off so that we enter upon the summer with a notably decreased supply of water.



Retreat director Archabbot Lambert Reilly, OSB.

was conducted by Archabbot Lambert Reilly, OSB, of St. Meinrad Archabbey, Ind. This abbey belongs to the Swiss American Congregation, and was founded from Einsiedeln Abbey, Switzerland, in 1854. Our St. Peter's Abbey belongs to the American Cassinese Congregation which was founded in 1846 at St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn., which in turn was founded from Metten in Bavaria.

April 8 — Abbot Peter celebrated the closing mass for the Fulda church of St. Joseph.

April 25-30 — The abbey hosted the Benedictine Formation Directors' Conference this year. Eighteen monks from 14 monasteries in the U.S.A. had the chance to visit Canada, most for the first time in this our northernmost abbey in North America! The weather was ideal, but continuing dry for the entire spring.

April 30-May 4 — The abbey retreat



Benedictine Formation directors were here for the first time in 14 years.