Great are the works of the Lord, to be pondered by all who delight in them.

—Psalm 111:2
This issue of Abbey Banner celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the Church’s attentive listening to the Spirit. Abbot John Klassen offers a reflection on the legacy of Vatican II: the openness of the council leaders to change, renewal, and learning. Father Kevin Seasoltz presents an overview of how the council affected the Church and how believers today strive to honor the reform and renewal begun fifty years ago. Father Daniel Durken, founding editor of Abbey Banner, highlights the profound effect the council had on the liturgy, labor, and life of the abbey. We also hear our late confrere Father Godfrey Diekmann, a theological consultant at Vatican II, offer his enthusiastic assessment of that springtime of the Church.

Openness to the Spirit’s guidance led our three novices to profess temporary vows as Benedictine monks in September. We are introduced to our Brothers Richard Crawford, David Allen, and Lucian López. We also meet Moses and Aaron—not the leaders of the chosen people in the desert, but the Benedictine volunteers in India. Mr. Paul Johnson, an alumnus of the Benedictine volunteer corps, reflects on his service and how it is changing his faith.

For one-hundred-fifty-five years monks of Saint John’s have been engaged in the education of youth. Thousands of middle school, high school, college, and graduate school students and seminarians call Saint John’s their alma mater. Whatever their course of study, all have been formed in the Benedictine tradition with its emphasis on respect for others and community. Father Eric Hollas introduces us to Dr. Michael Hemesath, an alumnus of Saint John’s University, who returned to the school in July to become its thirteenth president. Ms. Grace Lee, a junior at Saint John’s Preparatory School, shares her discovery of the value of a Benedictine education.

The monks of Saint John’s have managed the surrounding forests, fields, and lakes with care since settling here in the mid 1800s. Mr. Nicholas Moe updates us on the community’s ongoing sustainability efforts, while Ms. Eleanor Gray introduces our neighbor, The Nature Conservancy, and its contribution to good stewardship.

In this issue we also explore a new work of art in the abbey arboretum; we meet a monk from Saint Paul, travel to our mission in Japan, and savor a Czech tradition. Father Timothy Backous closes the issue by reflecting on the balance needed between the two pillars of monastic life: prayer and work.

The editorial staff joins Abbot John and the monastic community in extending prayers and best wishes for a blessed Christmas and Epiphany. May Christ’s gift of peace fill your hearts throughout the new year.

--Brother Robin Pierzina, O.S.B.
On 25 January 1959, the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Pope John XXIII did something completely unexpected. He called for an ecumenical council! That call led to three years of intense preparation for the opening session of Vatican II on 11 October 1962. The council was an unexpected spring for the Church. In this Year of Faith, we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of that marvelous era of change and renewal.

The spirit of openness that animated the council was due in large part to the leadership of Pope John XXIII. The Church changed its posture from a defensive, fearful stance to the world and instead turned toward the world, to be a learning Church. It retrieved the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, indeed the entire liturgy, as central to the life of the Church. By emphasizing the sacraments of initiation and the call of the entire Church to holiness, the council was able to call all of its members to a richer and more complete engagement in ministry. As a result, there are 16,000 permanent deacons and another 30,000 lay ecclesial ministers serving in the Church. This is an astonishing transformation unfolding before our eyes.

The council called the Church to a constant renewal of itself, fueled and guided by a return to the sources of its life in the Scriptures and patristic literature. This call is more than cosmetic; it means that the council leaders were affirming the Church’s life as deeply historical and embedded in culture. Everything we do is embedded in culture, and we are constantly engaged in the work of interpretation. This understanding has been much more difficult to sustain, especially with respect to the translation of the Roman Missal and other areas of Church life where inculturation is essential. It is clear that ongoing study and conversation are necessary in this arena.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, we may think of much that has been less than what was hoped for from the council. But there have been profound positive changes that have come about and have made the world a better place. I hope that Saint John’s Abbey will continue to be a place where the spirit of the council flourishes.
On the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 14 September, Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B., and the monks of Saint John’s Abbey rejoiced as they witnessed the profession of simple (temporary) vows of Novices Richard Crawford, David Allen, and Lucian López. Following a year of testing, the novices were accepted into the community as junior monks who will now continue their formation studies, service to the community, and discernment of Benedictine life.

Richard now works in customer service and shipping at Liturgical Press and is the technical director of the Weber Center and theater department at Saint John’s Prep School. He is also enrolled in Saint John’s School of Theology-Seminary. In his spare time he enjoys reading, cooking, baking, gardening, and playing cards.

“I took vows as a Benedictine monk,” Brother Richard states, “to follow in the footsteps of the monastics who went before me, leading to Christ. Before I came to college I had no idea that there were still monks and sisters in the world. In the powerful witness of the men and women of Saint John’s and Saint Benedict’s I saw a place for me in this way of life. Through the moderate cycle of public prayer, work, private prayer, and recreation, I can more fully and deliberately direct my life to the risen Christ, deepening my relationship with God and the community.”

While a Benedictine volunteer Brother David taught English, was a teacher’s aide, a library assistant, and a member of the tutoria team at Colegio San Lorenzo, a K-12 school located in the heart of Santiago’s underdeveloped neighborhoods. He also worked with native gauchos (South American cowboys—Yewhaha!) in Patagonia, which was a transformational experience for his vocation. After returning from Chile in 2010, he served as a youth minister at Saint Boniface Church in Cold Spring, Minnesota, and worked at the abbey arboretum and abbey.
woodworking shop. David now puts his extroverted demeanor to good use as the Benedictine outreach associate for the office of admission at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University. He is also enrolled in Saint John’s School of Theology-Seminary.

Brother David felt called to monastic life at Saint John’s “after having wonderful experiences with Benedictines and feeling the call to dive deep into my own vocational callings.”

Brother Lucian (Isaac) López, O.S.B., 34, was born in Iowa City, Iowa, but grew up in San Antonio, Texas. Throughout his grade and high school days he enjoyed drawing, writing, theater, and music. He credits the Sisters of Divine Providence with planting the seeds of his vocation to community life in an academic setting while he was an undergraduate at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio.

In the summer of 2002 Lucian took part in a live-in experience at Saint John’s Abbey that changed his life. Keeping the experience in his heart, he went on to complete a master’s degree in history at the University of Texas, San Antonio. His graduate studies focused on the rise of Christianity in late antique Gaul, and also fueled his own search for God and meaning in his life. That search led him back to Collegeville.

Reflecting on the past year of monastic formation, Brother Lucian observed: “I felt that I grew in self-knowledge and prayer and in relationship with the other men who live here. I also learned that whatever difficulties I enter the monastery with are difficulties I’m still going to struggle with. But through all of that I felt God’s grace, and I discerned the role this community had in helping me discover my strengths and weaknesses, giving me the support to find where all of that fits in with God’s plan for my life. This led to a ‘sense of place’ that I feel for this community.”

As monks we truly believe that the vow of obedience, lived over a lifetime as a monk, takes us on a holy path, away from the ego and all its traps, toward true Christian freedom. By obedience here I mean the true and careful discernment of God’s saving will for each one of us, for the good of the Church and the good of the community.

-- Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B.
India has many magnificent features. It is beautiful, religious, historical, and culturally rich. What I didn’t realize until arriving here was just how diverse the country really is. Each of the twenty-six states of India has its own official language, political affiliation, religious history, and, truly, its own people. I live in the state of Kerala where Malayalam is the official spoken language, but nearly everyone knows at least four languages. I teach English at Saint Thomas Benedictine Abbey in Kappadu to monks aged 18–30. Spending four hours with them in class each day and living next door to them has allowed us to get to know each other very well. They have many questions about Americans and about pop culture. I am learning much about Indian life but also recognizing how much I still don’t know.

Like Aaron, I have to admit that I don’t fully understand the Indian culture in which I’ve been immersed. Learning to appreciate the food and the monastic life are easier because of the training given to all Benedictine volunteer corps members. However, I still struggle with other facets of the Indian culture, such as language, dress, and simple customs. The language, while beautiful to the ears, is a very complex system. For example, there are three forms of the Our Father! One form of the prayer is short and succinct. Another version is written prose that is recited in the church. The third is normally sung before meals.

The traditional dress for men includes a loose-flowing long-sleeve shirt that extends to and sometimes past mid-thigh, and a long wrap that is folded at the waist and ends at the feet (called a dhoti). It looks very elegant, but in a region that experiences very high temperatures on a regular basis, it seems very inappropriate! I am certain that the longer I stay here, the more I’ll adapt and learn the purpose of these ways.

Benedictine volunteers Aaron Stolte and Moses Adeagbo graduated from Saint John’s University in May 2012.
Reflections of an alumnus

Paul Johnson

After graduation from Saint John’s University in 2011, Mr. Paul Johnson served in The Saint John’s Benedictine Volunteer Corps (BVC) for one year at Newark Abbey/Saint Benedict’s Prep in New Jersey. During an interview with Brother Paul Richards, O.S.B., Paul reflected on his experiences.

While working with a homeless community at Saint James Parish in south Chicago (a BVC site) over Christmas break 2011, I felt a calling to a similar experience. The Newark program appealed to me: I had heard about the particularly difficult nature of this site—taking on the role of a fledgling teacher in a private, all male, inner-city school for disadvantaged youths. After months of discernment and prayer, and many talks with friends and mentors, I knew that Newark was where I was called to be.

My most significant work at Saint Benedict’s Prep included discussing topics such as faith, respect, and “what it means to be a man” with my students. When what I said broke through just a little bit, enough to see them questioning their past behavior and coming to talk to me after class . . . those were fantastic days!

Other special moments included seeing a student light up because I knew his name and remembered having him in a class I substitute taught once; or the times that one of them would open up to me about personal strife or come to me for advice. I took students to weekly narcotics anonymous meetings; the strife in that room was amazing, but so was the healing that was going on and the success stories of those struggling with addiction every day.

Paul now works at a shelter for “at risk” women and children. Here he sees many similarities to his work with the BVC in Newark.

In Newark I had many students who talked about abusive environments at home or in their neighborhood; to them it was a normal part of life. At the shelter I have the opportunity to work with young kids, providing them with a positive male role model, showing them that it’s okay for men to show emotion, to be vulnerable, and to be loving. I help them to express anger properly and teach them about self-control, respect, self-esteem, and healthy relationships. It is due to my work last year with the BVC that I have the skill sets and patience to accomplish these goals at the shelter.

In October Paul began RCIA classes (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) in order to become a member of the Catholic Church.

This is an exciting time in my faith life! My decision is the culmination of many years of experiencing and learning more about the Catholic faith through the BVC and my years at Saint John’s. Although the BVC experience impacted me in a multitude of ways, the effect it had on my faith life was by far the greatest blessing I received.
His first visit to Saint John’s University as a high school senior from Iowa did not begin with much promise. He arrived just in time for a long weekend, and most of the students were away. Faculty members were equally scarce. But what caught his eye was the fresh blanket of snow that made the campus sparkle. Even better, not one footprint had disturbed the landscape. And that was all it took to grab Michael Hemesath’s imagination. Then and there he resolved to put his own footprints in that snow.

When he graduated four years later, in 1981, it did not occur to him that he might return someday as president. Still, his four years at Saint John’s had planted the seeds of a career that he had never anticipated as a high school senior. He went on to earn a doctorate in economics from Harvard. He then taught for two years at Tufts University before settling in at Carleton College, where he served as professor of economics and president of the faculty. Carleton was an ideal fit, but Saint John’s still stirred in the back of his mind.

Today Dr. Hemesath argues that his own trajectory best illustrates the mission that Saint John’s fulfills so well. “Other colleges attract talented and ambitious students, just as does Saint John’s. But Saint John’s adds greater value,” he is quick to note. “At Saint John’s we open to our students a range of possibilities and push them to explore their gifts and interests, and by graduation they have a much clearer direction for their lives. “This is what a liberal arts, residential college does so well,” he concludes, “and in this Saint John’s truly excels.”

What also distinguishes Saint John’s is its character as a Benedictine and Catholic institution. As its first full-term lay president, Dr. Hemesath is determined to maintain the strong ties with the abbey that have existed since the founding of the university. Crucial to the student experience has been the involvement of monks in classrooms and offices, and especially in the residential life program. He fully intends to strengthen the relationship between monastery and university, to the betterment of both.

In one respect Dr. Hemesath differs markedly from his monk-predecessors in the president’s office: his family. He comes to Collegeville with his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Galbraith, and two-year-old son, Cameron. For their first year they face the challenge of distance, as she completes her teaching contract at Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. But both look forward to a residence “within walking distance” of the campus. Together they will add value in one very distinctive way: the footprints in the snow of a two-year-old toddler.

Father Eric Hollas, O.S.B., senior associate for arts and cultural affairs at Saint John’s University, is the author of A Monk’s Chronicle, a blog at www.monkschronicle.wordpress.com.
Trinity Benedictine Monastery

Roman Paur, O.S.B.

Trinity Benedictine Monastery is located about 3,100 feet up in the foothills of the Yatsugatake and Japanese Alps mountain ranges near the city of Kofu—130 miles west of Tokyo, or about two hours by train. It is considerably cooler than in Tokyo in the summertime and hillier than the coastal plains to the east. Fifty miles southeast of us is the awesome Mount Fuji, visible from the monastery on clear days. The name Fujimi, a small town of under 20,000, means “in view of Fuji.”

Nature spreads a spectacular blanket of beauty throughout much of Japan, especially with the cherry blossoms in full bloom in early spring, the reds and yellows of the maples in late fall, and of course, the white fluffy stuff in winter. We enjoy all three views on our monastery grounds. As at Saint John’s we also have a healthy old grove of swayed Scotch pine that shadows the sun. One of the original bronze bells from the former abbey church twin towers migrated to our new monastery as well.

Ours is a beautiful setting on the outskirts of the town, a location known nationally for its clean air and pure water. Apples and persimmons grow here, and there are numerous rice paddies and distilleries for sake and spirits. Celery, cabbage, daikons (radishes), and mums are grown in greenhouses and in fields.

Recovery from the March 2011 tsunami and nuclear disasters continues slowly. Tens of thousands of people are still displaced; personal lives and the national economy suffered a crushing blow. Japan has had a sagging economy for years; the cost of living is high and services are expensive. Many of the foodstuffs are imported as are fossil fuels.

Three Japanese men and a Chinese priest are among those expressing interest in becoming candidates for our novitiate. Most candidates learn about us through someone who has visited the monastery or through our Web site. They are attracted to the community prayer life and to the peaceful environment. They require, and we provide, community support and a prayerful vigilance on their path of discernment.

Father Roman Paur, O.S.B., is the prior of Trinity Benedictine Monastery in Fujimi, Japan.
It is understandable that Pope John XXIII’s intention to convene a Second Vatican Council announced on 25 January 1959 disconcerted the officials of the Roman Curia because he defined the immediate task of the council as renewing the life of the Church and bringing up to date its teaching, discipline, and organization. He saw the unity of all Christians as the ultimate goal of the council. The curialists hoped that the council would simply affirm the traditional teachings and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the 1950s the Catholic Church began to move away from the neo-Scholasticism and biblical literalism that was imposed on theologians since the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) and above all during the anti-Modernist campaign launched by Pope Saint Pius X in the early years of the twentieth century. The modern world and its diverse cultural developments were rejected and often condemned by the Roman Curia; as a result various European theologians, including Yves Congar, O.P., Henri de Lubac, S.J., and Karl Rahner, S.J., were put under a dark cloud. It is amazing, however, that these same theologians surfaced during Vatican II as key theological experts in the formulation of the council’s documents.

The Second Vatican Council met in four major sessions from 11 October 1962 until 8 December 1965. Although the various commissions that the pope had appointed to prepare for the council were dominated by traditionalists from the Roman Curia, the bishops, who were assembled from all over the world, decided to elect their own commission members in place of those on the list prepared by the curialists. In other words the assembled bishops indicated their independence of the Roman Curia.

Vatican II produced sixteen documents: four major constitutions (on the liturgy, the Church, the Word of God and tradition, and the Church in the modern world), and twelve decrees and declarations (on such subjects as ecumenism, relations with world religions, religious life, and priestly formation). The immediate consequences of the council were far-reaching. Vernacular languages more or less replaced Latin in the liturgy; communion under both kinds was offered to the laity; the assembly was acknowledged as the primary celebrant of the liturgy, and full, active, and intelligent participation was expected of all in the liturgical celebrations. Relationships with other churches, especially the

Pope John XXIII saw the unity of all Christians as the ultimate goal of the council.
Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist Churches, were warmly established; and religious liberty and the sovereignty of conscience were recognized. The unitive purpose of marriage, and not only its procreative aspects, was affirmed; a new attitude on war and peace was developed; and a willingness to learn from the wider world was encouraged. Unfortunately the council failed to institutionalize the kind of moral theology it embodied in its documents, especially in the field of sexual ethics.

Although the various documents of Vatican II were approved, usually by overwhelming majority votes, there was a strong vocal minority deeply disturbed by the developments in the council; they never ceased to maintain their serious reservations. In fact, in order to maintain peace, their minority views were often included in various compromises and obliquely indicated in footnotes to the approved texts. This minority view has been kept alive up to the present, especially by members of the various Roman offices.

In recent years two polarized views have developed concerning the proper interpretation of the council. One view maintains that the council was a new event, a new experience; hence the texts should be interpreted in that light. The other view holds that the council must be interpreted not in terms of discontinuity but in terms of its continuity with preceding councils; therefore, it is the texts themselves that are important, not the cultural and ecclesial context in which they were formulated.

When Pope John XXIII called the council, the Church was monolithic. Its sure identity was expressed in its commitment to Latin and Gregorian chant, to a strong hierarchical structure, and to a clear statement of its orthodox theology. In the years since the council, however, the Church has become multicultural. The numerical center of Christianity has shifted from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern, with the majority of Christians now living in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The identity of the Church has been deeply affected by the migration of peoples, major changes in the modes of communication, the effects of globalization, and the relations of the Christian churches with other world religions, especially with Islam.
Excerpts from the opening address of Pope John XXIII

We hear opinions expressed by people who, though fired with a zeal for religion, are lacking in sufficient prudence and judgment in their evaluation of events. They can see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present. They say over and over that this modern age, in comparison with past ages, is definitely deteriorating. They seem to imagine that in the days of the earlier councils everything was as it should be so far as doctrine and morality and the Church’s liberty were concerned. We must disagree with these prophets of doom, who are always forecasting disasters, as though the end of the world were at hand.

The major interest of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred heritage of Christian truth be safeguarded and expounded with greater efficacy. We are not here primarily to discuss certain fundamentals of Catholic doctrine, or to restate in greater detail the traditional teaching of the Fathers and of early and more recent theologians. There was no need to call a council merely to hold discussions of that nature.

What is needed at the present time is a new enthusiasm, a new joy and serenity of mind in the unreserved acceptance by all of the entire Christian faith . . . more widely known, more deeply understood, and more penetrating in its effects on our moral lives.

With the opening of this council a new day is dawning on the Church, bathing her in radiant splendor. It is yet the dawn, but the sun in its rising has already set our hearts aglow.

Father R. Kevin Seasoltz, O.S.B., is editor of Worship magazine and professor emeritus of theology of Saint John’s School of Theology-Seminary.
Divine Intervention

Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B.

Father Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B. (1908–2002), a monk of Saint John’s Abbey for seventy-five years, was a liturgist, editor of Orate Fratres/Worship, and peritus (expert theological advisor) at the Second Vatican Council. Below are Father Godfrey’s reflections on the council, excerpted from an interview in Rome (November 1963) and from U.S. Catholic magazine (November 1991).

Chirst’s presence. At the council we established the good news that Christ is present not only in the eucharistic species, but he is present wherever a community is gathered. Christ is present when the Gospel is proclaimed. Christ is present when the sacraments are performed. Christ is present in the love shared with others. This rediscovery of the presence of Christ brings meaning to Jesus’ promise that he is with us all days. (U.S. Catholic)

The laity. The greatest thing theologically that happened at Vatican II is the rediscovery of the laity. The Church had become a hierarchy, but the council clearly insisted that all members of the Church are basically equal, and all are co-responsible under proper leadership. Each has his or her role to play in worship and service. We are one in Christ. The laity is not just at the beck and call of bishops. This was the greatest Christian insight in our century and perhaps in the last thousand years. We also discovered that the Church is not primarily an institution. It is a mystery, a sacrament, the body of Christ. “The People of God.” That was the turning point of Vatican II. (U.S. Catholic)

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (approved in November 1963). Twenty-five years after Virgil’s death. One wishes he were here to see this! [Father] Virgil Michel [O.S.B.] anticipated the course of events. There is not one reform being implemented that he did not point to as a goal to be achieved. This document is not the introduction of a few new practices but a thorough reorientation of theological thinking with appropriate pastoral conclusions. (Rome interview)

Vatican II was one of the great moments of God’s intervention in human history. (U.S. Catholic)

The Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served. To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.

--The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)

Council Quips

I’m on a balcony, opposite the Protestant and Orthodox observers . . . watching cardinals twiddling their thumbs when things get dull—which is often enough. A lot of Italian and Spanish bishops are talking “for the record” in order to immortalize themselves as having talked at the council. When this happens, there is a general exodus towards the coffee bars (a real godsend, but so crowded that you’re liable to be chewing a bishop’s mozzetta [cape] instead of your bit of cake, unless you’re careful). (Letter, 14 October 1963)

Have you heard the story of the Franciscan, the Jesuit, and the Benedictine at the Christmas crib? The Franciscan asks: “Is the child wrapped warmly?” The Jesuit inquires: “Has he been enrolled in one of our schools?” And the Benedictine wonders: “Does the crib face the people?” (Diary 1963)

Cardinal Bea prays: “Curia eleison.” (Letter, 14 October 1963)
Two days before his departure for Rome to attend the opening session of the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Peter Bartholome of Saint Cloud speculated, “The main work of this council will be to reaffirm the Ten Commandments.” About the same time, Father Colman Barry, O.S.B., wrote on a postcard to Professor Martin Marty of the University of Chicago, “We do not expect much to come of it.” Fifty years later these two comments deserve this one-word reaction: Surprise!

And yet the Second Vatican Council should have come as no surprise to the monks of Saint John’s Abbey. Thirty-seven years before the publication of the council’s first document, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Benedictines of Collegeville anticipated the major renewal of the Catholic Church with the 1926 founding of Liturgical Press and the publication of its flagship journal of liturgical renewal, Orate. Fratres, later renamed Worship. Under the leadership of Fathers Virgil Michel, O.S.B., and Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., liturgical renewal had long been the focus of the abbey’s worship and work. So what influence did the council have on the prayer life of the monastic community?

In its B.C. (before the council) days, the prayer schedule of the abbey had a quasi-Trappist tinge with the rising bell ringing through abbey corridors at 4:25 A.M. The Latin Divine Office hours of Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, and None began at 4:45 A.M., followed by celebration of Mass offered by the weekly prayer leader who alone consecrated and consumed the Eucharist. This daily Mass was intended to be the setting for the meditation of the priests. After this Mass dozens of priests descended to the lower chapel beneath the church (now the Great Hall) to celebrate their own private Mass at an array of private altars. Vespers was prayed at 5:30 P.M., followed by supper, an hour of recreation (card playing, a walk, newspaper reading, or conversation), and Matins at 7:30 P.M.

Thanks to two years of persistent efforts by Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, O.S.B., on 28 November 1966 the Sacred Congregation for Religious gave permission for the use of English rather than Latin in the choral recitation of the Divine Office. Abbot Baldwin stated, “The use of the vernacular in choir was but one step, even though a most important one, in our renewal program.” Later changes in the
Office included the consolidation of the so-called Little Hours (Terce, Sext, None) into one midday prayer.

Another major liturgical change came in August 1964 when Saint John’s was chosen as one of seven places in the world to experiment with the concelebration of Mass (several priests offer Mass together). The permission stipulated that one Mass of concelebration was allowed each week with a maximum of twenty concelebrants. During the planning (mid 1950s) of the new church, Abbot Baldwin sought permission for regular concelebration, given the presence of a large number of priests. Permission was denied, so thirty-two private altars were constructed in the lower level of the new church.

Among other major changes effected by the council was that of the status of the community’s brothers (nonordained monks). Before the council the brothers had their own section in the abbey dining room, their own chapel, housing in the older areas of the monastery, and a separate area in the abbey cemetery. (In 1967 when the first brother was to be buried in a lot previously reserved for deceased abbey priests, there were no reports of any priest turning over in his grave at such an innovation!) Only priests made final solemn vows, while brothers made simple perpetual vows. All of this changed in 1965 as a result of Vatican II. Eventually brothers served the community not only through manual labor and crafts but also as teachers, monastic superiors, and major administrators. Whether ordained or nonordained, all prayed together, ate together, and lived together.

Another change in the years after the council was the increased presence of women on campus. When I began teaching theology and speech classes in 1955, I had no women students; the first appeared in the early 1970s. A special problem existed in the production of plays. When Charles Matthews and I had the lead roles in Arsenic and Old Lace, we played the parts, not as the original old ladies hiding drugged men in their basement, but as two old men!

After Vatican II, women religious and laity took their indispensible places in our daily life. One major contribution was the establishment of the Benedictine School of Theology for sisters, launched by Sister Mary Anthony Wagner, O.S.B., that eventually blossomed into the graduate School of Theology at Saint John’s.

A regrettable feature of the Vatican II era was the exodus of many monks from the community. When the council began there were 261 priests, 68 brothers, 53 seminarians (clerics), and 22 novices for a total of 404 members. A few years after the council there were one hundred fewer members. This diminishment of numbers had a devastating impact on our pastoral and missionary ministries. Saint John’s once served 307 parishes in six states, The Bahamas, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Japan. A dozen parishes of the Diocese of Saint Cloud are now pastored by Benedictine priests.

Another council accomplishment that involved Saint John’s is the formation of permanent deacons. In 1969 under the leadership of Father Kieran Nolan, O.S.B., the first workshop for candidates for the permanent deaconate was held here.

The Year of Faith that began on 11 October, the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of Vatican II, is our call and challenge to re-read and study the sixteen major council documents. What we do this year to better understand, appreciate, and put into practice the principles of Vatican II will prepare us to be surprised anew when, sooner than later, Vatican Council III begins.

Father Daniel Durken, O.S.B., professor emeritus of theology of Saint John’s University, is the founding editor of Abbey Banner.
What is it? This question was posed throughout the building of the large outdoor installation sculpture named *Lean on Me*. It certainly invites curiosity and wonder, both in what it is as well as how this nearly thirty-foot, primitive-looking dwelling came to reside in the prairie at Saint John’s.

Artist-in-residence Patrick Dougherty was commissioned to design a piece. After two years of planning, he arrived in early September. None of the three hundred volunteer students, monastic members, neighbors, faculty, and staff knew exactly what the next nineteen days would bring. In collaboration with the abbey arboretum staff, the volunteers began by sustainably gathering bendable willow and sturdy ironwood—ten tractor loads in all, one of which weighed 3300 pounds!

Inserting the largest of the ironwood sticks 26 inches into the ground provided the pillars on which the frame was built. Twine and scaffolding held everything in place until the weaving, tugging, and pulling of sticks firmly bound the structure together with enough strength to last for at least two years.
The process was as significant as the completed structure. For three weeks it was an intense community builder and a teaching tool; now it is a place for children and adults alike to explore, a tourist attraction, and an environmental art piece. Numerous workers discovered an inner creativity and curiosity they didn’t know existed; many discovered muscles they didn’t know they had!

All are welcome to visit and explore Lean on Me.

--Theo Eggermont
Showing respect for the world around us is at the heart of Benedictine life and values. The monks of Saint John’s Abbey are committed to being good stewards of God’s creation and of the work of human hands, and they are seeking to educate and ally themselves with their neighbors, students, and colleagues in sustainability efforts.

In January 2012 Father Bob Koopmann, O.S.B., then president of Saint John’s University, signed the Saint Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor (Catholic Climate Covenant). This pledge commits us to be good stewards of our natural resources and to reduce our carbon footprint in order to mitigate global climate change, which disproportionately affects the poor. Thus we are continually improving our operations to use fewer fossil fuels, giving our campus community more opportunities to lessen their carbon footprint.

The abbey’s solar field has continued to be a reliable source of electric power since it began operation in January 2010. It has been working so well that its yearly output has been eight percent greater than we had expected. The abbey arboretum staff and I continue to give tours of the field to show how practical and effective solar energy can be. Other Minnesotans are catching on.

Education, correctly understood, cannot fail to foster respect for creation.

--Pope Benedict XVI

Eric Pohlman, O.S.B.
When the solar field was built, it was the largest of its kind in the state. Since then, we are happy to have “slipped” to third place!

This success has encouraged us to explore the possibility of an on-campus solar winter greenhouse that would grow a variety of winter vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, bok choy, lettuce, green onions, or chard. University senior Steve Johnson, a scholar with the McNeely Center for Entrepreneurship, will run the greenhouse as a business venture. Steve partnered with me and the physical plant staff to design and solicit bids for the greenhouse this past summer. It has gained support from both the university and the abbey, and the Saint John’s Dining Service has agreed to buy everything that the greenhouse can grow.

The 26’ x 26’ greenhouse building will soak up and retain as much solar radiation as possible while keeping the use of nonsolar energy to a minimum. Windows are to be placed only where there will be sun; the north side and most of the east and west sides will have no windows and be heavily insulated. We have calculated that the greenhouse could collect over 400,000 Btus of heat on a clear January day. It will have a backup natural gas heater, but to limit its use, a system that stores excess heat in coarse rock buried beneath the dirt floor will keep the greenhouse warm at night and on cloudy days. We have raised $30,000 for the project, but we need to raise $40,000 more. The project will go forward if we can raise the remaining funds.

Elsewhere on campus we are promoting reusable water bottles by installing eight bottle-filling stations in high-traffic areas of the campus. The stations have proven to be very popular. Six of them record how much water they provide; as of mid October, they have filled the equivalent of 23,510 sixteen-ounce bottles of water!

Not nearly as visible but perhaps more significant, we continue to burn only natural gas in the Saint John’s powerhouse and will continue to do so through at least October 2014. By avoiding coal, we have reduced the carbon footprint of the campus by 32% and have already surpassed our 2015 goal on our path to carbon neutrality by 2035.

Recognizing that the price of carbon-based energy will only rise in the long run, we continue to invest in energy metering to help manage our energy use. We are now in the third phase of our metering project; when it is complete, we will be able to monitor how much heat and electricity our buildings use and how much energy the powerhouse uses and produces.

The local foods movement keeps growing. Stearns County is considered the organic farming capital of Minnesota! The abbey and university acknowledge the importance of local, organic food for the health of the community and together have donated $5,000 to help fund the startup of a new food cooperative in Saint Joseph, the Minnesota Street Market. The Market, located in the former Loso’s store, specializes in selling food grown by local producers and is open to the public. This community-building enterprise has quickly become a favorite grocery store for the abbey guesthouse and the residents of the Collegeville Institute as well as for monks, employees, and students. The monastery’s garden also continues to be a beloved source of fresh vegetables for the monks.

Consistent with our identity as Catholic educators, Saint John’s promotes sustainability. According to Pope Benedict XVI, “education, correctly understood, cannot fail to foster respect for creation. . . . Environmental protection and the connection between fighting poverty and fighting climate change are important areas for the promotion of integral human development” (Address to Diplomatic Corps, 9 January 2012). We hope that our example inspires others to promote that development to the ends of the earth.

Mr. Nicholas Moe, a 2007 alumnus of Saint John’s University, is a monastic associate and senior sustainability fellow for the university.
Last fall The Nature Conservancy (TNC) moved its central Minnesota office into the Tholl house on Fruit Farm Road at Saint John’s. The reason behind the move was quite simple: TNC needed an office between two preserves (its Ordway/Glacial Lake landscape near Belgrade, Minnesota, and one in southeast Minnesota), and Saint John’s is a perfect midpoint.

The connection between TNC and Saint John’s is more than just that of location; it’s a bond between neighbors who share the same conservation and sustainability goals. Founded in 1951, TNC protects over 119 million acres of land in thirty countries, including all fifty U.S. states and over 70,000 acres in Minnesota. The approach of TNC to conservation focuses on connecting communities with the land and creating local incentives to keep it healthy.

“We manage invasive species, do brush control, build fences for preserves managed with livestock grazing, do scientific monitoring on most preserves, and collaborate in conservation planning activity,” explains Mr. Todd Holman, program director of TNC’s central Minnesota office.

The Nature Conservancy’s invasive species and brush control expertise makes TNC a great neighbor. At Saint John’s, TNC has already helped with buckthorn removal on the Watab picnic grounds. And these new neighbors don’t just care about how our backyard looks; they also teach the skills needed to keep it healthy. Last spring when assistant professor Troy Knight’s environmental science class was learning about fire’s role in prairie ecosystems, the students participated, alongside TNC employees and arboretum staff, in prescribed prairie burns in the field.

The Nature Conservancy is also a potential employer for local college students. This year Saint John’s University senior Ben Carlson will be able to add “Nature Conservancy Intern” to his résumé. Ben is currently using geographic information systems (GIS), a mapping program he learned in his coursework, to compile a land management history for several TNC preserves. “I was able to completely reconstruct the history of prescribed prairie burning back to the very beginning—the first burn taking place in 1962 on the Helen Allison Preserve near Anoka,” he explains. And it’s not just Ben’s résumé that benefits; for TNC the information in this geo-database could be used to determine future management plans.

Mr. Holman expects this strategic working relationship between the arboretum and TNC to transition into a more defined land management team. “Our presence may add to the overall capacity of the abbey and university to do land management on abbey properties as well as those of the College of Saint Benedict,” he says. “TNC brings additional capacity to the great work already being done in the abbey arboretum. If our crew and seasonal timing overlap with opportunities found in the arboretum, we have the ability to work together quickly and effectively for the greater management good.”

Ms. Eleanor Gray, a senior English major at the College of Saint Benedict, serves as a student office assistant at Saint John’s Abbey Arboretum.
Grace Lee

Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.
--Matthew 13:16

Earlier this fall while working on an American history assignment in Alcuin Library, I happened to be reading a historian’s essay about an extraordinary figure—Abraham Lincoln. Although I had long heard and read about him, I never studied Lincoln with the zeal and work ethic that I now carry. That particular evening I felt a farmer’s hand working invisibly inside my mind—planting in it a small seed, much like the magic beans Jack planted in the fairy tale, *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

My previous determination to write an “excellent” response for my history assignment matured into a full-blown admiration for the rich human being who both preserved the Union and abolished slavery. My admiration grew as I sympathized with the man who excelled in writing, suffered chronic depression, and waded through many impossible political dilemmas. Later that evening, as I walked past the outdoor sculpture of young Saint Benedict on my way back to my room in Emmaus Hall, I was distinctly aware of God’s presence. For the first time I pictured myself as a lawyer—studying, reading, writing, and speaking for people in need.

As a prep student in my third year of college preparation, I tend to relate the spiritual callings to my future career. However, I feel more blessed than most other high school students because Saint John’s Benedictine community makes it easier to translate ordinary routines into meaningful experiences. For example, in a February diary entry this year I wrote about how the Sunday homily in the abbey church, about Jesus’ healing miracles, made me want to become a doctor. I wrote, “Where’s the healing Jesus? Father Jonathan Licari reminds us that there is more than physical health to be healed. . . . Father told us to remind [our suffering, beloved ones] they are more than just cancer, more than just arms and legs.” I concluded my reflection with the spiritually motivated determination: “When I become a doctor, I will heal my patient’s soul as well as body.”

I deeply cherish these moments in which the spiritual callings of God have unmasked themselves in ordinary routines. It is truly exciting, touching to the heart, and rejuvenating to discover God’s personal messages hidden in every corner of the Saint John’s campus. If we follow Saint Benedict’s advice—“Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (RB Prol.10 [Ps 95:8])—then every day we will find in our heart inspiration from God, growing as quickly as Jack’s magic beans!

Ms. Grace Lee, a resident student from South Korea, is a junior at Saint John’s Preparatory School.
Meet a Monk: Bradley Jenniges

J. P. Earls, O.S.B.

Brother Bradley ("Brad") Jenniges, O.S.B., was born on the west side of Saint Paul, the fifth of seven children in his family. His father was a bricklayer and his mother a housewife and bookkeeper. Brad was baptized at Saint Matthew’s parish and attended its grade school through grade eight. He began high school at Brady High and finished at Humboldt High. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and continued graduate studies in that field for three years.

Brad was active in his parish life. He served as a lector at Saint Matthew’s and was elected to the parish pastoral council in 1988, completing his term just before he came to Saint John’s Abbey in 1991. At that time he also left his job of caring for people with multiple disabilities.

If growing up with six siblings were not enough to give Brad a bent toward community, working in a restaurant operated by a Lebanese family and working with special needs children and adults oriented Brad toward a life of service to others. While an undergraduate, Brad continued a spiritual search by taking a course in American religious history. He found himself drawn toward the monastic way, reading works by Thomas Merton and Basil Pennington. He recalls that a Benedictine was invited to lecture their class on “the little skirmish with Archbishop Ireland,” a nineteenth-century dispute over priority of ecclesiastical rights which Saint John’s Abbey didn’t win. However, the vocations office of the archdiocese pointed Brad in the direction of Saint John’s, so all is forgiven!

Once Brad saw Saint John’s, he realized that this was the place for him. The beauty of Saint John’s and the monastic life definitely attracted him. In addition, the diversity of work was appealing to someone who had helped his parents build their family house, dabbled in parish life, and done graduate work in mathematics. “There was bound to be something of value I could do here,” Brother Brad comments. He also recognized the opportunity for personal growth: “Physical, spiritual, and intellectual development were encouraged.”

The day Brad received the habit (becoming the first solitary novice at Saint John’s since 1919, according to some reckonings) was also the first day of the Halloween Blizzard of 1991. Since tradition held that the novice class was to be charged
with shoveling snow off the walkways around the abbey, Novice Brad had quite a task thrust on him! It would take the first four days of his novitiate year to complete, even with the help of many brethren. It was perhaps prophetic of the number of difficult assignments he has handled in his monastic career.

Brother Bradley professed first vows as a Benedictine on All Saints’ Day, 1 November 1992. He was immediately assigned to the physical plant department where he served for the next four years as plant and utilities cataloguer. He implemented a software application to trace all the pipes and cables of the campus infrastructure. He also was able to digitalize the layout of campus buildings. In 1996–1997 he taught geometry in our preparatory school; from 1997–2002 he worked in Saint John’s Information Technology Services where he functioned as LAN client support specialist. After serving on the corporate finance committee, Brad was appointed assistant treasurer of the abbey. His purview in the office was mostly monastery specific, overseeing its yearly budget for such things as education, health care, housekeeping, and retirement center management.

As a novice Brother Brad had trained for fire department duty, which he continued while fulfilling most of his other duties. He served as assistant chief from 1994–2010 and enjoyed the work he did as chair of the planning committee for the 2004 purchase of a new pumper vehicle for the department.

Two years ago Brad started a study program in Saint John’s School of Theology-Seminary leading to the master of divinity degree, with anticipated completion in 2014. Brad had felt a “pull” to get further education, and theology seemed to offer potential to develop a greater capacity for pastoral work. His work as coordinator of abbey formation classes (1999–2005) and as assistant formation director (2011–2012) had constituted part of this attraction toward pastoral work. Now he is engaged full time in study. Brad continues to enjoy running and cycling, and is occasionally seen repairing old bikes.

As a sign of the high esteem in which his brothers hold him, Brother Bradley was elected to the abbey’s senior council “several” times (according to his Minnesota-modest estimate), 1999–2003, 2005–2010. “My experience on the council as with monastic life in general reinforced how much we benefit from each other’s gifts, and that even conflict, when open to the truth in another’s position, can lead to improvement.”

Father J. P. Earls, O.S.B., is professor emeritus of English of Saint John’s University.
Father Raymond Pedrizetti, O.S.B., was born on 30 August 1930 in Duluth, Minnesota. Following six years of study at Saint John’s Preparatory School and University he ventured to Rhode Island to pursue religious life with the Trappists. Two years of formation had a profound impact on him; he internalized the monastic spirituality but also understood that his vocation was not to the Trappists. After returning to college studies at Saint John’s, he entered the abbey’s novitiate, professed vows as a Benedictine monk on 11 July 1954, and was ordained in 1958. After completing graduate studies at The Catholic University of America, he taught classics and served as a faculty resident in the university. He became part of the university’s philosophy department where he taught for thirty-nine years until retiring in 2000.

Father Ray played a significant role in the formation of his confreres. From 1964 to 1967 he was the cleric master for seventy-two young monks studying for the priesthood, guiding them through their final two years of undergraduate study, profession of vows, and four years of theology studies leading to ordination. The clericate program was in a period of major transition at that time. Father Ray, a key advisor to Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, O.S.B. (abbot 1951–1971), helped guide that transition to create one novitiate and a new “juniorate” formation program focused on monastic spirituality and solid relational skills.

Ray also played a significant role in the formation of lay students. During the 1969–1970 academic year he was an advisor for a group of eleven Johnnies and Bennies who lived in community in two apartments in Avon, Minnesota. It was truly a transformative experience for the students and for Ray, and led to lifelong friendships.

Ray loved the life of the mind, teaching, and scholarship. He delighted in philosophy and spent his monastic and academic life in conversation with the writings of Plato and Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, Immanuel Kant, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. His dream of devoting his retirement from the classroom to quiet study and philosophical reflection was cut short after only one year, when he was appointed prior (major superior) of the abbey in June 2001. For six years he shared with all his confreres the same insight, balance, and compassion that marked his earlier formation work.

Ray was satisfied with simple things: a good Italian meal with a flavorful wine, a stiff martini, a game of bridge, a good book. His faith and spirituality were summed up in a Lenten homily, when he proposed living the question: “What can I do to make you happy?” He practiced what he preached.

During his last years Father Ray suffered the debilitating effects of Parkinson’s disease. The community gathered for an anointing service days before he died on 3 September 2012. Following the Mass of Christian Burial on 7 September, he was laid to rest in the abbey cemetery.

What can I do to make you happy?

--Ray Pedrizetti, O.S.B.
Father John Stanley Kulas, O.S.B., was born to Joseph and Mathilda (Friedl) Kulas in Albany, Minnesota, on 1 June 1930. He was the fourth of seven children (three of his brothers died in infancy) and attended Holy Family School in Albany. In 1944 he moved eight miles down the road and made Saint John’s his home. At Saint John’s Preparatory School, John participated in band and track, and was an avid reader. He received a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and classics from Saint John’s University and interrupted his undergraduate studies to enter the novitiate at the abbey, professing vows as a Benedictine monk on 11 July 1951. Following seminary studies he was ordained a priest on his twenty-seventh birthday.

Father John’s teaching career began at the prep school where he taught history and coached the debate team from 1954 until 1959. Beginning in 1959 he taught German at the university until retiring in 2006, shortly before the onset of Parkinson’s disease. He received a National Defense Education Act fellowship to study German at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., from 1962 to 1965, where he was awarded a master’s degree in Germanic languages and literature. At Saint Stephen Martyr Church in Washington, Father John presided and preached at three Masses attended by President Kennedy.

John was instrumental in setting up a state-of-the-art language lab for the university, spending long nights creating practice tapes for students. He recalled being so tired from teaching and being a faculty resident (and having a schluck with Father Engelbert Dufner) that he would fall asleep during the pauses in the tape’s exercises! John served as chair of the department of modern and classical languages from 1967 until 1982, during which time he patiently guided the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University language departments toward unification.


Though he taught German throughout his adult life, Father John’s command of the English language was his greatest gift. His conferences as junior master, and all his homilies, were masterpieces of insight, faith, and erudition, delivered always with style and grace. A gentle, holy monk, Father John died on 14 October 2012 in the abbey retirement center. Following the Mass of Christian Burial on 18 October, he was buried in the abbey cemetery.

Gentleness is ever an ideal to return to, for it is the stuff of humaneness, it is the balm of Christianity, it is the very strength and wisdom of God.

--John Kulas, O.S.B.
Brother Urban Anton Pieper, O.S.B., was born on 22 March 1929 to John and Regina (Budde) Pieper in Marystown, Scott County, Minnesota. The eldest of ten children, he attended the local Marystown parish school and began working full time on the family farm after the eighth grade. Following several months as a brother candidate at Saint John’s Abbey, he entered the novitiate in January 1951 and professed vows as a Benedictine monk on 6 January 1952.

Throughout his life Brother Urban labored on the land. As a young monk, he worked at the Saint John’s farm and garden, and as a beekeeper and candlemaker. He spent fourteen years in The Bahamas, at the abbey’s mission of Saint Augustine’s Monastery in Nassau, tending the lawns, gardens, bees, and citrus groves—a real challenge, given the poor soil of the island. He also tended a herd of thirty sheep and was the chief caretaker and handyman for Saint Augustine’s College and its nearly one thousand students.

In 1977 Brother Urban returned to Saint John’s to become the official gardener and to manage the abbey apple orchard until he retired in 2006. Over the years he provided tons of tomatoes and fresh vegetables for the monastery table. The university biology department also made use of Urban’s special skills by making him their greenhouse specialist. Ms. Susanna Hynes, a coworker, observed: “Brother Urban has an affinity for green growing things, whether they are tomatoes or tropical plants. He is especially fond of cacti and succulents, but he is hard put to meet a plant he doesn’t like.” He did not get too attached to the plants, however. Each fall and spring he would supplement the greenhouse budget by having a plant sale for the college students.

While in The Bahamas, Urban bred parakeets and other exotic birds. In Collegeville, he raised Birmingham Roller pigeons, noted for their exclusive ability to turn over backwards and rotate downwards while in flight. He transformed a corner of the garden shed into his personal sanctuary where popcorn and Hamm’s Beer were regularly available for guests.

Brother Urban was a man of few words who valued his independence. Throughout his many years of work in the gardens and greenhouses, he proved to be pretty boss-resistant. On one occasion, when he perceived that the abbey and university garage was moving into garden territory, he built a wooden fence to clarify the situation.

On 1 November 2012, several days after suffering a stroke in the abbey retirement center, Brother Urban joined all the saints in heaven. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on 7 November followed by interment in the abbey cemetery.

“He has a special passion and talent for his little bonsai trees. Having worked in the abbey’s orchard, he applies the same principle of pruning bonsai as he did for apple trees, namely, ‘Cut the branches so that you can throw a cat through them.’”

--Susanna Hynes
Lack of significant rain in August and September did not dull the annual color show in the Saint John’s woods. Bright yellows, oranges, and reds of maples and birch were followed by the maroon and gold of the oaks. Master gardener John Elton’s mums brightened the inner campus. Most dazzling of all was the new copper roof on the east wing of the quadrangle. Collegeville was spared any destruction related to Hurricane Sandy, but on 19 November there was a sea change when university football coach John Gagliardi announced his retirement. The first measurable snowfall of the season came on Thanksgiving Day; Lake Sagatagan froze on 7 December. In preparation for the coming of the Christ Child, the monks of Saint John’s Abbey have been delighting in the hope-filled liturgies of Advent.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

September 2012

• On 11 September former NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw gave the sixth annual Eugene J. McCarthy Lecture to an overflow crowd in the abbey and university church.

• On 21 September Stickwork sculpture Lean on Me (see pages 18–19) was dedicated at the abbey arboretum. Environmental artist-in-residence Patrick Dougherty (left) worked with over three hundred volunteers to complete the five structures, inspired by the Stella Maris Chapel. Brother David Paul Lange, along with the faculty and staff of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University art department, helped sponsor the project; Brothers Walter Kieffer and Peter Sullivan joined in the construction.

• Abbot John Klassen traveled to Sant’ Anselmo, the Benedictine House of Studies in Rome, on 15 September for the quadrennial Congress of Abbots. Two-hundred-thirty-seven members from twenty congregations of men were present, in addition to nineteen participants from the women’s Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum. Abbot Primate Notker Wolf was reelected for a fourth four-year term. “It was especially gratifying to meet those abbots where our Benedictine volunteers are working,” Abbot John noted; “They were highly complimentary of the efforts and presence of these young men.” Earlier this summer Father Anthony Ruff, assisted by Father Michael Peterson and Brother Lucian López, assembled a new set of Gregorian chant offices used at the Liturgy of the Hours and at most of the eucharistic liturgies during the Congress.

• Some three dozen leaders of evangelical emerging communities from across the U.S. visited Saint John’s for two days. Members of this “new monasticism” movement work with the Rule of Benedict in order to adapt it to their situation for living in intentional communities. Fathers Columba Stewart and Simeon Thole, and Brothers Aaron

Robin Pierzina, O.S.B.
Raverty and Ælred Senna spoke to the group regarding structure, authority, and the way in which Benedictine monasteries fit into the Church.

October 2012

- Father Michael Kwatera and members of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, and the Episcopal Church of our Saviour offered blessings to all manner of critters gathered for the annual Blessing of Animals on 7 October at Saint Francis Convent. Treats were served to the most well-behaved animals and their companions.

- Two years after being implanted, the transmitter of Saint John’s loon, Big John (a.k.a., USGS number 55480), functioned intermittently in recent months but well enough so that his migration is being recorded at the U.S. Geological Survey Web site. Big John left Lake Sagatagan on 11 October and, as he did for the past two years, stopped at Forest Lake (Minnesota) on his way to Lake Michigan. If he follows his earlier patterns, he will winter in the Gulf of Mexico, twenty-five miles offshore from Tampa and Sarasota, Florida.

Dr. Michael Hemesath was inaugurated as the thirteenth president of Saint John’s University on 20 October. The celebration began the previous day with a lecture by Father James Heft, S.M., entitled “Challenges and Opportunities Facing Catholic Higher Education Today.” Prior to the ceremony Bishop John Kinney of Saint Cloud presided and preached at the inaugural Eucharist of the Holy Spirit. Representatives of more than forty colleges and universities joined the academic communities of Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict, the monastic community, and Dr. Hemesath’s family and his Johnnie classmates in a day of glad celebration. Father Robert Koopmann, twelfth president of Saint John’s (above left), and Abbot John placed the presidential medal on the new president, as Ms. Ann Huntrods, board chair, proclaimed his appointment to head the school.

On 14 October the community welcomed Sister Anita Whalen (right) and sisters from Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston, Minnesota, for the noon meal, following which they presented the monastic community with two lecterns for The Saint John’s Bible.
• On 21 October, the same day that Kateri Tekakwitha was being canonized in Rome, fifty monks and guests processed to the statue of Saint Kateri on the shores of Lake Sagatagan and prayed a litany in her honor. The statue of the “Lily of the Mohawks” (right), which has overlooked the lake since 1956, was a gift of Saint Olaf Parish, Minneapolis. After the old Saint Olaf church was destroyed by fire, its larger replacement was built over the spot where the statue had rested.

November 2012

• In observance of All Souls’ Day on 2 November, midday prayer was held in the abbey cemetery. Abbot John and the monastic community were joined by dozens of friends and neighbors in prayer for deceased loved ones. At the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist throughout the month of November, the community remembered tens of thousands of deceased individuals identified by friends of Saint John’s.

• The apiary staff has been as busy as bees. Brothers Nick Kleespie and Lew Grobe harvested sixty pounds of honey from more than three hundred pounds produced by three hives this year. If the bees survive the winter on the remaining honey, there could be up to eight hives next year.

• From asparagus to zucchini, a dozen monk gardeners contributed to a bountiful harvest for the monastery’s table: 5256 pounds of produce, with still more carrots and pumpkins to be weighed. Topping the tonnage total were cucumbers, 333 lbs.; pumpkins, 358 lbs.; tomatoes, 642 lbs.; potatoes, 676 lbs.; and butternut squash, 1523 lbs. Brother Isidore Glyer out-harvested the squirrels as he gathered 135 lbs. of walnuts from under their bushy little tails. Best in show went to a 15.5 lb. kohlrabi (German cabbage-turnip) that gardener emeritus Brother Gregory Eibensteiner (right) received from our garden to bring the growing season to an end.

December 2012

• Third Street Brewhouse (Cold Spring Brewery) has begun producing Sugar Shack Maple Stout, made with maple syrup harvested at Saint John’s. The dark, seasonal beer will be available in liquor stores and on tap in select bars and restaurants throughout Minnesota. While one confrere used our maple syrup in place of gravy on his mashed potatoes, this is the first time that it has been used to flavor beer.
Fifty Years Ago

Excerpted from The Record, official newspaper of Saint John’s University:

28 September 1962

- Bishop Peter W. Bartholome of Saint Cloud addressed Saint John’s students on 17 September before his departure for the Ecumenical Council in Rome. He counseled them to study, pray, and sacrifice for the success of the council.

- Saint John’s Preparatory School welcomed 360 students on 18 September to a new complex of buildings which was begun a year ago this month. Designed by architects Michelson and Hanson of Saint Paul, the two concrete structures overlook Lake Sagatagan. Saint Bede Hall houses three large study halls, twelve classrooms, administrative and faculty offices, a faculty lounge, temporary library facilities, a recreation room, and a snack bar. An underground corridor joins it with Saint Michael Hall, a split-level dormitory. At present one-fourth of this building serves as a temporary gymnasium for intramural sports.

26 October 1962

- Dedication ceremonies for the new prep school dormitory and academic building will be on Sunday, 28 October. The brightly lit and well-ventilated classrooms, with distinctive barrel vaulted roofs, were designed by Mr. Val Michelson. “We felt that this was a monastic school, and therefore had to be sufficiently austere to be in the Benedictine tradition,” he said.

“Yet it had to be playful enough for a boys’ school.”

28 November 1962

- The Saint John’s University Orchestra, fifth oldest orchestra in the United States, will open its 77th season on 3 December with a concert including works by Mozart, Liszt, and Beethoven. The present fifty-member orchestra consists of Benedictines, faculty, students, and musicians from the surrounding area.

- The Saint John’s faculty voted in favor of securing master of arts accreditation for the university’s theology program. The program is divided into two parts, the M.A. for the seminary, and the Benedictine Institute of Sacred Studies for sisters. If Saint John’s is authorized, the sisters now enrolled in the summer program will be the first to receive M.A. degrees.

7 December 1962

- The Saint John’s University Men’s Chorus has been selected by the program committee for the National Capital Pageant of Peace to sing at the Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the White House on 20 December.

- The Gregorian Chant for the Feast of Corpus Christi, an album by the Saint John’s Abbey choir under the direction of Father Gerard Farrell, has been receiving excellent reviews from such magazines as Musart, America, The Diapason, Commonweal, The Saturday Review, and The American Organist Quarterly. Since July it has sold almost 800 copies, somewhat of a record for recordings of religious music. Capitol Records of Hollywood is turning out a second pressing of the recording for Liturgical Press.

When first constructed, six of the eight bays of the 31,000 square-foot prep dorm were used by boarding students (each bay could house sixty beds), while two bays were used for recreation.
Recently Brother David Allen, O.S.B., and I had the pleasure of taking part in a cultural tradition of his family. Though it was the first time either of us had made kolacky, with the help of his great-grandmother’s recipe we turned out some pretty awesome pastry! Koláče (plural of koláč) are small dinner-roll-like pastries that are folded over a fruit-filled center.

Brother David recalls his family’s koláče tradition: “The family of my great-grandmother Lillian Dolejs brought the recipe to Minnesota in 1853 from Lisov in the region of Bohemia (Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic). They were one of the first families to settle in the townships of New Prague and Montgomery, Minnesota. Grandma Dolejs lovingly made many Czech foods for her family including koláče (pastry), játěrnice (liver sausage), zelnicky (sauerkraut crackers), vomáčka (sour cream soup), and koblihy (raised doughnuts).

“I first remember eating koláče when I was about four or five while visiting my family in Montgomery. We would always have them at the cabin for breakfast or after Mass on Sundays. Koláče are usually filled with apricot, prune, apple, or poppy seed. Apricot is my personal favorite.”

Brother David and I hope to make many more koláče to share with confreres. Perhaps it will become a tradition for the monks of Saint John’s! During this Christmas season, why not look into your old recipe box to see what traditions are just waiting to be revived!

Brother Ælred Senna, O.S.B., is the vocation director of Saint John’s Abbey.

Grandma Dolejs’ Koláče

- 1 ¾ cups milk, lukewarm
- 1 cup butter, melted
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 t. salt
- 2 ½ t. instant / bread machine yeast
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 t. lemon zest
- 6 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- Fruit filling of your choice (apple, prune, apricot) or poppy seed
- 1 egg, beaten + 1 ½ t. cream

Combine the first seven ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Stir well. Gradually add flour to create a smooth dough. Knead until quite elastic. Place dough in a large greased bowl; cover with a towel; allow to rise until doubled in bulk (about one hour). Punch down and allow to rise a second time.

Divide dough into 36 equal portions. Flatten each piece into a rough square, about 3” x 3”. Place a tablespoon of filling (don’t overfill!) in the middle, fold corners to the center, and pinch to seal. Place on a baking sheet (with nonstick cooking spray), folded side down. Cover loosely and allow to rise about 45 minutes. Brush koláče with egg/cream mixture before baking.

Bake at 375 degrees F for 15–20 minutes.
In Memoriam

Please join the monastic community in prayerful remembrance of our deceased family members and friends:

David Michael Bauer
Johanna Becker, O.S.B.
Gerald “Jerry” Bergren
Mary Claudia Boras, O.S.F.
Vitalia “Tally” Brinkman
Jude Burbach, O.S.B.
Darlene M. Christen
Catherine Claseman
James Patrick “Jimmy” Eaton
Verda Clare Eichner, O.S.B.
Monica Faas
Kevin Gorman, O.S.B.
Peter Grady
Marlene Guggenberger, O.S.B.
Msgr. James Habiger
Carolyn A. Held
Mary Kay Kaasa
Corene C. Kain
Mary Lou Kemper
Marcellus W. Klier
John Kulas, O.S.B.
S. James Messer, O.S.B.
Leo Moore
Mary David Olheiser, O.S.B.
Michael Parrino
Bernardine Paschke, O.S.B.
Ruth C. Peters
John M. Pflueger
Urban Pieper, O.S.B.
Leonard J. “Lenny” Rademacher
Suzanne M. Reinert
Theodore Suchy, O.S.B.
Elmer J. Torborg
Leila Mae Vicari
Diana Wells
Pius Wenker, O.S.B.

Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones.

—Psalm 116:15

Abbey Weekend Retreats

22–24 February 2013  Lenten Retreat: Created for Glory
Led by Father Joseph Feders, O.S.B.

The retreat begins with supper at 6:00 P.M. on Friday and concludes following lunch on Sunday.
Cost: Single room, $190; double room, $220 ($110 per person); meals included.
Register online at www.abbeyguesthouse.org; or call: 320.363.3929.

28–31 March 2013  Triduum Retreat
Led by Father Simeon Thole, O.S.B.

The retreat begins at 7:00 P.M. on Holy Thursday and concludes following lunch on Easter Sunday.
Cost: Single room, $270; double room, $480 ($240 per person); meals included.
Register online at www.abbeyguesthouse.org; or call: 320.363.3929.
Carla Silver, executive director of the Santa Fe Leadership Center, has used the concept of “alignment” of the human body as an image for what is required in our professional lives. From the toes to the neck, our balance and well-being are dependent on everything stacking up correctly. If one element of that “stack” is not right, the entire body is in disarray, and so are we. We don’t sleep well. We have trouble concentrating. We lose our edge because our focus is redirected to the epicenter of the pain or discomfort. Our performance suffers because of the misalignment. To put it simply, we get “out of whack.”

This image is apt not only for our professional lives but for our spiritual lives as well. In his *Rule*, Saint Benedict often speaks of balance. His wisdom demonstrates a need for the internal alignment that is endemic to any human social fabric. Healthy marriages, for example, include highs and lows that are anticipated in the vows themselves: “I will be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness, and in health.” According to Benedict, monastic life demands a careful mix of work and prayer in order for the monk to be productive and spiritually healthy. Too much of one without the other results in misalignment and disorder.

The problematic nature of being a workaholic seems obvious, but prayer? How can one pray too much? To answer this question we have to consider the fabric of community life—any community life, including marriage and family. Our love and respect for each other are created and sustained in daily interactions and accomplishments. We *work* to strengthen our community; we *pray* to strengthen our relationship with God. One without the other weakens that which is ignored.

The balance between work and prayer is delicate and real. How many marriages have struggled with the reality of work-related stress or overtime? So too in monastic families: absence from the regular daily routine will have a noticeable and debilitating effect on the wider community.

We are all called to balance the need for inner strength and social support. Prayer and work in harmony are the building blocks of a true monastic community. To keep them aligned is to help us move forward with confidence and purpose.

Father Timothy Backous, O.S.B., is headmaster of Saint John’s Preparatory School.
Benedictine Days of Prayer

18 January 2013: The Conversion of Saint Paul
26 April 2013: Saint Mark
17 May 2013: Pentecost

The day begins at 7:00 A.M. with Morning Prayer and concludes about 3:30 P.M. Cost: $50. This includes retreat materials, breakfast, and lunch. Rooms are available in the abbey guesthouse for the preceding overnight. Register online at www.abbeyguesthouse.org; or call: 320.363.3929.