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NOTE: Please send your change of address to: Ruth Athmann at rathmann@csbsju.edu or P.O. Box 7222, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7222 or call 800-635-7303.

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Editor: Daniel Durken, OSB
ddurken@csbsju.edu
Copy Editor and Proofreader: Dolores Schuh, CHM
Designer: Pam Rolfes
Circulation: Ruth Athmann, Cathy Wieme, Mary Gouge
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"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). I received a better understanding and appreciation of these words of Jesus when I read “A Pastoral Letter on the Human Rights of Immigrants” by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor of the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas.

Believing that the major issue about which American Catholics are most confused today is immigration, Bishop Taylor issued his pastoral letter on November 5, 2008, near Advent and Christmas. These liturgical seasons are unforgettable reminders that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were truly an immigrant family that received no warm welcome in Bethlehem, no room in the inn. Fortunately the border into Egypt was not closed to their search for safety.

Bishop Taylor reminds us that the God of the Bible is a God of immigrants, calling Abraham and Sarah to emigrate from their homeland, resettling the whole family of Joseph in Egypt, calling Moses to lead the exodus out of Egypt and bringing back the people from exile in Babylon.

Jesus provides the context for our consideration when he tells us we can give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and welcome to the stranger. Or we can ignore Jesus’ admonition to minister to their needs and thereby fail to see that what we do to the least ones we do to him.

Packed with statistics and thought-provoking questions and answers, the pastoral letter concludes with these words of Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Bishop Taylor’s pastoral letter is available from Office of the Bishop, P.O. Box 7565, Little Rock, AR 72217-7565. Bishops of Mexico and the United States issued their landmark pastoral letter on immigration reform, Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope in January, 2003. Reading and reflecting on these messages may move us to give half of our Christmas gifts to the immigrants and strangers in our parish and area. +

The Vocation Director in the Rule of Benedict

At first glance there is no guidance in the Rule of Benedict (RB) for a vocation director, who does not get a chapter in the Rule like the abbot, prior, or cellarer. For most of our communities the role of vocation director is a fairly recent one. Our abbey did not have one before the early 1960s—our very first was Arnold Weber, OSB, whose job it was to attract 7th and 8th grade boys to the Prep School. I am one of his recruits!

In RB 58 Benedict creates a place for the novitiate and gives a first-rate job description for the novice director. He coins the words “novice” and “novitiate” and creates the one-year standard length. “A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention.” In our time, the vocation director initiates the task of spiritual discernment that is now spread over a much longer time because of the heterogeneity of the culture itself.

As RB 58 begins, “Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry, but as the Apostle says, ‘Test the spirits to see if they are from God’” (1 John 4:1). It is the vocation director who responds to someone who inquires about monastic life, who “tests the spirits” to make sure that they are genuine. The director discerns how serious the person is, whether this is truly where the Spirit is calling the interested party, and how ready the person is for monastic life. Not only are we discerning a religious vocation, but a monastic vocation to this house.

How is this discerned? One could do worse than use the guidance of RB 58: “The concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials.” This comes down to seeing if the monastic way of community prayer and lectio divina works for the person, observing if the individual is sensitive to the dynamics of community and able to “pitch in,” and vocational resilience. Even though there is no explicit chapter on the role of the vocation director in the Rule, there is exquisite guidance in RB 58. +

FROM EDITOR AND ABBOT
The artists and art of the Stella Maris Chapel

“You use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul” (George Bernard Shaw).

The fall 2009 issue of Abbey Banner reported the June 13th blessing of the renovated Stella Maris Chapel. The following vignettes introduce readers to the four artists who collaborated to make the chapel a spiritual jewel sparkling on the shore of Lake Sagatagan amid the towering oaks and pines of Saint John’s forest.

ED SOVIK

Born in China to American Lutheran missionaries and educated at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, this World War II Marine fighter pilot studied art in New York, theology in St. Paul and architecture at Yale University. In 1949 Ed opened his architectural firm in Northfield and pursued an impressive career as a designer and theorist in liturgical architecture.

Ed received a major recognition of his work with the 2003 inaugural Godfrey Diekmann Award of the North American Academy of Liturgy. The citation reads, “With critical eye and gentle hand Edward Anders Sovik has crafted spaces that call the assembled church to its task: God’s word proclaimed, God’s praises sung, the world transformed with beauty and with justice.”

Ed removed the field stone buttresses of the Stella Maris Chapel, applied a new stucco finish, redesigned the front entrance with a large circular stained glass window of a star, restored the chapel floor and repainted the walls and ceiling. His suggestion for an image of the pregnant Mary inspired Alexander Tylevich to sculpt the statue that is the chapel’s centerpiece.
ALEXANDER TYLEVICH

This Russian/American artist was a major architect of government buildings, malls, an underground subway system, theatre, arboretum, parks and monuments in Minsk, Belarus.

Immigrating to the United States in 1989, Alexander produces numerous projects from his St. Paul studio, utilizing bronze, steel, glass, granite and other materials. He received the prestigious 2007 Hering Award and two international honor awards from the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture for the St. Thomas More Chapel at the University of St. Thomas Law School, Minneapolis campus.

Alexander was chosen to create a prayerful work of art for the Stella Maris Chapel. Ed Sovik’s suggestion for a pregnant Mary was accepted despite—or perhaps because of—its rarity in art history. Alexander’s resulting bronze figure is one of great restraint, quietness and dignity. The pregnant Madonna represents the Advent spirit of the expectant mother soon to give birth to the one who is the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.
German-born Dieterich Spahn has created 4,000 works for over 370 commissions during his forty years as an independent stained glass artist. Schooled by leading German and Swiss art teachers, he came to St. Paul in 1961 and worked with stained glass, mosaic murals and sacred arts. He contributed to the monumental 24’ x 90’ stained glass windows at Valparaiso University Chapel, Indiana.

JANEY WESTIN

The primary prayer of Mary, the Magnificat (“My soul magnifies the Lord”) of Luke 1:46-55, on the entrance wall of the Stella Maris Chapel, was emblazoned by Janey Westin who works out of her “Paper & Stone” studio in Edina, Minnesota. She began work as a calligrapher and expanded into letter carving and other work with stone.

In 1994 Janey was invited by Joe O’Connell, then teaching at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University, to work on one of his last triptych stone sculptures for Christ the King Catholic Church in Las Vegas. She designed, carved and painted two inscriptive areas and considered it an honor to work with this artist. Her studio does work for religious and educational institutions, corporations and private clients.

The English translation of Mary’s prayer is from the New Revised Standard Version, the same translation used in The Saint John’s Bible.
Robert Koopmann, OSB, inaugurated as 12th president of Saint John’s University

“Forward, always forward, ever forward”
(Wimmer, OSB, and Koopmann, OSB).

The 2 ½ inches of an all-day rain that poured down on Collegeville on October 1 did not dampen the inspiring celebration of Father Bob’s inauguration as the twelfth president of Saint John’s University.

The festival began with Bishop John Kinney of the Saint Cloud Diocese presiding and preaching at a midday Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging his connection with Father Bob as a fellow native of the “great neighbor state of Iowa,” Kinney prayed that the new president “bring the joy of the truth from the very heart of the Church all the years of your presidency.”

The mid-afternoon inauguration was a rainbow mix of exercises beginning with a procession led by thirty-seven CSB/SJU international students bearing the flags of their countries from Austria to Zimbabwe and followed by sixty-six delegates from colleges, universities and educational associations.

After the thousand guests who nearly filled the abbey church were welcomed, representative administrators, faculty and students shared memorable “Saint John’s Moments.” The new president was then blessed, invested with the president’s medal and given his charge by Board of Regents chair James Frey. Bob then delivered his inaugural address.

President Bob reminded the audience that our strong Catholic intellectual tradition goes back to the early medieval universities that were founded by Benedictine monasteries. “We are the ideal place to study ideas and subjects of great significance, to learn to live together in peace and harmony, and to be a positive influence to the world around us, which now includes the entire globe.”

In conclusion he stated, “The heritage of our founder, Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, is alive today. His motto, ‘Forward, always forward, ever forward,’ will be my mantra, always in my heart, mind and soul. Let us pray that God will bless all of Saint John’s in the years ahead and that we will do our part in moving this great institution forward, always forward.”

The ceremony concluded with ecumenical blessings in Chinese, Ojibwe, Hebrew, Tamil and German. Festivities continued in the Palaestra with performances by musical groups, a student illusionist, and a medley of piano pieces by the newly inaugurated president.
The word “archives” does not appear in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. While mentioning such monastic officials as abbot, prior, director of novices, porter, cellarer, kitchen helpers, attendant to the sick and reader for the week, Benedict does not refer to a community archivist. Yet it is just as impossible to think of a monastery without both archives and archivist as it would be to imagine an abbey without chapel or dining room.

Thus it is no surprise that the archives of Saint John’s Abbey were formally established in 1871, eleven years before the consecration of the abbey church in 1882. Founded by Alexius Edelbrock, OSB, one of the original five Saint John’s students in 1856, the archives were managed by him for four years preceding and for six years following his election as the second abbot of Saint John’s in 1875.

Francis Mershmann, OSB, was appointed archivist in 1881 and held this position for thirty-five years, until 1916, the longest term of any of the nine abbey archivists. **David Klingeman, OSB**, is the current archivist and is assisted by **Brennan Maiers, OSB**.

The mission of Saint John’s Abbey Archives is “to collect, preserve and make available materials that illustrate the history, lifestyle and activities of the monastery, its members, and those whom the monastery served.” The various archival collections are open to all who agree to abide by the rules governing their use and are available for research by appointment only.

The Guide to the archival collections lists seventeen topical categories that include the following:

- papers of Saint John’s ten abbots
- documents from the abbey’s missions in the Bahamas and among Native Americans of northern Minnesota, and foundations in Japan, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Kentucky and the University of Peiping, China
At the left is the official document of the incorporation of St. John Seminary by the Minnesota legislature. At the bottom of the third page is the incorrect date of March 10, 1856, instead of 1857.

- records of community affairs and minutes of the senior council and the monastic chapter
- legal, financial and ecclesiastical documents
- the personal papers of individual monks such as sermons and an occasional diary
- records dealing with liturgy and spirituality
- collections pertaining to the Oblates of Saint Benedict
- major collections pertaining to parishes founded by the abbey, including parish histories

Several unique collections deserve special mention: the 5,000 glass-plate negatives from the abbey photo gallery in operation from 1880 to 1920 under the direction of Peter Engel, OSB; issues of the Scriptorium, a literary project of junior monks from 1940-1962 and 1980-1987 who wrote theological and historical essays and translated early German correspondence (The text of each issue is scanned and available at this link: http://hmml.org/vivarium/sjuarchives.htm.); day journals kept from the very beginning by the pioneer monks who mainly listed expenses; essays and articles of Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, archivist from 1916-1933, who had a keen sense for describing significant events; many photo albums of abbey personnel, buildings and projects.

Of particular interest are the three pages of the copy of the charter of the Minnesota state legislature entitled “An Act to Incorporate the St. John...
Seminary.” The document is first dated March 10, 1857. But strangely enough, right below this date is the acknowledgment of the secretary’s office which is dated March 10, 1856—an erroneous date considering the fact that the monks of Saint John’s did not arrive in Minnesota until May of 1856.

Much of the work of the abbey archivists involves the search for genealogical information by families whose relatives were monks or students who attended Saint John’s University. Genealogical searches during the pioneer period (1856-1876) are often not productive. Some of the collections that receive active requests from outside researchers include the papers of Virgil Michel, OSB, materials related to Marcel Breuer and the design and building of the abbey church, parish histories and the general photograph collection.

Like the attics, closets, cubbyholes and store rooms of our homes that keep us in contact with our past, the abbey archives are a rich and rewarding treasure trove that also keeps us grateful for all that our predecessors have given to us and done for us.
A Review –

From the Pews in the Back: Young Women and Catholicism

by Lauren Murphy

This book conveys the stories of thirty-one young Catholic women. Their memoirs are variations on a theme: what do young Catholic women have to say about their tradition and experiences? Their theological reflections illustrate a variety of perspectives about Catholicism.

These are stories of mothers, daughters, sisters; vowed religious and lay; straight and lesbian; activists and theologians. They find the tradition to be inspiring, challenging, beautiful, maddening and hopeful. Some consider distancing themselves from the church while others cannot even imagine that. They wrestle with the church’s teachings, particularly on ordination and sexuality. They are articulate and intelligent; most of them have higher degrees in theology. Theirs are stories of joyful, stubborn hope.

The book was prompted by an experience that editors Kate Dugan and Jennifer Owens had while studying at Harvard Divinity School. Off campus they happened upon a group of older Catholics who were questioning the loyalty and participation of young Catholics. The editors wondered why young people, particularly young women, were not talking about their experiences of being Catholic. So they asked young Catholic women to send them their stories.

Twenty-nine of the one hundred plus essays received are divided into five parts—Growing Up Catholic, Faith in Action, Being a Catholic Woman, Vocation, and Spiritual Identity. The editors provide snippets of their own experiences in the introductions to the sections.

As distinct as the stories are, the commonalities are striking, particularly the pull of the community, the sense of home-ness that the authors feel about the Catholic Church. As Eileen Campbell writes, “I realize that I am not so strong or modern that I do not need a community of faith.”

In the foreword Mary Ann Hinsdale notes that this is a book for “anyone who wonders what young Catholic women are thinking about the church today.” It is not a book of clear answers. Kate Lassiter writes, “I want more of a role for women and others seemingly marginal to the church, but I don’t even know what that would look like.”

This is a call for young Catholic women to make their voices heard, to critique their Catholic heritage, to engage the tradition. By sharing their stories, these women lay the groundwork for further dialogue about the church we call home.

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Lauren Murphy is an editor for Liturgical Press.
Meet a Monk:
Neal Laloo, OSB, and his pottery

“Without potters no city could be lived in.”
(Book of Sirach 38:32)

Regular readers of Abbey Banner should remember the feature story in the 2008 winter issue entitled “Going to pots at the Saint John’s kiln.” The article commemorated the tenth anniversary firing of 12,000 pieces of pottery and sculpture from the Sister Johanna Becker, OSB, Kiln, the largest wood-burning kiln in North America built at Saint John’s in 1994 by artist-in-resident Richard Bresnahan.

When Brother Neal began producing pottery a decade ago, he took an entirely different approach to this ancient and honorable work of art. After completing five semesters of pottery courses taught by Sister Dennis Frandrup, OSB, professor emeritus of art and artist-in-residence at the College of Saint Benedict, Neal set up his pottery shop in one windowless basement room of the Breuer wing of the monastery.

To eliminate the carpal tunnel syndrome, an occupational injury affecting the wrist, hand and fingers of the potter, Neal purchased a Venco Pugmill, an Australian machine that compresses and extracts air from clay, making it readily workable. To this machine Neal designed and added a ram press that pushes a block of commercial clay into the chamber of the Pugmill. The clay exits the chamber as a ready-to-work cylinder.

Neal is ready to create a piece of pottery. He places the ball of clay on the “bat board” attached to the potter’s wheel. With his fingers he proceeds to form the size and shape of the vessel or plate. When this potter is satisfied that he has produced a suitable pot, jar or plate, he takes his creation to the College of Saint Benedict’s art studio where glaze is applied and the piece is fired in a gas-operated kiln that...
produces temperatures in the range of 2100 to 2300 degrees Fahrenheit.

During the past ten years Neal has produced some 4,000 pieces of pottery. Many of his pieces have been given as gifts to relatives and friends in the United States, Trinidad, the Bahamas, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The Abbey Gift Shop has a selection of his pottery for sale at prices ranging from $15 to $200.

A native of San-Fernando, Trinidad, 46-year-old Neal came to Collegeville via Saint Augustine’s Monastery, Nassau, Bahamas, a once dependent foundation of Saint John’s Abbey. He made his first profession of vows in 1991, worked for several years in the Bahamas and professed his solemn vows at Saint John’s in 1996.

In addition to his assignment as the abbey’s refectorian, the monk who plans the community’s special menus for major feast days, Neal is responsible for the upkeep of the community’s two retreat homes on Eagle Lake near Cross Lake, Minnesota, and Swenson Lake near Bemidji. He previously served as a prefect and maintenance person at the Prep School and as a monastic resident in a college dormitory.

To meet Brother Neal is to appreciate the ordinary and extraordinary works of his creative hands, head and heart. +
Be very careful when you think or say that some of the men of Saint John’s are “for the birds.” That phrase, taken literally, is the best way to describe the hobby of Urban Pieper, OSB, retired abbey gardener, and John Elton, landscape manager and master gardener of the Collegeville campus. They are the breeders, keepers and fliers of a unique bird, the Birmingham Roller pigeon.

What is a Birmingham Roller pigeon? Leading authority William Pensom of England writes, “The Birmingham Roller is the pigeon noted for its exclusive ability to turn over backwards and rotate downwards like a spinning ball with inconceivable rapidity through a considerable distance.” This eight-ounce bird is genetically programmed to flip backwards and spin down for as long as 100 feet, so fast that it looks like a falling ball of feathers. The bird recovers from the spin and returns to its twenty- or eleven-bird flock or “kit.”

The Birmingham Roller pigeon originated as a hobby of coal miners in Birmingham, Black County, England. Father Lawrence Schlattmann of St. Louis, Missouri, was one of five individuals to first import pairs of these birds from Pensom to the United States in the early 1930s. These imports are the founding bloodlines and lineage of today’s Birmingham Rollers.

As a boy John Elton raised show pigeons but knew nothing about Roller pigeons until he enrolled at Saint John’s University and met Brother Urban. When Urban retired from gardening he gave his twelve pairs of Roller pigeons to John. With his biology major background John established and maintains the birds’ five-grain diet with the proper proportion of fats, protein and carbohydrates to give the birds the strength and energy needed to fly and roll. He built the kit boxes that provide eating space and a separate perch for each bird. The boxes are located outside the garden house across the road from Emmaus Hall.

All you birds of the air, bless the Lord.
(Book of Daniel 3:80)
Three years ago John began entering his birds in regional and national competitions. At periodic meets the birds are judged by a comprehensive assessment of the quality and depth of their rolls. To date John has won nine prize plaques including a national fourth place in 2007 and a world-wide ninth place in 2008. He is currently in eleventh place nationally.

For a video of Roller pigeons in flight, go to Google, type in “roller pigeons” and click on the top item, “Video results for roller pigeons.” You will see the birds somersaulting in the air and rolling downward, doing what Roller pigeons do best.

There have been and still are other “bird men” at Saint John’s. The deceased Bruce Wollmering, OSB, took special interest in the Eastern bluebird. He built more than 70 bluebird nesting boxes to encourage their re-population and kept meticulous records of their nesting success. He also maintained nesting platforms for loons on our local lakes Sagatagan and Stumpf and at the abbey’s lake homes near Cross Lake and Bemidji. Gregory Eibensteiner, OSB, concentrated on the purple martin and established successful nesting sites. His story will be told in a future issue of Abbey Banner. +

All photos by Daniel Durken, OSB
The fascinating and complex history of the monk-priest

by Columba Stewart, OSB

“\textit{The monks so ordained . . . must make more and more progress toward God.}”

\textit{(Rule, 62)}

As we monks contemplate “A Year for Priests” declared by Pope Benedict XVI, we do so with our own perspective on the gifts of both priesthood and monastic life to the church. The history of how the two have come together in “monk-priest” is fascinating and complex.

Becoming a monk was originally an alternative not only to marriage and family life, but also to ordained ministry. The “flight from the world” characteristic of monasticism meant distance even from the ordinary Christian society of parish life. At that time parish priests were typically married, making the “monk” vs. “priest” dichotomy even starker.

Numerous monastic leaders were recognized as outstanding teachers, preachers, or spiritual guides. It was inevitable that bishops wanted to share such spiritual resources more widely by ordaining monks to the priesthood and episcopate.

Many are the stories of famous early monks pursued by prelates intent upon ordaining them. Pachomius, the founder of communal monasticism in fourth century Egypt, hid in the bushes to avoid Athanasius, the famous archbishop of Alexandria. In the 380s another Egyptian monk, Ammonius, cut off his ear to dissuade Archbishop Timothy from ordaining him. When the archbishop replied that even if Ammonius split his nose in two he would still be worthy of ordination, Ammonius threatened to cut out his tongue. The bishop desisted.

However, some early monks became bishops, such as St. Augustine. The sixth century \textit{Rule of Benedict} shows an important transitional stage. The abbot himself is not a priest, but the community has priests wishing to join (\textit{RB 60}) and may also need to have one of its members ordained for the sacramental care of the monks and guests (\textit{RB 62}).

In the early Middle Ages, developments in Eucharistic theology and the rise of sacramental confession changed the focus of priestly ministry. Masses were frequently celebrated for the dead or other intentions. Monastic churches
were built with multiple altars and needed more priests to meet the new demand for votive masses. Pastoral responsibility for workers and other lay people in the region increased.

Gradually the proportion of ordained to non-ordained monastics shifted from very few priest-monks toward a majority. The Cistercians introduced a formal distinction between “choir monks” and “lay brothers,” soon copied by the Benedictines. Ordained choir monks prayed the full monastic office in Latin and celebrated daily Mass individually as well as in common at a community Mass. Lay brothers prayed a simpler office and devoted themselves to essential crafts and manual labor.

Monasteries were closed in much of Europe in the late 1700s and early 1800s because they seemed to serve no useful social purpose. When monasticism was revived in Bavaria in 1830, the new founders were often diocesan priests or members of active religious congregations. These leaders desired a Benedictine way of life with a keener apostolic spirit and an orientation towards pastoral ministry. From them came the Benedictine mission to the United States in the 1840s.

Monks came to Minnesota to build a local church literally from the ground up. Saint John’s founded and staffed dozens of parishes from California to New York with the greatest concentration in Minnesota. Like other Benedictine monasteries, Saint John’s has always been a largely clerical community, but with a substantial group of non-ordained monks.

Changes after Vatican Council II abolished the distinctions between clerical choir monks and lay brothers. Also, the development of a simplified Divine Office in English meant that the whole community could now pray together. The renewal of liturgical theology and the theology of priesthood shifted the emphasis from a cultic model of priesthood to a model of service and teaching rooted in the communal celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

The changes were overdue and generally welcomed. Because priesthood no longer automatically means full rights of membership in the community, the call to ordination can be discerned as a distinct vocation. Fewer monks seek ordination, and some wait for several years before beginning seminary studies.

This shift and fewer entering novices have meant scaling back the parish apostolate; all the Saint John’s Abbey-staffed parishes are now in the Saint Cloud Diocese. Monks who serve nearby parishes and chaplaincies are more involved in the daily life of the monastic community than formerly. At the abbey itself, ordained monks minister to the monastic community, students, employees, local friends, and guests. Most of the monk-priests who live and work at the abbey combine their priestly ministry with a wide range of occupations.

Saint John’s monks continue to work toward a good understanding of how monastic life and priesthood relate. Both are blessings for the church, and priesthood has given monasticism great opportunities for worldwide service.

Columba Stewart, OSB, currently on sabbatical, is the executive director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library at Saint John’s Abbey.
Saint John’s Seminary given new direction

by Michael Patella, OSB

Inspired by Pope Benedict XVI’s devotion to Benedictine spirituality and learning, and faced with an excess of diocesan seminaries, Saint John’s is focusing its seminary on augmenting the Benedictine character within the church. It is doing this in the belief that one of the greatest treasures of the church—Benedictine monasticism—can address the requirements of the new millennium and be a light leading many to Christ.

In the summer of 2008 Saint John’s gathered Benedictine and Trappist monks from across the country for a consultation entitled Monastic Witness and the Priestly Vocation. As rector I have visited nearly forty Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in the United States and Europe to further this direction. The result is a seminary whose program of priestly formation prepares monks to serve the church with all the grace and charism of their monastic vocations.

Since each Benedictine monastery has its traditions and needs, Saint John’s Seminary trains the monastic seminarian by developing, in consultation with the candidate’s abbot, a focus of study and pastoral experience that addresses the demands of the home monastery’s apostolates. Saint John’s Abbey Guesthouse, Preparatory School, college campus ministry, nearby Catholic hospital, and local parishes provide a bounty of opportunities for a seminarian to match his community’s work with his own training.

Furthermore, the university and its superb theological library are poised to assist monks who plan a career in higher education. Candidates may pursue the Master of Arts or Master of Theology degrees concurrently with their ordination requirements. Uniting these various opportunities is the Rule of Saint Benedict. At weekly conferences and ongoing formation sessions, the Rule becomes the guide through which the rector and seminarians follow the requirements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This arrangement gives Saint John’s greater maneuverability in establishing programs for the wider monastic world. In 2010 we will combine off-site class time with Web instruction to meet the demands of North American Cistercians. In Saint John’s ecumenical tradition, we will soon enroll two Armenian seminarians. Finally, we have established a program whereby German monks and seminarians can come to Collegeville for their required Studentjahr (“Student Year”).

Permanent deacons from Saint Cloud Diocese, lay men and women from around the world, and monastic seminarians consider all study as the pursuit of wisdom. In this model, excellent theological instruction begets excellent pastoral practice and this leads to good theology so that in both theology and pastoral practice, God may be glorified. +

Michael Patella, OSB, is professor of Sacred Scripture, rector of Saint John’s Seminary and acting executive director of Hill Museum & Manuscript Library.
Abbey hosts national conference of Benedictine vocation directors

by Paul-Vincent Niebauer, OSB

Every two years Benedictine vocation directors in the United States assemble for a national conference. This year Saint John’s Abbey hosted the October 8-12 event. Forty women and men monastics attended with nine participating in the workshop for new directors and the balance arriving for the major portion of the conference.

During the first two days of the conference new directors were given helpful hints by the planners of the conference: Sisters Vicki Ix, OSB, and Mary Catherine Holicky, OSB, of Saint Benedict’s Monastery, Saint Joseph, Minnesota, and Brother Paul-Vincent Niebauer, OSB, of Saint John’s Abbey. They introduced the newcomers to their own philosophies of vocation and recruiting techniques and offered a support system made up of other directors.

The major portion of the conference was titled Monasticism as Radical Christianity: Reaching the Serious Seeker. Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pennsylvania, delivered the keynote address, speaking about the huge impact of Benedictine monasticism on Western civilization and of its contemporary importance. Sr. Joan is the author of forty-two books and has won nine Catholic Press Association awards, her most recent for The Gift of Years. She is the founder and executive director of Benetvision, a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality in Erie.

Brendon Duffy, past director of admissions for Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary, spoke about successful techniques needed to promote a religious institution. Sister Ephrem Hollermann, OSB, of Saint Benedict’s Monastery, Saint Joseph, described the ebb and flow of vocations within the larger context of monastic history. Abbot John Klassen, OSB, talked on “Where is the Vocation Director in the Rule of Benedict?”

During leisure time conference members visited Saint John’s Hill Museum & Manuscript Library that houses The Saint John’s Bible and browsed at the Liturgical Press and Saint Benedict’s Heritage Center. One evening conventioneers enjoyed the Saint John’s Boys’ Choir production of “Boys on Broadway” in the Saint John’s auditorium.

Members from a distance were housed in the Abbey Guesthouse and the nearby Episcopal House of Prayer. Collegeville experienced its first snowfall of the season during the meeting, so all enjoyed the use of the cozy wood-burning fireplaces in these facilities. +

Paul-Vincent Niebauer, OSB, is the vocation director of Saint John’s Abbey.
Monastic professions and investitures at Saint John’s Abbey and Trinity Benedictine Monastery

Four novices make first profession of vows

A former sound technician of NHK, Japan’s larger broadcasting network, Francisco SHIMOSE Tomobisa, OSB, 40, from Yamaguchi serves as guestmaster, has redesigned the community’s website and plays the community organ and cello. He will begin seminary studies in Tokyo after his profession.

Maximilian OKA Shuta, OSB, 41, from Himeji has an associate degree in social work and was employed by a health care agency for the homeless. He works in the monastery’s kitchen and shop and prepares the community newsletter. He will also begin seminary studies.

Gabriel OKU Hiroshi, OSB, 36, is a former health care worker from Yokosuka. Baking bread every night for the community, Oku serves as the kitchen manager and is being trained to oversee the monastery physical plant. He will also be attending a cooking school after his profession.

Seven candidates begin year of novitiate formation

Three novices of Trinity Benedictine Monastery, Fujimi, Japan, made their first profession of vows before Abbot John Klassen, OSB, the Fujimi community and their relatives and friends on the Feast of Christ the King, November 22.

John Meoska, OSB, 54, made his first profession of vows before the Saint John’s monastic community and his relatives and friends on September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Father John studied at Saint John’s Seminary•School of Theology and was ordained to the priesthood in 1982 for the Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin. In 1986 he joined the Spiritual Life Institute of Carmelite hermits. Discerning a call to a community oriented life, John returned to Saint John’s and entered the novitiate in 2008. He was recently appointed the manager of Saint John’s Abbey Woodworking.

Stephen Warzecha, 45, of St. Cloud, had a 21-year career as a computer consultant before studying for the priesthood for the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis. He attended the St. John Vianney and St. Paul Seminaries in St. Paul and graduated from the University of St. Thomas with the Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy and theology. He hopes to complete the Master of Divinity degree and seek ordination to the priesthood.
Abbey Associate begins formation as a Community Oblate

Andrew Frederick has been an Abbey Associate this past year, taking part in the public prayer and meals of the abbey while supporting himself as an employee of the Larson Allen accounting firm in St. Cloud. The monastic chapter on November 3 approved Andrew’s petition to become a community Oblate after a year of formation. He is a 1995 accounting graduate of Saint John’s University.

Maria Dominic TAKAHASHI Hidenori, 35, from the Miyagi Prefecture, is a former health care assistant. His desire to serve others came from his relief work during the Kolbe earthquake and was strengthened by a six-month stay with a Benedictine Spanish hermit.

Andrew LAM Hong Ching Rickie, 39, of Hong Kong, China, worked for thirteen years with the Hong Kong Diocesan Liturgical Commission and Catechetical Center. He completed his Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree at Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, and the Master of Arts degree in catechetics at Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Nickolas Kleespie, 25, of Morris, Minnesota, graduated from Saint John’s University in 2006 with a major in music. He then served for a year as a Benedictine Volunteer at Saint Maurus Hanga Abbey in Tanzania, East Africa. Last year he worked with the Boys’ Choir and campus ministry and as a faculty resident at Saint John’s.

Michael-Leonard Hahn, 26, of Robbinsdale, Minnesota, is a 2005 theology major graduate of Saint John’s University. He served for three years as a Benedictine Volunteer, teaching at Saint Benedict’s Preparatory School under the direction of Benedictine monks of the Abbey of Newark, New Jersey. Last year he taught theology classes at Cathedral High School in St. Cloud.

Lewis Grobe, 26, of Orono, Minnesota, graduated from Saint John’s University in 2006 with majors in the humanities and German and spent a year with the Fulbright Fellowship in Germany as a teaching assistant. He then served as a Benedictine Volunteer, teaching and fundraising at Saint Maurus Hanga Abbey in Tanzania, East Africa. He worked for the Boys’ Choir, campus ministry and as a faculty resident.
What our Benedictine Volunteers are doing in Chile, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Newark and Tanzania

by Daniel Durken, OSB

James Albrecht and David Allen in Santiago, Chile:

Community prayer, teaching, tutoring and building a student community fill our days. We try to be positive role models and initiated a recycling program with junior and senior high school students at Colegio San Lorenzo. We went on a 20-mile mountain pilgrimage with 80,000 youth through the Andes and helped rebuild a roof for a student’s family. The mountains rise high over Santiago, but our spirits rise higher as we are embraced by these wonderful people. Blog: http://www.DAinChile.blogspot.com/

Patrick Deering and Matthew Ott in Coban, Guatemala:

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday we deliver food to two villages for our school’s nutrition program. Teaching English at one school is challenging because we need a translator to communicate our Spanish into their native Mayan dialect. We help with agricultural and nutritional development and hope our experiments with growing peanuts, sorghum and new varieties of corn are successful. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays we help Father Bernie Ness, OSB, around the monastery and make computers available to students in the villages. Blog: http://pmdeering.wordpress.com/ and http://sheldonsjbvuegoatemala.blogspot.com

Luke Ekelund and Adam Sheldon in Esquipulas, Guatemala:

As we weed and pick oranges with Leonidas, a monastery worker, we improve our Spanish while he learns English. Our first visit to the City of Joy Orphanage to play with the kids was unforgettable. When we arrived several children ran up and gave us each a big hug. Soon we were surrounded by all thirty youngsters. They loved taking pictures with us and all of them wanted a piggyback ride. We now will be known as the caballo de gringo. Blogs: http://ljekelund.wordpress.com/
Benjamin Briese in Tabgha, Israel:

I have been working hard here at Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel. The Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, staffed by Benedictine monks, is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Galilee. I work in the gift shop, the only source of income for the community, and also with German volunteers at the “Meeting Place” where Palestinian and Israeli groups socialize and gain a better understanding of each other. Here we make peace one friendship at a time.

Eli de Leon and Andrew Julo in Subiaco, Italy:

We are at the Monastery of Sacro Speco (Holy Cave), one of the most visited sanctuaries in Italy. One hour from Rome, this place abounds with tranquility. Situated on the side of a mountain, the monastery is dedicated to Saint Benedict and the cave where he spent three years as a young man. People from all over the world come here. We help with guided visits to the Sacra Speco, assist in the gift shop and do other small chores in the monastery. With only five monks in the community, it is nice to welcome and help visitors.

Jacob Barnes, Patrick Hayes and Will Gilbert in Newark, New Jersey:

We are immersing ourselves in the monastic and educational work of Newark Abbey’s Saint Benedict’s Preparatory School situated in the midst of a rebuilding city. Jacob teaches civics to 10th and 11th graders and is assistant wrestling coach. Patrick Hayes directs the school choir. Will teaches 11th and 12th graders and is assistant swimming coach and water polo coach. Our daily routine includes preparing lesson plans, teaching and grading our courses, covering classes for absent teachers, eating and praying with the monastic community, and spending time with and tutoring students living on campus. Blogs: http://beyondthebellbanner.blogspot.com and http://twiliamg.blogspot.com
Andrew Braith and Anthony Jastrzembski in Hanga Abbey, Tanzania:

After a seventeen-hour bus ride through rural Tanzania, we began our work at the Benedictine Abbey of Hanga. We spend much of our time preparing lessons, teaching, and tutoring students at Hanga Religious Seminary and Saint Benedict’s Secondary School. Anthony teaches English and computer skills. Andrew teaches chemistry and physics and works at the Hanga Dispensary. We both work with some nongovernmental organizations and landscaping projects. Blog: http://Braith-tanzania.blogspot.com/

Daniel Plaisance and James Slagle in Mvimwa, Tanzania:

While we were walking home from a friend’s house one evening, a curious Tanzanian boy yelled, “Good morning, wachino!” (“Good morning, Chinese men!”) We’re not Chinese, but we’re definitely foreigners here in Sumbawanga. We are the first two volunteers to teach at Chem Chemi Secondary School and the only non-Tanzanians in the city. We have been greeted with Christ-like hospitality. We attend 6:30 morning Mass with the monks, eat all our meals and teach with them. They have welcomed us with open arms and made this place feel like home. Blog: http://danintanzania.blogspot.com/ +

GRATITUDE FOR GENEROUS DONATIONS

The monastic community expresses its gratitude for two recent generous donations in support of the Saint John’s Benedictine Volunteer Corps.

Ray and Mary Turcotte of St. Paul made the gift of $50,000 to the Benedictine Volunteer program. Ray is an alumnus of Saint John’s Prep School (’65) and University (’69) and serves as the chief financial officer for ST Specialty Foods that produces and markets pasta foods.

Saint John’s alumnus Aaron Carpenter (’97), music director of Saint Joseph the Worker Church, Maple Grove, Minnesota, organized a fund-raising concert on October 30 featuring the 24-voice abbey schola and the piano repertoire and accompaniment of Father Robert Koopmann, OSB.

The sponsorship of a Benedictine Volunteer is $5,000 to cover medical insurance, travel and a modest stipend. Readers wishing to sponsor a Volunteer in whole or in part should contact Father Geoffrey Fecht, OSB, Abbey Development Director, Saint John’s Abbey, P.O. Box 2015, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-2015. +
Francis George Peters, OSB  
1923 – 2009

George Peters, the only child of George and Clothilde (Brouillard) Peters of Monticello, Minnesota, graduated from Monticello High School. When he became a novice of Saint John’s Abbey he received the name of Francis and made his first profession of vows as a Benedictine Brother on March 21, 1944.

Francis’ monastic life for the next sixty-five years centered on printing, planting, processing, pressing, pictures and prayer. For twenty-two years he worked in the duplicating and print shops, operating the multilith machine and dealing with customers who needed their hand-outs and exams . . . yesterday.

His move to the great outdoors of the monastic garden was especially appreciated by Francis. For several decades he planted a colorful collection of summer flowers of which he said, “I fill up the flower bed and put a border around it. I don’t fuss with arrangements.”

During the first half of the 1970s Francis served at San Antonio Abad Monastery, Humacao, Puerto Rico, and in the mid-1980s he spent a year at Saint Augustine’s Monastery, Nassau, Bahamas. He must have marveled at the prolific plants of these semi-tropical places.

Processing books in the Alcuin Library and pressing pants and monastic habits in the abbey tailor shop completed Francis’ work assignments and he retired in 2006. It was only after his death that the community became aware of Francis’ hobby of photography. He had filled several photo albums with his two favorite subjects, plants and people.

Throughout his work assignments Francis did not lose sight of the primacy of community prayer and meals. Sitting in the same place at table day after day, Francis mixed occasional humor with his food and was a keen observer of the foibles of his confreres. He wanted to hear more than he wanted to talk and to this end had acquired new hearing aids just a week before his death. But now he needs neither his glasses nor his hearing aids to see and hear what God has prepared for those who love God.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Brother Francis on September 22 followed by interment in the abbey cemetery. May he rest in peace.

Remember our deceased loved ones:

Lordell Eibensteiner
Sr. Michaela (Cecilia) Fuchs, OSB
Clara Huberty
Zen-zo Kawamura
Helene Moorese
Dennis Sherod
Patricia Thimmesh
Alfred Vogel
Mary Zeimetz

May they rest in peace.
According to Brad Jenniges, OSB, the abbey’s weather-monk, August added only one 90-degree day to our unusually cool summer. Almost six inches of rain in August, two more in September and well over seven inches in October eased drought conditions. Residents became weary of the dreary days of the fourth coldest October on record, but November may be the second warmest on record if mid-month conditions continue.

August 2009

Two traditional abbey events were the annual Sisters’ Day on the 2nd and Clergy Day on the 11th. Threat of rain necessitated moving the Sisters from the back yard to the abbey’s recreation room and refectory. Crowded space and noisy acoustics did not dampen the get-together. Priests of the Saint Cloud Diocese appreciated their going-away gift of a fresh loaf of Saint John’s Bread.

The Mother of Mercy Campus of Care in Albany, Minnesota, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary and the dedication of a new third floor on August 22. This 76-bed facility was originally staffed by Sisters of Saint Benedict’s Monastery with priests of Saint John’s Abbey serving as chaplains. The first chaplain, Roger Kasprick, OSB, and the present chaplain, Thomas Thole, OSB, were present at the celebration.

The Office of Summer Events hosted more than 9,200 participants of 115 different groups including boys’ and girls’ leadership camps, sports camps, and retreats, reunions and wedding receptions. Despite construction in the dining facilities, the staff met the challenges of preparing and serving daily meals and periodic banquets. Accolades to: Special Events and Dining Service staffs, contractors, supervisors, skilled workers and patient diners. The refectory renovation was completed just in time for the return of the students.

Trailers, trucks, SUVs and U-Hauls clogged the campus on August 22-23 as a new academic year began. Onlookers marveled at the amount of “stuff” moved into dormitories. Saint John’s University enrolled 1,877 students and the College of Saint Benedict 2,085 for

“How sad would be November if we had no knowledge of the spring!”
(Edwin Way Teale)
a combined enrollment of 3,935. The two colleges have the largest number ever of National Merit Scholars, students of color, international students, and students from outside the state.

September 2009

- Bells have been a part of the abbey since 1857 when the community’s first bell arrived as a gift from German relatives of Brother Benno Muckenthaler, OSB. The five bells in the twin towers of the first abbey church, completed in 1882, were transferred to the banner of the new church in 1961. In 1989 new bells replaced the originals, one of which was sent to the abbey’s new foundation, Trinity Benedictine Monastery in Fujimi, Japan. Weather related and manufacturing glitches necessitate periodic replacement and repair. On September 15, two of the bells were lifted into the banner after more effective clappers replaced the original ones.

- Word was received on September 25 that the old St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Nassau, Bahamas, was extensively damaged by an early morning fire. The cornerstone of the church was laid on August 25, 1885 and the church was dedicated on February 13, 1887. Priests from New York had the pastoral care of the Bahamas until the arrival of Chrysostom Schreiner, OSB, in 1891 and the subsequent influx of Saint John’s monks. Archbishop Pinder announced that the archdiocese is fully committed to the restoration of the old church. He stated, “The old St. Francis building represents the devotion and generosity of Catholics who contributed to its construction and the 122 years of precious worship and the sacraments.” Fortunately the new St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, built adjacent to the old cathedral in 2004, was not damaged by the fire.

October 2009

- Finian McDonald, OSB, the abbey’s orchid expert, presented newly inaugurated president Bob Koopmann, OSB, one of his splendid plants, the Catalaya Alliance, Gold and Scarlet Beauty. Father Finian won a second-place red ribbon at the Minnesota State Fair for an orchid arrangement he entered in the Orchid Society of Minnesota competition. Congratulations!

- Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, professor emeritus of theology, is shown receiving the 2009 Frederick R. McManus Award from officers of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions during its national meeting on October 9. The award honors an individual who has made a significant contribution to pastoral liturgy on the national level. Father Kevin taught for 25 years at The Catholic University of America and then at Saint John’s School of Theology•Seminary. He edits the liturgical journal Worship, published by Liturgical Press.

- Light snowfalls proved that it is never too early to snow in MinneSNOWta when 1.4 inches lingered a few hours on October 10 and another 1.6 inches fell two days later but disappeared quickly. We will surely get more.

- Community creativity blossomed with the carving of pumpkins for the celebration of Halloween. The prize pumpkin was carved by Peter Sullivan, OSB.
November 2009

- Jonathan Licari, OSB, has been named subprior of the community and chair of the recently formed Mentors Council. Third in the chain of community leadership, the subprior is responsible for the ongoing monastic formation of younger monks following their final profession of vows. The Mentors Council replaces the Personnel Committee and offers counsel to the abbot on specific employment issues, the general direction of work possibilities, and guidance for further education or training. Father Jonathan recently served as pastor of Seven Dolors Parish in Albany and the Church of St. Anthony, St. Anthony, Minnesota.

- Dunstan Moorse, OSB, coordinator of the abbey gardens, reports that the plots produced in excess of 3,100 pounds of more than forty different products from asparagus to zucchini. Many products were transformed by vinegar, sugar and spices into varied edibles ranging from borsch to spaghetti sauce, from beet cake to roasted carrots, parsnips and purple potatoes. Even herbs and flowers were produced in abundance with over a thousand gladiolas brightening altar and table.

- Michael Naughton, OSB, replaces Father Jonathan as pastor of Seven Dolors Parish and the Church of St. Anthony, having completed a five-year term as prior of the International Benedictine College of Sant’ Anselmo in Rome. Michael’s previous appointments include administrator of Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, Virginia, director of Liturgical Press, assistant professor of theology at Saint John’s, missionary/teacher at St. Augustine’s Monastery, Nassau, Bahamas, and associate pastor of Benedictine parishes in St. Paul, Hastings and St. Joseph, Minnesota.

- Prior Thomas Andert, OSB, represented Saint John’s Abbey on November 19 at a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving at Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, OSB. Born in Bavaria on January 14, 1809, Wimmer became a monk of Saint Michael’s Abbey in Metten, Bavaria, in 1832. In 1846 he led eighteen novices to Pennsylvania and founded the first Benedictine monastery in the United States. Before his death in 1887 he established seven Benedictine abbeys, including Saint John’s, 150 parishes and 75 schools in America.+

- John Hanson, OSB, curator of the abbey’s apple orchard, reports that he and his helpers harvested about fifty-five bushels of apples. Walter Kieffer, OSB, added another five bushels from a lone apple tree among the pines near the Interstate and treated his residence hall students with several servings of apple sauce seasoned with maple syrup.
Cook, Eat, Love — Confessions of a Kitchen Junkie

by Aelred Senna, OSB

I learned to cook out of necessity while my mother worked two jobs to support us kids. As the oldest, it fell to me to do the cooking. I quickly embraced the good feeling that comes from preparing food that conjures up smiles for a special occasion, offers comfort in times of stress, or just provides an opportunity to gather people around a table to share time, food and love.

Before coming to the monastery in 2007, I cooked for my roommate, his daughter (my goddaughter), friends, family and anyone who showed up at my door. I believe that when folks have delicious food to nourish them, they are happier people. And happier people make better decisions, lead better lives, and are more fun to be with. One secret to happy, healthy living is delicious food, made with love.

My recipe for preparing good food is this: few ingredients, simple preparation techniques, and love for those who will share it. The key ingredient is always love — it makes food taste better. Whether I am making sourdough bread, hot pepper jam, cranberry scones, or cheese enchiladas, it is important to pour a little love into the mixture. Doing so makes me a happier monk, and I think those who share what I prepare appreciate the flavor of the love — even if they don’t know it’s there.

Cranberry-Citrus Scones (makes about 10)

3 cups all purpose flour  1/3 cup granulated sugar  1/2 teaspoon salt  1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon baking powder  1 stick (4 oz. or 8 tablespoons) cold, unsalted butter, cut in 12 pieces

Heat oven to 425°F. In a large bowl stir together flour, sugar, salt and baking powder. Cut in butter with pastry blender. There should still be pea-sized pieces of butter in the mixture. Add zest and cranberries and stir to combine. Add Half-and-Half and stir to combine.

Dough will still be very crumbly. Knead together gently with both hands until the dough hangs together. (Some flour may still resist becoming part of the ball.) Turn dough out onto floured surface and shape into a rectangle about 3-1/2” wide by 12” - 15” long. Cut into five squares and divide each square into two triangles. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 450°F for 12-15 minutes.
Saint John’s Abbey plants a field of sunshine

About the time local farmers were getting ready to harvest this year’s bountiful corn crop, a four-acre abbey field located at the northwest edge of the campus was being seeded with a new and unique crop of solar panels. These 3’ x 5’ rectangular panels will generate 575,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year, amounting to four percent of the annual electricity for Saint John’s, peaking to twenty percent during summer months.

On October 7, Abbot John Klassen, OSB, SJU President Robert Koopmann, OSB, and Abbey Treasurer Benedict Leuthner, OSB, joined officials of the M.A. Mortenson Company of Minneapolis and Westwood Renewables of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, in the blessing and groundbreaking of a 35-row, 1,820-panel, 400-kilowatt array of photovoltaic panels. Workers then began planting 455 poles to hold the pivoting panels that use sensors to track the sun from morning to night, much like a field of sunflowers.

The solar farm behind the new Flynnstown Apartments is four times larger than Minnesota’s current largest solar power system and will generate five times more energy. A $2-million grant from Xcel Energy’s Renewable Development Fund will help pay for the $3-million project. Remaining funding comes from federal tax incentives, private investors and payments for the energy produced by the solar farm. The solar facility should be fully operational before the end of the year.

The new project continues Saint John’s efforts to utilize local resources and practice environmental stewardship. These efforts include using field stones and homemade bricks for our original permanent buildings, monitoring, harvesting and replanting surrounding woods and producing maple syrup each spring, protecting our lakes by limiting motorboat access, establishing an arboretum and a pottery kiln and caring for monastic vegetable gardens and an apple orchard.

The recently dedicated McKeown Center is the first campus structure to be certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for the promotion of energy conservation and the use of durable building materials.

Nathan Franzen, general manager of Westwood Renewables, summed up the solar panel project when he said, “In some ways it’s going to look similar to a row crop, but instead of harvesting corn we’re going to be harvesting the sun.”
How are we saved?

by Robert Pierson, OSB

They shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us” (Matthew 1:23).

As Christians, we believe that God became a human being in Jesus Christ to save us from our sin and open up the possibility of eternal life with God. How did Jesus save us? One well accepted theory puts it this way:

• God’s honor was offended by our sin.
• God’s justice demanded a bloody sacrifice to pay for human sin.
• Jesus’ death was that sacrifice, paying the debt incurred by our sin, purchasing our salvation.

Over the years, I have struggled with this theory of salvation. Why does God need a bloody human sacrifice in order to forgive sin? What image of God does this theory conjure up for us? Does the image of a blood thirsty God match the image of God that Jesus teaches in the gospels?

I recently read a book that helped to answer these questions for me. In Problems With Atonement by Stephen Finlan (a Michael Glazier book published by Liturgical Press in 2005) we read that we are saved by Jesus’ incarnation and by his entire life, death and resurrection. In Jesus Christ, God became human to show us how we can live as children of God, becoming like God as we learn to trust God’s love and mercy, rather than always trying to “buy” God’s favor. Jesus’ teaching was so unpopular with the religious authorities of his day because it undermined their entire system of rules and regulations designed to keep people living in fear.

Jesus accepted death at the hands of those religious leaders rather than deny what he taught about his relationship with the Father. The Father affirmed his love for the Son by raising him from the dead, proving to us that God is more powerful than even death. We no longer need to fear death. “Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15: 55-57).

So, it is possible to affirm that Jesus Christ is our Savior without blaming God the Father for insisting on a bloody sacrifice to forgive us. Jesus constantly teaches us in his life and his parables that God’s love and mercy are always available to us, just for the asking. +

Robert Pierson, OSB, is the director of the Abbey’s spiritual life program and guest master.

Spring 2010 “Sunday at the Abbey” Lecture Series


February 21, 2010 – Dr. Daniel Finn, professor of economics and theology, considers “Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life Today.”

March 14, 2010 – Sr. Kathryn Casper, OSB, staff member of the Spirituality Center of Saint Benedict’s Monastery and director of retreats, discusses “Benedictine Spirituality for Ordinary People.”

April 18, 2010 – John Gagliardi, Regents’ professor of physical education and the winningest coach in college football history, speaks on “Football and the Reign of God.”

These free evening lectures begin at 7:00 in the Chapter House of the Pavilion adjoining the abbey church. Complete details at www.saintjohnsabbey.org/sunday.index.html.
New!

Don Talafous, OSB, Saint John’s University alumni chaplain, publishes his third volume of Homilies for Weekdays that reflect on the solemnities, feasts, and memorials occurring on weekdays. He leads readers through 115, three-quarter-page, pithy and practical paragraphs on designated saints to be both admired and imitated.

Clergy and lay people alike will find this book an inspired and inspiring basis both for daily preaching and personal prayer.

More of Father Don’s reflections can be found on his website link: www.saintjohnsabbey.org/reflection/. Once a month he also sends an electronic letter to nearly 2,000 Saint John’s alumni.

A Sample Reflection: December 26, Saint Stephen, First Martyr—None of us, filled with the spirit, good food, and music of Christmas, would ever have thought to place the feast of St. Stephen on the day after Christmas. To celebrate a man who was stoned to death for his belief in Christ on this day is about as unsentimental as one can get. . . . The feast of Stephen tells us that following Christ brings with it the Cross, as does simply living human life. The Eucharist tells us this same reality every day, and points ahead to resurrection.

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