

Mount Saviour Chronicle

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR
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MATERNITY OF OUR LADY 1953

Dear Friends of Mount Saviour:

It is a long time since my first—and last—letter went out to you. In the meantime, Father Gregory has kept you informed about events.

What a happy homecoming it was on the afternoon of the fourteenth of August when Joe Shanley drove me up the good old dusty, stony Madigan Road. The return trip from Europe had been strenuous, starting out from the lovely little Cistercian monastery of Hauterive early in the morning of the thirteenth, going by bus to Fribourg, continuing by train to Lausanne where our Oblate Brother Benedict Biscop Clifford awaited me with his car to drive to Geneva and the airport. There we had a last European lunch together before my flight to London. In London I had to switch to one of those big PAA-Clippers and make the last stretch from London to New York "clipperwise," as they put it.

After the early morning arrival at Idlewild and the bus ride into the Big City (with cars five abreast on the drive during the morning rush), it was a relief to get aboard the Phoebe Snow for Elmira and ride smoothly through the Delaware Valley and along the Susquehanna. At the Elmira station many of the old stalwarts were present: Joe Shanley, Ambrose Leonard, Dan Cohalan, Bill Kennedy. It was so good to see them!

It was a memorable moment when emerging out of the woods that line Madigan Road I saw for the first time the new chapel resting like a crown on the top of the hill. It is the first thing that greets the visitor, with its steeple pointing to heaven and its simple octagonal shape—God's dwelling place among His people—right here in the hills of Elmira where Catholic people once tilled the soil: the Hofbauers on the hill and Mike Madigan on the lower slopes. For all their work they never grew rich and so Mount Saviour will never be a "rich monastery"—I hope. It was good, however, to see the progress our farm had made since I saw it last. Many more fields were under cultivation. More cows were in the pastures—and a flock of ducks stood right in front of us on the road in deep contemplation that even the blowing of the horn could not disturb. A significant picture.

There was St. James, the old Madigan house, where most of our professed brethren still have to live—and drive up the hill in the little jeep at 4 o'clock in the morning when the bell rings for Vigils—because "there is no room in the inn." In passing it I could not help thinking of our housing problem which is becoming worse and worse as time goes on, and praying that Our Lady may move the heart of somebody to put a roof over so many who come to stay with her here on her hill. Then a little further up came St. John's, our little guest-house. It looked so much neater and nicer after all the work that had been done to it by the Brethren during the past year. There the first Fathers had installed themselves in the spring of 1951 when there were no beds, no chairs and only one old table which had to be braced to serve as an altar, and a sheet of paper in front of it which was the only form of carpet around: God's dwelling place among His people!

Now St. Peter's came into full sight, the old home of the Hofbauer family. On our approach the novices started ringing the bell, and the whole community thronged the car for the first Pax after such

a long time. We had arrived just in time for First Mass of the Assumption, and therefore went right into the chapel, the "old one" I mean which formerly had been the Hofbauer's living room. We shall always remember it, and I am sure our guests and visitors will too, those simple choir-stalls to the right and left of Our Lady's picture; the benches lining the walls of the former parlor, and the altar-table in the center, a true image of the "cenacle" where Our Lord broke the bread and gave the chalice to His disciples, asking them to do this same thing in His memory all through the ages—and right here He gave His Body and His Blood the next day to Mrs. Hofbauer who so often had put the good things of her kitchen before her family in that same room: God's dwelling place among His people!

It was a special joy for all of us to celebrate the last Conventual Mass there on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, with the profession of Brothers Maur and Paul. I had been in many monasteries during my trip to Europe and had listened to many a choir of monks but I may say, in all humility, that when I heard our choir at Mount Saviour singing the Introit: "Gaudeamus omnes Domino—Let us rejoice in the Lord . . .", I found it could easily compete with them. Of course, we don't sing every day as we sang then, carried by the enthusiasm of the hour in which the two Brethren offered themselves to God, surrounded by the joy and love of their two families, that of the blood and that of the Spirit. It was a blessed day.

In the evening clouds came and it looked like rain, but God had another day of sun and happiness in store for us: the day of the opening of the new chapel. We sang Terce at St. Peter's which was now empty, except for the stalls, and then we went in silent procession to bless our new oratory, singing the Miserere as we went around it to sprinkle the outer walls with Holy Water. Then the doors opened and we entered into it. One had immediately the feeling that Joe Shanley's design was a full success. The dome over the main altar gives a wonderful sense of spaciousness and dignity, while the central octagonal shape unites all in an intimate union of hearts around the Table of the Lord. Today the chapel was packed with God's people, the monks forming the "inner circle" as it were, next to them the Oblates and candidates and volunteer workers, the good Sisters from Elmira,

Corning and vicinity, and our friends from all over who, to our great joy, had come in large numbers to celebrate with us. It was a wonderful picture: the celebrant at the altar in the center, and all God's family around him in God's new dwelling place. The small circle of the chapel widened into the all-embracing unity of the Catholic Church when a telegram from Rome was read conveying to all who were participating in our celebration the Holy Father's special blessing. This was the seal, as it were, of the three weeks which I had spent in Rome and which gave me the happy assurance that the highest authorities of the Roman Curia are deeply interested in the success of a monastic foundation such as ours which is contemplative without being exclusive. In long talks with the Abbot Primate I realized how much he has taken Mount Saviour to his heart. He expressed his confidence in a special letter to the community, and we feel keenly the obligation which this confidence imposes on us, as well as the joy and peace derived from the fact that we are safely hidden under the wings of ecclesiastical authority.

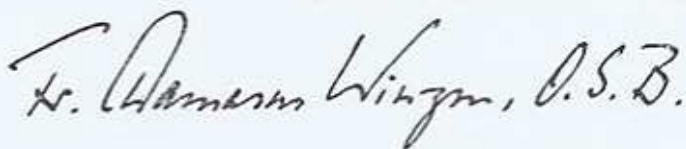
The family-spirit which took such a hold of all those who assisted at the celebration of the first Mass in the new oratory continued in the cheerful, generous cooperation of our friends from town who had set up a tent in which they served refreshments to the visitors who kept arriving until late in the evening. There were so many faces which I hadn't seen for a long time. I was deeply moved when I realized how many people had prayed for me during my illness, how much they rejoiced in the progress of our foundation and in the good spirit of the community. Mount Saviour has taken roots in many hearts.

Just returning from Europe, the difference of atmosphere between the "old" and the "new" world struck me more than ever. Too many people in Europe are cut off from one another by barriers of old hatreds: national hatreds, class hatreds, cultural hatreds, descending from generation to generation. These hatreds go back mostly to the series of conquests and suppressions which mark the paths of imperialism and feudalism. On the other hand, there is much cultural and spiritual wealth—to a great extent the endowment which the Church has given to Europe. Americans are fortunate to be in a position to adopt whatever they want of the spiritual heritage of Europe while the political structure of their coun-

try saves them from being burdened with her traditional hatreds.

This is where Mount Saviour comes in. Our foundation is linked to the spiritual heritage of Christian Europe through the Rule of St. Benedict and through our descent from European monastic centers like Solesmes, Beuron and Maria Laach. But, at the same time, the Rule of St. Benedict does not impose upon us the organizational ties of a centralized Order. It leaves us free to make a fresh start and to adapt our way of life to the spirit of this country, an adaptation which does not consist only in the use of modern machinery and "gadgets" (a simple necessity in this country), but which is a real and far deeper adaptation to the historical mission of these United States, which were built up by free people, with equal opportunity for all. When I first saw our friends, people of all walks of life, working together with the members of the community on that beautiful afternoon of August 16th, the deeply Christian—and also so American!—principle which St. Benedict has laid down in his Rule came to my mind: "Let not a free-born monk be put before one that was a slave, unless there be some other reasonable ground for it . . . because, whether slaves or freemen, we are all one in Christ, and have to serve alike in the army of the same Lord." The Holy Spirit determines the order of the monastery rather than age, blood, money or education. The Holy Spirit should also determine the attitude of the monks toward their fellow Christians. Our oratory is meant to be an expression of this attitude. All the members of the monastic family and those who join them, as Oblates or as guests, rich or poor, black or white, learned or unlearned, are invited to enter into the one life of the One Christ which flows from the one altar in the center: God's dwelling-place with His people in the hills of Elmira. Deo gratias!

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,



Damasus Winzen, Prior

"Praising God and Having Favor With All The People . . ."

The joy which the Holy Ghost instilled into the hearts of the first Christians in Jerusalem and which

made them praise God and eat their meat in gladness and simplicity of heart was contagious to those who same into contact with them: "They had favor with all the people." (Acts 2:47). Because St. Benedict had the intention to revive, within the precincts of the monastery, the spirit of the Apostolic Church, his Rule has a similar effect on those who follow it as well as on those who come into contact with his monks. People may not have a clear idea about our life, but once they come up to stay with us for a while they get infected by the joy which the Benedictine way of life inspires.

GUESTS

Quite a few of the priests and other guests who came to visit us this past month decided to join the monastic family as secular Oblates. Father Thomas Carroll of Boston made his final oblation on the Feast of the Assumption. Father Fred Schroeder, Pastor of St. Ann's, Monterey, Ind., was made an Oblate Novice on the Feast of St. Bernard, and received this saint as his patron. Charles Visgak of Cleveland, Joseph Tunney of Bela-Cynwyd, Pa., and Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Taylor of Rochester, N. Y. were received as Oblate Novices within the Octave of the Assumption. Miss Margaret Adams of South Bend, Ind., who was invested as an Oblate Novice in July by Rev. Blaise Hettich in Notre Dame, Indiana, was able to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption with us here at Mount Saviour.

MONKS AND MONKEYS

There are a good many ladies in town who sympathize with us, because they take it for granted that young monks are unable to cook. We cannot resist the temptation to report a conversation which went on in Mrs. Rohde's kitchen when she was cooking a spaghetti dinner for the monks of Mount Saviour. "Grannie" said her three little grandchildren who were looking on with hungry eyes "why don't you cook anything for us?" Grannie explained: "I cook first for my twenty monks at Mount Saviour, and then for my three little monkeys at home." "Why do you call them monkeys?" they asked. "I didn't," Grannie protested, "they are monks, you are the monkeys." "But, Grannie, why do you call them monks?" "One really should call them "Fathers," Grannie said, "and the nuns are called "Sisters." They were not satisfied with this explanation: "But, Grannie, if you call the monks "Fathers" why don't you call the nuns "Moth-

ers?" "Imagine, three years old," Mrs. Rohde said when she told the story.

PLUMS - PLUMS - AND MORE PLUMS!

Plums in the morning for breakfast. Plums for lunch. Plums for dinner. We were drowned in plums. Who had ever thought Mount Saviour would produce such an abundance of plums. The canning-ladies had to work overtime at St. John's to can them and make plum-butter. Brother Peter in the kitchen tried his hand on plum jelly. "Not for the community!" he declared emphatically, "It's too expensive." He sells them for thirty and fifty cents a jar to the connoisseurs in town, and he hopes to be able to buy a dough-mixer from the proceeds—three years from now—, if nobody comes along to shorten the process.

THE DEEP-FREEZE

A gift of Mr. Charles McDonald Grace, has proved to be a real Godsend. It swallowed the rest of the plums. It took care of "Stanislaus" (one of our beef cattle), after his return from the slaughter house. Our chickens find their last (?) repose in it. The corn, the berries, even the bread—the deep freeze solves all their problems.

OUTING

We did not only harvest plums. There was more important harvesting to be done, as for example the oats. It was hard work. After it was over, a day of outing was given to the community. Seventeen took part in it. Some of them had never touched an oat. The Charles Hughes family of Elmira had offered us the use of their wonderful beach on Lake Keuka. We did a lot of swimming and racing in a motor boat. It was a perfect day, not only for us but—as they assured us—also for our hosts, who never before had heard the Divine Office sung right around their outdoor fireplace. The next neighbor, Mrs. Githler of Corning, was all set to have us stay overnight but since there was no St. Scholastica around to move heaven for a cloud burst (cf. S. BENEDICT by Dom Justin McCann, p. 21-22—available at the religious articles shop at Mount Saviour) we had to return home.

THE FIRST "DAY OF RECOLLECTION"

Had been planned for Sunday, September 20th, at Mount Saviour for the Catholic Daughters of America from Corning under the leadership of their Grand Regent, Miss Rose DiCaita. Days before assignments were given at Prime to fix up St. John's guest house for the occasion. We prayed for good weather—and it rained all night and day! The road was a mess. The mill looked bleak. Our hearts dropped. There would be five ladies, if any, we thought. We looked for cars, and lo and behold there they came—courageous-

ly facing wind and weather, twenty strong, stepping from their cars right into the mud without rubbers. All received Communion at the sung mass at 9 o'clock, had coffee at St. John's and three conferences in all, with dinner in between and Vespers at the end. When it was all over everybody agreed that the devil's efforts had been beaten and that in spite of the weather it had been a most profitable day. Don't wait until snow comes to make your arrangements!

CALENDAR

NOTE: The calendar will list only those Feasts which have some particular connection with the monastery or on which special ceremonies will take place.

Sun., Oct. 11—MATERNITY OF OUR LADY.

Third anniversary of official permission from the Sacred Congregation of Religious for the foundation of Mount Saviour.

Community celebration of the 25th anniversary of Rev. Father Damasus' ordination to the Priesthood.

Sun., Oct. 25—CHRIST THE KING.

After Vespers at Benediction Consecration to the Sacred Heart.

Sat., Oct. 31—VIGIL OF ALL SAINTS.

After Vespers (4 p. m.) Clothing of Brother Swan as a Novice.

Sun., Nov. 1—ALL SAINTS.

After Vespers of the Feast, Vespers of the Dead will be sung.

Mon., Nov. 2—ALL SOULS.

At Conventual Mass (9 a. m.) the commemoration of the departed whose names have been sent in will begin, to be continued throughout the month.

Fri., Nov. 13—ALL HOLY MONKS.

Sat., Nov. 21—PRESENTATION OF OUR LADY.

Feast of Oblates, who may receive a Plenary Indulgence under the usual conditions.

Sun., Nov. 29—FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Procession before Conventual Mass.

Tues., Dec. 8—IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

Procession to the Shrine after Vespers.

On Sundays and great feasts Conventual Mass at nine; Vespers and Benediction at four.

On other days Conventual Mass at six and Vespers at five.

The next issue of the Chronicle, to appear at Christmas, will be devoted to the younger members of the monastic family. A description of the Chapel and of the Shrine which was blessed on October 4th will be given in a later issue.