



Mount Saviour Chronicle

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR
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Dear Friends of Mount Saviour:

When Our Lord said to the disciples who were gathered round him in the upper room for the celebration of the Passover meal: "I no longer call you servants . . . but I have called you friends," he added as his reason: "Because the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) This indeed is the difference between servant and friend, that a servant obeys his master's instructions without being drawn into his confidence, while the intimate union of hearts in friendship allows of discussion of what the friendless man must speak of within himself. Now the one thing which Our Lord was never able really to share with his disciples was the very thing closest to his heart but contrary to their way of thinking. I mean the fact that he had to die for us before he could make us sharers of his kingdom. This secret the Father shared with his Son alone. Several times the Son tried to tell them, even imploring them to "Let these words into your inner ear: 'The son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.'" But the more urgent his plea, the more stolid his hearers. Saint Luke continues: "They did not understand. It was hidden from them that they did not perceive it. And more, they were afraid to ask him about this saying." (Luke 9:44-45)

Who could have any doubts that Saint Peter loved Jesus with all his heart? As soon as he heard the invitation: "Follow me!" without any hesitation he left everything dear to him to join the Lord. (cf. Matthew 4:19-20) Yet when Christ began to show his disciples that the son of man must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and the high priests, be killed, and be raised again the third day, it was Peter who emphatically disagreed saying: "Far be it from you, Lord; this shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:22) If we keep in mind that this encounter took place a short while after his confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" had earned Saint Peter the title 'rock' together with the solemn pledge from the Lord: "Upon this rock I shall build my Church," we shall grasp better the full impact of the Lord's reaction to the complete lack of understanding on the part of his foremost disciple. Conscious of the

special position just accorded him, the "rock" had taken his master aside; he found it imperative to talk to the Lord in private, not so much to speak to him as a friend would speak to his friend, but to throw in the full weight of his "authority"; he had rebuked Jesus, making his statement in the most categorical way possible, in a way tantamount to saying: "Nothing doing, Lord!" Saint Matthew shows that the reaction on the part of Christ was just as harsh as the rebuke by Saint Peter: "Abruptly he turned away from him (not even looking at him, but in the direction of the disciples, as Saint Mark has it) and said unto Peter: "Back, Satan!" "You are a stumbling block (scandal) to me, because you do not mind the thoughts of God but those of men." (Matthew 16:23) A chasm had opened up between them as wide as that which separates hell from heaven. The rock had turned into a stumbling block, lying in the wrong direction, not in that of God's thoughts but in that of man's, since Peter was — unconsciously — siding with Satan when he tempted the Lord in the desert, holding out to him the prospect of glory without the cross. (cf. Matthew 4:8)

I realize that the explanation of this passage of the Gospel has run away with me. In fact what prompted me to refer to it is much less drastic than the incomprehension of the disciples before the Lord's great secret. Addressing myself to you, friends of Mount Saviour, to offer you the "kiss of peace," as befits the celebration of Our Lord's Nativity, I was pondering how I could best show the gratitude of our community to all of you who have done so much to support our monastery with your prayers and gifts. As monks we have to say with Saint Peter: "Silver and gold we do not have," but what we do have to give you is our monastic life itself. This we share with you day after day through our intercession for you. I am sure you are aware of it. But when a special occasion like Christmas comes round, we feel we should do, not something "more", but something special or extra, and the thing that comes to mind is to send a "word", but a word as spoken friend to friend, a word about the things closest to our hearts. It is precisely here that the difficulty arises, and it is somewhat similar to the difficulty Our Lord encountered when he wanted to speak about the great secret of his heart. The life which we are leading here at Mount Saviour is not

easy to explain. Please, do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to categorize us as on a par with Our Lord, nor do I consider you as little devils! We simply have to face the fact that the monastic life, as we live it here, is a stumbling block to many today, and we know that you, our friends, often find yourselves exposed to the pressure of public opinion. It would be understandable, if you were to begin to waver and ask yourselves: "Yes, what is it really all about? What is the value of it at a time when so many laborers are needed in the Lord's vineyard?" If we could point to certain achievements, let us say mission centers, or schools, or hospitals, we would have no difficulty sharing our plans with others, and we would find a ready response. But our type of life does not lend itself to such enterprises. Consequently we are unable to register our "achievements" in the form of statistics. We are unable to prove to the world our usefulness. We cannot even prove it to ourselves. We pray, but what do you know, and what do we know, about the power of our prayers? We work, but our work is not a great contribution to civilization, and if it were, it would not justify our way of life. Our life is from beginning to end a matter of faith. Once we start apologizing for it we only help our friends miss the point. In this regard our situation is really similar to that of Our Lord, when he spoke to his apostles about his "secret". He was unable to convince them that his death on the cross would be a great "success". His mission was only to give witness to the Love of God by doing his Father's will. The rest he left up to the Holy Spirit, who would introduce men into the whole truth; not only into the intellectual truth, or the practical truth, but the whole truth, the divine life shared by the Father through the Son made man in the unity of the Church. We have to do the same: do the Father's will for us by following His call to share in the death and resurrection of His Son through the monastic form of life and "sing in our hearts to God under the impulse of His grace." (Col. 3:16) The rest we have to leave to the Holy Spirit. Only on special occasions do we send out a little "word". We call it the Chronicle. Its purpose is to give witness on a special occasion in a special way, by sharing with our friends one or the other aspect of our "secret". We send it out in the hope that over a period of time the bond of understanding between us will be deepened, so that we become better friends.

Dear friends of Mount Saviour, this Chronicle originally closed with the announcement that the special "word" sent to you this Christmas would consist in the broadcast of our Midnight Mass under the auspices of the National Council of Catholic Men. Unfortunately at the last moment this project ran into technical difficulties, so that the National Broadcasting Company was unable to carry it through. You can imagine our disappointment. It would have been the first major feast celebrated in the new chapel, the Mass being offered for all our friends and benefactors who have helped us with its construction. The broadcast would have made it accessible to all who wanted to listen. Now this dream has not come through, and we stand before you without any little "extra" at a time when we would have loved more than ever to express our gratitude to you in a special way. But this situation is also in conformity with the spirit of a monk's Christmas. Sometimes God's children are tempted by the grandiose, and then they are reduced to sighs. Just the other day I read in the "Tales of the Hasidim" the following story: "Once Suessche ('Sweetie') prayed to God: 'Lord, I love you so

much, but I do not fear you enough! Lord, I love you so much, but I do not fear you enough! Let me stand in awe of you like your angels, who are penetrated by your awe-inspiring name.' And God heard his prayer, and his name penetrated the hidden heart of Suessche as it does those of the angels. But Suessche crawled under the bed like a little dog, and animal fear shook him until he howled, 'Lord, let me love you like Suessche again!' And God heard him this time also."

I am sure you feel that the spirit of the Incarnation is alive in this story, and you will understand why we want to share it with you, especially under present circumstances. So long as the choir of the Mount Saviour "angels" does not ring out from coast to coast may this whisper from heart to heart unite us in the loving-kindness of God our Saviour.

F. Adamez Winz, O.S.B.

CHAPEL REMODELLING

Within the next few days we hope to be back in our chapel, leaving the temporary quarters in the shop building which we have used since mid-June. The work done on the chapel has been so extensive one should probably speak of its reconstruction. The addition of wings to the original octagon has given it the form of a Greek cross; an entirely new disposition of windows has changed its appearance inside and out; in addition to the new silhouette afforded by extending the overhang of the eaves, new roofing of rough cedar improves the building aesthetically and structurally. To keep pace with style the columns of the porches have darkened from weathered to charcoal gray, contrasting handsomely with the chalk white exterior. The building has been orientated: the entrance to the chapel is now through the east door rather than, as formerly, from the south. The interior is much more spacious, though the transformation of the character of the room has not, apparently, damaged the exceptionally fine acoustics the building had when it was in essence a dome, nor has the atmosphere of intimacy of the former smaller building been lost. The previous altar has been removed and in its place is a five foot square wooden table, constructed in the dimensions of the projected stone altar we hope to have in place before long. The Blessed Sacrament chapel has been removed to a larger area in a spacious landing between the upper chapel and the crypt. The upper chapel is much lighter than in the past, having been painted all white except for the dark laminated arches that form the cupola, and having been glazed, at least temporarily, with plain glass. Though the colors of the crypt are darker, blue-gray on the walls, vibrant blue with white and gold trim on the ceiling, the new look promises to augment the effect of the stained glass windows. The principal innovation in the crypt will be an Eastern Rite chapel, fit for our monthly celebration of the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

The roads are always well ploughed in stormy weather; we invite you to have a first look at our "new" church during the Christmas season.