



Mount Saviour Chronicle

NUMBER TWENTY EIGHT • PENTECOST 1966

'GO WHERE THE SPIRIT CALLS, SEEK UNITY, AND ALL HIS GIFTS ARE YOURS'

These words, dear friends of Mount Saviour, which once greeted visitors to the baptistry of St. Peter's in Rome, formed the conclusion to our *Chronicle* of October, 1962. At that time the Spirit called the bishops of the Church, through the voice of Pope John XXIII, to gather at St. Peter's for the Second Vatican Council. Through three years of hard and concentrated labor, unity was sought. And in the end, it was manifested in the moral unanimity with which the great assembly accepted and promulgated a vast body of teaching* that is beginning to enrich God's People with the gifts of the Spirit.

Renewal of Monastic Life

While this process of renewal is taking hold of the entire Church, we monks ask ourselves: what is the Spirit asking us to do to become a part of it? The question becomes more acute in these days of "involvement" when many people consider the monastic life remote and self-centered. We do not want to fall victim to some kind of self-complacent aloofness. On the contrary, our vow of "conversion of morals" — it might also be called "renewal of life" — should keep us young by preserving in our hearts a constant openness and readiness to change. Each morning the words of the psalm ring in our ears: "Today, when you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts!" Docility is an essential part of our life as monks, but docility to the right teacher, God and His Word. And it is precisely for this reason that the voice of the Church in the teachings of Vatican II finds such a deep and enthusiastic echo in our hearts. The Church speaks, not from an anxious desire to please the world, but out of the peace of Christ, out of the depth of contemplation. As a result, the teachings of the Council dwell upon topics which, although never before appearing in the history of the Councils, are of vital importance to Christian life, and, we may add, have always played a central role in monastic life.

In a very special way, then, this Council is our Council. Its teachings have a familiar ring, and go deep into those aspects of the Christian life which are closest to the heart of the monk. Never before has the worship of the Church, for example, been presented to the Christian people in such depth, nor has the Church ever unfolded with greater clarity the mystery of her own community life. Worship and community life, as you know, make up the very essence of our monastic existence, because the monastery

is an image of the Church. The voice of the Council, as expressed in the two Constitutions on the Church and the Liturgy, cannot fail to have a profound influence on our life as monks.

Openness

Paradoxical as it may seem, a word rising out of the depth of contemplation has a special openness to the world. In a special way this is true of the word spoken by the Church as the Bride of the Spirit. Her contemplation reaches into the very heart of God, entering into the wide spaces of His eternal love. Once again we must say that never in the history of the Councils has the word of the Church entered wider horizons than in the decrees of Vatican II. In fact, it is in this field of openness — openness to the whole of Christianity, to the religions of the world, to all men and their needs — here the teachings of the Council will probably have their most evident and far-reaching effects on monastic life, surprising as that may seem to those who believe that the monastery is really closed.

A Word About This Chronicle

During the past few months we at Mount Saviour have experienced this kind of openness, and we wish to share it with you in the following reports, prepared by various members of the community. As you will see in the first article, which deals with Christian unity, we have profited greatly from contact with our brothers, particularly those from the Geneva Presbytery; these contacts are becoming a familiar part of our life, and because of that we are now able to enter areas of discussion which, by their very nature, belong to the more intimate spiritual life — prayer and worship, for example. The same is true of the lectures on the sacred writings of Hinduism, which Dr. Sivaraman gave us practically every week all through the winter season, and which are the subject of the second report. Out of these lectures a friendship has developed which we cherish as a real gift of God's grace, because it is a bridge to a civilization eminently contemplative. The final report reminds us of our special relationship to our oblates. Without leaving the world, they have, through their oblation, entered into the covenant which binds us to the community through solemn profession. Through them we are present to the world in a very special way. Through them we participate in the work of the sanctification of the world from within, which they share with all Christian laymen; and through us they are better able to fulfil both their priestly function of offering spiritual worship to God, and their prophetic office of being "powerful heralds of a faith in things to be hoped for."

*See the excellent edition of *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter Abbot and Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild Press, 1966), paperbound, \$.95.

Dear friends, we send this *CHRONICLE* with our best wishes for the feast of Pentecost. On that day, when we are gathered around the altar, each one in his particular church, receiving the Lord in holy communion, we sing these words of Scripture: "Suddenly from heaven came a sound as made by a whirling wind, coming where they were sitting together, Alleluia. And they all were filled with the Holy Spirit, telling of the wonderful works of God. Alleluia, alleluia." Let us not forget that at that very moment the Church is being re-born in each one of us. Let us listen, then, to the call of the Spirit, let us seek unity, and all His gifts are ours. Alleluia!

Fr. Damien Wignm, O.S.B.

TOWARD CHRISTIAN UNITY

Concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the ability of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies. This very concern already reveals to some extent the bond of brotherhood existing among all Christians, and it leads toward that full and perfect unity which God in his love desires.

*Second Vatican Council:
Decree on Ecumenism*

Long before the Holy Father in his Christmas message of 1965 said of ecumenical work that "there is no turning back," it was our custom to welcome Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant brothers to break the bread of God's word with us. Now we have begun to do this a bit more systematically, mainly with Presbyterians and Anglicans, but our approach is still informal and small-scale. Even though these meetings involve only a few people in upstate New York, they ought to have an effect on Christians outside the inner circle of participants. Our reason for chronicling these meetings, then, is not simply to let them be known, but to urge that they be lived in spirit by all our friends.

The Geneva Presbytery

We have previously mentioned our relationship with the clergy of the Presbytery of Geneva, New York. During the last six months, thanks to the collaboration of Robert Loyer, Geneva's General Presbyter, we have had three full-day sessions together. These begin about three o'clock in the afternoon and end the following day; during this time the Presbyterians share as fully as possible in the life of the community. Ten or fifteen Presbyterian ministers and an equal number of monks participate in the two meetings that are held, one in the afternoon, one in the morning. Two short papers, by a Presbyterian and a member of the community, are read; these are followed by open discussion. The subjects dealt with include: the Church and Sacraments (November), Scripture and Tradition (February), and Prayer (May). One of the high points of each meeting is the opening or closing prayer, rich in biblical significance and spoken from the heart by one of our Presbyterian brothers. What is most impressive about these meetings is the deep inner unity they

reveal. This makes our differences seem slight; but it also gives us courage to face difficulties honestly and to engage in real dialogue. There does, in fact, seem to be a certain divergence of view on the meaning and value of a visible Church, sacramental ritual, and the material world. But we hope to explore these areas further in the next series of meetings, which will deal with worship and the Christian view of man.

John Macquarrie on Current Theology

In March the clergy of the Geneva Presbytery invited Dr. John Macquarrie to give them a one-day introduction to the theological problems of today. Dr. Macquarrie, of the University of Glasgow, Scotland, is presently lecturing on systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Thanks to the Geneva Presbyterians, Dr. Macquarrie came to give us a similar one-day course, with the morning devoted to contemporary developments in Protestant theology, particularly in America, and the afternoon to "existential theology" and the German biblical exegete, Rudolph Bultmann. Those who know Dr. Macquarrie's books (*An Existential Theology, The Scope of Demythologizing, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, etc.*) will appreciate the range of his studies and the clarity of his presentation. His exposition of current Protestant theology was articulate, stimulating, and truly ecumenical.

Informal Meetings and Visits

In addition to discussions and lectures, we have had some informal ecumenical encounters here — often consisting simply of a talk with one or two members of the community, a tour of the monastic buildings, or the sharing of a meal. Among the ministers and church groups who visited us recently were: Rev. Gunnar Gunderson and fifteen members of the Elmira Evangelical Pastors' Association; a group of ministers from the Watkins Glen area; three groups of students from Princeton Theological Seminary; youth groups from Protestant Churches in Elmira, Arkport, and Olympia, New York.

We also received visits from members of religious communities. Fr. Lincoln Taylor, O.H.C., Superior of Holy Cross Monastery (Episcopalian), West Park, New York, and Fr. Lee Stevens, O.H.C. with nine postulants from the same monastery, spent a day with us, and told us something about the life and ministry of the Order of the Holy Cross. Frere Gerard of the Taize community, France, who is presently at the University of Wisconsin, spent an afternoon with us in November discussing the monastic life and ecumenical work of his community.

Last month, Dr. John Oliver Nelson, director of Kirkridge, the ecumenical retreat and study center at Bangor, Pennsylvania, paid us an unexpected but welcome visit, and gave us a fine account of the work being achieved at Kirkridge to integrate prayer and Christian social responsibility.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Fr. Bennett Sims, Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, Corning, New York, for his enthusiastic and refreshing talk on the meaning of *aggiornamento*, and to Rev. Marcy Punnett, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Big Flats, New York, for showing us "The Postman of Dovje," a film strip (with wonderful music), produced by himself, which told the story of one of his adopted children in Yugoslavia; like all good stories, it told us something about ourselves as well.

Perhaps the best conclusion to this report is contained in a letter we received from one of our Presbyterian friends:

"Dear brothers, thank you for the way you opened our doors and hearts to all of us. It was a great privilege for us to share in some small way in your common life. You gave us much to strengthen our lives in Christ, and we hope that we in turn were able to give you some spiritual gift. I sincerely hope that future meetings can be arranged in order that, as St. Paul says, 'we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.'"

A DIALOGUE WITH HINDUISM

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in other religions . . . She urges her sons to prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of the Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men as well as the values in their society and culture.

*Second Vatican Council:
Declaration on Non-Christian Religions*

On December 7, 1965 Professor Krishna Sivaraman of Hindu University, Benares, India, currently a visiting professor at Elmira College, helped us to enter into dialogue with Indian thought by beginning a series of fifteen weekly lectures here on Hindu scriptures. Dr. Sivaraman pointed out that, while the Greeks are admired for their sense of art and beauty, the Romans for their sense of polity and law, the special contribution of Hinduism to the family of man is the knowledge and way of attaining spiritual freedom. The religious thought of Hinduism is centered in her scriptures, comprised of the Upanishads (essentially religious-philosophical treatises), the *Bhagavad Gita* (Hinduism's greatest religious document), and the *Brahma-Sutras*, (a kind of resume of the Unpanishadic philosophy). Dr. Sivaraman explained that, although there are different schools of interpretation of these scriptures, all concerned with concepts that are of interest to Christians: scripture and revelation; grace and free will; the faith necessary to salvation; the belief in a personal, creating, and supreme Being; the concept of ritual acts as worship; work as worship; spiritual freedom and the material world.

In India's spiritual climate the key word is renouncement. The beginner renounces his past and present life with all its passions and commitments in favor of the search for the Self (Atman) which both dwells within him and yet is outside of him. Seen in another light his renouncement is the forsaking of the realm of action (Yoga) and of "good works" for the pursuit of the one thing necessary, the search for and the knowledge of Being (Brahman), beyond which there is nothing higher or greater.

Eventually, this quest leads to the embracing of a life of voluntary poverty, fasting, and pilgrimage — a kind of monastic life in fact. It was Gandhi who said that "elephants, palaces, and jewels win India's acclaim, but renouncement wins her heart." And here, as Dr. Sivaraman pointed out, lies the important and irreplaceable contribution of monasticism in any Hindu-Christian dialogue. Today in India respect for the holy man and for

the monastic institution, with its accompanying marks of earnestness, self-denial, fasting, and strictest poverty is still very much alive. Schools, hospitals, and the like can and must be, Dr. Sivaraman remarked, but without the witness of the monastic life one cannot speak to the heart of the religious-minded Hindu.

This, and much more, became clear as Dr. Sivaraman patiently and quietly unfolded for us the meaning and significance of the great Hindu scriptures. At the end of the series of lectures, Reverend Father Damasus, in thanking Dr. Sivaraman, quoted some lines of the *Bhagavad Gita* which impressed him deeply many years ago, and which now made him think of Dr. Sivaraman: "He who works for Me, who loves Me, for whom I am the supreme goal, who is free from all attachment and devoid of hostility, he in truth comes unto Me."

Unfortunately Dr. Sivaraman bring his brief stay in the United States to a close this coming June. Before coming to Elmira College, Dr. Sivaraman spent a year at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School, where he had memorable dialogues with Christian thinkers like Paul Tillich. That year of studying Christianity, and now his association with Mount Saviour, have led Dr. Sivaraman to think that perhaps he should devote his life to the task of bridging the gap between the religions of East and West. Although family duties summon him home to India, we hope that he will be able to dedicate to this important work his immense and ordered stores of knowledge, his warm and generous personality, and his uprightness as a seeker after Truth.

For our part we thank him for sharing with us the spiritual treasures of his own tradition, and we assure him of our lasting gratitude as well as our prayers and best wishes for him, his family, and his future.

WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION

Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a sign of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability . . . must spread in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peacemakers — whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed.

*Second Vatican Council:
Constitution on the Church*

Some of our oblates and guests have expressed in writing what "standing before the world as a witness to the resurrection" means to them, and how Mount Saviour can and does help them to fulfill this vocation. We would like to share some of these thoughts with our readers.

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We came to Mount Saviour because we had been told of the joy that was there and of the unity that was constantly being created — not without pain. We wanted to be at one with you and we were not turned away. Our first contact with the community was at the conventual mass. What a mysterious and wonderful event! In celebrating the liturgy we were gathered into the community without even an introduction

Since our visit we have been spreading the joy we found, constantly telling others what we had been told was true. Still, we want more; we need more.

We need to come see you again. Even more we need to be a continuing part of your liturgy. We need to be responsible to you. All of us are trying to understand what we must do to love one another. In our failings is a pain that makes us reach out again and again for the success that is joy and peace. You have taken us into your unity of love. We would join you in the oneness of full community. Not only will we share your joys and peace but your pains and sorrow will be ours also.

Janice W. Murray

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I am a diocesan priest engaged in the active ministry. My job is to translate God's message into practical human terms and to bring man's yearnings before the throne of God. I can become awfully engaged in activity. I need to draw back from it from time to time to see the total reality better. I also need the strength that comes from reading and praying, studying and discussing. I feel that for me this is to be found eminently at Mount Saviour. Likewise I find it a very congenial place where I can not only relax, but find my deepest and truest self. I can then come to cope not only with the divine reality but with my own personal reality. Likewise, isn't it possible that the oblate should become the interpreter of the world to the monastic community? He is, after all, deeply engaged in it. The oblate has something to offer the monastic community just as the monastic community has something to offer him. Perhaps one could see the oblate as somehow the instrument of dialogue between the monastic community and the world.

Fr. Thomas Phelan

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My whole life is in my relationship with God — the Triune God. Other facets of life — business, wife, children, chores, friends, neighbors, nation — must be woven integrally into this continuing encounter between Christ and myself. It could get rather chaotic. Thus I look to an age-old wisdom for guidance. I look to a rule of life that has empirically worked and stood the test of time. The Holy Rule has served and governed men well for fifteen centuries. To me the striking idea of Benedictine life and spirituality is the notion of a balanced life of work and prayer As an oblate, one's entire life — or those activities that flow properly from one's state in life — becomes a life of prayer. The relationship with God becomes fuller and deeper.

David Reeves

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The household of God.

Can we ever love enough?

Can we ever be involved enough?

Involvement is another form of love, that love from which all other expressions of it radiate.

Our Lord exhorted us to love one another as He loved us.

That love was and is limitless. Within this love is there a for spiritual isolationism?

We are nourished from the same source and drink from the same cup whoever we are, wherever we are.

Within this Unity, love of our neighbor means a readiness of the heart to love, to give, to become involved.

Brigitta Lieberson

Spring is a time of newness in nature and newness in hearts, and the community receives new life in its new members. We are happy to report that we have three new monks in solemn vows: Fr. Hugh McKiernan and Fr. Bernard Collins became members of the community and made their stability at Mount Saviour on the First Sunday of Advent. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Br. Stephen Galban pronounced his solemn vows at our monastery of Christ of the Desert in Abiquiu, New Mexico. During the Mass of Easter Wednesday, Br. Anselm Jaskolka made his final oblation and was received into the community as a regular oblate. Br. Nicholas Grajek and Br. Jerome Walter made their simple profession this year, and Br. Louis (Gary) Dechaine of Phoenix, Arizona, and Br. Christopher (Jack) Gardner of Ridgeway, Pennsylvania, were received into the novitiate.

Among Reverend Father's appointments at the beginning of the year were: Fr. John, third superior, and Fr. Hugh, master of the junior monks.

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Retreats and Renewals

Our retreat this year was given by Dom Jean Leclercq of Clervaux Abbey, Luxembourg. His theme was the Council's decree on the renewal of the religious life. Dom Leclercq helped to draft this conciliar text, and his commentary on it enabled us to appreciate the decree in its fullness. He also gave a first-hand account of the current revival of monasticism in Africa, and communicated its freshness and promise. "These monks and nuns," he told us, "are preparing the ground for the encounter of Christianity and African culture."

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In January, Reverend Father Damasus gave several retreats on the West Coast, where he found a new and vital monasticism. Among the communities he visited was St. Andrew's Priory, Valyermo, California, where a group of former Benedictine missionaries to China hope to implant their monastic tradition in American soil. The community's new prior, Fr. Philip Verhaegen of the abbey of St. André in Belgium, shared our celebration of Holy Week and Easter last year. The fruit of this visit was a deep mutual understanding about monastic ideals. A unique experience for Reverend Father was his visit to the recently established abbey of Our Lady of the Redwoods, Whitethorn, California. Here, as Reverend Father told us on his return, Mother Myriam Dardenne and a small group of nuns live their monastic life in great simplicity and spiritual beauty.

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The Great Week

Holy Week this year was especially memorable. On Monday evening, when the Jewish Passover began, we had a Passover meal (a Seder). Mr. Hyman J. Levinson of Elmira, a new friend, helped us to make it as authentic as possible, and explained to us how his family celebrated it. The Seder was the ritual meal at which our Lord instituted the Eucharist; it is still held each year by Jewish families in memory of the great things God has done for his people. For us it was a deeply moving experience, and brought us closer to the very source of Christianity.

Many of the regular Holy Week services this year were in English, and a record number of guests came to participate in them. We were especially glad to welcome once again Fr. H. A. Reinhold of Pittsburgh, who has done so much for liturgical reform and who is now reaping some of the fruits of his labor. This year Fr. Reinhold is celebrating the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination, and we join his many friends in offering him congratulations, best wishes, and gratitude.

During these days of Easter our chapel has an especially jubilant air thanks to the large, colorful banners designed and executed by our Br. Nicholas.

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Guests

Our Christmas festivities were heightened by the presence of five Sisters from Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, including Sister Mary Corita, I.H.M., whose serigraphs (silk-screen prints) are now on exhibit in New York, and Sister Marie Fleurette, I.H.M., chairman of Immaculate Heart's drama department. We had some stimulating discussions with them on new developments in the arts (which they illustrated with slides, films, and tapes) and the significance of these changes for the Church. The Sisters left us with a large collection of silk-screen prints and a great deal of Christmas joy.

On the Feast of the Epiphany we welcomed the diocesan clergy of the Elmira area. It was a very good encounter, and the mutual understanding and friendship we experienced that day is still with us.

When the winter was over, and we were rejoicing in new Easter life, Abbot Leo Rudloff came to bring greetings from our brothers at Weston Priory in Vermont. Abbot Leo, with whom we have been so close for many years, is on his way to his other home, Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, and carries with him our fraternal love and prayers.

Another long-time friend we welcomed this spring was Mr. Henry Clifford, Oblate Brother Benedict Biscop, former Curator of Painting of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Henry gave us three illustrated slide lectures on the art of the Aztec and Mayan cultures of Mexico (the oldest American art) and Mexican colonial architecture.

Sidelights

Hendy Hollow, the winding road between Elmira and Mount Saviour, is being rebuilt. We are enthusiastic about the project, but must warn you that the "Under Construction" signs mean just that. Next year we hope to have a smooth, straight road between us and Elmira.

There is also some construction going on here at the top of the hill. St. Joseph's and St. Peter's guesthouses are being painted and repaired, thanks to the funds provided by the appeal in the *Chronicle* a year ago. Reverend Father's old Casa has also been refurbished. For this we owe thanks to Dr. Dante Morgana of Buffalo, who plans to use the Casa as an occasional hide-out. And, thanks to Dr. Mark Stern, we now have a new hermitage to which we can retire for a day or two of solitude and prayer.

Because of the favorable weather conditions, we were able to plant our oats and grass seed earlier than in recent years. After the sowing, a good, steady rain fell. We trust these signs herald the end of our four-year drought, and look forward to a good harvest.

DECEASED FRIENDS AND OBLATES

We single out the following names of deceased friends to recommend to your prayers:

Abbot Aidan Williams
Anthony Rizzotti (Oblate Brother Benedict)
Grace Chippendale (Oblate Sister Macrina)
George Cormey
Robert Godfredson
Francis Lisi
Anthony Morell, Sr.
William Oehl
Sister Mary Pius Rehill
Evelyn Crowe
Laura SanFratello
Mary O'Donnell

May they rest in peace.

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