



Mount Saviour Chronicle

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Dear Friends of Mount Saviour,

The winter and spring months, since you received the last *Chronicle*, have been especially rich ones at Mount Saviour. It has been a time of coming to a greater appreciation of God's gifts to us, and a time when we deepened our understanding of community life. The articles on the Holy Spirit and on prayer which follow confirm that for the Christian all things are a gift from above. We respond to these gifts as individuals and as a community. The article on discussions indicates how we have tried to make the gifts of the Spirit more operative in our community life.

Fr. Damien Wingem, O.S.B.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

*A sermon delivered during the octave of Pentecost
by Father Hugh.*

The red vestments of Pentecost express the paradoxical, Well nigh contradictory nature and character of the Spirit. He is both unrivalled power and limitless tenderness; strength beyond compare and the infinite delicacy of God. Red is appropriate indeed, for He has the intensity of a burning flame and the intimacy, the warmth of one's own heart's blood.

The Pentecostal scene depicts Him as tongues of fire but also as a mighty wind, a storm descending from Heaven upon the Apostles in the Upper Room. Yet we see Jesus gently breathing on His disciples as He says: "Receive the Holy Spirit . . ."

These symbols recur frequently in Scriptural descriptions of God. The Spirit moves like a driving storm over the face of the abyss at creation's dawn; the Chosen People are led forth from Egypt by the Lord appearing as a Pillar of Fire. When God speaks on Sinai to Moses the mountain is enveloped with flame. And at the end of the world, the whole of creation will be baptized with fire and the Holy Spirit.

This powerful action of God can be experienced also in one's personal life; He may enter therein like a veritable tornado. Death in the family, unexpected reverses of fortune, sickness, accident. The Spirit's action is hidden at first but great spiritual fruits show in the end that He was there all the time. St. Ignatius of Loyola was crippled by a cannon ball at the Siege of Pamplona — the apparent end of all his hopes, but actually the beginning of his conversion.

Sometimes, too, the Spirit steps into one's soul with power. Amid the dryness of prayer, the thirsting mouth of the soul is filled with the sudden wine of the Spirit.



BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN visited Mount Saviour in January. He was welcomed by Fr. Gregory, Br. John, and Rev. Fr. Damasus. We were gladdened by this opportunity to meet our new bishop.

One is drawn forth irresistibly outside himself — beyond thought and all yearning — even, it may be, beyond sense — and is caught up into the joy and freedom of God. All else is forgotten; what need has he of them? He has passed beyond lesser things into the heart of God.

It would be a rare Christian life that did not experience one, at least, of these various actions of the Spirit. Yet violence, the storm — these are not ordinarily His way. At times, it is true, long pent up and held back, He can burst into one's life as through a broken dam . . . But ordinarily not so . . . "I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace" (Isaiah 66,12). Our Lord actually calls the Spirit, Peace; "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you . . ." Then, He is not a flame consuming everything, nor a tornado shattering a man's life. Rather He is like the spring rain, falling gently upon the earth, making its way through a thousand hidden channels into the soil — soothing, invigorating, restoring, giving life, so that a single seed will bear fruit a hundredfold.

Do we not experience this Spirit — even very often? We would recognize Him if we but looked closely. We would accept His grace more often if we but perceived from whom it came. That slight tug at our hearts, that well nigh silent whisper in our consciences, drawing us to prayer when we would look for distractions — making us do good to a neighbor we dislike or despise — opening our hearts to the agony of mankind about us when we would close our eyes to all except our own little world — overcoming, slowly, our petty anxieties that we may be concerned for but one thing — God's kingdom in our hearts and in the hearts of men — these are all due to the action of the Spirit. He is revealed in and through

our lives, in little things as well as in great, for nothing is common in His sight. His presence turns even straw into pure gold. He meets us at every turn —not insistent, not glorious, not frightening, still less terrible; but gentle, loving — the Friend Who does not, will not fail us.

Here is joy, here is peace, here is meaningfulness in our lives. Has not our Lord said of the Spirit: "He will abide with you and be in you"? It is a relationship to God that is no longer vertical, but horizontal. What Aristotle thought impossible is achieved in the Spirit of the Risen Christ: man stands on a plane of equality with God and converse with Him as one friend with another. "I to you and you to me . . ."

This is the I-Thou of friendship carried to its final intensity, its ultimate greatness, spreading the radiance of the Spirit all through our lives. I may quote very fittingly here some beautiful lines from the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, speaking of a more noble reality than he himself knew:

"So long as the heaven of Thou is spread out over me, the winds of causality cower at my heels, and the whirlpool of fate stays its course. No deception penetrates here; here is the cradle of . . . Life . . ." It is what St. Paul wrote long ago to the Christians of Rome — and to us: "To set one's heart on the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8, 6).

ON PRAYER

Some thoughts from an address given by Father Gregory at the Parish House, Christ Church Cathedral, Rochester, New York

God the Father communicates his Spirit to his Son. It is possession of this Spirit which makes Christ his Father's Son. It is this same Spirit which is also sent into our hearts, to possess us, enabling us to cry, "Abba! Father!" And in that cry "the Spirit of God joins with our spirit"; He comes "crying, 'Abba! Father!'" So, He, the Spirit of the Son, received from and responding to the Father, *He is our prayer*. The very gift which makes us sons of God, the gift which is his Spirit, makes us men of prayer.

This is the great mystery of prayer, and is against this background, which reaches into the very heart of God, that we must think and speak of prayer. In the light of this apostolic teaching, we may, we must, say that prayer is an essential characteristic of the son of God. It is the expression, as St. Paul indicated, of the liberty and confident love of God's son. It is the articulation of our entering into, or being received into, sharing, God's life, the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the assent in faith (faith in its full biblical dimensions) to God's plan: the mission of his Son to pour forth his Spirit upon men.

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Man, being what he is, the word "prayer" especially evokes for him the notion of petition, request. God, being what He is, the "Lover of men", as the Greek Liturgy so often and so beautifully addresses Him, and so having become a man among men, is shown in the Gospel as a beggar with the rest of us, His brothers. He not only knows divinely, but by human experience He knows our needs. And so His teaching about prayer is mostly about asking. But, Son of God, as well as son of man, He sees, as we can see too, that to beg for our needs is already



AFTER he had toured the monastery, Bishop Sheen met with the community in the common room and spoke of his plans for the Diocese of Rochester. Rev. Father Damasus offered Mount Saviour's help — and was promptly appointed to the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

adoration of the One who can fill them. So Christ carries petition, the humbler form of prayer to its ultimate point, the point which we can all sense as being the goal of all prayer. If we ask, it is, in the last analysis, that we may be fitted, through material as well as spiritual benefits, to become, already in this life, "true adorers of the Father in spirit and truth."

If God knows what we need "before", "without" our asking, does prayer really have any role in obtaining what we ask? To this we can only reply that as God so often acts through secondary "causes" why should He not, in His loving plan and desire for our collaboration with Him, make the granting of some of His gifts "dependent", or let us say rather make the granting of His gifts (though not necessarily their reception by us) *simultaneous* with our asking?

* * *

One of the objections to prayer most felt in our day is that we don't really need God's help, at least not for much that man has prayed for in the past. The more mature we become, and the more our technological knowledge and ability grow, so runs the argument, the less we have need of God. We used to ask him for rain. Soon we shall make the rain ourselves!

But, it is because of God's great gifts to us that we are able to achieve the marvels of science and technology. The more he enables us to do, the closer is our likeness to Him. Therefore, I would say that the greater our understanding and competence, the deeper should be our realization of the profound intimacy we have with Him, which spontaneously finds expression in prayer. The more sensitive we should be to His and our partnership in the development of creation, and so the more humble and constant should our prayer become. That would be a sign of real maturity. Prayer is a recognition of God's dominion, yes. But not only that. It is, even more, a recognition of our being His co-workers, His children, His friends.

* * *

Prayer is a dialogue, a dialogue of love. Like every dialogue of love it is sometimes expressed in a form, and sometimes simply in silence. The silence can be on God's part too, not only on ours. How easy to believe in our love, though it may be silent; and how difficult at times, most times, to believe in God's love when He is silent . . . Yet, we must not deny Him that possibility, or deprive Him of such depth of love.

Prayer is communication, communion, with One who loves us, and whom we really do love. (The very thought that we do not love God, or the recognition of how poor our love for Him is, is already a real concern about love, a wanting to love, or to love more. And what is that but love — the groping, seeking, desiring, which are characteristic of all real love?) Communication, communion, require not only the word. The word itself demands hearing, listening. In our communing with God, if it is to be a real exchange, we cannot demand that He do all the listening! We must listen first. We must always listen, as well as speak. Listening with the heart to His word of love, spoken in Scripture, in Creation, in the meaning of things, events, persons — waiting on God — prayer includes all this.

If prayer is, and it certainly is, a dialogue, a communion of love with God, then it is not only valid, but it is one of our greatest needs, and one of our greatest glories.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

It all began in the summer of 1964. Except it really began much earlier than that. The principles of discussion and of taking counsel have always been present in the monastic tradition. Chapter three of the Holy Rule deals with "calling the brethren to council". St. Benedict here directs that whenever any important business is to be done the abbot shall call together the entire community. The reason why all take part in the council is that "God often reveals what is better to the younger". The Lord, the abbot, old and young monks — how great may be the power of that assembly if the giving and taking of advice is done "with all deference and humility". All of us who live the monastic life experience the power of this assembly to enlighten and to heal. And a group is not an individual 'writ large'. It is wonderful to realize that we need not be submerged in a collectivity, but that each person gives the whole a new uniqueness that springs from himself.

From the beginnings of Mount Saviour we have emphasized the importance of group meetings. The daily Chapter Office, special meetings of the community, sessions for work and study teams, have continually been an essential part of our life. But the experience of these years taught us that we needed technical aids in the conduct of meetings. In order that our turning to one another in the Holy Spirit might be more effective, we had to learn better the ABC's of dialogue in a group context.

THE NEW BEGINNING

In 1964 Charles Dwyer of Philadelphia, then a Graduate Fellow at Cornell University, gave us a series of classes on the nature and dynamics of group discussion. Mr. Dwyer stressed that this is a skill, and we learned the nature of communication and practiced various kinds of group discussions, each with its own laws and characteristics. During this time we were inspired by the openness, frankness, and great charity of the Fathers of the Vatican Council, giving an example for all to follow. The Council's decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, coming shortly thereafter, has stimulated us to employ the dynamics of group discussion in dealing with the many challenges which we must face during these days. For true dialogue the authority of the superior must be viewed, not as a matter of controlling power but rather in terms of a service of unity — a kind of

catalyst of concord and consensus, in and through which the members of the community can personally relate to one another and articulate a common course.

SMALL GROUPS

Last summer we divided into four small groups, each composed of six or seven monks, and set up on a task-oriented basis. This allowed each member of the community to participate more fully and freely in the discussions. Sociologist friends insisted that each group should include someone from every facet of our life. Although most of us work in all these areas — kitchen, farm, studies, etc. — most of us have a particular responsibility in some one area. After several meetings of the small groups, a meeting of the whole community followed, in which the achievements of each group were shared by all.

Silence was chosen as the first topic, because communication is a vital concern of the man of today. At the conclusion of our meetings, we saw more clearly that silence is a form of communication. No one believed that silence is "out" and talking is "in", but on the contrary, we had come to appreciate more deeply that silence is a means of communication with one another as well as with God.

FULL COMMUNITY MEETINGS

During this winter and spring we held weekly meetings of the whole community to further our understanding of contemplative monastic life, and to discuss the principles of monastic worship and music.

In his retreat conferences, Fr. Bernard Haring emphasized the importance of the public side of the Sacrament of Penance. On Holy Thursday the community responded to Fr. Haring's invitation, and met to repair in peace and the spirit of continual conversion those faults of individuals which are a hindrance to the spiritual progress of the community. At this time we deeply experienced the healing power of the Christian assembly.

THE RESPONSE

The welcoming response to these meetings was shown in the amount of preparation and participation which they called forth. At times they have been bumpy, and they vary considerably in merit. But they make us learn to listen, to pick up the broken pieces, and to nurture the ideas of others so that they become stronger than when they were born. We also learned that much of our communication is non-verbal. Our attitudes of acceptance and support, of joy and faith, of trust and confidence, are all part of communication.

We don't intend to organize the Holy Spirit; but we are anxious that our response should have those qualities of excellence which He deserves. Through these meetings we have experienced the unifying power of the Spirit which enables us to live together as brothers.

We mention our efforts at group dialogue in order to encourage our friends to "stir up the grace that is within you" (2 Tim.1,6). May all groups — religious communities, oblates, and families — experience the enlightening and healing power which flows from the Christian assembly as it flowed from Christ.

NEWS ITEMS

COMMUNITY

Brother Christopher (John) Gardner made his simple profession on the feast of the Ascension. Br. Christopher comes from Ridgway, Pa., and is now a valued helper in the business office.

On April 1st, Brother Samuel (Albert) Meyer, of Landsdowne, Pa., and on the feast of Corpus Christi, Brother Ansgar (Leif) Kristensen, of Varde, Denmark, were received into the novitiate.

BENNO CARDINAL GUT

We are sure all our oblates and friends join us in congratulating Father Abbot Benno Gut on his elevation to the cardinalate. Cardinal Gut, who has headed the world-wide Benedictine Confederation since 1959, is the first Abbot Primate to be so honored.

Mount Saviour lies outside the Benedictine congregations, directly under the Abbot Primate's jurisdiction. We have twice experienced his fatherly interest and help during visits to the community, and in last summer's *Newsletter* sent to you some of his kind words. We wish Cardinal Gut many happy and fruitful years in his new position.



SEED FOR THE SPRING PLANTING, and the orchard, apiary and fields were blessed during the Rogation Day procession of May 1st. The community and guests followed a banner made by Fr. Nicholas. God has showered His blessings upon us, as rain has been abundant and the harvest is plentiful.

— Photos by Lon Matoon

DECEASED FRIENDS

We recommend to your prayers the following friends who have died since the last issue of the *Chronicle*.

Abbot Patrick O'Brien, O.S.B.
Fr. Darcy Bolger
Fr. Christopher Hagen, O.S.B.
Fr. Bernard Hanna
Fr. Francis Harding
Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Heart, O.P.
Anna Carnevale
Ethel Crimmins
Virginia Cyr
Amanda Fuller

May they rest in peace.

ST. GERTRUDE'S GUESTHOUSE

St. Gertrude's, our guesthouse on the hilltop near the monastery, continues to receive sisters, laywomen and families for several days up to a week. Mr. and Mrs. Maximilian Albrecht maintain quiet and homelike surroundings, and all guests have the opportunity of participating in the Mass and the Divine Office with the Mount Saviour community. The expenses of the visit are met by the free-will offerings of the guests.

St. Gertrude's began life as a farmhouse, and last fall we were able to make further improvements through the help of a generous benefactor. New siding and windows were installed, the outside painted white, the front porch enclosed, and another bathroom added. Rocco Picarazzo and Joseph Fieri did their usual skillful work, and gave us an example of the good Christian workman.

For more information regarding a visit to St. Gertrude's guesthouse contact The Guestmaster

Our phone number is Elmira 734-1688. Make reservations early, and if you must cancel please inform us as soon as you are sure.

WE GIVE OUR SYMPATHY . . .

In the tragic airplane crash near Blossburg, Pa. on June 23rd, our neighbors, the Atonement Friars of St. John's Seminary, Montour Falls, N. Y., lost both their superior, Father DeSales Sanderwick, S.A., and the newly-elected Father General, Alexander Beaton, S.A. Fr. De Sales came to Mount Saviour for his retreats in the past several years, and we had worked closely with him on various diocesan projects. We extend our heart-felt sympathy to the community of St. John's Seminary on these great losses. We assure them of our prayers for Father Alexander and Father DeSales.

The Benedictine Abbey church of Our Lady's Dormition in Jerusalem was hit in the recent warfare. Abbot Leo Rudloff had come to Weston Priory, Vermont, shortly before the war, but has now been recalled to Jerusalem. We offer our sincere sympathy to Abbot Leo and the Dormition and Weston communities.

DEDICATION DAY ON SEPTEMBER 17th

Our fourteenth annual Dedication Day will be celebrated on Sunday, September 17, 1967, from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. High Mass at 11:00 will be followed by the usual attractions: Children's Games, Foot Tent featuring Italian sausage, Homemade Cake & Pastry Tent, Art and Craft Exhibition of local artists, Variety Tent, Baby Sitting.

Please send items to be sold in the Variety Tent — aprons, place mats, souvenirs, etc. (but not used clothing). Also send packages for the Parcel Post Booth: mark the price on the wrapper (50c, \$1, \$2) and they will be sold 'as is'.

All are welcome on September 17th, friends old and new, and especially families with children. Dedication Day closes with Vespers and Benediction at 5:00 P.M.

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR, ELMIRA, NEW YORK

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