

GREETINGS  
CHRISTMAS 1975



Nº 47

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Christmas 1975

Dear Friends of Mount Saviour

It is now 25 years since the founding of the monastery. That is hardly anything compared to 1400 years of Benedictine history and even less when compared to the 20 centuries of the Christian Church. It is nothing at all in the light of the hundreds of millions of years we know God has been lovingly concerned with this universe. But thank God we are naive enough to be thrilled by the thought of it and overjoyed with this gift of time and place 'to ponder the love of the Lord.'

Recently our friends Albert and Elsi Reyburn translated some letters that had been exchanged between Fr. Damasus and a confrere, also a monk of Maria Laach, during the years 1946-50. These letters were between two friends, sharing their deepest hopes and aspirations without thought of anyone else ever reading them. In one letter this monk wrote '... I have been out of Europe long enough now, and have had sufficient experience with the United States, that I cannot be fooled by those who say there is nothing to America but business and pleasure. This is often said by those who either throw themselves wholeheartedly into such pursuits in mindless idolatry or who criticize everything American but who have neither the imagination nor

the sense of purpose to propose anything positive. There is a business-and-pleasure America, it is true, but there is also a deeper spiritual America which is truly contemplative. And it is absolutely necessary that this deeper spirit find a focus and an opportunity to radiate. In the coming years the United States will have to take a leading role in world affairs. It will have to draw on its great spiritual resources. This is why your monastic foundation is so urgently needed there. It is necessary not only for America but for the whole world . . .'

We are often asked why was Mount Saviour founded. The answer is a simple one. Because of the initiative of God who wanted this monastery at this place and in this time of salvation history. Because of faithful people, religious and laity alike, who responded to this initiative. It was the same old yet ever new story of call and response, of word and deed, of lover and beloved that is told and told again from Genesis to the book of Revelation. The encouragement the confrere gave to Fr Damasus is a part of this initiative and response.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, St Paul writes that the Holy Spirit is given to us precisely that we might know the gifts that God has given us. This is as true in our days as it was in the first century and as it always has been. It comes as a gift of God that we know what we have. So in a very real sense it can be said that Mount Saviour is a gift, given by God to the people of this country as a blessing in order that we might know the wealth and power of spiritual resources which flow from their contemplative spirit. The monastery is a blessing that enables this spirit to surface, and be recognized and exercised in great and noble service, in ordinary tasks and in world affairs. The monastery is founded that people can become more aware of and more convinced of that dimension in their own spirit which can be called contemplative.

This may sound a bit expansive. But I mean it to be. Not in the sense that Mount Saviour alone is God's gift to North America. But in the sense that two foreign monks recognized a power in the people that needs to be expanded. It is reported that we spend 245 million dollars a day on armaments—and it may be necessary. But it is all the more necessary to alert our people to a spirit within them more powerful and more likely to create lasting peace than the resources we seem to be relying on.

At this particular Christmas Season we take great joy in joining with you, and Mary the Virgin, and all throughout the ages who gave their assent to the loving initiative of God—who let his saving Will take place in them as a blessing on the world for which he gave his Son.

In Christ,

*Martin*



||||||| community news |||||||



Joseph Sudbrack, a German Jesuit who had spent last year teaching the history of spirituality at the Harvard Divinity School, spent a week with us in June. He spoke twice a day on the topics he had dealt with there: the period of early Christianity with a symbolic view of the world; the medieval period, interested in the persons and places of Scripture, and in fellow human beings; and in the contemporary period, which he interpreted in terms of community. His experiences in America, seeing races and nationalities striving to realize the unity spoken and sung so often in our past two hundred years, evidently led his thoughts in this direction, and he appreciated that this work of unification has been basic to monastic struggles in these years.

Brother Pierre spent three weeks this summer in Kalamazoo, attending a program on spirituality at the Institute of Cistercian Studies at Western Michigan University there. John Sommerfeldt, an oblate of Mount Saviour, and Rozanne Elder were the directors of the program, and Father Jean Leclercq was scholar-in-residence. Texts were prepared in Latin, and commented upon by speakers versed in the subjects, which ran from Saint Paul to the Reformation.

*Abundant rains, falling at appropriate times, brought about the best grass and corn harvests in 18 years of cultivating these hills. With this, milk production has risen, and the herd was recently rated 10th in the county.*

As a result of their attendance at a seminar on Saint Aelred, held at the Abbey of Gethsemani last January, Brother Peter and Brother John began our own Aelred Seminar in the Spring. This autumn the seminar has resumed, this time dealing with an article by Odo Casel, late monk of Maria Laach, on *Benedict of Nursia as Man of the Spirit*. An English translation of this essay is being published in *Monastic Studies/11*. The notion that the Rule of Saint Benedict must be understood as a spiritual principle rather than as a code of law was basic to the thinking of Father Damasus in founding Mount Saviour. It was to be a monastery where the Rule was observed by Americans in the twentieth century, i.e., not always literally, but according to the Spirit at work in the author of the Rule. In addition to the seminar there is a series of Thursday evening talks. The first ones have been given by Joseph Kubis, nuclear physicist of Ann Arbor, Michigan; William Hood, art historian at Oberlin College; Brother Peter; Father Martin; and Brother Thomas.

The rains ceased long enough to allow the Fall Festival to proceed under a sunny sky, though on soggy green grass. It is said that 15,000 people came on Sunday, September 20th, between the outdoor Mass at 10 a.m. and Vespers at 6 p.m. This year the Celebrate Life group of Horseheads, and the Mark Twain Cadets of Elmira, were joined in providing entertainment by The Refugees, a group recently from Vietnam who have become popular entertainers in Watkins Glen. Like last year, the choir of the All Saints Baptist Church in Elmira sang in the chapel at the time of None.



The community sang the opening number, *Exsurge, Domine*, formerly the Introit of the Mass of Sexagesima Sunday, at a celebration organized by the Bicentennial Commission of Chemung County, on Sunday, November 16th. Choirs composed of singers from Catholic churches, Protestant churches, the Jewish synagogues, and the Black Baptist churches, followed, singing sacred music of their various traditions.

Dear Friends

Shortly after my enthusiastic tale of progress in the Mount Saviour Easter Chronicle, the pin in my left hip broke, requiring two operations and being put into a cast for three months. Then, about three weeks ago, my lungs had over-much fluid, and the tests showed signs of a return of the lymphosarcoma. Again, with all the help of your prayers and with expert medical attention, I seem to have made what the doctor calls a "remarkable recovery." It all goes to show how ready we should be for the unexpected and how much we depend on God's help and man's care. Thank you so very much for your thoughts, notes, letters and gifts, and please continue to remember me. You are daily in my prayers.

My therapy has, of course, been delayed; but I hope it will not be too long before I am back at the monastery. What God's mysterious purpose is behind all this, it is not possible fully to discern. Obviously I have much to learn, especially in the art of union with him—in his living, dying and rising in me. The steps I make will depend much on your prayers with me and for me. God has given me great peace and joy and a spirit of gratitude. How could it be otherwise with so many signs of his love coming from all sides—family, community, and friends and benefactors!

This year I do not plan to send Christmas cards, but you must be perfectly sure that you will, even more than every before, be in my loving thoughts and prayers.

A blessed, joyful and peace-filled Christmas to you all.

Devotedly in Christ,

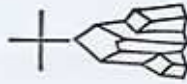
† Gregory

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

NEW! The first publications of Fr Damasus' Psalm Commentaries:

Introduction to the Psalms and Commentary on Psalm One	\$ 1.00
On the Psalms of Compline: Commentaries on Psalms 4, 90, 133	\$ 1.00
Monastic Studies/11—On Benedictine Monasticism—Essays by Ambrose Wathen, Odo Casel, Placide Deseille, Matthew Stark, Irene Hausherr and others. Autumn 1975	\$ 7.00
The New American Sunday Missal <i>complete</i> with the liturgical readings for the <i>three year cycle</i> , complete rites for Holy Week, and the Mass for great feasts during the year, ribbon markers.	
Black leatheride, limp binding, gold edges	\$16.95
Black leatheride, stiff cover, red edges	\$ 9.95
A Word In Season—Lent, part one. Paper	
An anthology of readings from the Fathers for general use during the first three weeks of Lent. Edited by Henry Ashworth, OSB	\$ 4.50
Man's Quest for God, Studies in Prayer and Symbolism, by Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel. Hard cover.	\$ 5.95
The Taize Picture Bible—for children. Stories from the Scriptures, adapted from the Jerusalem Bible, with illustrations, black and white, and color, by a Brother of the Taize Community.	\$ 6.50
Good and Evil, by Martin Buber. Two interpretations: I—Right and Wrong; II—Images of Good & Evil	\$ 2.45
Classic Prayer Series: The Lord's Prayer, by Frank Sheed, illus. The prayer of Jesus.	\$ 4.95
The Magnificat, the prayer of Mary, by Sidney Callahan, illus.	\$ 4.95
Religion and World History, a selection from the works of Christopher Dawson—Image Book	\$ 2.45

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**ERIC GREGORY BORGSTEDT, monk of Mount Saviour**

Father Gregory was born in Yonkers, N.Y., August 1, 1908, and was received into the Catholic Church on December 13, 1926. He made his novitiate at Fort Augustus Abbey in Scotland, and was professed for Portsmouth Priory (now Abbey), Rhode Island, May 4, 1929. After studies at St. Anselm's and the Catholic University in Washington, he was ordained priest on June 13, 1933. He taught in the Portsmouth Priory School, was associate headmaster with Dom Hugh Diman, then was headmaster after 1942. He was appointed prior in 1940, and in 1949, when Portsmouth was raised to the status of conventual priory, he was appointed the first conventual prior.

In 1951, Father Gregory was cofounder of Mount Saviour Monastery with Fathers Damasus Winzen, Placid Cormey, and Bernard Burns. He served as subprior, cellarer, choirmaster, master of ceremonies, director

of oblates, and later was novice-master. In August, 1967, he went to Mount Saviour's foundation, the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, New Mexico, and served there as prior. He returned to Mount Saviour in March, 1974, with what was later diagnosed as lymphosarcoma.

During the final year and a half of his life, while he was able to live at the monastery, and in the hospital, he spread around him the same joy of living, love of his friends and zeal for the things of God that were always the keynotes of his life.

On December 8 he was anointed by Father Martin Boler, prior of Mount Saviour, in the presence of all his brothers, and he died on the evening of the 9th. He was buried in the monks' cemetery, December 13, 1975.

*Mount Saviour Monastery, Pine City, New York 14871*