



The brothers, summer retreat group and staff, 1992.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS GREETINGS!

Time slips swiftly by on quiet cats' feet like fog stealing wraith-like across monastery fields in rain time chill.

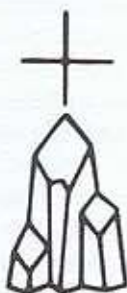
The summer of 1992 has come and gone. The five week summer program for men between the ages of 20 and 35 desiring an experience of monastic life was held again this past summer and was a great success. We plan to make it an annual event. We have a brochure describing the program and will be happy to send it out upon request.

Repairs on St. Peter's guesthouse began on Nov. 1 and are due to finish by Feb. 1. Thanks to all those whose support helps make the renovation possible!

We bless God for growth in the monastic community here with the entry of Br. Anthony Clotti of Reading, PA into the novitiate on Sept. 10 and Br. Chris LeBarr of London, Ontario into the novitiate on Oct. 16.

Mount Saviour Pine City, N.Y. 14871

Chronicle



Christmas 1992 No. 74

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THE ABBOTS CONGRESS AS GOOD NEWS

This September, I was privileged to attend the Congress of abbots and priors in Rome. It gave me hope for the Church and for the future of the Benedictine Congregations.

Prior John Hammond of Weston Priory and I have been attending these meetings since 1970 and among the many changes we noted was the fact that we were among the "elders"! Fully one third of the 239 voting members were there for the first time, and most of us had not been educated at Sant Anselmo, the more or less official college of the Benedictines. Reverend Father Damasus used to compare the Abbot's Congress to an alumni meeting, for at one time all the abbots and priors had the common experience of monastic life and education at Sant Anselmo. This college was erected in 1687 for the Italian Cassinese and it

flourished for 150 years, although it was forced to close for extended periods of time by Napoleon, cholera and the political upheavals of 1879. The "new" Sant Anselmo was moved twice, coming to rest atop the Aventine Hill in Rome 100 years ago. The evolution of this college and its relationship to present day Benedictines captures in some sense the shift in emphasis in the search for our Benedictine identity with its unity in diversity.

Benedictines in History

Although each religious congregation is unique, Benedictines could be considered the most unique. Each monastery is an autonomous unit, bound only by weak ties to other monasteries and by no juridical ties to the confederation. Monastic life under the Rule of St Benedict flourished from the early 500's to 1125 and, though it was not unflawed, benedictine influence was given a large share

of the credit for bringing civilization to new birth. There followed a period of real decadence until the early 1400's when reforms gave rise to *congregations*, which allowed the monks to be free of feudal masters and involvement with the secular rulers of emerging nations. In spite of serious setbacks, such as the Reformation and its aftermath, monasteries continued to exert influence in the life of the Church. Then came the movement known as the Enlightenment, followed by the French revolution, widespread secularization and the Kulturkampf in Prussia, which led to the suppression of religious institutes. Monasteries and congregations all but disappeared. The reform that was an instrument of renewal this time was the move to *confederation*, a considerable departure from St. Benedict's notion of monastic life and a notion resisted by many.

So, it had the trappings of a "shot gun" marriage, when in 1893, Pope Leo XIII succeeded in appointing a "chief" or Abbot Primate, to be elected by all the abbots for a term of twelve years. The Benedictines did not want a chief by any name and so circumscribed his powers in order to preserve the autonomy of the monasteries and congregations. His power of the keys was just that, he could open and close the doors of Sant Anselmo. Fortunately, the first abbot appointed, Hildebrand de Hemptine and all subsequently elected, proved to be outstanding leaders. They nudged and prodded us in the delicate struggle of finding monastic identity in the context of shifting societal forces. At this session, 14-26 September 1992, we elected Abbot Jerome Theisen of St John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. He shares the exceptional qualifications of his predecessors and we ask your prayers for him and for all benedictine monastics.

American monk is new Abbot Primate

Abbot Jerome comes to office at a time when there is a strong sense of unity flowing from a more vital awareness of our common monastic vocation. This newly emerging awareness is that the bond which unites all benedictine monastics is our common vocation, itself the work of the Holy Spirit, so that we are rooted with Christ in the Triune



Br. Anthony Ciotti with Fr. Placid and Br. James.

God. This is a far cry from the mentality which saw our unity as the result of using the same choir books, wearing the same habit and having our leaders graduate from the same school. Benedictines should not be centralized and neither should we be atomized. Abbot Patrick Regan of St. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana in his masterful summary of the theological papers presented at the Congress, called this newly expressed reality "reciprocity". This reciprocity is being expressed across congregational lines without any loss of autonomy or identity of the monastics or monasteries involved. It is seen in the numerous ecumenical exchanges with other Christian denominations, with the laity, more and more of whom are finding a common bond with monastics which respects the different expressions of our vocations. It is recognized in exchanges with monastics of other cultures and with people whose desire for integrity and truth enables them to be in sync with us who are also striving and not always succeeding.

We are in the season of Advent, ever more aware of the Word made flesh, who is Incarnate and Risen. Benedictine participation in the life of Christ at this time in history was well expressed by Abbot Notker Wolf: "Inculturation (Reciprocity" in Abbot Regan's terminology) means making incarnate, implanting and imprinting the tangible stamp of Church and monasticism on the various cultures. The historical changes which are connected with it render the dynamic of this incarnation visible. Furthermore and lastly, it is the Word of God who wills to be enfleshed in all ages and in all places. Inculturation therefore is certainly not an end in itself; this process of incarnation is fulfilled in the elevation and assimilation of human life into the divine majesty. Inculturation means the transformation of culture to give it a divine destiny".

I am convinced that we Benedictines are now poised to use our newly found solidarity as a monastic leaven, which will begin to have its saving influence on the fragmented post modern world as it once had on the faltering Greco-Roman Empire. That is "good news" indeed!

In Xto,



Br. Chris LeBarr of London, Ont.

VISITING SPEAKER: RONALD FOGARTY

For the second summer in a row the brothers of Mt. Saviour had a one week course on the integration of psychology and spirituality taught by an Australian Marist brother, Ronald Fogarty. Ronald is a delightful spry, 78 year old who combines an Irish brogue with an Australian accent and who loves to play raucous bar room, dance hall and rag time music on the piano. He is also one of the first members of a Catholic religious order to become a clinical psychologist, earning a doctorate at the University of Chicago in the early 1960's.

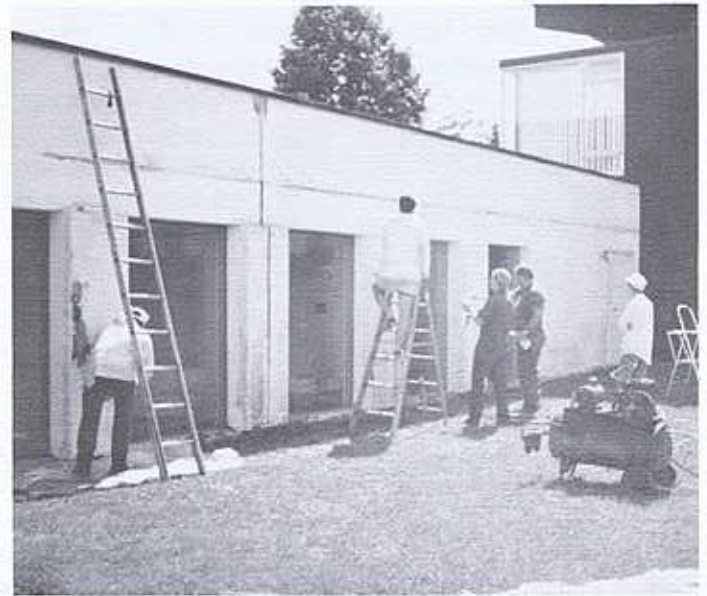
The brothers of Mt. Saviour have lived through a sea change in the past generation concerning the value of psychology as seen by monks. Once seen as a threatening social science that dismissed, belittled or ignored religious belief, the insights of psychology did not at first find easy entry into Catholic circles. In the wake of Vatican II, the previous reluctance often gave way to infatuation to the point where some now argue that religion has become so "psychologized" and "therapeutic" that it has lost touch with its foundations in God and Scripture. Between this Scylla and Chrybdis Br. Ronald led us through an exploration of modern insights on the nature of emotions coupled with traditional spiritual teaching. We often found that familiar biblical and spiritual texts took on fascinating new perspectives when viewed in the light of modern insights on the nature of the human person.

There was a practical side to this course concerning community life. Br. Ronald gave an historical overview of the roots of modern religious life since the eighteen hundreds. There were both smiles and grimaces of recognition as he described the spiritual and cultural climate of Catholicism in the last two centuries.

Many of us in the monastery grew up in an atmosphere that resembled in some ways what Br. Ronald described as typical of modern Catholicism. The idea was prevalent that the unruliness of emotions, particularly sexual emotion, was a sign of our fallen nature, that emotions were to be distrusted, that the "spiritual" person was one who could "rise above his feelings" and base his actions on "reason" and "knowledge of what is right", that negative emotions had to be controlled and not expressed because they were dangerous and potentially destructive.

A background of this type is a recipe for what Br. Ronald terms "emotional illiteracy" where well intentioned people can cause themselves and others a great deal of unnecessary pain. A focal point of the course was the notion of "letting out your feelings." Br. Ronald pointed out that this advice is often proffered in the naive and flippant sense that any emotional outburst is desirable and to be tolerated no matter how inappropriate or no matter what its effect on others.

Quite the contrary, the first key to "expressing your feelings" is to look inward and discover the internal personal and mental structures in ourselves that trigger our emotions. Though simply stated this is a spiritual discipline of the highest order. It involves realizing that our cultural stereotypes and our very language mislead and make it easy for us to deny responsibility for our reactions. For example the common statement "you make me angry when you do that" attributes the anger to an external cause.



Monks and summer group paint north side of chapel link.

What it really means is: "Because of the attitudes, expectations and preconceptions that I have, I chose to get angry when you do that." To express one's feelings is primarily a statement about ourselves and not a value judgement about an external cause.

Expressing your Feelings!

To "express our feelings" does not refer to an aggressive outburst or for that matter to an affectionate outburst. These are properly termed "acting out a feeling" which we all do at times. "To express a feeling" is an honest admission of the response that a person or event has triggered within us. Since we do not control our feelings, to be open and honest about them to others requires a degree of honesty, maturity and openness that is difficult to come by even in adult life. Yet, since we do not consciously control our emotions, it is precisely through this affective dimension of ourselves that God often chooses to speak to us. If we experience a great deal of emotional chaos it usually means that we are compulsively or unconsciously making choices that cause us to be torn apart or that we are dealing with parts of ourselves we have preferred to ignore and repress. Either way, God is speaking to us and we do well to listen,

The real goal in living with our emotions is not to simply "let them out" but to read, interpret and understand them as a channel through which God speaks to us as surely as through thinking, praying or reading books. It is essential for our mental and spiritual health that emotions be expressed and verbalized but in appropriate ways that promotes our health and the good of others.

We were startled at how Br. Ronald presentation dovetailed with traditional spiritual teaching on "detachment." He closed with his favorite quote of John Paul II, "The truth we owe to human beings is the truth about themselves."

Fr. Ansgar (Lief) Kristensen 1941-1992



On June 13, 1992, Fr. Ansgar Kristensen, monk of Mt. Saviour, died in his native Denmark, fortified by the sacraments of the Church.

Born on 9 June 1941 in Naestved Denmark, Fr. Ansgar became a convert to the Catholic faith and entered the Danish foundation of Conception Abbey. Sometime after the foundation

was discontinued, Fr. Ansgar entered Mt. Saviour Monastery where he was professed 2 June 1968. He was ordained 21 March 1977. Fr. Ansgar's education included a BA from Immaculate Conception Seminary, studies in theology at the University of Munster, an STB degree from S Anselmo in Rome, an SSL from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and a diploma of advanced studies from the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem.

Fr. Ansgar participated in the full range of duties at Mt. Saviour from milking cows, to guest master, assistant director of oblates, which entailed regular visits to the oblate group in NYC, teaching and serving on a myriad of committees. He also spent time at the foundation of Christ in the Desert with Fr. Gregory and Fr. Aelred Wall. Our Br. Ansgar was a talented linguist both in sacred and modern languages who became a scholar of the Old Testament with a particular love for the Psalms. The present psalm distribution used in the Divine Office at Mt. Saviour is in large part due to his efforts.

He was also of service to the Benedictine confederation as one of the secretaries of Abbot Primates Rembert Weakland and Victor Dammertz. Fr. Ansgar worked on the Benedictine Catalogus Monasteriorum for two editions and wrote the Essay on the Role and Interpretation of Scripture in the Rule of Benedict for RB 1980.

One of only a handful of Danish Catholic scholars in the world, Fr. Ansgar chose in the end to respond to the call of the Church in his native land. For the last decade of his life he was the chaplain to the Benedictine nuns at



Aaserbaken, and worked at the Apostolic Delegation for Scandinavia located in Rungsted, Denmark. He received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice award from Pope John Paul II for his service there which included collaborating on a translation of the psalms into Danish and participating in the revision of the Danish breviary.

Although he was shy and reserved, Fr. Ansgar was an astute observer of people and events. He had a very dry sense of humor and could carry on a wonderful tease that one would long mistake for seriousness.

He is survived by his sister, Margit, who is with UNICEF in Mauritania and by all of us at Mt. Saviour.

Bishop Hans Martensen of Copenhagen said the Mass of Christian Burial at the Cathedral on Friday June 19th. Burial was in the monastic cemetery at Mt. Saviour on August 3. Fr. Ansgar served the Benedictine Confederation, and our monastic fellowship. We ask your prayers that Christ may bring us all to life everlasting.

Books Recommended in the Shop:

For a number of years we have been carrying in the shop a series of books published originally in French by *Librarie du Cerf*, the largest Catholic publishing house in France. Each one contains a clear, understandable presentation of Catholic beliefs and their history combined with first rate modern scholarship. These books are worthwhile reading which provide well synthesized, enlightening, reliable information on important subjects. If your faith seeks understanding of itself, you will find these books helpful.

HOW TO READ CHURCH HISTORY: Volume 1, From the beginnings to the fifteenth century: by Jean Comby. \$14.95, paper.

HOW TO READ CHURCH HISTORY: Volume 2, From the Reformation to the present day: by Jean Comby with Diarmaid MacCulloch. \$14.95, paper.

HOW TO READ THE WORLD: CREATION IN EVOLUTION: by Christian Montecat, Luc Plateaux and Pascal Roux. \$10.95, paper.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE CREED: by Jean-Noel Bezancon, Philippe Ferlay and Jean Marie Onfray. \$12.95, paper.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND GOD: by Dominique Morin. \$12.95, paper.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE LITURGY: by Jean Lebon with a preface by J.D. Crichton. \$11.95, paper.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND MARRIAGE: by Jean-Pierre Bagot. \$9.95.

HOW TO READ THE NEW TESTAMENT: by Etienne Charpentier. \$12.95, paper.

HOW TO READ THE OLD TESTAMENT: by Etienne Charpentier. \$12.95, paper.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE SACRAMENTS: by Philippe Beguerie and Claude Duchesneau. \$14.95, paper.

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NEWS ITEMS

The monastery has been given a FAX MACHINE. It receives messages on a phone line one digit higher than our regular phone number, 607-734-1689. (Through generosity of a Buffalo oblate!)

NO SMOKING POLICY adopted for monastery guesthouses:
Effective from Nov. '92.