

Mount Saviour

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR
P.O. BOX 272, ELMIRA, NEW YORK

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 1956

"Grace and friendship save a man" was our motto for "Dedication Day" on August 19, and serves well for this report on our summer activities. Life in the cloister is not usually very "newsy" and monastic newsletters, full of facts and nothing but the facts, do not make the most exciting reading. For this reason, we try a different method of letting various members of the community tell you their story. This means that our report will be neither brief nor complete, but it may achieve a more personal contact from which "grace and friendship" will spring forth to save both monks and friends.

The most "exciting" event of this summer was probably the Mount Saviour Tour, organized under the direction of Dr. Balduin Seifert, with our Fr. Gregory serving as Chaplain. A group of 20 left Montreal for LeHavre on June 12th. Fr. Benedict in one of his letters, wrote of their arrival in Rome:

"Rome, S. Anselmo, July 8.

Dear Brethren,

Br. James is away making his retreat at Farfa (a monastery near Rome. ed. note) and Fr. Gregory and pilgrimage have just left after a quick visit to S. Anselmo, so in the deathly silence that pervades S. Anselmo there is nothing to still that little voice inside that tells me: Write the Brethren you rascal you. So, somewhat timorously I'll take this occasion to throw my hat inside the door to see whether anyone will throw a frying pan or Antiphonal at it. I richly deserve such treatment because it has been literally months since I last wrote.

It was wonderful to sit in the Via della Conciliazione (on a bench natch) and watch the Mount Saviour Monastery Tour bus grind and puff to a weary stop the other evening at 7:30. Dr.

Schwarz was the first to leap from the bus, with Fr. Gregory a close second. And thank heaven, we finally discovered who Minnamino is. He popped into the news a few months ago, and has been in every Mount Saviour letter since, but we never did find out the vital statistics: place and date of birth, height, weight, how he came into the Mount Saviour picture, etc. We all had a very nice reunion in the Columbus Hotel where the Tour is staying, and I crept back to S. Anselmo at 10 PM.

Fr. Gregory looks well and just about the same as when I saw him last although he says he is beginning to put on weight. Does it look it to me, unless he was very thin before. I am asking about everyone at home, but there is not much opportunity for just talking about the "family", because there is rarely a moment of real privacy, but the group is a good one, and all seem to be very friendly. So it is a pleasure to have them break in on the Mount Saviour tete-a-tetes.

Yesterday we had a dialogue Mass at the altar of the Pieta in St. Peter's. The Hotel Columbus is just down the street from St. Peter's so after Mass the group hurries back to the hotel for breakfast, then charges off to a hard day's sightseeing. Dr. Schwarz is an able commander-in-chief. He really knows where he is going. Yesterday I went along to the Vatican Museum and was really impressed by his ability to pick out just a few good things and give a fine critique of each."

We continue, in the same letter, with the description of Er. James' profession:

"Days later: in Venice, at the Patriarchal Seminary. Br. James is now talking to me, lying on his bed saying: 'Tuesday is always my worst day.' Why? 'Because it's St. Ann's day, and she makes me suffer'. Perhaps this isn't a good way to introduce the next big topic: Er. James' profession. It was the most magnificent possible. The basilica is now open at Monte Cassino, and the Office is sung there by the community. One is hard put to exaggerate the magnificence of Monte Cassino. Its new exterior is blindingly white. The interior, of the church at least, is blindingly rich. The gilding of the nave and choir has been complete. The facing of all the wall surface with inlaid Tuscan marble in flower designs is also almost complete. For elegance, the church ranks with the major Roman basilicas, and with St. Marco in Venice.

On the morning of the 11th of July, Br. James made his profession in this incredible relic of the glorious past of the Benedictines. Abbot Ildefonso, a very amiable and fatherly man, who

s also the driving force behind the reconstruction of the Abbey pontificated specially for the profession. Br. James edified the community with a beautifully sung "Suscipe" (Uphold me, o Lord.. and afterwards received the kiss of peace from all the monk priests. Then he was "buried" under the pall, and the bells of the Abbey were tolled until the "Surge qui dormis" (Rise, thou who sleepest...) after the Pater Noster. At the "Surge" all the bells were pealed in jubilation - and such beautiful bells too.

After Mass a solemn procession to the Abbot's apartment, where Br. James received a second affectionate Pax, and then to the corridor of the monks' dormitory where I finally got the Pax to him. After a moment a dash to dinner, where Br. James sat at the Abbot's right, and Fr. Gregory and I followed in close succession. Then, after dinner, recreation and Vespers. Then - as ever - a dash to the bus, for the train back to Rome."

While Fr. James received his consecration as a monk from the hands of the successor of St. Benedict in the splendor of the resurrected Monte Cassino, Br. Laurence took his triennial vows in the rustic simplicity of Mount Saviour, and, to make the day triply blessed, our Father Peter celebrated the 25th anniversary of his profession. To his surprise and joy, he, a Frenchman, received a genuinely American gift of 25 silver dollars on this occasion from a group of ladies at the Elmira office of the Telephone Co.

On the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, Br. Andrew Leach and Br. Martin Boler also took their temporary vows. Br. Martin is now attending Catholic University for his philosophy. On the Feast of the Assumption, Fr. Maur made his solemn profession and became a "full-fledged" monk. With Fr. Gregory and Fr. Placid who have now received permission to transfer their stability to Mount Saviour, the number of solemnly professed monks is seven.

It should be added for your information that, at Mount Saviour, only the solemnly professed monks wear the cowl. Those in triennial vows, of whom there are 11 since Br. Basil DePinto made his simple profession on October 7, have the long scapular. The novices receive the short scapular, while the postulants have only the tunic. All postulants, novices and those in simple vows are called "Brother". Those solemnly professed are called "Father" by all, if they are priests. Those who are not priests are called "Brother" by their seniors, "Father" by their juniors according to ch. 63 of the Rule where it says: "The juniors there-

fore, should honor their seniors, and the seniors love their juniors. In addressing one another, let them never use the bare name, but let a senior call his junior "Brother", and a junior call his senior "nonnus" - (a coptic term which survives today only in our word "nun"), which means "Reverend Father".

Another group within the monastic community are Regular Oblates. They live in the monastery, wear the habit, and after a novitiate of one year make the promise of stability, conversion of life and obedience. Since they do not take the canonical vows, they can be dispensed from their promise at any time by the Superior should a sufficiently grave reason occur. Because they are prevented from following the entire monastic routine by a lack of Latin, or for some other reason, the degree of their participation in the regular monastic life is determined in each individual case by the Superior. There are many who have the desire to live in a monastery and profit spiritually from their association with a community, but are not able, or do not feel called, to take upon themselves the full obligation of the Rule. On the other hand, there are certain activities which belong to the workings of a monastery but are difficult to fit into the rhythm of the monastic life, either because they take the monk too often outside the monastery, or because they interfere with the regular attendance at the Divine Office and other community exercises. A Regular Oblate does a great service to his brethren by filling this need.

Take the example of our Br. Michael. As a Regular Oblate, he may do things which could not regularly be undertaken by the other members of the community. He takes a big load off our shoulders by doing the 1000 and 1 errands for the monastery. He also feels a strong call to serve the poor and the sick and the aged in town. Because his work is bringing good fruit, he has received permission to visit regularly the hospitals and the 33 nursing homes in town, and a number of poor families. In the report about this year's activities, Br. Michael lists: 1,523 sick people visited in the Arnot Ogden Hospital alone, 8 returns to the sacraments, 15 baptisms, 5 converts, one marriage straightened out and seven more baptisms pending in the near future.

The Regular Oblates should not be confused with the Secular Oblates, members of the clergy or lay people who live in the world but are affiliated with the monastery through their obligation by which they promise to live their life in the spirit of the Rule. As an example of the way in which the principles of

the Rule can be applied to family life, we insert here a letter which Fr. Boniface's brother "Skip" wrote from Lake Saranac when the Taylors of Rochester established "Camp Caritas" for the purpose of following a program of prayer, play, work and reading for their children, in the spirit of the Rule: "We went to Mass on the Feast of St. Benedict (July 11th) and prayed for you all at Mount Saviour. At lunch we had a hot dog roast to celebrate the great feast. This was also the first time we said Prime and Compline both as we received the books just the afternoon before. When we went to Mass, a Sister (Carmelite) asked us through the turn, if we would come every day for the rest of the summer to serve, so we will be going to Mass and Holy Communion every morning now.... 'Mother Mechtild' (abbatial title of Mrs. Taylor! ed. te) reads Crusade to us in the evening before Compline. These are Bible stories for children and are very interesting. At Prime we read the Holy Rule and at breakfast we explain it. The three tents are named Azarias, Ananias and Mizaël and at four o'clock we say the Canticle of the three children for Vespers. I have to close now to do my laundry...PS. Last night we went horseback riding on the trails." (For the complete program, you may write to Mrs. Robert Taylor, 380 Seneca Pkwy., Rochester, N.Y.)

Now we let our guestmaster, Br. Luke, report to you about the guests at Mount Saviour: "Last January, during the Church Unity Octave, Bishop Seraphim of Holy Trinity Monastery, visited Mount Saviour to give the community a conference on Russian monastic life. This venerable old monk, with his flowing white hair and beard, endeared himself to us by his spiritual qualities and brotherly manner. Following the conference, there was an animated period of questions on many topics, and to one regarding guests the Bishop remarked: 'There is room in God's house for many people'. The Bishop's guesthouse is small and, like St. John's at Mount Saviour, cannot accommodate too many people at one time.

Now as we look over our guest register, we are reminded forcibly of the Bishop's remark. By the time this newsletter reaches you, over 300 guests will have stayed in our guesthouse. Some just overnight, many for weekends, or for longer periods. How greatly Mount Saviour has been blessed by being able to see Christ in the person of our guests. Among others, Fr. Louis Bouvier of Paris, Fr. John Oesterreicher of Seton Hall, Profs. Goetz Brieger and Heinrich Kronstein of Georgetown and Dr. Bernard Peebles of CU, refreshed our thirsty minds during the heat of summer work giving us conferences.

In addition to the guests, there are the visitors from near and far-off places who come to assist at Conventual Mass or at

Vespers on Sundays (9 AM and 4 PM respectively). Their big day is "Dedication Day", celebrated this year on August 19th. The whole community worked hard to get the place into some presentable shape. The most urgent job was the grading in front of the chapel, but this could not be undertaken before the ditch, which drains the water away from the foundations of the chapel, had been dug. Nevertheless, we managed to get all the work done and in the final hours before the "deadline", the last touch was given by the addition of some lovely evergreens planted in front of the porch of the chapel.

A fairly large Committee of friends from Elmira and Corning worked hard under the chairmanship of Alex Kosty of Corning preparing food in a good-sized kitchen tent, managing the sale of various items, and all the other details which go with our little "Fiesta". We were worried about the weather. It rained on Saturday. It rained on Sunday morning. It rained at seven. It rained at eight. After Prime, we sang the antiphone with the prayer to St. Gertrude. At 8:30 the rain stopped. It turned out to be a beautiful day in every respect. Later in the evening, after the people had left, and the tired community gathered together for a short recreation, we had the happy feeling that the Day had been a great success, that people had had a good time and had enjoyed especially the opportunity to talk to the members of the community. Everybody was in attendance to greet the newcomers, to show people around in the chapel and in the new building, to help them singing at the blessing of the refectory, etc. For Vespers, the chapel was so filled that it was impossible to have everyone take part in the candlelight procession to the shrine of Our Lady, Queen of Peace. Next year we probably have to plan on having Benediction outside from the porch of the chapel.

As you see, we are drawing the circle further and further. We began with the monks, proceeded to the Regular Oblates, then to the Secular Oblates, then to the guests, then to the visitors, and what is left now but the animal world, the cows on the farm and then the plants; the oats and -- the weeds. The work on the farm this year was put out of gear by the unseasonably bad weather; late with plowing, late with sowing, late with harvesting, and to make the misery full, Carroll Hayes suffered a badly twisted ankle and has been laid up with complications caused by it. Therefore, we gloss over the woes of the farm, but pause for a moment at the weeds with a little piece written by Br. David: 'Some of our visitors were wondering why we have so many sunflowers at Mount Saviour. Well, this is easily enough explained. Fr. John had gotten hold of some sunflower seeds this past spring

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It must have been half-pound or more - and there he was busy planting them in some spare moments between installing the furnace and feeding the pigs. A special blessing seems to have followed this sudden inspiration, for evidently every single kernel sprouted. Yet maybe there is more to it than this.

Maybe some of our guests expected well-groomed beds of lilies in a quiet cloister garden. There is no cloister garden at Mount Saviour as yet. But sunflowers will grow on any mess building lot, and when we stretch our backs during work, take deep breath and look up, we look right into their sunny faces.

Sunflowers are not in the Bible, granted. Our encyclopedia claims that they are "native of central North America". Flower of the "highways and hedgerows", they remind us whence we have been called to the heavenly wedding feast. Though not much better than weeds, are not they too more splendidly adorned than Solomon in all his glory? A handful of seed in May, and in early September "the birds of the air" are feasting on the sweet harvest of these tallest among our garden herbs. But the taller they grow, and the fuller their crown, the deeper do they bend their heads. Many generations of monks have exalted the lilies. Could the sunflowers have been waiting for Mount Saviour?

Now that it is too late, I realize that Br. David's poetic nature has upset the order of things by giving a prominence to the weeds which should have been given to the orchard about which Fr. Placid had written a more prosaic report. He tells us that the canning process, started with currant jelly plus 60 gallons of applesauce, is now in the stage of plum jam making, with good prospects for Seckel pears, prune plums and concord grapes. Also the 25 peach trees and 35 apple, cherry and plum trees, 100 grapevines and raspberry bushes, all received through the kindness of friends and newly planted this season, are thriving with only a few exceptions. When fully grown, we should have a magnificent orchard.

From the realm of life, we turn to inert matter, which is nonetheless, close to our hearts -- books! Father Peter lists a great number of books which have been donated to us in the course of the year, and then he ends his report with the following sad statement: "As the number of volumes in our library increases, the problem of its organization becomes more and more urgent. The very small room in which part of it is housed has long been overcrowded; Reverend Father shelters a great many books (the German ones which nobody else reads anyway! ed.note)

n his "casa"; the chapter room has a few shelves; there are others in the entrance hall at St. Peter's; many books lie in boxes in any available corner." The Librarian's misery could be alleviated, if we were able to have the necessary bookcases installed in the community room of the new building and in the present refectory, which will be free as soon as we can move into the new refectory. But here we reach the point where the "ifs" and "whens" begin and with them our problems -- and, shall we say, your opportunity?

We had a very encouraging response to our plea for subscriptions of \$100 for the furnishings of a cell. Our visitors on "Dedication Day" were pleased to see the small cards we had placed over the entrance to each cell on which it said: Saint pray for..... Each monastic cell has a patron saint to watch over it and its inhabitant and the person whose memory the cell is furnished. We found out, however, that the place over the entrance is not a good one, because one doesn't really look up there. So we shall put a small plaque of carved wood into each cell, and this will help to keep the three together - the patron saint, the monk and the donor. There are still two more cells to be furnished in this way, and there is a dormitory housing three postulants, each of whom needs the same furniture as a monk: a bed, a desk, a chair and a closet. I hope one or the other of you would like to set up a postulant that way. Postulants are the most unfortunate creatures in the whole monastic set-up, because they have to face all the difficulties of the beginner plus the misery of homesickness.

Not everybody can give \$100 just like that, and monks need more than a cell to sleep in. They have to have a place to eat. We, therefore, put out a book on "Dedication Day" for people who wanted to set up a monk in the refectory. At that time we did not know how much it would cost, but in the meantime, Fr. John has come to the conclusion that \$40 would do the trick. This includes not only the table setting (mug, plate, dessert bowl, bread plate, napkin, one set of silverware), but also the chair and the table. When we have a place to eat, we also have to have the matter to consume which is prepared in the kitchen. There is another field for your generosity.....To make a long story short, we add to this newsletter two pages which you may tear off and send to us: one has a list of items to provide us with the furnishings needed in the new building. The other is the All Souls list which you may send in with the names of those whom you want to have remembered during the month of November at our altars.

I, _____
name

_____ address

subscribe herewith the amount of \$ _____ in memory

of _____

(the amount need not be paid in full immediately)

_____ for the furnishing of a cell (\$100)

_____ to set up a Postulant (\$100)

_____ for setting up a monk in the refectory (\$40)

_____ for setting up a guest in the refectory (\$30)

we are planning a guest table with accommoda-
tions for 12 in the center of the new refectory

_____ for reader's desk in refectory (\$150)

_____ for kitchen cabinets (\$400 the whole works,
or \$25 per foot)

_____ for a bread oven (\$350)- This is a
very important item because bread is the "key" to
our diet. We have received already a donation for
a bread mixer. So please help us with this.

_____ for a pot sink (\$50)

_____ for a vegetable sink (\$40)

_____ for a library book section (\$25)
each section 39" wide; 7 shelves high

_____ for catalog file section (\$5)

All contributions are tax deductible

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