



Mount Saviour

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY
OF MOUNT SAVIOUR

P. O. BOX 3066, ELMIRA, N. Y.

NEWSLETTER

August, 1962

Dear Friends of Mount Saviour:

It has been a long while since you have had any news. Now that the first cutting of silage has been put away there is time to take a breather and send word of what has been happening here during the past several months.

Like provident squirrels we are not only looking back on what we have done, but have an eye cast to the future when on September 9 we expect to have Dedication Day. Last year was the first time we risked a September date, but the day turned out so beautifully that it will probably become a fixed custom to have it then. Those of you who are old friends of Mount Saviour know that this is the day we count on for providing us with the means of paying a good portion of our summer running expenses. Old friends also know that we have changed from the custom of sending raffle books to requesting a donation equal to the returns on two raffle books, or \$2.00. Old friends know these things, but new friends might not, so please bear with us in reminding you of them. As always we would be grateful for the donation of articles to be sold at the bazaar, but no second hand articles please! Practically anything goes, so long as it is somewhat useful. When sending things please mark them c/o Dedication Day. A big welcome to all to help us celebrate Dedication Day, and a hearty thank you to all who contribute to its success!

One reason for our advertising Dedication Day so fervently is that the Community is growing: this year we have had the solemn profession of Father Gabriel Duffee, on February 2, Feast of the Purification; at Vespers of the same feast Brothers Elias Mandell, Stephen Galban, and Peter Leinenweber made their simple profession; on February 10, Feast of Saint Scholastica, Brothers Bruno Lane, Anthony Ward, and Matthew Regan were clothed as novices. The several postulants we now have give us a total family membership of thirty-six. We are all, oldsters and youngsters, happy that the Holy Spirit is bringing vocations this way, and we are all working to help support ourselves, though we all join in this single annual appeal for funds to help tide us over.

It may not be very tactful to call our Father Placid one of the oldsters, because his heart is young, but the fact that on May 22 he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination certainly cases him gently towards the 'oldster' category. His way is quiet as he himself admits, but there is at times an impact to his presence: the high point of a recent visit of his at the home of a friend was the moment a jar of applesauce he had brought exploded and added splashes of new color to the

entire kitchen. His way is quiet, but subtle, too: in his chronicle of monastery doings this past Spring one reads: March 12, feast of Saint Gregory. 'In eve., musical selections, letters and gifts to Fr. Gregory, and grape juice.' The tameness of the recreation must have been unbearable, because on March 15 the entry reads: 'Wine bottling, w. help of Tony Cerio, in a.m.' We have enjoyed the wine several times since, including the time Father Placid was toasted with it on his silver jubilee.

The wine of the Spirit was ours in abundance during the Easter season, blessed as it was in countless ways for the whole community to make up for the absence of Reverend Father Damasus. Reverend Father had left early in Lent for Rome and the Holy Land as part of a winter restorative program prescribed by his doctor at the time of his last cardiac crisis. Because of the almost daily conferences it is his custom to give the community during Lent this could have meant our having arrived spiritually parched at the Paschal Mystery, but the Spirit made Himself visible in weather and liturgy, particularly that of Good Friday, but above all in us. It may sound rash to say it, but it was the general feeling of the community that never before in our lives had the brilliance of the glorified humanity of Christ been reflected so clearly in the eyes of those around us. It was into the quiet eye of what he was later to call this 'Pentecostal storm' that Reverend Father Damasus made a three-point landing via the Chemung County Airport on May 22. A few days later the Spirit did it again, this time with the tender collaboration of His Holiness Pope John XXIII who in a letter accompanying the gift of an autograph portrait conferred his Apostolic blessing on us, our families, benefactors, and friends, allowing us to share in a still more tangible way with you the blessed and agreeable storm of the Spirit that Reverend Father and the community have been riding out together since his return.

One of the major events of the last year was the breaking of ground for the new monastery buildings. Since then we have undertaken considerable building activity that is located on the periphery of the spot of the sod turned by His Excellency Bishop Kearney last August 6, though it approaches the center more each day. On April 4 we began construction of a new shop building, to the north of the barn. This building is now practically completed and is the temporary home of the novices, and, in the garage area, of the chapel, because on June 18, work began on the remodeling and enlarging of the chapel proper, forcing us to vacate for four months and move to the barn

area. The garage of the shop building makes a very good oratory, providing more togetherness for the community, as well as occasional togetherness situations with the nearby cows. The maternity wing of the barn faces the oratory, meaning that Vespers can be punctuated or even punctured with moos from Cow #12, known better by her Christian name, Echo, now several days overdue and getting impatient.

Construction of the main monastery buildings is due to begin later in the summer, meaning that within a reasonably short time the community will have settled into a permanent home leaving the shop building for the craftsmen, and providing more room for guests, particularly priest guests, who are increasingly anxious to make their retreats here with us. During the past few weeks we have had a great number of priest retreatants, some of them old friends, such as Father Rollins Lambert, assistant chaplain at the University of Chicago; Father Thomas Welch, oblate, of the Worcester Diocese; and Father William O'Brien newly ordained priest of the New York Archdiocese, and also an oblate. These old friends all did us the honor of celebrating conventual Mass. We hope the newcomers among them will soon be old friends, and that the improved guest accommodations of the future will increase the number of friends and oblates among the diocesan clergy of the Rochester and neighboring dioceses. It is a pleasure to know that they like what they find here but it is necessary to say that the Spirit raises his holy storm in such a way that there is communication in both directions: the community profits greatly from the edifying example of the retreatants, too.

Among our other guests were three Russian exchange students from Cornell, who spent an afternoon here early in April. They had never visited a monastery before and were 'very impressed' with everything, but were also very careful to affirm, at least the one who acted as spokesman for the three, that 'We believe in Marxism as you believe in God.' Communication along more familiar lines, and very fruitful communication, too, resulted from our welcoming a group of ten Protestant ministers here as retreatants, brought to us by their retreat master, Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J., of LeMoyne University, Syracuse, from June 14 to 16. We carried this ecumenical communication outside the monastery during Lent when Father Benedict participated in a panel group that met several Sunday mornings in the parish house of the First Presbyterian Church in Elmira to discuss the relevance of the belief, shared by Catholics and Presbyterians, that Jesus is the Lord. Nothing is compromised and a great deal gained from these encounters with non-Catholics, and we are happy to have a share in the deepening dialogue with them.

Among our most welcome recent guests were our Elmira and Rochester oblates who came for a few days' recollection over the weekend of June 9-10. The secret of any monastery's success is the degree to which it projects the face of Christ to the world around it, and since oblates are the best means of helping a community show this loving face outside the cloister, we are happy that our family-in-the-world is constantly growing and regularly returning to reaffirm the life it shares with us. All the members of the Mount Saviour community hope that the recently deceased oblate-members, Mary Heime and

Fred Grimaldi, are interceding for those of us still en route to heaven.

Other deaths that particularly saddened the community were those of Mrs. Alice Mergenthaler and Mrs. Katherine Hofbauer. Mrs. Mergenthaler, benefactress and old friend of the community, died suddenly on May 20. Mrs. Hofbauer was the widow of Joseph Hofbauer and with him had been the owner of the house and farm that formed the nucleus of the monastery at its founding eleven years ago. The Hofbauers became fast friends of the monastery and have now both returned to rest in the community cemetery on a hillside above Saint Peter's, the name we gave the old 'Hofbauer house'.

Mr. and Mrs. Maximilian Albrecht have managed our ladies' and married couples' guesthouse, Saint Gertrude's, for over a year now, and have made their name a synonym for cordiality to guests and community alike. In addition to cordiality the name 'Albrecht' has come to mean 'music'! Mr. Albrecht, a musician of note in pre-war Germany, has recently had a composition sung by the Cornell University choral society. A major work, his Requiem, will be performed by the same group during the coming school year. Mr. Albrecht has fired the enthusiasm of the community so successfully that a kind of 'music fever' has resulted. In addition to the several small choral groups that have developed, Brother Bruno has organized a chamber music group, consisting of several recorders and a cello. After an evening concert that ended with all players together after a few bars of tense improvisation the cellist wiped his brow and said: 'All's well that ends well.' Though there is no end of the music fever in view, it has never reached a crisis and has contributed considerably to the community's recreations.

Part of the work of the Spirit here at Mount Saviour this spring was to provide us with enough rain to make the first cutting of silage the best we have ever had. Father John was never altogether satisfied with the weather, but in the long run we were blessed with enough 'right' weather to give us a prize cutting. At present we are faced with a water shortage, the drought that the rest of the Northeast has had to cope with from the beginning of the season. We have been praying for all of you with parched lawns and now ask that you fall to praying that rains come for us, too. There may be no connection between dry weather and angry bees, but there is a connection between evicted and angry bees. Father James moved several hives this spring, and within fifteen minutes of the operation the hilltop was aswarm with the angry creatures and the community had been dive-bombed indoors, many of us stung in many a part. The real fracas occurred later that day, after Compline, when another hive was being transported downhill in the car the novices use to get back and forth to the novitiate. As the hive was being removed from the car the bees came out en masse, and a twilight massacre ensued, with the bees the clear and easy victors. Frankly, the chronicler does not know whether there is any real connection between drought and angry bees, but if drought means shrivelled plants and if shrivelled plants mean less food for bees and if hungry bees are angry bees, we need prayers, so please pray for rain.

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Before closing, —

A Memo from the Office:

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