

Assumption

ABBEY NEWSLETTER

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Interview with Abbot Daniel Maloney

Abbot Daniel is the spiritual and canonical head of the Abbey. The following is an interview conducted with him at the end of September, 2018.

What are the biggest issues ahead for the Abbey in the coming year?

Vocations are a great concern, especially with our aging community. If we are serious about fostering vocations, then we ourselves must be good monks, model disciples of Jesus, attractive to those young men who are searching for a real and flourishing gospel life of transformation. Here at the Abbey we also have an ongoing need for maintenance of buildings. And we have a concern about guests, visitors and the groups that come here, that they receive proper care and hospitality. Furthermore, we have a concern about Tibatí, our daughter-house in Bogotá. The nine monks there are members of our



Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinski

Abbot Daniel Maloney receiving gifts at the altar during the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. From left to right are: Sandy Maloney, Margo Nelson, Tom Maloney, Brother Michael Taffe, Abbot Daniel Maloney, and Brother Alban Petesch.

community. They sponsor two large schools. We must somehow develop a closer bond with them even though we do not share a common language. They speak Spanish and we speak English.

Has your first year as abbot been a surprise for you, or has it unfolded similarly to what you expected?

A pleasant surprise has been the number of people who support us and visit us: oblates, donors, alumni and others. The Abbey community tends to operate well by itself, as our recent canonical visitations have shown. We are in good shape.

What has most humbled you about serving as abbot for this community?

Realizing that my abilities and energy are limited. I will turn seventy-seven this year. There is only so much I can do each day. We must trust in God's providence and grace.

When you were elected abbot on July 27, 2017, you returned home to the Abbey after serving as a chaplain in Bismarck for thirty years. What has that been like?

There is a different rhythm of life here. First of all, we live

on Mountain Time, which I think is closer to actual sun time. Monks go to church and pray together several times a day. In Bismarck, I lived by myself and prayed by myself. I experience and enjoy much more community life here, and have gotten to know my confrères better.

The history of Assumption Abbey is an interesting one. How has that story influenced the monastic community as it is today?

The monks moved here for apostolic reasons: German Russians and German Hungarians needed pastors who spoke German, and we were a missionary monastery. The main language was German. There was little English spoken. Our founder, Bishop Vincent Wehrle, was able to recruit young German-speaking men from Europe. After the bankruptcy in 1924, and the re-founding in 1928, a big change took place. English was spoken. The school became more important because of this change, and parishes in the area moved from German to English, although pastoral needs were not so urgent as before. The bankruptcy made a major impression so that the focus on financial stability became very strong. Monks lived simply and there was a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency that is seen even today. The monks always did their own work, and in the 1950s hired only one lay teacher.

Assumption Abbey sees its fair share of visitors, from oblates to students to hob-

byists to travelers who stop through. The Abbey is welcoming to them, yet the life lived by the monks is a contemplative life of prayer. Describe how guests fit into a prayerful Benecitine way of life, and is this a challenge?

Yes, hospitality is a challenge. Most of our guests are looking for a contemplative life style; a great many of them are here for private retreats. They know that we live a life of prayer. But some visitors are unaware of what monks do. Their exposure to us along with the pamphlets we offer will give them some insight. Frankly, it is difficult to provide adequate hospitality. Not all monks are willing to take the time to give tours, but we try to be friendly, and the Abbey church is a major place of interest. The 2000 renovation of the church has been very helpful in this regard: the church is beautiful, and people can see in its upkeep just how central the place is to our life.

The Abbey has many contacts with lay people daily, from cooks in the kitchen to delivery people, to construction workers, to postal carriers. What benefits do these contacts bring?

Our employees have skills that we do not have. We need their help. They contribute to our well being, and in the process they become friends and are perhaps helped in a spiritual way by us.

Describe what grace means to you and how you see it at work at the Abbey.

Grace is the life of God, the love of God. Charity. And charity enables us to do things that we can't normally do. Grace enables us to accomplish things we may have thought impossible. We can have compassion for visitors who disturb our routine, and the groups that come here seem to be helped more than we tend to think.

If a young man came to you who was considering a monastic vocation and he asked, "Why is a monastic life relevant now?" How would you answer?

Monastic life is a way of living Christian life more intensely. Monks are separated from distractions in order to focus on what is truly important: growing in the love of God and neighbor. The Rule of Saint Benedict says: Seek God first of all.

Reporting in the news about widespread sexual abuse within the Church has been jarring and painful, and has affected the image of the Church for many. What aspects of the Catholic faith do you think can be the greatest source of strength for the faithful in these difficult times?

The need for penance and prayer, the need for personal reform. The need for constant vigilance. *We must not do harm to others.* The bad news reminds us that we must have special concern for children and young people. There is hope: history shows periods of reform. There is hope for the future.

What doctrine or liturgy

should the Church focus on now?

The ministry of reconciliation. We need to be reconciled with those who have suffered. And those who have committed wrong need to be reconciled. The sacrament of penance and the sacrament of anointing are very powerful. The Eucharist is also a tremendous source of healing. The sacraments should have a powerful role in healing. Eucharistic adoration is helpful. Other devotions are helpful.

Are any changes needed in Church doctrine or practice to address the problem of sexual abuse?

No need of change in doctrine, but of certain practices, yes. In the code of canon law it was a sin to cause scandal. If a bishop were to make known that a priest had sexually abused children, then the bishop, and not just the priest, was guilty of causing scandal. Furthermore, the bishop was required to provide for the priest even after he was removed from active ministry, which might look as though a bishop is paying off a sex abuser. Only the Vatican can reduce a priest to the lay state. A bishop can only suspend a priest by taking away his faculties. Since 2001, allegations must be sent to Rome. Pope Francis is calling a summit for all presidents of the Catholic conferences of bishops throughout the world to meet at the Vatican in February to discuss the issue of sexual abuse.

Hopefully, good things will come of this summit. Bishops

need to listen to lay people, especially those who have suffered.

Has the Church's response to sex abuse by its clergy been sufficient? What more should be done?

More needs to be done. We must continue to do background checks. We need greater supervision of clergy and religious, accountability in the form of review boards.

Has any aspect of Church doctrine or theology fostered sexual abuse? If the abuse was due to "a few bad men," why was it so widespread?

There is the doctrine of original sin. We have to expect that people *will* sin. This has always been an issue. We have all been born with an urge to do bad things and to disobey God. This is an important doctrine in the Catholic Church. The Church itself is always in need of reform. Religious orders and congregations can be very helpful in this regard, with their history of reform and providing the Church with better clergy.

There are dangers in modern technology that we must guard ourselves against. Day to day we must be on guard more than we used to be. Pornography is so accessible, and our high standard of living in America leads to addictions and abuses. We have safeguards at the Abbey. With the Internet and modern communications, monks have far more resources, yet we must be vigilant and ever-aware of our monastic vocation which is *not* a calling

to an easy way of life. It is an imperative calling to holiness which requires the putting aside of unnecessary things so that we can be especially devoted to God's word and liturgical worship. □



Requiescat in pace



Photos by Jacy

Father Claude (Arthur) Seeberger died peacefully on October 1, 2018, attended by his brother monks.

Father Claude was born in Glen Ullin, ND, on November 17, 1924, to Nick Seeberger and Teresa (Duratschek), the second of seven children. He was born in the home of his maternal grandparents, Frank and Clara Duratschek. He was given the name Arthur at his baptism. He attended Sacred Heart School for eight grades, then attended Assumption Abbey High School and College even after his family moved to California in 1942. He entered the novitiate in 1943 and was given

the name Claude, his patron being St. Claudia, mentioned in the second letter to Timothy 4:21. He professed vows as a Benedictine on July 11, 1944. All his seminary was done at the Abbey in Richardton, and he was ordained to the priesthood on August 10, 1949. His first mission was to Belfield, ND. In 1951 he was appointed Instructor to the Brothers. He also taught in the Abbey schools.

In September, 1954, Father Claude was sent with his confrere Father Michael Messer to Strasburg, ND, as assistant pastor. The following September he was sent off to do graduate work in history at the Catholic University in Washington, DC, where he earned an MA in one year.

He returned to the Abbey to teach and was appointed Procurator in 1958. He held that position for seven years until becoming pastor of St. Mary's, Richardton, from 1964 to 1973. He was appointed pastor of St. Philomena in Selfridge, ND, but never functioned there because he made a trip to the Holy Land on the occasion of his 25th anniversary of priesthood, then spent three months studying in Rome. Upon returning, he spent a year and a half at Corpus Christi in Bismarck, then was appointed pastor of St. Elizabeth in Lefor and the rural parish of St. Stephen's. He remained there from 1975 to 1983. While looking after these parishes, he also taught at Trinity High School in Dickinson and served at St. Joseph's Hospital for three years. In July of 1983, Father Claude was appointed pastor of

Sacred Heart in Glen Ullin, his home parish, with its rural mission of St. Joseph's. He retired in January, 2000, to a chaplaincy at St. Joseph's Hospital in Dickinson, residing at St. Patrick's Parish. In February 2008 he was assigned as chaplain to the Sisters of the Presentation at Maryvale in Valley City, ND. He returned to the Abbey in February, 2016.

Father Claude was an avid fisherman and built his own houseboat so that he could ply the waters of Lake Sakakawea in comfort, although the boat looked like it was held together with twine and chewing gum. He also loved bird watching and was an avid fan of the Minnesota Twins baseball team.

Father Claude is survived by his sisters Claudia (Sister Judeen), Irma (James Brown) and Clarice, and his brothers Frank (Bertha) and Edward (Joan). He was preceded in death by his parents, and his brother Leo.

A Vigil Service and a Mass of Christian Burial were held in the Abbey church, followed by burial in the Abbey cemetery. □



AUGUST CHRONICLE

August 2: The wildest temperature change in history occurred next door in Loma, Montana on January 15, 1972. The temp rose 103 degrees from -54 to 49 degrees Fahrenheit. This was due to Chinook winds which we don't get in North Dakota. Nevertheless, today in Richardton, the temperature went from 42 at 5:00 a.m. to 92 at 3:00 p.m., a 50-degree change. A coat and hat in the morning is uncomfortable at noon! ❖

August 4: Nine members of the Abbey high school class of 1968 and their spouses meet for a reunion. They attend our community Mass and join us for lunch. Brother Placid gives them a tour. Although we asked, they had no messages to leave for other former students. Perhaps Brother Placid's tour left them at a loss for words. ❖

August 5: One of the Rug Hookers here for a workshop passes out in church. Apparently Vespers is not for the faint of heart! (We learn later that she is diabetic.) The Rug Hookers make fantastic rugs that are far too beautiful to be used on the floor. Some of them are, nevertheless. Their carefully woven rugs are objects of art. ❖

August 9: Monks arrive home for our yearly business meeting and who can fail but notice that Father Valerian has a black eye? He explains that Mother Angelica's Poor Clares gave it to him when he visited their monastery in Hanceville, Alabama. To tell the truth, he

tripped on the curb in their parking lot and hit his head. ❖

August 10: A visitor asks if we keep the Abbey church locked on Sundays. The monk answering the question had to bite his tongue. (He wanted to say, "In these black robes do we look like 7th Day Adventists?") ❖

August 12: Brother Gregory reports that the temperature outside peaked at 103 degrees Fahrenheit. Even so, there is a good turnout for Donor Appreciation Day and Father John Guthrie gives a fine address about appreciating monastic history and monks, especially those living in North Dakota. ❖

August 14: Paul Ellerkamp of DePorres House of Barbering in Dickinson arrives just in time to make us look spiffy for our patronal feast of the Assumption. ❖

August 16: The community has a bean snapping party after supper in the community lunchroom. The green beans have been prolific: too abundant for Father Denis to catch up. And so everyone is called into action. Many hands make light work. ❖

August 20: A woman telephones asking if we have any vacancies for the evening. The monk answering explained that we do not function as a motel. "Rooms are ordinarily occupied by retreatants, or by friends and relatives of the monks." She said she will swing by, nevertheless, for a look. Not knowing that the same monk waiting on her in the Gift Shop

From the Archives:



The blessing of the Votteler-Holtkamp seven-rank organ in the choir loft of the Abbey church, 1962. The organ was purchased second-hand from a church in Vermillion, South Dakota and used to accompany the St. Mary's church choir and congregation for thirty-eight years. It was sold to a Minnesota man and his wife in 2000. Pictured left to right: half-head?, half-head?, Pauline Muggli, Martha Hoerner, Bertha Hunke, Ben Hunke, Father Jerome Mundt OSB, Ray Messmer, Matt Feller, unidentified, Zeno Muggli, Terry Kilzer, Martha Jungers and Gwendolyn Muggli. The nun sitting at the console of the organ is Sister Bernard Bernard OSB from Sacred Heart in Yankton.

was the one she spoke to over the telephone, she says, "We wanted to stay here but all the rooms were taken." ❖

August 22: The Red Hat Society from Beulah visits the Abbey today. According to their website, the Society is "a playgroup of women created to connect like-minded women, make new friends and enrich lives through the power of fun and friendship!" Like-minded? Okay, but a few of the women are hatless, and some were not wearing any red. ❖



SEPTEMBER CHRONICLE

September 3: Thousands of blackbirds converge in the yard this morning, perching in the trees and foraging on the lawn. It looks like a scene straight out of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds." By early evening they are all gone and the yard is silent. This pattern will repeat itself many times until early October when they disappear for good, all gone to warmer climates. ❖

September 5: New anti-fatigue mats are installed on the kitchen floor. The old mats are available for anyone who might like to use them but they are

worn, looking like something that the Ringling Brothers Circus left behind. The new mats have lots of cushion, almost enough to bed down and take a nap on the floor. ❖

September 6: Hail falls during the Holy Mass, so hard and steady that we can't hear the presider, Father Boniface, and because stained glass windows prevent us seeing outside, many wonder if the building is coming down. Nevertheless, we preserve our liturgical dignity, and after the Mass we discover that some of the stones are jawbreaker-sized, most of them marble-sized. Thank goodness, there is no real damage: the hail fell with a good cushion of rain. ❖

September 11: The North Dakota Game & Fish Department is encouraging senior citizens to "get hooked" on angling by offering license-free fishing for a limited time only. Oblates Jerry and Vivian Schneider offer to take three monks out. Two go, and catch their three-fish limit. The Schneiders give the monks their fish so that twelve are brought home. That sounds like a magical number. We know what Jesus did with five loaves and two fish: he fed 5,000. With twelve fish, he could have fed 30,000, with enough baskets left over to feed the monks for several years! ❖

September 13: The Abbot and Prior begin visiting the various work departments at the Abbey, to see how things are. Complaints, of course, are confidential, but it seems that



Development Office

Br. Michael Taffe, O.S.B.

fortunate to be able to work with local groups from the Dickinson area and will be sending out a reminder in the mail in addition to posting updates to Facebook and our website. We appreciate your generosity and support! Thank you for all the kindness you generously show.

All funds raised by the Abbey on Giving Hearts Day will go to the library needs of *San Benito de Tibatí* in Bogotá, Colombia, for books and update shelving. The school is a Catholic high school under the auspice of the Benedictine monks of Tibatí, Benedictines who are full members of Richardton, North Dakota's Assumption Abbey. San Benito was founded in 1978 in the slums just outside of Bogotá because there were no Catholic schools in the region. San Benito has a very small library and very great needs!

Oh, and we'd also like to mention the availability of Mass Cards: a card that you can use to send to someone telling them that a Mass is being said for them at the Abbey. Write or call about these cards. □

Once again we will be participating in Giving Hearts Day this year on Thursday, February 14th. Giving Hearts is a day dedicated to on-line giving across North Dakota and western Minnesota. Sponsored by Impact Foundation and Dakota Medical Foundation, Giving Hearts Day helps non-profits with money for their missions. And we need to do a little bit of work beforehand. We need to raise at least \$4,000 incentive, or seed money, in order to participate and reach a goal of \$10,000. Our hope is that you, generous readers, will be able to help us out. You may use the envelope included in this Newsletter or give Br. Michael a call at 701-974-3315 or, for more details, send an email to this address:

michael.taffe@assumptionabbey.com

Giving Hearts Day, called the most generous day of the year, has been online since 2008, providing a gateway for people to connect to causes in doing good work in areas they care about. On February 14th, simply log on to impactgiveback.org and go to Assumption Abbey to make a donation. And while you're online, let us remind you about using smile.amazon.com. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Assumption Abbey is



peace reigns, as it should in any Benedictine house, where PAX is the defining word. ❖

September 13: Plumbers have been hard at work in the second-floor washroom, inside the cloister and directly off the community rooms. Everything inside is new: floor, vanity, toilet, urinals and dividers. The porcelain is much too good for us and some monks will probably avoid using it for a time, until it appears second-hand and common enough for them. ❖

September 15: Those in formation—Brothers Symeon and Maximilian and Candidate Craig—attend a concert in Dickinson given by the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Singers at Trinity High School. The orchestra and singers are on a USA-Ukraine Friendship tour. By chance, Mr. & Mrs. Roman Rakowsky from Cleveland, OH, are passing through, both of them born in the Ukraine. But after a full day of driving they decline to attend the concert. ❖

September 18: Abbot Elias Lorenzo, President of the American-Cassinese Congregation, has notified all abbeys that the 53rd general chapter will be at St. Anselm's in NH June 16th-19th. ❖

A reunion is being planned for Assumption College classes '69 through '71. The dates are June 13 and 14, 2019. For anyone interested, and for more information, contact Frank Wroblewski at:

franknsuew@ameritech.net

Or call 440-461-0349. ❖

From the Library

By Br. Michael Taffe



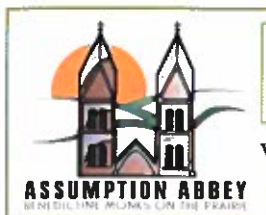
Classic books are those that stand up to the passing of time and that can move one no matter what place or era one is in. I find myself going back to them over and over again. One of my favorites is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. Jane is left an orphan at a very young age and sent to live with an uncle and his family. He soon dies and she is left in the care of her step-aunt (of the wicked sort) and some awful cousins. She is bullied and punished by everyone in this family and her only support is from the governess. As an aside, one of the stepsisters (the bitter and angry one as opposed to the self-absorbed and superficial one) ends up joining a convent – an area in which I think Bronte is incorrect as this is not the type of person who should be a monastic! Jane is finally sent off to a school run by an ignorant and hypocritical man. Okay, it is clear that many of these early characters are pretty awful. She then becomes a governess herself and meets Mr. Rochester and, well, you'll have to read the book to find out what happens next.

Be that as it may, Jane is essentially saved by the young woman who runs the boarding school. Both this young woman and the one who is a governess of her uncle's family are simply kind to Jane. As I reflect on

being generous and kind to others, especially children, I can't help but wonder why Jane could not have been shown a bit more by those who were responsible for her care. Offering kindness to others, especially to those with no power, becomes a challenge when we simply want to maintain our power over others. Yet kindness is elemental in helping us become good people. Kindness and care toward others can be compared to yeast in bread – it just grows and the rest of us may, as a result, be more kind to others. Jane has developed to truly see herself and others as they are and this is her gift. To be fair to Bronte, the story might not have been as interesting if Jane had been treated correctly!

Besides the compelling narrative, the language of the story is so crisp. Each word is used to full effect without the need for adding unnecessary descriptions and asides to the account. One cannot go wrong by re-reading this wonderful classic. □





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Benedictine Saints

St. Emilion de Combes is the patron saint of wine merchants. Indeed, a French wine is produced called Saint Emilion with raisin, plum, cherry, bramble fruit and tobacco overtones selling for about \$55 a bottle. Emilion was born in Vannes, the capital of Broërec in Brittany, and according to legend gave bread to the poor without the approval of his master, the Comte de Vannes. When the Comte stopped Emilion, squirreling bread under his coat, he demanded that the coat be opened. By a miracle all the loaves of bread turned into pieces of wood. Emilian became a monk of

Saujon near Royan, but was forced to flee because of the influx of pilgrims as a result of his miracles. He settled in a solitary hideaway at Combes, near what has become Saint-Émilion. A monastery was built there after his death in 767. Today a metro station in Paris bears the saint's name: Cours Saint-Émilion on line 14. January 7th is his feast day.

February 25th is the feast of St. Walburga, canonized in 870 by Pope Adrian II. She was born in Devonshire, England, in 710, the daughter of Saint Richard the Pilgrim and Winna, sister of St. Boniface, Apostle to Ger-

many. Her brothers were saints Willibald and Winibald. (The other children were Wesley, Winifred, Willa, Wyatt, Wayne, Walter, Warren and Wilma.) Walburga was entrusted to the abbess of Wimborne when she was eleven and educated by the nuns. As an adult, she traveled with her brothers to Germany to assist St. Boniface in evangelizing the still-pagan people there. Because of her fine education, she was able to write an account of the trip in Latin, and as a result is often called the first woman author in both England and Germany. She became a nun in the double monastery of Heidenheim-am-Hahnenkamm, founded by Willibald, and became abbess there. She died in 777 and her remains are at the abbey of Eichstätt in Bavaria where her tomb exudes a remarkable and therapeutic oil that produces miracles. Walburga is patroness of Eichstätt, as well as of the Benedictine nuns at the Abbey of St. Walburga in Virginia Dale, Colorado.

March 6th is the feast of St. Balther, a Benedictine monk of Lindisfarne, also known as the Holy Island, off the northeast coast of England. Balther was an expert gold and silversmith and worked with Bishop Eaddfrid to create the bindings of the famous Lindisfarne Gospels. He died of natural causes in 756. □



A detail of the Lindisfarne Gospel cover.