



Comings & Goings

† March 21 was the 70th anniversary of the founding of St. Benedict's Abbey. The monks celebrated with a Eucharist honoring St. Benedict and a festive dinner.

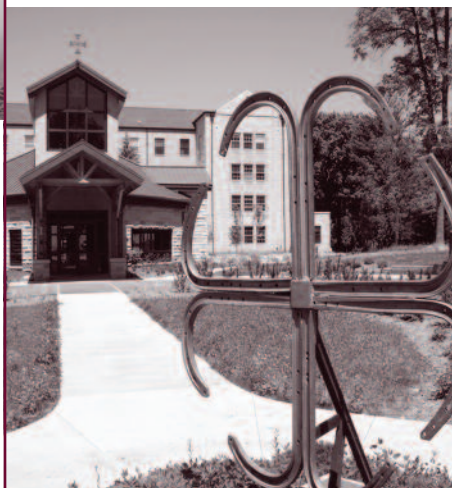
† St. Benedict's Retreat Center hosted 20 *Kairos* peer-led retreats this past year for five Catholic high schools in the Chicagoo area.



† St. Benedict's Retreat Center is a popular location for women's group retreats. In the past year, for example, we've enjoyed the presence of five quilting groups who share their creative energy as they sew away.

† The Retreat Center also welcomed individual retreatants, including priests from the Archdioceses of Milwaukee and Chicago, for private retreats.

† Fr. Steven Lattner serves as parochial vicar in Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Monroe, Ohio, continuing the pastoral tradition of Benet Lake monks.



† Over the past year, the Retreat Center has provided retreat facilities for faculty from DePaul University, Northwestern University, Marquette University, and Loyola Academy.

† Fr. Patrick Caveglia continues to serve the Swiss American Benedictine Congregation as treasurer, and Abbot Edmund Boyce serves with Fr. Patrick on the Congregation Finance Committee.

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Write for information.



† Seminarians from Our Lady of the Lake Seminary, Sacred Heart School of Theology and St. Francis Seminary have all made retreats at the Retreat Center this year.

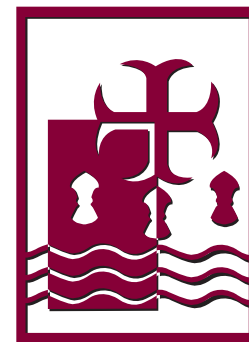


† St. Benedict's Retreat Center is a popular location for twelve-step weekend retreats for northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. We welcomed 18 recovery groups this year.

† Other groups who have used our Retreat Center include Franciscan novices, Dominican sisters, Franciscan friars, Third Order groups, and Jesuits.

† Fr. Donald Gibbs has been working the past year in seminary formation at Conception Seminary College, Conception, Missouri. He plans to continue taking courses in Christian Spirituality at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, this summer.

Benet Lake News



Benet Lake News

St. Benedict's Abbey

Benet Lake, Wisconsin 53102

Spring, 2015

St. Benedict's Abbey – Ora et Labora

In the last issue of the Benet Lake News, we spoke about the history of St. Benedict's Abbey. Since the monastery's founding by Abbot Richard Felix, O.S.B., in 1945, the monks of the Abbey have focused on a life of prayer and work – Ora et Labora. In addition to life at the monastery in southeastern Wisconsin, our Benedictine heritage expanded into missionary and pastoral work in the United States, Mexico and Central America. The work of St. Benedict's Abbey included educational and printing apostolates as well, as Abbot Richard sought to bring the Gospel to the modern post-World War II world.

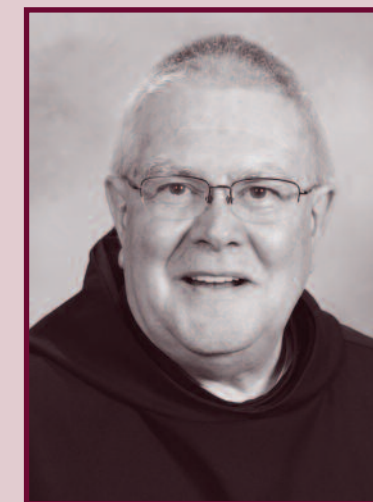
Benedictine monasteries do not just spring up in odd places. They are founded by living and breathing monks from monasteries with histories, traditions and customs. As you read in the last newsletter, St. Benedict's Abbey was founded from Conception Abbey in Missouri. Conception had been founded from Engelberg Abbey, Switzerland, in 1873 to serve the pastoral needs of German immigrants who had settled north of St. Joseph, Missouri. Abbot Frowin Conrad, O.S.B., who founded Conception Abbey, brought with him the Benedictine traditions he'd learned at Engelberg Abbey. The Conception Benedictines lived the monastic life in rural northwest Missouri while running a high school and seminary, farming, printing liturgical pamphlets and greeting cards, providing a quiet place for retreats, and engaging in pastoral work throughout the Midwest.

Abbot Richard Felix literally grew up in that atmosphere of Benedictine culture and tradition. When he came to establish St. Benedict's Abbey at Benet Lake, Wisconsin, he brought with him his experience of pastoral and missionary work in southern Missouri. He had served as rector of Conception College and had established *Our Faith Press* to disseminate pamphlets to explain the Catholic faith. The labors of Abbot Richard and his monks thus became a natural extension of Benedictine tradition and culture from Engelberg to Conception to Benet Lake, a place centered between Chicago and Milwaukee.

(continued on page 2)



St. Benedict's Abbey



Father Patrick Caveglia, O.S.B.

The Swiss traditions of prayer in a vibrant liturgy, an educational apostolate, and community self-sufficiency were transplanted from the Old World into the New. These traditions came to Conception Abbey and were passed onto St. Benedict's Abbey. Like their confreres at Conception, the monks at Benet Lake prayed, farmed, printed, taught young men in the seminary-like Latin schools, and engaged in missionary activities and pastoral work. The works of the monks were supported by the generosity of donors and benefactors throughout the United States.



St. Benedict's Abbey, Benet Lake, Wisconsin

Several years ago, the leadership of St. Benedict's Abbey reached out to Conception Abbey with an idea: was there a way in which the two communities could cooperate to shape futures faithful to their common traditions from Engelberg? Members of both communities were involved in planning a process of discussion and investigation. A joint committee representing both Benet Lake and Conception wrote a Memorandum of Understanding which was approved by the monastic chapters of both communities in April 2013. The Memorandum of Understanding provided a framework for dialogue and cooperation for a period of eighteen months, during which various implications of shared resources and personnel were explored. To help with the process, Fr. Patrick Caveglia, O.S.B., was sent from Conception Abbey to serve the monks of Benet Lake as prior in Wisconsin.

On October 23, 2014, the chapter of St. Benedict's Abbey voted to become dependent on Conception Abbey. A week later, the chapter of Conception Abbey voted to ratify this decision and to accept St. Benedict's Abbey as part of Conception. All of the monks of St. Benedict's Abbey have

remained in their current assignments and most live at Benet Lake. It is hoped that by sharing resources, both St. Benedict's Abbey and Conception Abbey will be able to fulfill their mission for the Church in fidelity to their Swiss roots.

Because Conception Abbey has long focused community energy and personnel on seminary formation, Conception Seminary College was happy to welcome St. Benedict's Fr. Donald Gibbs, O.S.B., to the seminary spiritual formation team this past year. This assignment has helped Conception broaden its spiritual formation program while allowing Fr. Donald an opportunity to get to know the Conception community first-hand.

We believe that our two Benedictine communities, heirs of a common Benedictine tradition from Switzerland, will find other ways to share resources in the future. Both Conception Abbey and St. Benedict's Abbey have mission and evangelization in their tradition. Both have demonstrated the importance of education and formation for the life of the Church. Both have understood the need to use modern communication to preach the Gospel. And while each community has shaped these goals differently, both communities have seen this effort as rooted in the life of prayer and work of the monks.



The first Mass celebrated at St. Benedict's Abbey, March 21, 1945.

You have been a part of Benet Lake's story as a friend of St. Benedict's Abbey. Now St. Benedict's Abbey and Conception Abbey are cooperating in new ways. As we move toward future cooperation, we hope you will wish to support initiatives of mission and seminary formation that will help the Church to grow in our modern world. †

A Word From Father Donald



The question that each monk is asked when he comes to the monastery is "Do you seek God?" It is in the pursuit of God that we actually find our way, a way that leads to union and joy. In the habit or out of the habit, we preach the same Risen Christ.

All Benedictines have a common history, a common Rule of St. Benedict, and a common founder, St. Benedict. St. Benedict tells us that each local house needs to adapt the Rule in order that the Spirit of God continues to breathe and give life. Yet we are united by a community spirit where we can recognize certain family resemblances. All of these hint at a way of life we share however great the superficial differences.



St. Maur Hall, Conception Seminary College

St. Benedict's Abbey at Benet Lake and Conception Abbey in Missouri are part of the Benedictine common history. At both monasteries, we monks are called to "seek God." At this point in our histories, it is one desire that we seek to embrace as we continue our Benedictine way of life.

Having lived at Conception for a year, I have experienced the way the monks of Conception approach our common Benedictine pursuit and seek to live the Rule. I observe that what must bring us together is the honest appreciation of how each community seeks God. It is learning to appreciate and allow for diversity as we pursue a stronger bond of fraternity.



Conception Seminary College Graduation

Presently, I serve as Vice Rector and Dean of Students at Conception Seminary College. My ministry with the seminarians is both rewarding and enriching. Sharing my faith and inviting them to share their faith experiences demands of both of us a great vulnerability. I believe the most profound formation is always mutual.

My welcome to Conception Abbey has been sincere and fraternal. The monks of the Abbey and the seminary community have received me into their communities. I am sure there will be days and seasons ahead when we at Benet Lake may struggle to not lose our "community spirit and identity," but we trust that in our fraternal agreement our way of life will be honored. My ministry and living at Conception Seminary College is a blessing to me. I continue to learn it is the Lord Jesus who calls, and my response is to freely give over my life to the One who summons me. Together we monks of Conception and Benet Lake join together in our community pursuit to "seek God."

Fr. Donald Gibbs, OSB

Fr. Donald Gibbs, OSB