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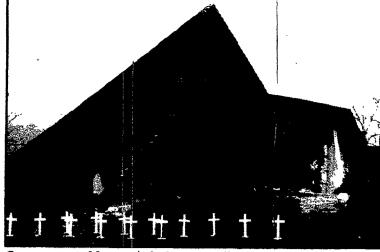
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## WALKING IN-

## FAITH

CATHOLIC COURIER SPECIAL SECTION

APRIL 29, 1993



Crosses marking monks' graves line the front lawn of the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard.



The monks begin baking their well-known Monks' Bread early in the morning.



**The entire community celebrates liturgical prayer seven times a day. Here they are gathered for Sext,** which is celebrated at 11:15 a.m.

## Monastic life calls outgoing inward

By Rob Cullivan

PIFFARD — Picture a shy and timid man, about 40 years old, entering the Abbey of the Genesee one day and asking about joining the Cistercian monastery.

The man is led into a meeting room where he is

greeted by Brother Anthony Weber, OCSO, a tall monk with short white hair. The monk introduces himself as the community's director of vocations and novice director.

The unmarried man explains that he spends most of his free time alone, has few friends, dutifully attends church but really spends little time in any parish ministry. He believes, however, that he has been called to the quiet, contemplative life that the abbey affords.

Brother Anthony replies that the last thing this man needs is to enter a monastery, where the quiet atmosphere would only turn this man more into himself.

This fictitious anecdote illustrates what Brother Anthony (his real name is Donald Weber) will tell anyone about the monastic life - aimed at active souls who seek to deepen their inner life, not at introverts who are looking to flee the world.

"I try to determine whether they're running away from life or running towards God," Brother Anthony said of those men who inquire about the monastic life.

A well-qualified candidate for monastic life would

exhibit a healthy Christian "outgoingness," Brother Anthony said. Such a candidate participates in his church's life, attends Mass more than weekly and performs some sort of regular parish service.

A potential monk should also have achieved some successes in his life and shown signs of stability, such as holding down a job; living in one place for more than a couple of years; maintaining friendships and family contacts.

Finally, a candidate should be open to radical change, because a monk's life demands daily commitment to prayer, work and study, all in the name of God, he said. In between regular prayer and intellectual study, the abbey's brothers raise wheat, corn and soybeans, perform manual labor and bake the famous Monks' Bread.

Following at most 11 years of initiation and discernment, a monk takes permanent vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Two other vows — stability and conversion of life — oblige the monk to remain rooted in the Cistercian order and to continue seeking to immerse more and more of his life in Christ and the community.

Brother Augustine Jackson, OCSO, seems to have been just the kind of candidate for which Brother Anthony was looking. Prior to joining the abbey, Brother Augustine was Jim Jackson, a cradle Catholic from Detroit, Mich.

He was willing to bargain with the Lord if only God would stop calling him to a monastery - a call Jackson had felt since his confirmation.

Continued on page 22



abbey as a novice in 1978.

- PHOTOS BY ---

**Brother Augustine Jackson OCSO**