

## CONTINUED...

## Monastery

continued from page 1

Young and old, male and female, married and single, professor and student, agnostic and devout, rich and poor come out of curiosity or seek to be transfigured or merely to rest and contemplate the mystery of God. They do so through the silence, nature and the communal act of prayer seven times a day — Vigils, Lauds, Mass, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline.

### Vigils

It is 4:45 a.m. The chapel bell breaks the silence. The monks of Mount Saviour rise in the predawn darkness to synchronize their minds, hearts and voices with the Psalmist in creating "music to our God while we live."

Making their way from their cells in the cloister to the crypt beneath the chapel, they are dressed in black habits and long black scapulars. They are led by a sanctuary lamp that illuminates a 14th-century triptych behind the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and lit votive candles in front of a 16th-century sculpture of Our Lady. Anticipating God's glory with the sun the cantor breaks into chant: "O Lord, open my lips." The monks respond: "And my mouth shall declare your praise."

Vigils is a reminder of the coming light. It also calls the monks to unite their day to the rhythm of creation and the spirit. "It's a rhythm that keeps us mindful of our daily calling to rise and die in Christ," says Brother Gabriel Duffee, who came to Mount Saviour in 1957 as a summer volunteer and remained.

After the Vigil prayer, the monks spend time in reading and the study of Scripture. Known as *lectio divina*, it is, as Father Martin says, "the fuel for meditation and contemplative prayer that fills the monk's life as he works about the monastery." It is the monk's desire to engage God in an uninterrupted dialogue.

### Lauds

At 7 a.m., the bell echoes throughout the hillside again. The monks and guests gather around the stone altar in the octagonal sanctuary of the chapel. There are no familiar faith symbols to distract. The emptiness allows one to focus on the Mystery. The light of a new day brings praise.

As Mount Saviour's founder, Father Damasus Winzen, liked to point out, "Oblates or guests, rich or poor, learned or unlearned are invited to enter into the one life of the One Christ which flows from the one altar in the center." Father Damasus never saw the need for altar rails or iron grilles.

As with the previous residents upon this mount — including a fugitive slave in the 1850s and German and Irish immigrants — Father Damasus of Maria Laach



Photo courtesy of Mount Saviour Monastery

monastery in Germany and his three companions brought a daring vision in 1951. It was a vision that the late Madeleva Roarke describes in her 1998 book, *Father, Damasus and the Founding of Mount Saviour*. As she points out, it was never easy. Nor perfect. Circumstances and divergent personalities and ideas were the cause of great hardship and disagreement.

As Nazism began to undermine the church in Germany, Father Damasus was sent to America in 1938 to join another monk in finding a site for the monastery of Maria Laach to relocate, if necessary. Fortunately, Maria Laach survived Hitler's nationalistic rage.

Father Damasus had a taste of celebrity while teaching and lecturing in the United States. Also, after the war he was struck by "foundation fever" — the desire to create a monastic community within parameters set by the Vatican and the Rule of St. Benedict. In America he found a reception to his ideas on monastic tradition, informality and liturgical reform.

Before Vatican II reforms, Mount Saviour was already practicing a more inclusive spirit. There was no separation between priests and brothers. Father Damasus did not want to segregate his community — brothers and priests would pray together and milk the cows together. There was no "over-theologizing." The Mass was in the vernacular. There was an open invitation to gather around the centered altar. The buildings were built with nature foremost in mind. When ecumenism was rare, Mount Saviour extended a spiritual hand to fellow Protestants and Jews.

It was Father Damasus' spirit of ecumenism that prompted Mount Saviour to hold a symposium in 1972 that brought together people of the world's major belief systems. The event drew Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist believers and leaders, among others, to share their respective faith journeys.

After a lifetime of much war, change and pain, in a statement of faith Father Damasus made shortly before his death in 1971, he said: "When I look back on the seventy years of my own life, I see quite clearly that I owe my present inner happiness, my peace, my confidence and joy essentially to one single fact: I am certain that I am infinitely loved by God."

### Eucharistic Celebration

The bell at 9 a.m. invites the monks and guests to the eucharistic feast. As the Mass celebrates our union with the Body of Christ, the monks extend the spirit of St. Benedict to receive all guests as Christ. For Mount Saviour that has meant approximately 1,400 visitors a year.

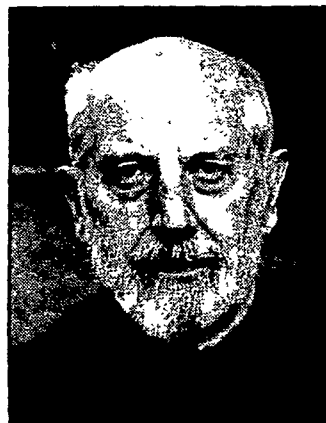
Visitors and guests come from near and far, of various denominations and beliefs, and represent many socioeconomic strata. For Brother James Cronen, the guestmaster, that means a steady stream of people to schedule; for Brother William Uiting, many rooms to vacuum. Besides St. Joseph's dormitory that can sleep 15, there are apartments and cottages for married couples. On a hidden knoll up from the monastery is a guesthouse for women and married couples run by Maureen Cadley.

After Mass, the workday begins. As the monks are few in number (13 live on the site) they have adjusted by using outside assistance and reducing their more strenuous and time-consuming labors. Farming is one of them. Back in the '60s and '70s their Holstein herd was one of the top dairy farms in Chemung County. But as the burden of dairy farming became greater on an aging community, they sought other means for income. Sheep are less needy than cows. Shepherding takes up less time. From the entire community being involved in some aspect of the dairy operation, it now takes only a couple of brothers to tend the sheep. That is, until shearing time in May when they rely on many additional hands.

Aside from the farm, duties around the rectory and cloister, such as laundry and kitchen work, change weekly. Guests are invited to work alongside the monks. The brothers rely on them and a number of locals, whether helping Brother John Thompson in the orchard or Brothers Raphael Maley or Guerric Laliberte in the kitchen or assisting Brother Gabriel with maintenance or housekeeping.

### Sext

Sext is the noon-hour Office followed by the main meal of the day. It is at Sext and None when the monks chant a *capella* but usually the psalms are accompanied by Brother Bruno Lane on the guitar or Brother Pierre Pratte on the



Father Martin Boler

harp.

The monks take turns cooking and serving their fellow brothers and the guests. Meals are eaten in silence, except for the table reader who begins with the Rule of Benedict and then continues with a popular article or book.

The topics are as diverse as a biography on Ulysses S. Grant to Gothic architecture. After the main meal and clean-up, the brothers can elect to take a short nap or read before resuming work in the afternoon.

### None

At 3 p.m. the bell calls the monks to put aside their mental or physical labors to pray the office of None.

Work and scholarship are not the only pursuit of monks. Creativity is a vital part of spirituality and it is manifested by all in many forms — from writing to cooking to painting to carpentry to weaving, etc. Father James Kelly has written several books on spirituality. Brother Luke Pape has used watercolors to capture the serenity of the monastery, and many priests and deacons in the Rochester Diocese wear Brother Stephen Galban's woven stoles. Brother David Steindl-Rast is a well-known ecumenist and writer. Visiting Benedictine priest Father Alexis expresses himself in icons.

Work concludes at 5 p.m. followed by a light supper of soup and fruit.

### Vespers

At 6:30 p.m. the bell anticipates the night as shadows grow longer. Unlike other religious orders that teach or do social work, Mount Saviour's contemplative lifestyle is its apostolate.

But the lifestyle does not rule out enjoyment of events held outside the monastery. Community members keep abreast of national and global events through journals and newspapers, and occasionally view a college football game on television or a nationally broadcast symphony.

### Compline

It is 8:15 p.m. Candles flicker in the dark. Voices rise from silhouettes and gently sing about fading light and watchful love. After Compline, what the monks refer to as "the great silence that leaves you open to hear what the Lord is saying" begins. It is a silence with Siren allure — it becomes more desirous as one listens.

Too often in this culture, we confuse success or value — a concept that is never fixed but fickle — with social gain or monetary profit. Without evident worth in secular terms, monasticism has fallen under such criticism. But not all value has to be temporary or tangible. Monasticism has survived 1,500 years through many "isms" — socialism, capitalism, communism and other systems. And what 19th-century immigrant farmers dubbed "Poverty Hill," because they tilled it without success, this Mount, named after the Transfiguration, has been paradoxically priceless to thousands who have spiritually profited from the beauty, prayer and peace. It is a spirit that continues to be cultivated and carried down into the hollows.

G. Wayne Barr is an oblate of Mount Saviour and a parishioner of St. Peter and Paul in Elmira.

Details about the monastery and its events are on its Web site at [www.msaviour.org](http://www.msaviour.org).

## THE HURLBUT

Three Generations of Caring

We are a full service medical facility providing the following services for the comfort of our patients and residents:

- Comprehensive rehabilitation services for short term stays
- Specialized care services in the form of infusion therapy, wound care and management, tracheostomy, colostomy, ileostomy, and gastrostomy tube care, hospice care
- Skilled nursing care and rehabilitation for those in need of long term placement
- Physical, occupational, speech therapy

Admissions and tours available 7 days a week

1177 E. Henrietta Rd. Rochester, NY 14623  
(716) 424-4770 Fax (716) 424-1922



Leo M. Bean



Bryan S. Bean



Stephen D. Bean



David M. Bean

"A Tradition of Family Service"

Family Owned and Operated

LEO M. BEAN

FUNERAL HOME, INC.

2771 Chili Avenue • 426-7830