

r Friends and Visitors

In our entry for May we told about the landscaping of the new cloister garth. Accompanying this entry for June are some photographs of our little cloister garden. The new cloister, simple as it is, has a surprisingly satisfactory effect on our environment. It is planted in blue fescue sod, with accents of coneflowers, pinks, daisies, black-eyed Susans, lavender, and various herbs. Two dogwoods, one pink flowering and one white, stand in one corner of the new garden.



June has been marked by an unusual number of in-house guests and visitors. Visitors are never lacking in our guesthouse, but it is rare that we have such a turnover of guests in the monastic enclosure itself.

The first of these guests was Dom James Connor, abbot emeritus of Assumption Abbey. Fr James was in St Louis, MO, to conduct a day of recollection for the local Thomas Merton Society (a monk of Gethsemani Abbey, KY, Fr James was a novice under Thomas Merton and later served with Merton as assistant novice director). After the day of recollection Fr James drove to Ava to spend a weekend with us. On the Sunday of his visit, Dom James spoke to the community assembled in Chapter. He reminisced about Thomas Merton and about his own long and varied career as a monk. He told the community that this particular visit to Ava was a moment of grace and healing for him personally. It was a pleasure for us to be able to show Dom James our new facilities, a project that began in concept during Dom James' term as abbot here.

Concurrent with Dom James' arrival and extending for two weeks after his departure was the live-in experience of two young laymen. Peter Martin, 27, has just graduated from the University of Kansas with a master's in psychology. Larry Carney, 26, is a seminarian for the Diocese of Wichita at Mount St Mary's Emmetsburg, Maryland. The two contacted us earlier this year laying out their wish to devote part of their summer to a monastic experience. The two men were exemplary guests. They took rooms in our new quarters and followed the entire monastic rhythm, attending all the offices in choir, working each day, taking their meals in the monastic refectory. In addition, Peter and Larry met three times each week with three different monks for a closer look at the theology of the monastic liturgy (Fr Cyprian), monastic prayer (Fr Robert) and Cistercian spirituality (Fr Mark). The experience, new for both Larry and Peter, and

the Ava community, was altogether positive on both sides.



Another monk visitor this month was Br Gerard Ingusan, OCSO. Br Gerard is a professed monk of Ava's daughter house, Our Lady of the Philippines Abbey (OLP) on the island of Guimaras. For the past four years Br Gerard has been studying philosophy and theology at the Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, CA. He was ordained to the transitional deaconate in December of last year. Since then he has completed his studies at Vina. He will return to his own abbey next month. The date of his ordination to the priesthood is already set as December 14, 2002.

While this was Br Gerard's first visit to his "mother house" he was already known to several of us. At OLP Gerard was a novice together with our own Fr Alberic and with Br Fidel, a monk of OLP in extended residence at Ava. Fr Mark, as Master of Students at Vina, accompanied Br Gerard for a few years before coming to Ava in 2000. It was good having this brother and friend with us if only for a few short days. He is pictured here with Br Fidel Manuel, OCSO, our fruitcake baker.

Finally, Fr Paul Philibert, O.P., was with us for four days. Fr Paul, currently rector of the Dominican house of Formation in St Louis, MO, is Distinguished Visiting Professor of Church and Society at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in that city. We invited Fr Paul to give us some conferences as part of our ongoing community formation. Over four days he delivered six conferences. Fr Paul's theme was the Priesthood of Christ and the Priesthood of the Faithful. The content was fresh and creative while at the same time sound and thoroughly traditional in the richest sense of that word. Fr Paul lived in the monastic enclosure and gave a fine example of an integrated and happy religious.

With the end of the month, the season's accustomed heat and humidity seemed to settle in for the summer. We look forward to the return of Fr Anthony on July 7 and of course to our annual community 4th of July picnic on Independence Day. We wish all our visitors a safe and refreshing vacation season.

Fr Mark, Abbot