

## News Letter

Dear Friends and Associates

The Lord be with you!

The 4th of July weekend was sunny and mild in between a lot of rainfall before and after. Fr. Thaddeus, the leader of the Vietnamese monks, had the Mass and homily. He gave a thoughtful reflection on peace, as grounded in the love, justice and forgiveness found in the Heart of our Lord Jesus. The grapevine reported some questioning about Vietnamese having been enemies in the War of the 60's. We let a response flow back through the grapevine that it was the Catholic Vietnamese, who were fighting alongside American soldiers against the Communist forces trying to take over their land.

We had our annual cook-out with the Franciscan friars, served and enjoyed in the cloister open walkway.

Two of Br. Boniface's nephews visited him here. Pete and Mark Domas drove from California, taking the most scenic routes along the way. They shared with 120 relatives in a family reunion at Epworth, IA (close to New Melleray Abbey), celebrating the 88th birthday of their mother, Mary Eileen. Br. Boniface turned 89 in June. Pete and Mark engaged in a lot of repartee with Boni, who is in an intriguing stage of clear retorts combined with spacey confusion. Rather like taking care of a four year old

We were spared the worst turbulence from Tropical Storm Bill, but the continuing rain produced the highest flood at Bryant Creek's low water bridge in a good many years. The silver lining is the garden's growth. Lettuce, green beans, and cucumbers abound. Sweet corn coming soon, but the odds are split between the deer, raccoons, and monks getting to eat the ears.

Fr. Peter and Fr. Matthew (former abbot of our Lady of Divine Grace in Vietnam) arrived from their country in July. Their plane was due at 3:15 p.m. in Springfield. It arrived in time but bad weather here forced the plane to land at Kansas City. Some hours later they deplaned at Springfield, and spent the night at Mary Queen Convent. Fr. Alberic picked them up the next morning; after they offered Mass in Vietnamese for the Sisters.

Br. Roberto finally passed his written driver's test after some four earlier tries, and passed his practical driving test on the second try. He is happy with that success. The USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) has received the papers we sent for the four next Vietnamese monks, requesting Religious Worker visas for them. It takes a full six months for the Homeland Security Dept. to review and approve the requests.

The Family Guest House roof is in need of repair. We have hired Ricky Jones, a local roofing contractor, to repair gutters and soffits, and to cover the metal roof with a rubberized paint, which seals and protects the panels from rust and deterioration. Ricky's men did a good job last year on the sections of monastery roof, which plagued us for years with leaks. The work passed acid tests of ice and snow last winter and of heavy rainfalls this year.

St. Benedict's feast in July reminds us to carry on his program of *Ora et Labora* (Prayer and Work) in our daily round of monastic life in the Church, abbey and bakery. Fr. Neil, a diocesan priest from Texas, is living within our community now. He has permission from his bishop to take a time of practical discernment regarding a call to a form of life involving more solitude. His time with us is dipping his feet into the water, half-way house toward full solitude as a hermit.

# YOU ARE ALL BROTHERS

In the year 1098 our Cistercian Fathers, Robert, Alberic and Stephen, were founding their New Monastery at Citeaux. At the same time the First Christian Crusade was recapturing Jerusalem from the Moslem invaders, and setting up the Crusader Latin States in the Holy Land.

That is not the end of the story, which began long before with the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael, the two sons of Abraham.

Jews and Arabs saw themselves as descendants from Isaac and Ishmael. Mohammed saw himself as the final prophet after Moses and Jesus. In his view the Torah was God's revelation to the Jews, the Gospel was God's revelation to Christians, and the Koran was God's revelation to the Arabs. When Jews and Christians did not accept Mohammed's religion as God's plan of Salvation for the Arab people, then Mohammed came up with Jihad, a Holy War by which Islam would strive to become the world religion and political kingdom.

From the 700's Moslem armies overran the Mideast, and made headway in all the Mediterranean countries, occupying much of Spain and threatening Hungary and Austria.

The Popes and Catholic Kings carried out twelve Crusades, attempting to free the Holy Land from the Moslems, over a period of some 300 years. In 1492 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella sponsored Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World, and they also drove the Moors/Moslems out of Spain.

Moslem traders spread their religion through South Asia and North Africa, while Catholic missionaries spread the Gospel throughout the lands of the New World and Asia.

In our day and age we are experiencing renewed violent conflicts between the children of Isaac and Ishmael and the followers of Christ. The demons, which possessed the lunatic man living among the tombs in our Lord's time, are still driving human beings to irrational violence. Yet, at the same time, the Son of Man, who drove those demons out into a herd of swine, is present and active in our midst now, beginning a New World of brotherhood through the power of His Holy Spirit.

The ecumenical movement among different Christian faiths over the past century is one evidence of that renewal. Pope John Paul II's recognition of Israel as the renewed state and homeland of the Jewish people is further evidence. Our Trappist monks giving their lives in witness to their love and union with the Moslem people of Algeria, along with Dom Christian Cherge's Last Will and Testament expressing his vision of Faith and union with God the Father's Love and Forgiveness for his killers, is another fruit of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady's message at Medjugorje of prayerful union and peace between Catholic and Orthodox and Moslem is still further evidence that the Spirit of Christ is stronger than the demonic spirits.

Our own small share in this ongoing work of Christ and His Holy Spirit, creating a New Heaven and New Earth of fellowship among all the children of Abraham, is to persevere daily in our Christian and monastic vocation. We strive to live out a communion of charity in the bond of peace with our own brothers in community...to live Eucharistic lives.

In the Sacred Heart,

Your Ava Monks

