

# *Saint Andrew Abbey Vocation Newsletter*

May, 2008

## Monks to Elect New Abbot in June

At the public celebration of the Feast of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict on April 1 (transferred from March 21 due to Holy Week this year), **Abbot Clement** announced that the abbot president of the American-Cassinense Congregation, **Abbot Timothy Kelly, OSB**, had accepted his request to resign his office for health reasons effective at the time of the election of a new abbot. The election has been scheduled for June 9-10 and will be conducted by **Abbot Timothy**.



**Abbot Clement** was elected the fifth abbot of Saint Andrew Abbey on June 8, 2001 to succeed **Abbot Roger Gries, OSB** who had been named auxiliary bishop of Cleveland two months earlier. **Abbot Clement**, now 76 years old, had been the associate pastor of Assumption Parish in Broadview Heights at the time of his election.

A son of the former St. Benedict's Parish which was located adjacent to the monastery, **Abbot Clement** graduated from Benedictine High School in 1950 and professed his first vows as a monk in 1953. After ordination as a priest in 1959, he joined the faculty of Benedictine High School and taught physics and theology from 1960-1970 and again from 1973-1997. He earned master's degrees in physics (University of Notre Dame), religious education (Loyola University), and spirituality (Duquesne University).

### **Abbot Clement gives the invocation at the annual Blue and White Gala April 19, 2008**

religious from the earliest years of his priesthood. He was a popular class moderator at Benedictine High School and also served as chaplain and tennis coach. He has also been a much sought after spiritual director for many priests, religious, and lay persons in the diocese of Cleveland. In 1996, he translated from Spanish a section of the writings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Mexican mystic Conchita Cabrera that focused on the need for priests to seek a deeper prayer life and especially

purification and holiness in face of the challenges of the modern world. That same year he participated in a project at Harvard University in Boston serving on an advisory board to give

A dynamic and challenging speaker, **Abbot Clement** was involved in retreats for students, lay adults, and consecrated

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### ....**Abbot Clement continued...**

shape to the research of Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard University Medical School. Dr. Benson had been working with a grant from the Fetzer Institute in Michigan for researching the measurable effects of intercessory prayer on people who have had coronary bypass surgery.

While serving as associate pastor of Assumption Parish from 1997-2001, he was involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, scripture study, religious education, evangelization, retreats, and a parish partnership program with a struggling parish in Haiti which **Abbot Clement** visited before his election as abbot.

During his 7 years as spiritual father of the abbey, **Abbot Clement**, emphasized in his weekly conferences the need for each monk to have and deepen a living, personal relationship to Jesus so that the repetitive external religious practices of monastic life do not become sterile and ineffective in leading the monk to greater union with God and with his confreres. He proposed new structures for administration in the school and devised a successful method for addressing financial obligations. He endorsed a closer and more effective relationship between the abbey and a new Benedictine community in Slovakia.

Most importantly, he has taught by personal example the value of attendance at choral prayer, community recreation, public lectio, and manual labor. He brought many talented individuals to make presentations to the community including the first lay person to lead the annual monastic retreat, **Dr. Susan Muto** of the Epiphany Association at Duquesne University.

Finally, **Abbot Clement** has taught his monks to power and value of embracing the cross of suffering in union with our crucified Savior. This was evident early in his tenure as abbot when he experienced a severe heart attack and as he bears the cross of his current illness. We ask your prayers for **Abbot Clement** during this time of transition and trial for him.

## June Election will Follow Traditional Procedures

How do Benedictine monks elect an abbot? This is a question many of the monks of Saint Andrew Abbey are hearing from friends and relatives these days. The process is primarily the same that has been used in the election of all five former abbots (**Abbot Stanislaus in 1934, Abbot Theodore in 1946, Abbot Jerome in 1966, Abbot Roger in 1981, and Abbot Clement in 2001**). The election will be conducted at the abbey on June 9-10 under the direction of the Abbot President of the American-Cassinense Congregation **Abbot Timothy Kelly, OSB**. There are no pre-announced candidates. Any ordained monk, solemnly professed at least 7 years and at least 30 years of age may be elected abbot. Only monks in solemn vows are eligible to vote.

On the first secret ballot, each elector will be asked to write down the names of two monks that he believes could successfully serve as abbot. When this ballot is tabulated, the Abbot President will recognize as candidates those monks who received the highest number of votes. If the candidate agrees to remain in the process, then the Scrutiny follows in which each candidate is asked to leave the room for a time so that all the monks may discuss his suitability. After a recess the first actual ballot is taken. On the first three ballots, a 2/3 majority is needed for an election. If more than three ballots are needed, the next three require only a simple majority. When a monk is elected and accepts, he receives the pectoral cross and chain and assumes immediate jurisdiction as superior. Within three months he is blessed in a liturgy by the local bishop. He will serve until his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday or eight years, whichever is longer.

# Chronicle of an OSB Easter “Emmaus” Trip



**Patrick poses with the Dominican novices**



**Patrick with junior monks of St. Meinrad’s Archabbey**

**Postulant Patrick O’Hearn** and vocation director **Father Gerard** took a traditional post-

Easter “Emmaus trip” to visit Saint Meinrad Archabbey in southern Indiana. Staying over night at the famous midwest Benedictine abbey, they were able to tour the large, new guesthouse and the new monastery that was also designed by **Evans Woolen** who was the architect for the 1986 abbey infirmary wing and church here at Saint Andrew’s. They were also honored to meet the *oldest Benedictine monk in the world* - **Father Theodore Heck, OSB**, who was born in 1901! His mind is clear but he has poor hearing and usually travels in a wheelchair.

They also stayed overnight with the 10 novices of the Dominicans’ Eastern Province which has its novitiate at Saint Gertrude’s Parish (named after a German Benedictine saint by some German immigrants) in Cincinnati. The Cleveland monastic dual also visited with **Mr. Joseph Gressock**, former Benedictine High School theology teacher who had been the principal of Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in the small, German town of Oldenburg, Indiana. The long supper conversation with Joe and his wife Eileen was effective in getting Joe to agree to return

to Cleveland to be the new principal of our high school, his alma mater, next year. The third and final day of the trip found Fr. Gerard and Patrick having lunch with confrere **Fr. Dominic Mondzelewski, OSB**, at his sister Kathy’s home where he was visiting with his parents **John (95 yrs.)** and **Sonya (91 yrs.)**. He joined his confreres for a ride home to Cleveland.

# Next “Benedict” Weekend August 8-10

The next “Living with Benedict” weekend monastic vocation discernment retreat will take place **Friday, August 8 to Sunday, August 10, 2008**. The theme of the weekend will be the important concept of “Community” in the Rule of Saint Benedict. Several young men have already inquired about registering for this retreat so if you are interested, please contact Fr. Gerard at [gerard@cbhs.net](mailto:gerard@cbhs.net). You must be at least 18 years old for this weekend experience.

This is the only “Living with Benedict” weekend retreat scheduled for the summer of 2008 because of the special Vocation Pilgrimage to the International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec sponsored by the vocation office of Saint Andrew Abbey for June 17-24. The pilgrims will include **Fr. Gerard, Fr. Sean Donnelly** (a second chauffeur and pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Madison, Ohio), **Postulant Patrick O’Hearn, Brian Cerio, Walter Sanders, Christopher Haas** (Columbus), and **Anthony Alto** (Cleveland). The final seat is being held for French-speaking **Thomas Polak** of Geneva, Ohio who may confirm his participation after he returns from his spring semester in Rome through Christendom College in Virginia. Any past participants of “Living with Benedict” weekends or new inquirers who wish to visit the abbey during the summer outside of the August retreat are welcomed to come if they first contact Fr. Gerard.



**Brother Finbar Ramsak, OSB** (second from right), St. Andrew Abbey junior monk poses with **Archabbot Douglas** (left), **Bishop Robert Carlson** of Saginaw, Michigan (center), and **Fr. Justin, OSB**, rector of St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, after receiving the ministry of lector on March 31. **Bro. Finbar** has now completed his first year of Theology.







