



50th Anniversary in 2009

Mount Angel Abbey Retreat House

(Benet Hall)

Benedictine Hospitality has a tradition going back to its founder, St. Benedict 1500 years ago. Most Benedictine Monasteries/Abbeys operate a guest/retreat house as a natural part of their way of life. Mount Angel Abbey fits well within that age-old tradition. This year the monks celebrate the 50th anniversary of their Retreat House.

On a glorious clear Spring day, March 20, 1959, The Most Reverend Dermot O'Flanagan, D.D., Bishop of Juneau, Alaska, formally blessed and laid the corner stone of the newly constructed St. Benet Hall, Mount Angel Abbey's Retreat House. While this was the formal opening for this new facility, retreats had been conducted in this new building since the first week of February 1959.

Bishop O'Flanagan had arrived at the Abbey to ordain one of his seminarians in to the priesthood and in addition graciously agreed to help us with the dedication of the Retreat House as well as be with us the next day to celebrate the feast of St. Benedict. This was our traditional Clergy Day with some 90 priests of the Portland Archdiocese attending.

Louis Schmerber of Salem accomplished the design of the 45,000 square foot building. Construction of this three-story, split-level building began in February 1958 by contractor Erwin E. Batterman of Salem. The approximate cost of the building was \$400,000, not including the light fixtures, landscaping and an elevator.

The Retreat House provides 23 rooms with one double bed and seven rooms with two twin beds for guests and retreatants. The rooms are complete units containing a closet, washbasin, shower and toilet, and will accommodate 60 double occupancy guests/retreatants. Other amenities included in the building are lounge areas, a dining room and kitchen, along with conference rooms, a religious goods store and (at that time) a garage.

The three-story building, buffed with Willamina brick, is relieved by artistic terra cotta trimming to match the other existing buildings. The structure is located on the slope south of the Abbey church, and at an elevation that only the two top floors are seen across the hilltop. The observation deck on the West end gives visitors a marvelous panoramic view overlooking Silverton and Salem in the distance.

The lay Retreat apostolate began in the Archdiocese under the impetus of the Knights of Columbus and flourished at Mount Angel Abbey under Abbot Damian Jentges, O.S.B., the first Retreat house Director.

Mount Angel Abbey is a community of Benedictine monks founded in 1882 by the Abbey of Engelberg in central Switzerland. The monastic community now numbers 75 members, dedicated to a life of prayer and work in the service of God, of the Church and of the larger community.





The monks of the Abbey live a commitment to serve the community through daily prayer, the education of priests, pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Portland, hospitality in the Retreat House and its programs, the library, and artistic and cultural programs and events. For over 125 years the monks have prayed and worked on this hilltop in an unique and beautiful atmosphere of reflection and prayer.

"Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray." (Matt. 14:23) The monks of Mount Angel Abbey invite and welcome men and women of all faiths to "come away to a quiet place... and rest awhile" (Mark 5:31), on their beautiful Abbey hilltop.

Retreats and the ministry of hospitality for groups and individuals, with a separate Retreat House building, have been an active apostolate of Mount Angel Abbey and a community apostolate for over 50 years. In chapter 53 of his Holy Rule, St. Benedict instructs the Abbot and his community that they are to welcome all guests "as Christ himself." Whole-hearted courtesy and respect for each guest must be the hallmark of all that is undertaken to instill the value of Benedictine hospitality and permeates all that we do.

Those who come on retreat are encouraged to use the Abbey Library, rich in its theological and spiritual books and periodicals and to share in our Benedictine daily schedule of prayers. The bells awaken us and call us to prayer and meals. The quiet allows time for reading and reflection. Not everyone is called to live our monastic life, but as the Lord said, we are all called to "come away and rest a little."

Retreat House rooms are private, comfortable and with beautiful views of the Abbey gardens or the southern Willamette valley. Those on retreat share a special area on the lower level, which is conducive to quiet, reflection and prayer with a prayer chapel and a beautiful meditation room. There is also a dining room, and a coffee and juice bar with pleasant areas to pray, read and reflect. During this past year we have seen a notable increase of guests. Many familiar old friends as well as new friends. A number of people have already booked return reservations. The increased interest has allowed us to expand a new area on the lobby level as a Visitor's Center – offering a special environment with a marvelous view over the valley and gracious amenities for guests and visitors.

The new website (www.mountangelabbey.org) has introduced many people to our Retreat House facilities and programs. The continuously up-dated calendar of events has been very helpful in showing our friends all we have to offer. An expanded email program has been instituted and has proven popular and effective in the promotion of retreat opportunities.

The view from the Abbey Retreat House and Abbey grounds provide a spectacular vista of the Willamette Valley with its surrounding snow-capped mountains. The Abbey with its new 115 ft. bell tower is newly landscaped with beautiful spacious grounds, flowerbeds, and meditation paths. We invite you to come and share the contemplative atmosphere of our beautiful hilltop, appropriately called, Tap-a-lam-a-ho (Mountain of Communion) by the original native Americans. It is indeed a unique and beautiful place.

Welcome!

