“Behold, I make all things new.”

REVELATION 21:5
Dear Friends,

As we see summer bursting forth all around us, we monks are grateful that we can share our life with you this summer. We look forward to seeing many of you at our Saint Benedict Festival on July 9 and still others at the Abbey Bach Festival on July 27, 28, and 29. Having these beloved celebrations in-person again is a source of hope for the months ahead.

In this issue of Mount Angel Letter, you’ll find more reasons for hope. We held commencement at Mount Angel Seminary at the end of April, with degrees conferred upon 33 students. Several seminarians will be (and some have been already) ordained to the diaconate and priesthood this summer. We’ve included reflections from a few of those preparing for ordination to priesthood about their time at Mount Angel and how they hope to bring the spirit of this Benedictine Hilltop to you through their parish ministry.

In contrast to the new beginnings of our graduates, we also feature three of our brothers who are celebrating 50 and 60 years of monastic profession this year: Br. Simon Hepner, Br. James Bartos, and Abbot Peter Eberle. While they have faithfully lived their vows at Mount Angel for many decades, you will recognize in their stories a constant sense of freshness and renewal. They each witness to Christ, who promises, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

We give thanks to God for your prayers and friendship. We pray for you as well, that Christ will bless all of us with the joy that comes from life lived in the abundance of his grace.

In Christ,

The Right Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, OSB
Abbot and Chancellor
Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary

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Please note our mailing address: Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary, PO Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497. All other Abbey mail should be addressed to 1 Abbey Drive, Saint Benedict, OR 97373.

Would you like to receive our publications, invitations and news via email? Simply send your email address to news@mtangel.edu.

Do you have special requests regarding the mail you receive from the Abbey? Give us a call at 503.845.3030. Please send address changes or comments, along with your mailing label, to Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary at PO Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497.


Contributors to this issue include Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, Abbot Peter Eberle, Fr. Israel Sanchez, Br. Matthew Sislow, and Ethan Alano.

Photo Contributors include Karen Jacoby, Ethan Alano, Fr. Israel Sanchez, and Frank Miller.

Editor: Theresa Myers
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Finding CHRIST on the Streets of Rome

After nearly a year away from home, I am happy to report that life in Rome is still a source of wonder. My daily commute is a trip through the centuries, sprinkled with landmarks ancient, modern, and everything in between. Life itself here is a regular rhythm of things ordinary: study, prayer, going for walks, dinner with friends, catching buses, getting stuck in traffic, shopping for toiletries, etc. The littleness of my life mingles with the great dramas of history that have played out in this loud, crowded, famously dirty city, where something seems always on fire.

Rome has its stories, scars, woes and glories, and hides none of it. Poverty and homelessness are as visible as the basilicas and monuments. You either take it all in, or you shut it all out. I am strangely in love with Rome. Like a good book, friend, hour of lectio divina, so too the city is slowly working on me, shaping the way I think about the world in and around me. I can’t quite yet say how. But where is Jesus Christ in all this? I’ve seen him wandering about the catacombs just as comfortably as he roams about the beautiful Caelian Hill. I’ve met him in the occasional stranger at the bus stop. I’ve found him within me, calling me to be still and silent. More often, I’ve encountered him walking beside me. I like to imagine that as we go along, he’s remembering everything he has seen on these seven hills since the beginning of time.

Please keep me in your prayers as I continue my studies in this holy city of Rome.

– FR. ISRAEL SANCHEZ, OSB

Monks Lead Stations Procession

On Good Friday, April 15, close to 250 people gathered at the base of Abbey Drive for a solemn celebration of the Stations of the Cross. The group included monks, seminarians, oblates, and local community members.

Celebrated in Spanish, the outdoor praying of the Stations began with a group of monks several years ago. The first public procession was in 2009, the initiative of Fr. Ephrem Martinez, OSB, who invited several families from St. Mary Parish in Mt. Angel to participate. As the presider, Fr. Ephrem emphasized how “devotional spirituality is a preparation for the liturgical prayer” of the Lord’s Passion.

Learn more about the oblates of Mount Angel at mountangelabbey.org/oblates

For about three weeks in February and March, Mount Angel Abbey hosted Archbishop Vittorio Viola, OFM, Secretary for the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. The Secretary is the no. 2 man in the Congregation and oversees the organization and major projects of the Congregation. While his primary purpose at Mount Angel was directly related to his liturgical work for the Vatican (working with Abbot Jeremy, who is a consultant to the Congregation), we monks also had the privilege of him celebrating Mass on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, giving us a tangible connection to our current shepherd sitting on the Chair of Peter, Pope Francis.

During his stay, Archbishop Viola held formal and informal conversations with the monks about the Church, his work in the Congregation, and what our own role is in all of this. He also served to bring us into the great season of Lent by celebrating the community Mass on Ash Wednesday and giving an evening conference to the monks.

– BR. MATTHEW SISLOW, OSB

Consecration of Russia & Ukraine

One of the Church’s early responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in early 2022, was to call for a worldwide campaign of prayer and fasting. At the request of the Ukrainian Catholic bishops, Pope Francis consecrated the world, the Church, and all of humanity – especially Russia and Ukraine – to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on March 25, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

Both the monastic and seminary communities of Mount Angel participated in the prayers and also welcomed Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of the Archdiocese of Portland as the principal celebrant for the Mass of the Annunciation in the Abbey church. Archbishop Sample led the congregation and those following on livestream in the prayer of consecration in front of an icon of Our Lady of Kyiv, written by Br. Claude Lane, OSB.
The Mount Angel Library attracted some attention in the first half of 2022, beginning with an online art exhibit, curated for the Abbey’s website by Fr. Nathan Zodrow, OSB, art curator for Mount Angel. The exhibit focused on the furniture within the library rather than the architecture, both designed by the renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.

Complementary to the library building, completed in 1970, Aalto designed the furniture in his signature curved wood style. Despite constant use over the years, the furniture and tables show remarkably little wear and tear. And although most of the chairs sit low by modern standards, they are almost universally comfortable.

Aalto considered it “great fun to design furniture.” For visitors to Mount Angel, it’s great fun to enter the library and be surprised by the play of natural light, the silence, and the sense of reverence and comfort that comes from being in the space.

The library also received attention from Oregon's largest newspaper, The Oregonian. A writer called in early May to say she was working on a story about the library. It was focused on the architecture and furniture more than the impressive collections of books the building contains. The piece published as part of the paper's Here Is Oregon series.

The attention culminated May 21 with The Reynolds Symposium, sponsored by the University of Oregon's School of Architecture & Environment. Held in the library auditorium, the symposium focused on the use of natural light common to Aalto's work and demonstrated so effectively in the Abbey's library. According to the event sponsors, the symposium celebrated “the beautiful and impactful ways that Aalto made daylight an integral part of his designs.”

A common thread of all three points of attention noted above is the Abbey library's sustainable, organic beauty and functionality. It speaks to the Benedictine tradition of respect for the land and environment. The humble, low-key exterior of the building, as it sits in its place among the buildings encircling the Hilltop, allows the Abbey church, housing the Eucharistic presence of Christ, to remain center and central to the whole.

- THERESA MYERS
Br. Simon Hepner, OSB

As he signed his solemn profession document on the altar of the Abbey church, Br. Simon Hepner recalls feeling that “I had finally come to the place God wanted me to be.” This fall, Br. Simon will celebrate 50 years as a monk of Mount Angel Abbey, having made his first profession of vows on September 8, 1972.

The seeds of Br. Simon’s vocation were planted early in life when Abbot Damian Jentges, OSB, visited his home parish of St. Paul in Eugene. Somewhat out of character, a young David Hepner left his mother’s side to talk with Abbot Damian. He told the abbot he would “come up to see him some day.”

After high school, David entered Mount Angel Seminary, unsure exactly where God was leading him. During a three-week break in his sophomore year, David lived in the monastery, discerning God’s call and discovering “a sense of being at home.” He entered the monastery in August 1971 and later took the religious name Simon, after the Apostle Simon the Zealot. Br. Simon was first assigned to the Saint Benedict Post Office at Mount Angel Abbey, a work he fulfilled for 16 years. He was later assigned to repair books in the library mendery, a work he has lovingly done for 32 years.

For Br. Simon, the monastery has been a home where he has experienced continuous growth as a monk in the “school of the Lord’s service,” recognizing that “we are all still learning how to be monks.”

Abbot Peter Eberle, OSB

Growing up in a Catholic culture strongly influenced by the Bavarian heritage of the town of Mt. Angel, young Joseph Eberle, “didn’t know there were any kinds of priests except Benedictines.” From his early days in grade school, Joseph, who later took the profession name Peter, experienced a strong desire to be a priest and monk.

Abbot Peter attended Mount Angel High School Seminary and entered the monastery after two years in college. Becoming a novice in 1961 and making his first profession of vows on September 8, 1962, Abbot Peter experienced his earliest years in the monastery against the backdrop of the Second Vatican Council. He warmly remembers the Council era as a time “that brought a lot of life and vibrancy to the Church.”

After priestly ordination in 1968, Abbot Peter served briefly at Sacred Heart Parish in Portland before pursuing further studies at St. Paul University (Ottawa) and the Alphonsianum of the Lateran University in Rome, where he earned his doctorate in moral theology in 1976.

Monastic life

Stability, Obedience, Constant Conversion

(continued...)
Elected abbot in 1988 after the passing of his cousin and dear friend, Abbot Bonaventure Zerr, OSB, Abbot Peter found himself frequently calling on God’s help to exercise the stressful duties and responsibilities of the office. Despite being called to the highest rank in the monastic community, Abbot Peter continues to see his relationship with God as simply “being a monk.” After his abbatial service, Abbot Peter continued teaching in the seminary and also found great joy in serving as chaplain to the Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel for 20 years, whom he describes as being a “great moral [and] spiritual support.”

Reflecting on his jubilee and his decision six decades ago to profess vows as a monk of Mount Angel Abbey, Abbot Peter says that in making this commitment to God, “I can be sure he is going to be faithful to me.”

Although he grew up in Eastern Oregon, the young Br. James established early connections with Mount Angel, as both Fr. Richard and his brother, Abbot Anselm Galvin, OSB, grew up around the block from the Bartos’ family’s home in Pendleton. In 1956, he began studies at Mount Angel High School and entered the monastery four years later. Celebrating his 60th anniversary this year, Br. James made his profession on March 25, 1962. Among his assigned works, Br. James has maintained the Abbey’s telephone system, served as a registered nurse in the community care center, and, as locksmith, streamlined the key system on the Hilltop. At the invitation of Fr. Konrad Schaefer, OSB, Br. James went to Mexico in 1997 and served as sub-prior for Our Lady of Angels Monastery in Cuernavaca. Returning to Mount Angel seven years later, Br. James began preparation for the permanent diaconate and was ordained on June 29, 2012.

In his daily monastic life, Br. James finds great joy in “giving oneself totally to God.” He advises those discerning the monastic life to “learn to put your total trust in God and let him guide you.”

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Luigi DeSantis

**Cultivating a Spiritual Home**

In the mid-twentieth century, Luigi DeSantis came to live at and care for the gardens and orchards of Mount Angel Abbey, where he became known as a man of faith and piety. Little did he know that his work of caring for the land and environment at Mount Angel would be continued decades later by his great-grandson Dean and the now family-owned company, DeSantis Landscapes.

Born in 1881, a year before Mount Angel Abbey’s founding, Luigi grew up in Montefortino, Italy, a rural town nestled in the hills and mountains of the Province of Fermo. Along with his brothers Tony and Anibale, Luigi immigrated to the United States in 1905, passing through Ellis Island. Hearing about work on the railroads near Portland, Luigi and Tony traveled by train to the West Coast and married the two daughters of an Italian woman who ran a boarding house in Portland. Luigi and his wife, Margherita, started a family in Portland but later moved to rural Silverton, where they developed a commercially successful strawberry farm. After the death of Margherita in 1947, Luigi briefly lived with some of his adult children before receiving the permission of Abbot Thomas Meier, OSB, to take up residence at Mount Angel Abbey.

Fr. Vincent Trujillo, OSB, recalls that Luigi’s room was next to the biology and chemistry labs in what is now the Abbey museum. He remembers Luigi as a “very saintly man” who joined the monks for prayer and spent hours at the Abbey’s grotto in prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to Abbot Peter Eberle, OSB, Luigi was great friends with Fr. Fidelis Schoenenberger, OSB, who designed the grotto and completed it in 1922. Abbot Peter fondly remembers the piety of Luigi, who liked to sprinkle holy water wherever he went, so much so that, recalls Abbot Peter, “the first pew [in the church] was really water stained.”

The descendants of Luigi DeSantis say they feel humbled to take up the mantle of their great-grandfather in caring for the landscape of the Hilltop. Dean DeSantis adds that, “our team is looking forward to taking an active role in keeping the Abbey’s extensive green space an optimal setting for prayer and meditation, as well as furthering the role well-tended gardens play in monastic life.”

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**Br. James Bartos, OSB**

During a visit to Mount Angel Abbey, a six-year-old boy innocently tried to follow Fr. Richard Galvin, OSB, into the cloister, prompting Fr. Richard to tell the child: “You can’t come in here.” The boy, the future Br. James Bartos, responded to himself with conviction: “Okay, someday I will.”

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– ETHAN ALANO

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– ETHAN ALANO
Mount Angel Seminary's 33 graduates concluded the academic year with the Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement Exercises on the morning of April 30 in the Abbey church. In addition to the graduates, the seminary and monastic communities were joined by many friends and family who filled the church for both celebrations.

The Most Rev. Peter Smith, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Portland, served as the principal celebrant for the Baccalaureate Mass, telling the graduates during the homily that they “have arrived at the starting line. Now the real race begins.” As the graduates processed into the Abbey church for Commencement, an organ fanfare echoed throughout the building, highlighting the exuberance of the day. Msgr. Joseph Betschart, president-rector, welcomed those gathered and led the invocation. In his address to the graduates, Msgr. Betschart encouraged them to “put your faith ever more firmly in the Lord, ask for the courage to answer his call and the perseverance to be his faithful witnesses to the ends of the earth as he sends you out on mission to serve in his vineyard just as he did the apostles some 2,000 years ago and all his disciples ever since.”

Deacon Adrian Sisneros, of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, gave the Senior Farewell address. Referring to the original pioneer monks of Mount Angel Abbey, he spoke about the virtue of “holy grit,” which he described as “a noble and holy quality of character that will elevate us toward the heights of heaven.”

Before giving his blessing to conclude the Commencement Exercises, Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, chancellor of Mount Angel Seminary, offered some final lessons to the graduates from the life of St. Benedict, reminding them that, “there’s a cloister in every heart and a stairway that leads to heaven.”

– ETHAN ALANO

Among the graduates of 2022 were seven deacons, from four dioceses. All were scheduled to be ordained priests during the months of May and June. Each shared memories of their time at Mount Angel as they concluded their seminary formation on the Hilltop.

Fr. Juan Carlos Reynoso Lozano
Diocese of Fresno
May 28, 2022
“I will carry with me the love of the liturgy and especially of the Holy Scriptures, of the Lectio Divina promoted by the monks and in particular by my spiritual guide. I want to transmit love for the Word of God and continuous meditation on it.”

Fr. Dalton Rogers
Diocese of Fresno
May 28, 2022
“I hope to carry Mount Angel’s vision of hospitality and communion into my priestly ministry, welcoming each person as Christ and leading them into deeper communion with God and with one another in God.”

Fr. Agustín Henderson
Archdiocese of Santa Fe
June 4, 2022
“The monastic atmosphere here has helped me develop habits for a life centered on the most important things. I hope to carry into my priesthood an intentional balance of prayer and work.”

Fr. Darrell J. Segura Jr.
Archdiocese of Santa Fe
June 4, 2022
“I hope to be a man of truth, who preaches the truth no matter what the cost. Mount Angel has taught me that silence in the face of wickedness and sin is compliance with the devil. To stand for truth is to stand with God.”

Fr. Adrian Sisneros
Archdiocese of Santa Fe
June 4, 2022
“This time of formation has given me the opportunity to not only reflect on the mystery of the radicality of the call to live as Christ lived but also to reflect on the radicality of the gift that we have all received, to respond to this radical call in our vocations.”

Fr. Tristan Dillon
Diocese of Salt Lake City
June 24, 2022
“I will most remember the amazing friendships that I have made in and around the seminary. They have supported and accompanied me along this journey, and I would not be here without them.”

Fr. Chad Hill
Archdiocese of Seattle
June 25, 2022
“I will most remember the community and friendships that I have made with the monks, faculty, staff, and with my fellow seminarians.”

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Msgr. Terrence Fitzgerald ‘62

60 Years of Priestly Ministry

Mount Angel Seminary expresses heartfelt congratulations to Msgr. Terrence Fitzgerald of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, who celebrated 60 years of priestly ministry May 12, 2022. An alumnus of Mount Angel Seminary, Msgr. Fitzgerald also served as president-rector from 1984 to 1990.

It's rare to see a Catholic priest as the subject of a contemporary Hollywood film, and rarer still when that priest is an alumnus of Mount Angel Seminary. Yet for those who knew Fr. Stuart Long, the subject of Sony Pictures’ “Father Stu,” produced by and starring Mark Wahlberg, the compelling nature of his story and the desire to tell it comes as no surprise. As in any creative work, the dynamism of the real person far exceeds the cinematic portrayal.

Before coming coming to Mount Angel Seminary in the fall of 2003, studying for the Diocese of Helena, Stuart Long had spent time with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, where he learned to embrace poverty for the sake of Christ. Mount Angel novice Fr. Jack Shrum, a classmate of Stuart, said that he “had a detachment from things that was truly impressive.” His generosity, recalls Fr. Jack, included buying laptop computers for seminarians who could not afford one themselves.

Fr. Basil Lawrence, OSB, another close friend of Fr. Stu, traveled with him and some other seminarians to Rome for Holy Week in 2005. Shortly before the trip, Stuart had injured his hip in a bicycling accident, which likely occurred as a result of the early stages of inclusion body myositis. Stuart's resilience to be fully present to his friends despite his physical discomfort foreshadowed his faithful perseverance in his future pastoral ministry despite the fatal progression of his disease. Fr. Basil remembers his friend Fr. Stu as, “a great man with a fantastic sense of humor, a gentleness of spirit, and a kindness that was unmatched.”

To convey a lifetime of adventure, heights of success and deep valleys of trial and darkness in a Hollywood film is always a challenge. Those who knew Stuart Long and have seen the film seem to agree on one point: the film's portrayal of Fr. Stu as a devoted priest and much-loved confessor while he lived with a painful and debilitating illness is spot on. The 124 minute film is rated R for language, which may be off-putting for some. Still, those who knew Fr. Stu say the film accurately portrays his experience of conversion, his immense generosity and deep love for Christ, and the bittersweet joys of life ministering the sacraments from his own sick-bed. Fr. Stu is a film to make us proud to embrace Stuart Long as an alumnus of Mount Angel Seminary. The Fr. Stu of the film, like Fr. Stu in “real life,” has much to be admired and emulated.

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Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary  
Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497

Saint Benedict Festival

July 9 | Noon – 4 pm

We celebrate the feast of St. Benedict each year with a festival held in early July. It’s an opportunity for people to spend an afternoon with the monks, beginning with noon prayer, followed by a buffet picnic and time together at Mount Angel. At 4 pm, monks and guests gather for a procession with the statue of St. Benedict into the church for vespers.

Tickets & Information
mountangelabbey.org/sbf

The festival is for adults 21+ and is pet free. All proceeds benefit the works of Mount Angel Abbey.

Abbey Bach Festival

July 27, 28, 29 | 5 – 9:30 pm

This year we celebrate the 51st anniversary of the Abbey Bach Festival with three evenings of classical music and a buffet picnic on the Abbey lawns. This year, performance highlights include Ilya Kaler on the violin, The Tempest Trio, with Alon Goldstein, Ilya Kaler, and Amit Peled, and the Ensemble Caprice, with Matthias Maute and Sophie Lariviere.

Tickets & Information
mountangelabbey.org/bach

Available for individual evenings or for the entire series of three evening concerts.

Join the monks of Mount Angel Abbey for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours

Weekdays

Vigils: 5:20 am  
Lauds: 6:30 am  
Holy Eucharist: 8:00 am  
Midday Prayer: Noon  
Vespers: 5:20 pm  
Compline: 7:30 pm

Sundays & Solemnities

Vigils: 7:30 pm (Saturday)  
Lauds: 6:40 am  
Holy Eucharist: 9:00 am  
Midday Prayer: Noon  
Vespers: 5:20 pm  
Compline: 8:00 pm

See mountangelabbey.org/live-stream schedule.

Was there a moment at Mount Angel that changed your life?

Many recall particular monks, spiritual directors or teachers whose words and presence made all the difference.

If mentors at Mount Angel have helped you or a loved one to grow in new ways and opened doors to God, please consider planning a gift or bequest to honor them. That way, others will have life-changing opportunities as well.

For information, contact Susan Gallagher
at 503.845.3030 or plannedgiving@mtangel.edu
 mtangel.gif legacy.com

Please note, when writing your will, please leave bequests and other estate gifts to: The Abbey Foundation of Oregon  
Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497  
(Tax ID number: 04-3703021)

Fr. Paschal Cheline, OSB
1936 – 2015