

Assumption

ABBEEY NEWSLETTER

Volume 50, Number 3

Richardton, ND 58652

July, 2022

Jubilarians of 2022

Father Damian (Leo) Dietlein was born on a farm near Braddock, ND, in 1932, the youngest of five siblings. Leo was his baptismal name. He grew up in the Dust Bowl and attended a one-room rural school two miles south of the farm. He walked there, except when the temperature fell below zero and his dad or older brother gave him a ride in a sleigh pulled by two horses. The teacher pushed Leo through several grades so that she could have two students in grade four. And in a one-room school house, younger students listen to what is being taught in the grades above. Leo did very well.

Life on the farm was not easy. He was already working a dump rake pulled by two horses when he was only seven years old. Three or four rode out together into the field on a farm wagon with a barrel of water, some oats for the horses, and a box lunch for all of them. One day he fell off the wagon and was taken to a Finnish farmer who had a good reputation as a bonesetter. But his bone had to be reset after Leo broke it again while playing.

As a child, Leo looked forward to threshing because threshers ate well. He learned



Father Damian Dietlein celebrates 70 years of profession and 65 years of ordination.

to shock to protect bundles from the rain and from sprouting on the ground. And with whatever abundance, the Dietlein farm seemed to grow rocks: there were always plenty to haul to several large rock piles, yet the ground always seemed to yield more, replacing what was picked up.

All through his youth he milked cows. The farmstead had no electricity or indoor plumbing until the mid-1940s when a 3000-Watt 110-volt gas generator was purchased for lights and the milking machines, and indoor plumbing was installed by digging a six-foot trench from the windmill to pipe water to the house.

In 1945 Leo followed his brother Francis to Assumption Abbey High School where he experienced a vigorous life of varsity sports and handball. And there was music: he played the clarinet in Abbey band and Abbey orchestra. In his freshman year of college he read Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* and decided that he had a vocation to be a Trappist. He was still very young, and his fervor soon dissipated. Instead, he entered the novitiate at Assumption Abbey and was given the name Damian. For two hours every morning and afternoon, he and the two others in his novitiate class—Raphael Stovik and Alcuin Muggli—excavated dirt under the church in what is

called the catacombs. Abbot Cuthbert planned to use the area under the high altar for more altars to be used by priests celebrating private Masses. The Trappist bug hit again at the end of the novitiate, just after a good retreat, when Frater Damian visited Abbot Cuthbert and told him that he did not believe it was possible to achieve a life of holiness at Assumption Abbey. Instead, he wanted to join the Trappists. Abbot Cuthbert regarded him silently for an uncomfortably long time and then began to laugh until he roared. Frater Damian fled his office and soon after made simple vows at Assumption Abbey in 1952.

He graduated from St. John's University, Collegeville with a double major in Philosophy and English Literature. Returning to Assumption Abbey he taught for a year while studying theology as a cleric. Abbot Ignatius asked him if he was planning on taking solemn vows. Frater Damian said, "Yes, I think so." Abbot Ignatius answered, "Good. I'm sending you to Rome to study Scripture."

Roman studies were difficult because in 1955 everything was taught in Latin. There were no exams except 15-minute orals at the end of the year, which meant that a student might know 90% of the material, but if asked only something from the 10% he didn't know, he would fail. Fortunately, Frater Damian did not fail, and while in Europe he was ordained a deacon at Sacro Speco, Subiaco Abbey, July, 1956, and ordained simplex at Assumption Abbey in July of 1957. Immediately, he was sent back to school and earned a



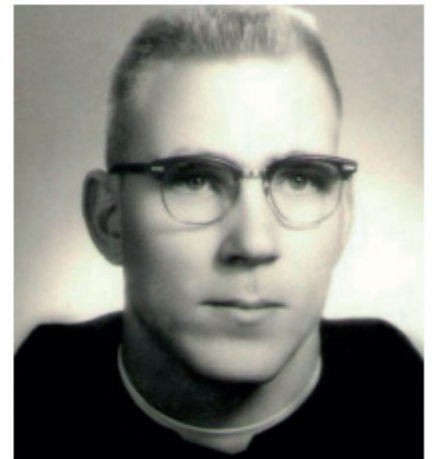
Ordination to the diaconate, July 1956: Damian Dietlein, Raphael Stovik and Alcuin Muggli.

Licentiate in Theology in 1959 from Sant' Anselmo in Rome, and then a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome in 1961. The summer of 1960 he was able to take a tour of Bible Lands, beginning with Egypt, then to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Greece.

After that, his career was mainly about teaching. Fr. Damian taught in the Assumption Abbey Seminary while it still existed (1961-1967), at Saint Teresa College in Winona, MN (1963-1964), at Assumption College, Richardton, ND (1967-1968), and at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad, IN (1968-2015). He became a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Catholic Biblical Association, and the Society of Biblical Literature. On sabbatical at the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, CA, he studied feminist hermeneutics-theology with Karen Torjesen, and this helped him to develop Feminist Biblical studies at St. Meinrad which were popular

with women lay-degree students. He became a member of the CBA Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics task force where he served as co-convener.

After his long and intense career at St. Meinrad, Fr. Damian melted back into the life at Assumption Abbey quite naturally, living a monastic life that enables God to shine through ordinary living. He gives beautiful and thought-provoking sermons for the monks and has become a pillar of the community with his wise words at chapter and elsewhere. May God bless him for his many faithful years of service.





Abbot Daniel Maloney celebrates sixty years of monastic profession.

Abbot Daniel Maloney was professed on July 11, 1962 and therefore celebrates a diamond anniversary this year. He was born on November 24, 1941, to Leo and Eileen (Kain) Maloney and given the name Leo at his Christmas baptism that same year on December 25. He came to the Abbey School from Starkweather, ND, and graduated at the top of his class in 1959. He continued to excel at studies for the next decade, earning a B.A. in philosophy with honors from St. John's University (then College), Latin studies during the summer of 1966 at Georgetown University, four years of theology at St. Meinrad Seminary, and went off to Fordham University in the Bronx for an M.A. in philosophy in 1968. He studied again at Georgetown for a summer of German, and then became a Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy at Fordham in 1970. After he returned to the Abbey he was prior for a few years, and in 1977 was appointed superior of a Montana foundation that Assumption Abbey proposed to

establish in Billings, Montana. When the Abbey had to scrap those plans at the eleventh hour, he became chaplain of Mercy Hospital in Devils Lake, the very hospital where he was born. Then, in 1980, Abbot Lawrence appointed him to head a retreat program at the Abbey. He also appointed him as half-time professor of philosophy at the University of Mary (then Mary College) in 1980. In 1981 he was named diocesan liaison for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In 1983 he became chaplain for the Monastery of the Annunciation, Benedictine Sisters in Bismarck, ND, teaching philosophy part time. In 1984 he became co-vicar of Religious in the Bismarck Diocese. When he was elected abbot of Assumption Abbey in 2017, he had been chaplain for the Benedictine Sisters in Bismarck for nearly 35 years.

Abbot Daniel may look detached, and at times even disinterested, but nothing much escapes his attention, and he has a magnificent memory for details. Assumption Abbey monks greatly appreciate his steady hand and even temper. He makes no secret of relying on his Senior Council, and his dutiful Prior, Subprior, Business Manager and Liturgical MC. Abbot Daniel's door is always open when he is home, and he is an excellent listener, practiced after years of counseling as chaplain of the local Beginning Experience, a program for those grieving various losses, often divorce.

Abbot Daniel can often be found in the Abbey lunchroom, at ease in conversation with every one of the monks, and an interesting conversationalist.



Abbot Daniel and Sister Paula Larson, prioress of the Richardton Benedictine Sisters.

It is not to be lost on us that the ninth abbot of Assumption Abbey should sprout from Starkweather, near Devils Lake, territory of the very first missions established by our founder and Abbot, Bishop Vincent Werhle, back in the late 1890s. Things have come full circle, as they say. May God continue to bless and prosper our abbot, giving him many more years as leader of this monastic community.



Abbot Daniel in the Abbey church for the celebration of the Eucharist.



Padre Manuel Cely Silva celebrates his silver jubilee of profession this year.

Father Manuel Cely Silva has been the prior, the head of our priory in Bogotá, Colombia, since 2017. He has become the keystone of that religious community through unsteady times, and we have a great deal to be thankful for in him.

Manuel was born in Floresta, Colombia, on October 10, 1970. He entered our *Monasterio Benedictino de Tibatí* and professed vows there on January 17, 1997. He knew virtually no English before spending nine months at Assumption Abbey. He became proficient enough to do his seminary studies at St. John's University and Seminary in Collegeville, MN. Shortly after returning from St. John's "Early Christian World" study abroad, he was ordained a deacon at Assumption Abbey in 2004. He was ordained to the priesthood in Colombia in 2005. Father Manuel became Formation Director, Liturgy Director, and he taught religion in both of *Tibatí's* schools, *San Carlos* and *San Benito*. He was appointed subprior in 2010 and in 2017 Abbot Brian appointed him prior of that house. He has held the job ever since.

While he was still at St. John's, teachers were much impressed with him. One of them wrote, in his end-of-year evaluation:

His academic performance has consistently been impressive. He is a careful reader, a critical thinker, and a theologian with a good eye for what is truly essential. He is consistently successful in overcoming the language barrier and sharing his experiences and insights with his peers. Indeed, his academic performance has probably been the best of all the students I have had who are not native English speakers.

His priesthood is exercised in a variety of settings: school teaching, school administration, work in neighborhood parishes, formation work in the monastery, and, last but not least, administration of a monastery. Amidst the rich diversity of those ministries, what sustains Father Manuel is life in community where everyone works together. Also sustaining him is his sense of humor, well-known to his confreres at Assumption Abbey. While he was living with us, he went with the monks to help the Annunciation Benedictine Sisters move into their new home in 2000; it began to snow, and that was the first time Manuel saw snow. We had to stop long enough to give him a chance to play in it.

Father Manuel is an avid supporter of the *San Carlos* school sports programs: basketball, volleyball and soccer. He attends as many games as he can. He also plays basketball with the alumni once a week. He makes himself available to students and parents and they greatly appreciate what he does. May God bless this fine priest and prior and give him many more years of prayer and service.



Manuel climbed a spruce tree in the east yard while he lived with us at Assumption Abbey. No doubt the view was splendid.

FEBRUARY CHRONICLE

February at the Abbey had COVID stamped all over it. Brothers Benet, John Patrick and Stephen tested positive and were quarantined until the 4th, then on the 7th Father James, Brothers Jacob and Maximilian and Candidate Chris came up positive and had to be isolated. On the 19th, Brother Bertrand was about to head home for his mother's 100th birthday and took a test to make sure he was COVID free but tested positive, so he was shut up, too. ❖

Because monks living on the 3rd floor of the monastery do not have private bathrooms, anyone up there testing positive had to move down to the main floor to hole up in a guest room where

their meals were delivered—usually by the good prior or the generous kitchen manager—until they tested negative again. And so Main Floor East became COVID Corridor. Even after emerging from quarantine, monks were told to mask up for five additional days. ❖

The Senior Council met on February 7th and made adjustments to parish schedules and groups utilizing the Abbey facilities for less exposure. Groups were to eat their meals downstairs and away from the monks. The Easter Open House was canceled, along with the spring Oblate retreat and our hosting the Southwest Choir Competition, all because of the COVID surge. ❖

Someone posted a note for a COVID Cocktail, a nutritional bundle to provide maximum protection from the virus: 3000 mg of Vitamin C, 5000 IU of Vitamin D3, and 50 mg of Zinc to be taken daily, plus 50 mg of Quercetin to be taken twice a day. (Shake, do not stir. Serve on the rocks.) ❖

February 2: Father Julian returns from five weeks of mission work in Montana, a big wide-open place west of North Dakota where one can get lost in a hurry, but he grew up there so he knows his way around. ❖

February 11: A generous donor leaves 200 pounds of beef on our doorstep, made up of brisket, ribs and soup bones. Well . . . perhaps not literally on our doorstep but there are a lot of doors around here. The donor was one of Father Gerald's friends from Killdeer, ND. It was said of Father Gerry that he was often late for Mass because of his addiction to golfing ❖

From the Archives:



Brother Conrad Schaeffbauer's goats were trained to pull a cart, as shown in this photo from 1936. The couple in the cart have not been identified. The stools on which they are seated still exist and are in the Abbey sacristy. Father Julius Locnikar is looking on from the entryway. He was the nephew of Abbot Bernard Locnikar of St. John's (1848-1894). He took vows at St. John's in 1901, was ordained there, and was assigned to various MN posts until 1921 when he was recalled to St. John's Abbey to serve as procurator. In 1923 he became pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Garrison, ND. And in 1928, when St. Mary's Abbey opened again as Assumption Abbey, he became its procurator and remained in that post until 1951. He did not transfer his vows to Assumption until 1951. Every autumn at harvest Julius was a popular man because daily he carried lunch out to the field mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

February 13: The Super Bowl LVI party is also a donor's generous gift, Jimmy John's sandwiches that are "Freaky Fresh & Freaky Fast"™. The monks are very grateful. ❖

February 18: Abbot Daniel leaves for a gathering of abbots at St. Joseph's Abbey near Covington, LA. Benedictine monks there run a college seminary, along with their "pennies for bread" program, baking around 2,000 loaves each week for distribution to the needy. After Hurricane Katrina, the monks used the many trees knocked down by the storm for building caskets to sell to the public. They were immediately sued by the Louisiana Board of Funeral Directors because it was a crime for anyone but licensed funeral directors to sell a casket in the state. The 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the funeral directors, protecting

"a vital core principle, the taking of wealth and handing to others when it comes not as economic protectionism in service of the public good but as economic protection of the rulemakers' pockets." Wait . . . so, the monks are, like, Robin Hoods? ❖

February 22: Our venerable prior is on the board of the Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center, a critical access hospital with three clinics, one in Elgin, another in Glen Ullin, and a third right here in Richardton. The Jacobson Memorial made the list of the top 100 critical access hospitals in the country, of which there are 1,350. Of the top 100 in North Dakota, four of them are within 80 miles of the Abbey. ❖

February 21: A typical winter's day in ND. The temperature hangs around -10° Fahrenheit all day. ❖

MARCH CHRONICLE

March 1: The month begins with a line of monk-visitors to the abbot's office, each carrying his Lenten *bona opera*—or list of good works—for the abbot's approval. According to the Rule of St. Benedict, a monk decides what to do for Lent, over and above the usual prayer and fasting, and obtains the abbot's permission, "for what is done without the consent of one's spiritual father will not be accounted meritorious, but presumptuous and vain-glorious. Therefore it is with the abbot's consent that all things are to be done." Besides, an abbot is likely to weed out dubious sacrifices, such as giving up Brussels sprouts. ❖

March 2: With the distribution of ashes we observe a "desert" day, which is meant to be a day of retreat, a day devoted especially to prayer. The abbot gives two conferences strategically scheduled midway through the morning work period and the afternoon work period because some monks find it nearly impossible *not* to work. Of course, some work has to be done regardless of desert days, but sitting still in prayer can often give one the jitters. Mr. Devil whispers in the ear, "You're wasting your precious time praying. Get up and DO something!" ❖

March 7: Brother Stephen begins the 2022 garden season by planting seeds under grow lights in the basement of the garage. He starts with leeks, onions and asparagus. Much more to come. ❖



Development Office

Br. Michael Taffe, O.S.B.

We are so grateful to donors who contributed to our kitchen project. The ceiling was long overdue for fresh paint. We contracted Joans Painting in Dickinson, ND, and she did a marvelous job of priming and finishing the ceiling without dripping paint into the soup. Thank you, Joan!



Two of our cooks, Nancy Box and Darla Conitz, admire the kitchen ceiling, newly painted.



Brother Symeon Rubbelke in the courtyard, concerned about the condition of the columns supporting the walkway roof.

The courtyard columns and walkway ceiling still need to be painted, and we are waiting for warmer weather to do so, but your kind contributions cover the cost for that area of the Abbey which is a favorite of guests and visitors. God bless you for your concern and good will! □

March 9-12: We are blessed by a visit of the St. John's Abbey juniors along with their vocation director. Brs. Jeremy Welters, Félix Mencias and David Allen are the juniors, while Fr. Michael Peterson is the vocation director. They wanted to see how Benedictine monastic life is lived way out here in western ND. Among other things, they went for a frosty hike with Br. Placid on the frigid open prairie, a place quite unlike the forested area of St. John's in Minnesota. ❖

March 11: The news is announced that there *will indeed* be a Junior Formation Seminar this year, after two of them had been cancelled due to COVID. Belmont Abbey in North

Carolina will host, and Brs. Joseph and Stephen will journey there to take advantage of a country-wide gathering of OSB juniors, along with some instructors to give them classes in monastic subjects that they very probably would not have had otherwise. ❖

March 14: A community meeting is held to discuss and answer three questions concerning COVID that the congregation has asked. What are three lessons, both individual and communal, that have been learned? What are three challenges to living monastic life in a rapidly changing culture? And what are three areas in which the congregation can offer greater

assistance to member monasteries? Good questions, and there were a great variety of answers, leaving the abbot to decide which were important enough to convey to the congregation. ❖

March 15: Br. Stephen checks the fire extinguishers throughout the entire campus. That's over fifty of them! ❖

March 17: Abbot Daniel begins his annual visit of each monk in his room as part of Lent, and part of the protocol for Praesidium accreditation which the Abbey has held since 2008. Some monks do the only—and therefore the yearly—cleaning of their rooms before he arrives. ❖

March 21: Saint Benedict's Day, or the solemnity of the passing of St. Benedict (as opposed to July 11 which is the solemnity of St. Benedict, Patriarch of Western Monasticism) is celebrated with beautiful liturgy, and a wonderful supper, with a wide variety of salads, cooked dishes and dessert, even when the day's reading from the Holy Rule is about having only two cooked dishes. ❖

APRIL CHRONICLE

April 2: Those little low-lying Pasque flowers are appearing on the prairie and have shown up in the community room in a small vase. This is a sure sign of sprung springage, or springing spring, or springly springery. ❖

April 5: A new Abbey wine is in the process of being approved. (There must be a board of label approvers somewhere in Cali-

fornia.) It is a sweet red that will be called *San Carlita*, a nod to 62 years of Assumption Abbey monks being in Bogotá. *San Carlita* is the name given to a student or graduate of *Colegio San Carlos*, the school run by the monks. Hopefully, no one will conclude that students and graduates of the school are winos. ❖

April 9: Brother Placid is out in a blind on this frosty morning watching the mating dance of the sharp-tailed grouse. They spread their wings and stomp the grass in an area known as a lek. That way the female is able to choose whatever male she fancies. Then, the fun is over. She goes off and lays her eggs, hatching them out and bringing them up all by herself. ❖

April 10: Palm Sunday and Father Boniface and Brother Placid are at the Social Center demonstrating the art of palm weaving. Most people forget from year to year, but these two have it in their blood. ❖

April 11: Sister Kathleen Atkinson drives out to the Abbey with her friend Rev. Zanne Ness to tell us all about Ministry on the Margins, a Bismarck-Mandan organization to relieve hunger and homelessness. To learn more, visit:

ministryonthemargins.com ❖

April 13: A big snow storm hits and there is no morning cook. Brother Alban jumps in to make breakfast. Meanwhile, Brother Jacob goes out in the 4-wheel pickup to pick up the lunch and supper cooks. In bringing them home again, he gets stuck. ❖

April 14: Brother Placid brings out the farm tractor to

pull out the pickup. Interstate and local traffic is at a standstill, and Father Thomas—pastor—must cancel Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies at St. Mary, St. Stephen and St. Thomas. Twenty-five years ago the same thing happened during Easter Week. Back then, more than 40 people were stranded at the Abbey when a Greyhound bus couldn't move, and the electricity went out. Fortunately, the kitchen ovens and stoves run on gas. ❖

April 17: Easter Sunday—alleluia—and many hands in the kitchen help prepare the festal meal of turkey, rice, red cabbage, Greek salad, squash bread and lemon pie. Brother Gregory can't say, "We never get lemon pie!" ❖

April 23: The temperature is dropping and it's raining. The ice freezes on the roads and trees. The result is no travel advised. Father Thomas cancels weekend Masses again. Many branches come down, and no cooks can come in, so Br. Alban must cook again! ❖

April 30: Brother Symeon Rubbelke graduates from the U. of Mary with a BA! □



Brother Louie Bachand with fresh wax beans from the garden.

Benedictine Saints

Saint Lidanus of Sezze, Italy, was born in 1026 in the Abruzzi Mountains and placed in the care of the Benedictine monks of Monte Cassino when he was nine years old, which was common practice among the nobility of those days, like sending your kid off to boarding school. When he was seventeen his parents died, leaving him a fortune and he used it to drain the Pontine Marshes at Sezze to build an abbey dedicated to St. Cecilia. He assumed the role of abbot and guided his monks on the narrow path that leads to glory for seventy-two years, dying of natural causes in 1118 at the age of ninety-two. Who said people in the Middle Ages did not live long? His abbey was destroyed in the 13th century but not before his bones were removed to the cathedral in Sezze and placed under the high altar. His feast day is July 2.

August 11 is the feast of Saint Agilberta of Jouarre who became abbess there in 660. The Abbey of Jouarre still exists despite a rough history. At the time of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572, the abbess, Charlotte of Bourbon, became a Protestant and "escaped" from the abbey in a cart of hay. She fled to Germany where she became the third wife of William the Silent of Orange-Nassau, and thus a founder of the royal family of The Netherlands. During World War II a nun of Jouarre—a medical doctor—took refuge in the bell tower of the abbey for as long as the Nazis occupied France. She had to do this



Published Quarterly in January, April, July and October
for friends of Assumption Abbey.

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Assumption Abbey Newsletter

P.O. Box A

Richardton, ND 58652-0901

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because she was an American, an enemy of the Germans. When France was liberated, she founded an abbey in the USA in appreciation for America's part in the war. That abbey is Regina Laudis in CT. Read all about them at:

abbeyofreginalaudis.org.

On to another saint. In 984, His Majesty King Edgar of England abducted an innocent nun of Wilton Abbey, and the result of their union was Saint Edith (Eadgyth) who, as an infant, went back to the abbey with her mother who continued her life as a nun. The king, in reparation, did not wear his crown for seven years, and supported the abbey financially with money and land grants.

Edith was educated by the nuns and eventually became abbess. Fast forward to 1539: Cecily Bodenham, the last abbess of Wilton, surrendered the convent to the commissioners of King Henry VIII, and the site was granted to Sir William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who turned it into Wilton House, still used today by his descendants. One wonders if they celebrate the feast day of St. Edith on September 16. □



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