

PRAYER AND WORK

The Romanesque, sandstone Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln was built by monks and area townspeople between 1899 and 1907.



BLADE PHOTOS/DAVE ZAPOTOSKY



Above: Monks including Brother Bede Na, front left, and Brother Andrew Zimmermann, right, share the sign of peace during Mass in the Archabbey Church.

Left: Brother Francis de Sales Wagner, a junior monk from Maumee, wears civilian clothes while watering plants in the greenhouse, one of several jobs he holds at the monastery.

Monks seek unity, balance in daily life

The monks of St. Meinrad



By DAVID YONKE
BLADE RELIGION EDITOR

ST. MEINRAD, Ind. — The Benedictine monks of St. Meinrad Archabbey leave the secular world behind and devote themselves to the work of God, a devotion that they practice both inside and outside the walls of the church.

The Benedictine motto of *Ora et Labora*, Latin for “Prayer and Work,” serves as a reminder that God is present everywhere. The monks seek to do God’s work when they gather in the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, and when they leave for their jobs.

The 100 monks at St. Meinrad — including seven from northwest Ohio — work as professors, gardeners, stained-glass artists, editors, potters, musicians, tailors, carpenters, and more.

They start their day early, many getting up at 3 or 4 a.m. for “quiet time” before the church bells begin ringing at 5:15 to call them to lauds and vigils.

The bells “announce that this community of monks gathers in the early hours of the day, before dawn, to pray for a world still slumbering,” said Brother Denis Robinson, subprior of the archabbey.

The six bells in the twin towers are again rung by the monks before Mass at 7:30 a.m., midday prayers at noon, and vespers at 5 p.m., setting the rhythm of the day at the monastery.

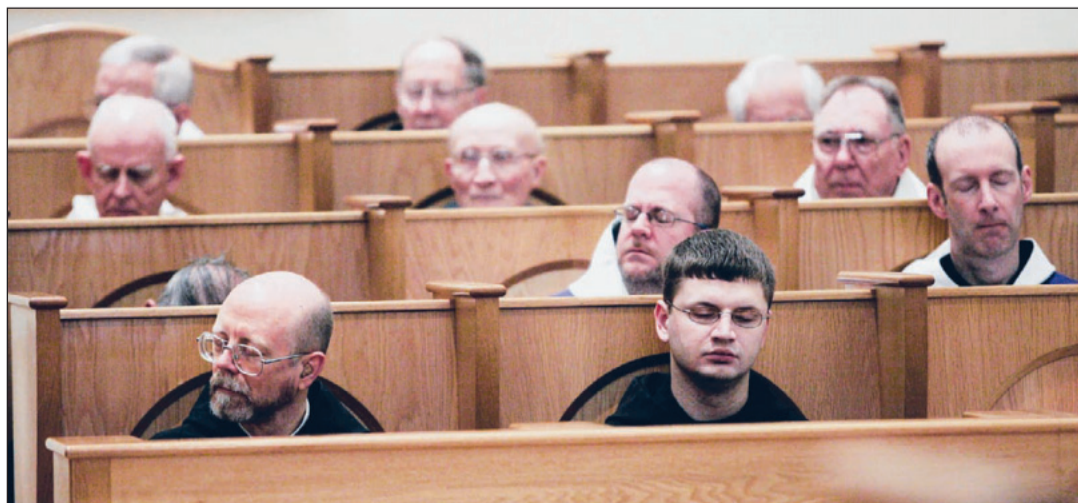
“Bells become symbols of our lives, marked off as hours, as days, as seasons flowing into one another, pacing off the span of years,” Brother Denis said.

St. Meinrad’s is named for a 9th-century German monk who lived as a hermit near Lake Zurich. After word of his holiness spread, the monk moved further into the woods to avoid visitors and built a hermitage at Einsiedeln, Switzerland, where years later a monastery would be built.

The Indiana abbey was founded in 1854 by two Benedictine monks from the mother abbey in Einsiedeln, where the government was threatening to close Catholic monasteries. St. Meinrad’s was elevated to archabbey by Pope Pius XII on its centenary in 1954.



Above: Eighty-eight-year-old Brother Benedict Barthel, who has been at St. Meinrad since 1938, walks through the slype, or hallway, connecting the monastery and Archabbey Church. Left: Monks sit in rows of oak choir stalls aligned on two sides of the Archabbey Church. Novice and junior monks must sit in the front rows while senior monks sit in the top sections.



Contact David Yonke at:
dyonke@theblade.com
or 419-724-6154.