

# Mount Saviour Chronicle

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR  
231 MONASTERY ROAD, PINE CITY, NEW YORK 14871

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## From a Talk by Reverend Father Damasus Winzen Given to the Monks of Vina in 1966

We were founded in 1950. You know, the whole thing developed this way...For a long time, our abbot had the idea of maybe making a monastic foundation in the United States because he had started a liturgical academy at Maria Laach where the great majority of students were Americans. That called his attention to the fact that there was a great openness and eagerness in the States, especially for the liturgy. So he was kind of toying with the idea of a foundation in the States in case things would get bad in Germany. Ever since Hitler came into power, the existence of the monasteries was more and more precarious.

In 1934 it became more evident that Hitler did not want to have anything to do with the Catholic Church. Therefore the Abbot decided to send the prior, Albert Hammenstede, to the States to see about the possibility of a foundation. They were looking around in Jefferson City, Missouri, and there seemed to be the possibility maybe to form a chicken farm and he was to can chickens. Fr. Albert was very enthusiastic about the situation in the States and he was very eager to have this idea of a foundation go through. Fr. Albert sent a description of this property to the Chapter in Maria Laach and they nearly fell off their benches thinking that the monks would start canning chickens. So it kind of fell through.

I belonged to the minority right from the start because I was in St. Anselm's, and I made my studies there and there I learned to know the American students. I always have instinctively had the feeling that the United States would be a tremendous opportunity for the Church and for the development of the Church. And so, when it came to the point that our abbot heard that Hitler had declared war on Poland in 1938, then he called me in.

I was involved in the Catholic Student Movement in Germany. Maria Laach got into a conflict with Hitler because he had forbidden all activity among the students and any student associations that were not National Socialist. But we had continued anyhow, and in November 1937 we had a meeting of all the leaders of the Catholic Student Movement in Cologne. I went there. It was the first time that I—during the Nazi time—had something written in a manuscript and had typed my talk. It was about Göring and about National Socialism and its interrelation to communism and to the totalitarian movement of the time, so it was very dangerous stuff, as you say. I had it in a briefcase. I remember this thing still as though it were yesterday. That was a turning point in my history and I didn't know it.



And so we had this meeting and we started out, you know, with singing, as we usually did, and then I said to the fellows there—about 25 student leaders from

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 17-20, 2020	17 <sup>th</sup> Annual Knitters' Retreat Weekend
May 3, 2020	18 <sup>th</sup> Annual Damasus Winzen Memorial Lecture with Father Richard Vosco
May 29-30, 2020	Annual Sheep Shearing Days
August 16, 2020	Dedication Day Ceremonies
Oct. 15-18, 2020	Oblates Retreat

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## NEWS

For updated and expanded notes visit the Monthly News page on our website: [www.msaviour.org](http://www.msaviour.org)

**10/ 21/18** Dr. Anthony Cernera talk on migrants/refugees

**11/7/18** Acceptance of Mount Saviour into the Subiaco Cassinese Congregation

**11/11/18** Ms. Pat Brisson spiritual poetry reading session

**2/25–3/1** Community retreat given by Father John Denburger, O.C.S.O.



**3/3/19** Talk by Kathlyn Tolbert, Washington Post reporter, on Japanese War Brides

**3/20/19** Brother Thomas Enzweiler received as novice



**4/14/19** First of 131 lambs born this year

**4/24/19** Brother Mark Lau first renewal of vows

**5/5/19** Sister Julia Upton RSM Damasus Winzen Lecture presenter



**5/24–25/19** Annual sheep shearing days



Br. Bruno and Helper at Shearing

**8/11/19** Dedication Day with musical presentation by flute player Rhonda Larson



Dedication Day with Rhonda Larson

**8/17/19** New Memorial Panel for the deceased brothers of Mount Saviour installed in Crypt

**8/24/19** Brother James Cronen, 92, died in the 70th year of his profession

**10/6/19** Sister Mary Donald Corcoran, O.S.B. speaking on Benedictine Wisdom

**10/17–21/19** Oblates Retreat



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the Rhineland—I said, “Now let’s sit around this table so that you can take notes.” The idea was, we wanted to prepare the work for during the winter in the various groups that we had. At the moment when we were rising and gathering around the table, the door opened and two Gestapo fellows came in. They had these medals around their necks and they were kind of swinging them around—like this—and they said, “Now, you probably know who we are!” and I said yes, I had a very good idea, and they said, “You don’t mind that we sit at your meeting and hear what you say?” and I said no, they would be welcome.

And so, one was sitting next to me and the other fellow was sitting further down the table. I had this briefcase with this talk about Göring and about National Socialism and the whole thing, I had it in my hands. For the moment I was thinking, “What should I do? Should I let it quietly disappear under the table? Or should I simply keep it there and put it on the table?” It was a kind of fateful decision, you see. So I simply, so I put it right there on the table, between him and myself, and then I started. And he asked me, “Now please, what was your idea to talk about now?” I said I wanted to explain the Mass of the coming Sunday. This was Saturday. The Mass of the Sunday – it was the 18th Sunday after Pentecost. And then—he didn’t know what Mass was because those Gestapo fellows, those they used in the Rhineland, came from East Prussia, you see, so he didn’t know what Mass was and so on—so I started out about the Mass, and he began fiddling around. He wasn’t too interested in my topic. Then he took up a paper. We couldn’t have any books any more. We had just mimeographed materials that were kind of lying around, there were songs and things like that—absolutely innocent, you know, in nature, and all religious. And he started picking up one thing, looking at it, putting it down; taking another thing, looking at it, putting it into his pocket. And I was thinking, “Now what is he going to do about this briefcase?”

I talked and talked and talked – you know I could do that already at that time—and I thought then to myself, “Let’s see who has the longer breath.” And then finally it was too long, and he interrupted and said, “Now excuse me, I think I have heard enough.” I had explained the Mass piece by piece, and you can do that in a very extensive way. So in the end he called an end to it and then he took all our names, and then he disappeared. Then we sent two fellows from the group after them to see if they had left the house or not, to make sure. As soon as they left the house, we opened the briefcase,

took all these things out and tore them to pieces. And we flushed the whole business. That was enough to give an indication of what was in store...

So in the beginning of 1938 there was the first kind of sign of the approaching disaster. All the monks of Maria Laach were listed by what our degrees were, how much we were serviceable in the army, and so on. We were practically already enlisted. Then the Abbot heard that the war against Czechoslovakia was planned for September. So the Abbot said this is now the time for me to leave. He wanted Maria Laach to continue, but didn’t want to give the impression that we, in any way, were leaving the country. So it was only myself leaving Maria Laach, and then the Abbot said I could pick somebody who would go with me, and I had this friend of mine, Fr. Leo from Gerleve in Westphalia, and I went there. We left in late August and came to the States in September.

I still remember the time. It was a beautiful day on the 9th of September, a marvelous fall day, and in the morning New York, and the skyscrapers, and the morning sun hitting them like jewels, all over the place—oh my, it was beautiful! And these two fellows next to us, one of them said to the other, “Oh boy, home. Home,” they said. And we were a little sad you know, but I don’t mean we were disappointed or anything like that in the country. We were very elated. The first day in the United States. I shall never forget it.

THE OBLATES OF MOUNT SAVIOUR BLOG  
WE WELCOME NEW OBLATES!

<http://oblates-of-mount-saviour.blog/blog/>

#### CANA

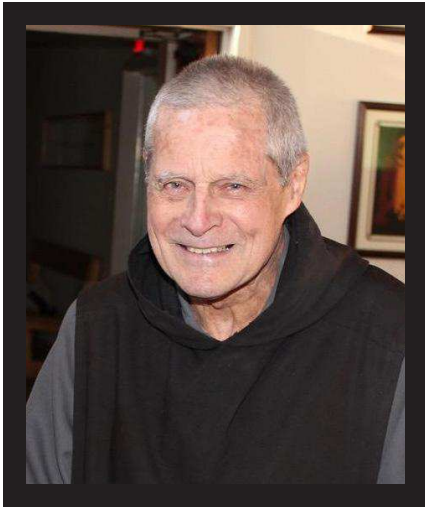
When Mary said to Jesus, “There’s no wine.  
They have no wine,” she told him, “This is it:  
Your hidden life is over. Now acquit  
The glory you’ve been given. Time to shine.”  
And Jesus said to her, “My time is mine.  
I’ll do a miracle when I see fit.”

Then, trusting in his blessed mother’s wit,  
The choicest vintage earth has seen divined.  
And Mary treasured in her heart that then  
The world would never be the same again.  
And we who to our hidden life hold fast,  
Afraid of where God’s grace might bid us go,  
Must, heeding Mary, let our lives be cast  
Into a world whose wine is running low.

- By Oblate Jeffrey Essmann



## Brother James Cronen Monk of Mount Saviour



**Birth: June 19, 1927**

**Profession: September 11, 1948**

**Ordination: May 29, 1954**

**Death: August 24, 2019**

New Jersey. He earned four letters in athletics in high school and was voted Most Popular Student. He considered becoming a coach, but instead followed the path to monastic life, becoming a Novice with the Benedictines at Saint Paul's Abbey in New Jersey in 1947. He was professed on September 11, 1948, and ordained a priest on May 29, 1954. Brother James began taking his vacations at Mount Saviour in the late 50's. In 1961 he wrote the Subprior, Father Gregory, "I have long desired to live the monastic life pure and simple and, not finding it in Saint Paul's, would like to seek it elsewhere." He expressed his satisfaction with all that he found at Mount Saviour and asked his Abbot to go there for a year of trial. His Abbot agreed, five years later. In 1967 he was allowed to transfer his vow of stability to Mount Saviour. He became secretary to Father Damasus, choir master, novice master and Subprior. He assumed the role of Prior in 2008 after the retirement of Father Martin Boler.

Brother James and music were matched for life. He was monastery choir director for many years, a classical pianist, transcribed numerous Introits used at Sunday Mass, enjoyed watching Lawrence Welk reruns in his later years, and was taken weekly to Nazareth College's music classes while with the Sisters in Rochester. He was a lover of nature and of animals, and was clearly in his element as he worked on the monastery farm team. The sheep dogs enjoyed him as their best friend. His regularity in monastic observance extended to the regularity of his menu when cooking for monks and guests. If some-

Brother James, age 92, monk of Mount Saviour Monastery, died peacefully in his sleep on Aug. 24, 2019, at the Sisters of Saint Joseph Motherhouse in Rochester, New York, where he had been living and receiving excellent care since 2016.

Brother James, the son of George and Olive (née Duffy) Cronen, was born on June 19, 1927, in East Orange,

one didn't know what day it was, it could easily be figured out by what was being served. He was also regular in his homilies, which induced some monks to lapse into reverie as he frequently waxed poetic about his favorite themes: 4th century doctrinal controversies and the early Church and Monastic Fathers. In a 2008 letter to Brother James, the Provincial Superior of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur recalled Father Damasus saying to the sisters as he saw Brother James approaching the group "That brother is ALL MONK." And so he was—with all the good that implies. His warm smile and gentle presence will be greatly missed. Please pray for him.

### RECOMMENDED BOOKS READ IN OUR REFECTORY

*Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life* by Sister Joan Chittister

*A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sister Maura* by Eileen Markey

*Road to Valor: A True Story of World War II Italy, the Nazis, and the Cyclist Who Inspired a Nation* by Aili McConnon and Andres McConnon

*Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty: An Intimate Portrait of My Grandmother* by Kate Hennessy

*A Sense of Wonder: The World's Best Writers on the Sacred, the Profane, and the Ordinary*, edited by Brian Doyle

*At Play in the Lions' Den: A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan* by Jim Forest

*When Jesus Became God* by Richard E. Rubenstein

*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson

*The Paradise Man: According to Thomas Merton* by Linhxuan Vu

*The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown

*Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson

*Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Humanity and Christian Maturity* by Ronald Rolheiser

*Please remember us in prayer and, if possible, also in your estate planning and will.*

Our legal title is:

**The Benedictine Foundation of New York State**