

INSIGHT

by FATHER JOHN P. BRADLEY, PRESIDENT

This year, 1976, we celebrate the Abbey's Centennial Year. One hundred years of dedicated service in what truly must be one of the most unlikely places in the entire United States for a Catholic institution to be founded and to manage to endure for half as long as our Nation! This aspect of the Abbey's history never fails to fascinate me and has, of course, particular relevance during this Centennial Year, especially for those of us in a position to know the struggle and sacrifice that has gone into making its continued existence possible.

While recognizing and admiring the sacrifices and dedication of many people, Benedictines and others, that made this possible, it seems to me that the only adequate explanation of the Abbey's being able to celebrate its Centennial is simply because God in His Providence wants this institution to be here. Founded in response to the offer of a thousand-acre plantation, in an area that even one hundred years later has a very small Catholic population, this institution had to go it alone. Alone, that is, except for the all-important fact that in the mysterious design of Divine Providence, the Abbey had and has a purpose to fulfill here.

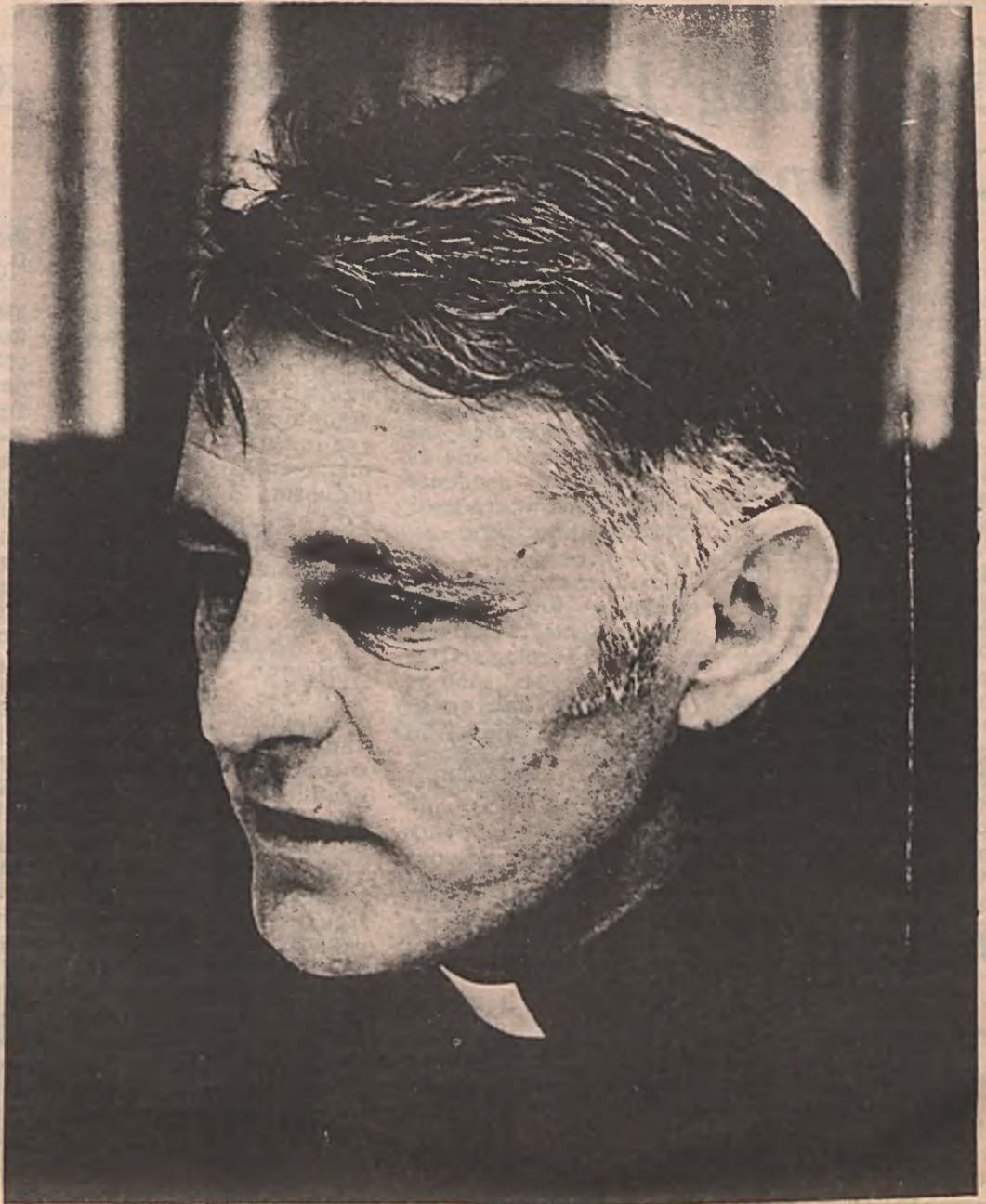
For a proper appreciation of what I have said, some familiarity with the history of the Abbey is needed: how the ten wonderful Benedictine monks who came here 100 years ago had to dig up the clay, make the bricks with their own hands, and build the buildings that are now a hundred years old; how their successors had to work and sacrifice to sustain the institution those pioneer monks had established. But since I am not the one to write about the history of the Abbey, that fascinating subject can only be peripheral to this article. The major thrust of this article focuses on the decision to launch during this Centennial Year the first major fund-raising campaign in the history of the College.

At the April meeting of the College's Board of Advisors in 1975, the proposal was made that we should prepare for a major fund-raising campaign to coincide with the College's Centennial Year, and that this campaign should be conducted with the assistance of fund-raising counsel, just as other colleges throughout the nation have done for many years. Acting on this, I proposed at the next meeting of the Board of Advisors in October, 1975, that Ketchum, Inc., a highly reputable fund-raising firm, be engaged to conduct the campaign. This proposal was adopted and in November, 1975, the representative of this firm took up his duties at the College and initiated the pre-campaign process to discover if we had the potential support to justify the mounting of a full-scale drive. After some two-and-a-half months of this process, it was decided that, though the Abbey had relatively few regular donors compared with other colleges, there was sufficient justification for undertaking a full-scale campaign.

So now Belmont Abbey College finds itself embarked on its first ever major fund-raising campaign, an event that for most other colleges throughout the nation has been for many years a normal and regular part of their operation. The basic reason, of course, why this is abnormal for the Abbey, yet normal for other colleges, springs from what I have indicated above: the people to whom we are appealing for substantial donations are necessarily located in our local area and, of course, at the same time supporting other private colleges throughout North Carolina. When I tell you that during the Abbey's hundred years' history, whatever financial support it has received has for the most part come from wonderful non-Catholic men of means who are also at the same time supporting their own denominational colleges, you will understand why I often say that the Abbey understood ecumenism long before the Second Vatican Council talked about it.

As we prepare for this Centennial fund-raising campaign, we must emphasize the importance of being able to tell potential large contributors that a significant percentage of our alumni contribute whatever they can, thus showing their appreciation of the College. It is utterly important that we have a respectable percentage of alumni donors. In checking out this statistic, I found that the Abbey has an embarrassingly low percentage of alumni donors.

In seeking an explanation for this, no doubt a number of reasons can be found for this low statistic. For instance, the Abbey has never had the funds to employ a



Rev. John P. Bradley, President

full-time alumni director who would constantly keep in touch with alumni. Again, I sometimes think that the problem may have something to do with the Abbey family atmosphere leading so many people to take for granted the wonderful generosity of the Benedictines. Whatever the reason, I feel sure that the College has done a poor job in telling Abbey students and alumni the facts. No one, for instance, ever told Abbey students that by paying what the College charged for their four years' education here, the students were actually paying about 59 per cent of the real cost. In other words, at the Abbey there is a large gap between the price charged and the actual cost. No one ever told the Abbey students that the difference between the price charged and the actual cost has always been picked up by the College and that the College by and large was able to do this because each and every Benedictine working in the administration or on the faculty, was, through his contributed service, personally contributing over \$7,000 every year for the education of Abbey students. No one ever told the Abbey students that highly competent staff members worked for much less salary here than they could command in a commercial business. No one ever told the Abbey students that certain excellent lay

With this in mind, I wrote our alumni recently outlining the importance of our alumni giving particularly during our Centennial Year, so that we can report a much higher percentage of alumni giving that we have had in the past, as we go about the work of soliciting large contributions in our fund-raising campaign.

We are now in a position to compare the response to this letter, over a three month period, with the response received to last year's letter, over a similar period. In 1975, 4,500 letters were sent out. We had 160 replies contributing a total of \$6,878.15. This year we again sent out 4,500 letters, which generated 195 replies, contributing a total of \$13,973.00. This year's letter then brought to the College a little more than double the amount yielded by last year's. What seems to have happened is that the small number who habitually give, plus a few more, doubled their giving to help us report a better alumni performance during

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Anti-Abortion Rally Held

Thursday, January 22, marked the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortions. As elsewhere throughout the United States, events were scheduled at Belmont in protest of the ruling. At 6:30 that evening a motorcade assembled in front of the St. Leo's Building on the Belmont Abbey campus. Accompanied by two police escorts, the cars, complete with signs, made their way to St. Patrick's Cathedral in Charlotte. There, at 7:30 p.m. a con-celebrated Mass was held, "to show concern for the life of the unborn." The principle celebrant for the event was Bishop Bagley who stated in his homily, "it is in celebrating life we come to know God and we offer up this Mass for those who did not have this chance to love and for those who perform such deeds."

All were urged to write North Carolina Senator, Jessie Helms, who is in support of the Anti Abortion movement.