



Monastery of the Ascension

# THE DESERT CHRONICLE

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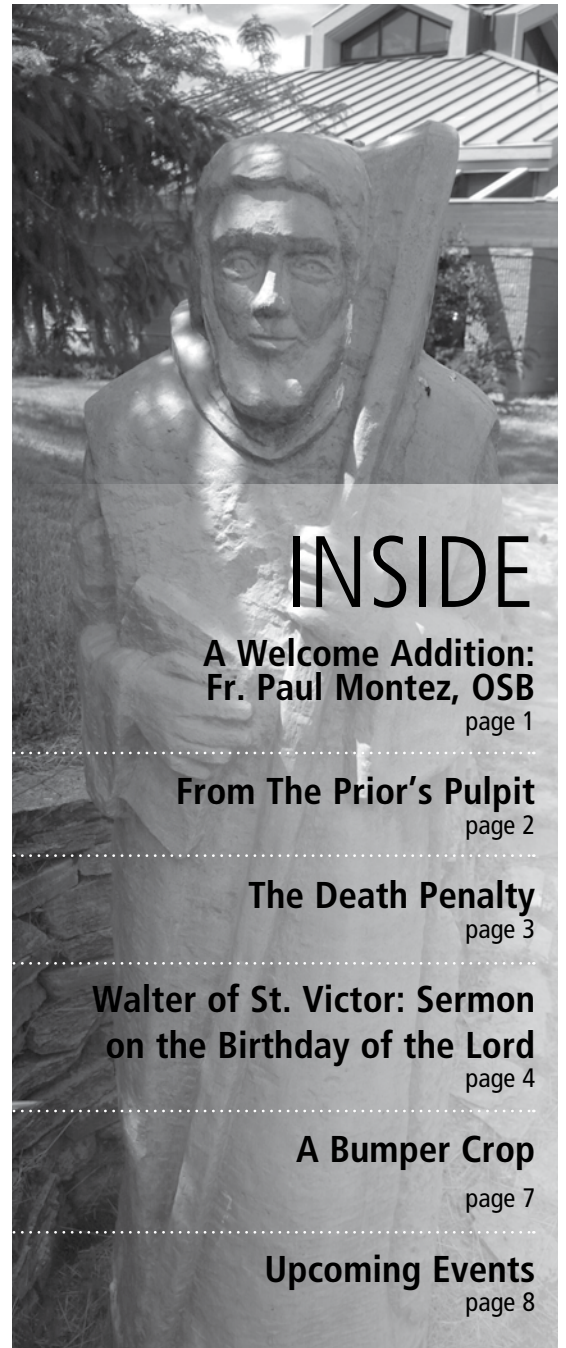
## A Welcome Addition: Fr. Paul Montez, OSB

*By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB*

Late this summer, we welcomed Fr. Paul Montez, OSB, who, God willing, will become a member of our community. Like Fr. Prior Kenneth Hein, OSB, Fr. Paul was a member of Holy Cross Abbey in Cañon City, Colorado, when that monastery closed. Since then he has been doing parish work in Colorado. Fr. Kenneth says of Fr. Paul, “He is a dedicated monk and priest whose dynamism assures that he will sooner wear out rather than rust out. He brings us a great deal of young life—relatively speaking, of course.”

Fr. Paul was born in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1959. He is the oldest in a family of five children, three boys and two girls. He has ten nieces and nephews. His mother lives in Avondale, Colorado. Fr. Paul graduated from Pueblo County High School in 1978. He visited Holy Cross Abbey in 1979, and made first vows there in 1981. At various times he served at Holy Cross Abbey as sacristan, prefect in the school, assistant infirmarian, cantor, teacher, member of the senior council, subprior, and vocation director.

He graduated from the University of Southern Colorado in 1992 (now Colorado State University-Pueblo) with a BA in philosophy. In 1996 he earned his Masters of Divinity degree from Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin. He was



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# From the Prior's Pulpit

## OUR SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

*“Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me; to the obedient, I will show the salvation of God”*

– Ps 50.23, New American Bible

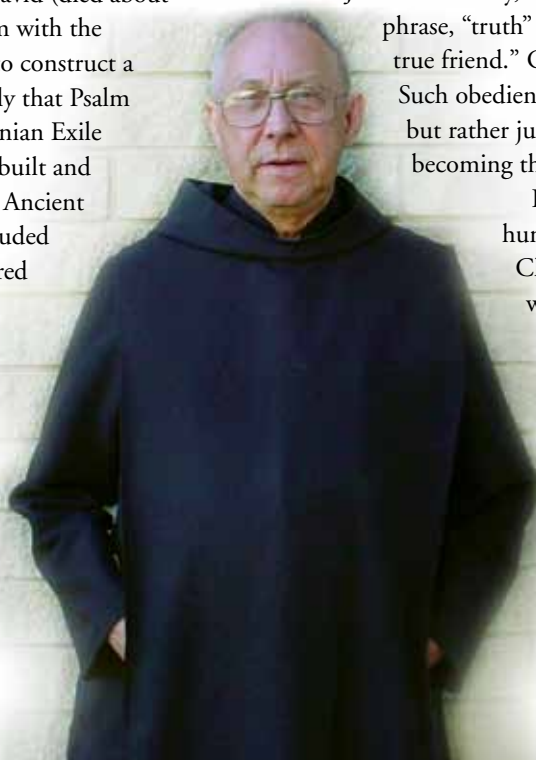
WE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THAT THE DEATH OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS FULFILLED AND REPLACED ALL EARLIER SACRIFICES in Israel's history or any other history. Catholics understand the Mass to be Christ's once-for-all sacrifice as it is extended to and applied to all times and places—the universal “sacrifice of praise.” During the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas we can reflect on the meaning of sacrifice and the phrase, “sacrifice of praise”, in view of the Incarnation—of God's taking on the fullness of human nature for the sake of our salvation. A good place to begin our reflection is Psalm 50 (numbered in some Bibles as Psalm 49).

The psalm is attributed to Asaph, who according to 1 Chronicles 25:1-2 was specially favored by David (died about 921 AD). This attribution connects the psalm with the David's conquest of Jerusalem and his plans to construct a temple for God there. However, it seems likely that Psalm 50 was actually written soon after the Babylonian Exile (586-538), when the temple had just been rebuilt and it was time to consider reinstituting sacrifice. Ancient Israel had a sacrifice of thanksgiving that included the offering of wine in libation and was referred to as a “sacrifice of praise” (cf. Ps 116:12-17). Here, however, the author of the psalm writes that the upright lives of believers are a “sacrifice of praise” that counts for more than the perfunctory offering of animal sacrifices. At the end of the Psalm, God declares, “Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me; to the obedient, I will show the salvation of God” (New American Bible).

There is nothing that we can offer to God that is not God's gift to us. When at Mass we join the offering of our hearts and lives to Christ's offering to the Father, we are uniting our offering of thanks for God's many other gifts to us to the greatest gift of all, Christ's self-gift to us and to the Father. Our thanks to God, of course, may well include recounting God's greatness, but our praise is first and foremost a matter of giving thanks for kindnesses received. To offer a sacrifice of praise thus means to offer thanks.

The last verse of Psalm 50 puts offering a sacrifice of praise in parallel with obedience. Christ was obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8). His obedience to the Father was “learned” through his sufferings and is singled out in the Letter to the Hebrews 5:8. In chapters 9 and 10 of this letter, Christ's death is understood as a sacrifice that removes our sins and brings us salvation. Perhaps some find the idea of obedience a bit disturbing. We readily think of obedience simply as a “sacrifice” of one's freedom. However, the biblical sense of obedience as seen in Ps 50 above means especially to follow the right way; for any other way only leads to ruin and death. To be an obedient Christian thus means to accept Jesus as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In this phrase, “truth” means one who is fully reliable as in “a true friend.” Christ is the reliable way to everlasting life. Such obedience is hardly a sacrifice of one's freedom, but rather just the opposite. It is to find the freedom of becoming the children of God.

In Advent, we look both back to humanity's time of waiting for the coming of Christ and forward to the time “when Christ will come again”. Between these two points of expectation is the celebration that Christ has indeed come so that we may have life in abundance. For this, we give thanks—our sacrifice of praise.





# The Death Penalty

**A**T 9:15 AM ON NOVEMBER 18, 2011, PAUL EZRA RHOADS WAS EXECUTED BY LETHAL INJECTION BY THE STATE OF IDAHO. HERE ARE SOME REACTIONS AND REFLECTIONS:

In his final words, he apologized for one of the murders and said goodbye to his mother. He forgave state officials for the execution. "I forgive you. I really do." Paul Ezra Rhoades (1957–November 18, 2011).

"Lord, thank you for always showing us perfect mercy, perfect justice . . . especially since today, in Idaho, we showed you that we have no idea how to do either." Heidemarie Martin, Boise State University (Class of 2012)

"It is with sadness and disappointment that I learned the execution of Paul Rhoades was carried out by the State of Idaho this morning. While Mr. Rhoades' crimes were heinous, and his trial and sentencing met the standards of justice required by our state, the Catholic Church continues to believe that the sanction of death, when it is not necessary to protect society, violates respect for human life and dignity. Today I pray for the victims of Mr. Rhoades and for their families. I pray for the soul of Mr. Rhoades and for his family. I also pray that this will be the last execution ever to take place, in our state or anywhere else. In union with Catholic bishops throughout the country, I believe it is time for our nation to abandon the illusion that we can protect life by taking life. Ending the use of the death penalty would be



one important step away from a culture of death toward building a culture of life." Michael P. Driscoll, Bishop of Idaho (1999–)

"I refuse to be a part of this compromised and inequitable system any longer; and I will not allow further executions while I am governor." "I do not believe that those executions made us safer; certainly I don't believe they made us more noble as a society. And I simply cannot participate once again in something I believe to be morally wrong." John Kitzhaber, MD, Governor of Oregon (1995–2003; 2010–)

To a group meeting in Rome, November 30, 2011: "I express my hope that your deliberations will encourage the political and legislative initiatives being promoted in a growing number of countries to eliminate the death penalty and to continue the substantive progress made in conforming penal law both to the human dignity of prisoners and the effective maintenance of public order." Benedict XVI (2005–). •

**"WELCOME ADDITION", from page 1**

ordained on June 14, 1997. His first assignment as a priest was at Sacred Heart of Mary Parish in Boulder Colorado. He subsequently served in parishes in Grand Junction, Delta, Pueblo, Durango, Rocky Ford, Cedar Ridge, and Denver.

Fr. Paul has several hobbies: model trains (an interest he shares with Fr. John Koelsch who lives on the monastery property and joins us for some meals and prayers each day), candle-making, weight-lifting and other exercise activities. Since he arrived at the

monastery he has been helping Fr. Kenneth, Fr Eugene, and Br. Sylvester. He also volunteered to help clean up the vegetable garden after the first serious freeze ended the growing season on October 25.

As I write this at the beginning of December several other people are visiting the monastery to discern whether they would like to apply for membership. There is hope that after a long dry spell we will be blessed with new members. Prayers, please! •



# Walter of St. Victor Sermon on the Birthday of the Lord

Tr. Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

## Translator's NOTE:

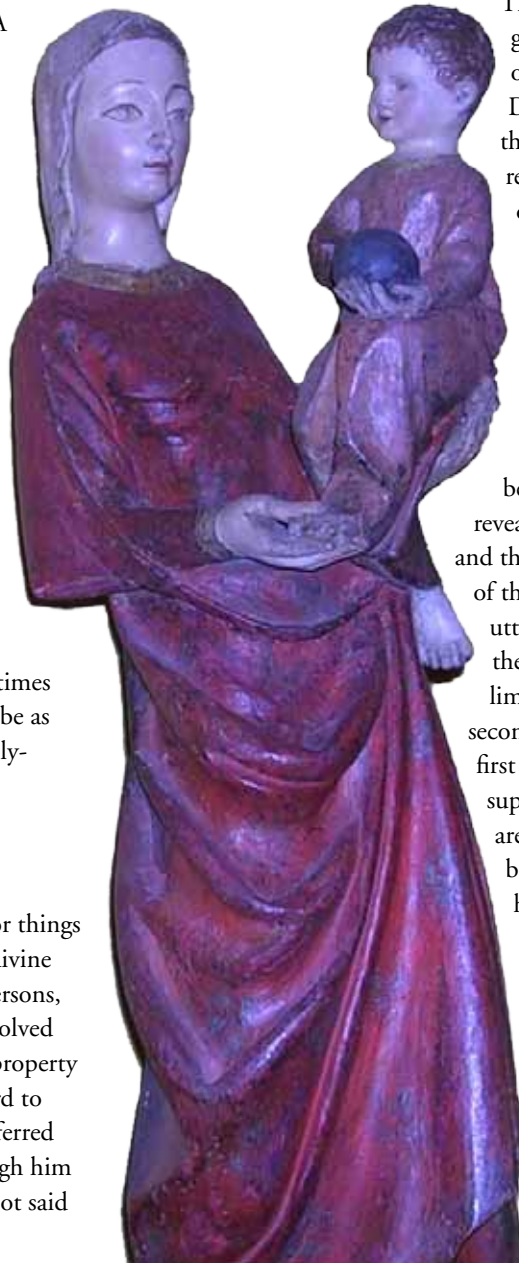
*[Walter was a priest in the Augustinian abbey of St. Victor in Paris. He died in 1180. As subprior and then prior of the abbey one of his duties was to preach on important feasts. What follows is the central part of his previously untranslated Christmas sermon.]*

to be simply “The Word,” but the Word of The Father, because the Father, who is in Himself invisible, unseen, and hidden, comes to be known through the Son. Thus He says: “no one knows the Father except the Son, and whoever the Son wishes to reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27) and thereby hints why He is called “Word,” or “image,” or appearance, or splendor. These names connote revelation.

**A**T THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, “A CHILD IS BORN TO US, AND A SON IS GIVEN TO US” (IS. 9:6). AT THIS TIME, “THE WORD became flesh and dwelt in us” (John 1:14). When it is said that “In the beginning was the word” (John 1:1), and “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made firm” (Ps. 32:6) and “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14), the “Word” is understood to be the Only-begotten Son of God who is co-eternal with the Father, and so utterly immutable. Therefore, one can ask why He than whom nothing is more immutable is called “Word,” that is, by a name than which nothing is more mutable. “Word” properly applies to an utterance; a utterance is even more changeable than time itself. Though time is always in motion, still its passing is sometimes prolonged. An utterance, though, ceases to be as soon as it begins to be. Why then is the Only-Begotten Son of God called “the Word”?

## THE ABBREVIATED WORD

We should be aware that whenever names or things or utterances are transferred to signify the divine essence or to express of one of the divine persons, we should note careful what property is involved in the transfer. The primary and principal property of the Word is to be revelatory. It is in regard to this property that the term “Word” is transferred to designate the Son of God, because through him occurs every revelation of the truth. He is not said



The first and full revelation is the eternal generation of the Son. What is the generation of the Son if not the pronouncing of the Divine Word? What is the pronouncing of the Divine Word if not the full and perfect revelation of the Father? A secondary revelation of the Father is the creation of the world. “From the creation of the world the invisible realities of God are beheld through what is understood of the things which are made” (Rom. 1:19-20). Hence, it is not inappropriate to say that the world itself is a word, and not only the universe, but each creature can be called a word, because by its beauty, as by a kind of voice, it praises and reveals God. Behold two word: the Word born and the word made; the first is like a conception of the mind, the second like pronouncing an utterance; the first is invisible, the second visible; the first without bounds, the second brief and limited; the first is a perfect manifestation, the second a partially full one. By bringing forth the first Word, the Father manifests himself to the supercelestial beings and angelic spirits, who are capable of hearing the word of God. By bringing forth the second word, He makes himself manifest to human beings who are not capable of receiving the first Word, especially after the Fall. The first word was incomprehensible to humans, the second was insufficient. So that humans would not remain forever strangers to knowledge of God and so for deprived of salvation, God was pleased to make one Word of two words, one Word of the begotten Word and





the created word. He therefore made of the unbounded Word and the short and limited word an abbreviated and perfecting Word. He abbreviated the unbounded Word insofar as God became a human being; He perfected the limited and brief word insofar as a human being was made God. Such was the union of human and divinity that He made God a human being and a human being God. He therefore made of two books a single book, abbreviated and perfect.

## ONE BOOK MADE OF TWO

There are many books of the Old and New Testaments, of Blessed Augustine, and of other doctors, but none of them, not even all of them together, contains “all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge God” (Col. 2:3). This book is written inside and outside; outside in the humanity, inside in the divinity; written outside it contains “all the treasures of knowledge,” written inside “it contains all the treasures of wisdom.” All knowledge that we have of the Incarnation of the Word is brought forth from the treasures of knowledge, whereas all knowledge that we have of the eternal generation of the Word is brought forth from the treasures of wisdom. Let us read this book on the outside and the inside; outside for imitation, inside for contemplation; outside for justification, inside for beatitude.

This book illumines, heals and satisfies. He illumines perfectly teaching about all things and leading into all truth. He heals every illness and weakness, not only of bodies but also of souls. He satisfies with an abundance of all delights, especially with the richness of butter and the sweetness of honey. Read on the outside, He satisfies with the richness of butter; read on the inside, He satisfies with the sweetness of honey. Hence, He is called Emmanuel, and the food of Emmanuel is “butter and honey” (Is. 7:22). He Himself eats this food, and with this food He satisfies those who read Him. Hence it is written: “Everyone left in Jerusalem will eat butter and honey.” With these words we are taught what we must be like if we wish to be satisfied with the food of Emmanuel, namely, so that when others are led captive in Babylon, that is, into the confusion of vices, we may remain in Jerusalem, that is, in the vision of peace.

## LIGHT FOR THE BLIND

That He perfectly illumines we know from the Gospel where one reads that the Lord Jesus “spit on the earth and made mud” (John 9:6) with which He illumined the eyes of the one born blind, a deed that contains a great sacrament of our





salvation. For what does the saliva that descended from Jesus' head stand for, if not the wisdom of God, which says: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the first born before all creation" (Sir. 24:5). From this saliva of heavenly wisdom and from the earth of our nature was made the salve that healed the eyes of the man born blind. What is signified by the blind man, if not the human race. For every human being is blind from birth in what concerns the eye of the mind. For the eye is threefold: the eye of contemplation, the eye of reason, and the eye of the flesh. With the eye of contemplation one sees God and the things that are in God. With the eye of reason one sees the mind and the things that are in the mind. With the eye of the flesh one sees the world and the things that are in the world. The eye of contemplation is blinded by sin; the eye of reason is made bleary; the eye of the flesh is open to desire. The interior eyes, the eyes of the heart, are healed by faith in the Word Incarnate. This eye-salve did not heal the eyes of the blind Scribes and Pharisees, who seeing Him did not see. This medicine did not heal the foolish philosophers who were trying to be justified by free choice. Peter was healed by the medicine of this salve. He said, "Lord, to whom will we go? For you have the words of eternal life, and we believe and know that you are Christ, the Son of God" (John 6:69-70; Matt. 16:16). And elsewhere: "There is no other name under heaven in which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In truth He is the Savior of the world; in truth, there is no other name in which there is salvation, there is no other salve for our eyes; there is no other

medicine for our wounds. By this medicine have been healed all those healed from the beginning of the world. Without faith in the Word incarnate, there is no hope of salvation. Hence, David says: "He sent forth his word and healed them" (Ps. 106:20). For this the Word became flesh, that is, a human being. . . .

## A DWELLING FOR THE WORD

"The Word became flesh and dwelt in us." Truly blessed and happy are those who can say: "The Word became flesh and dwelt in us." He became flesh in order to dwell in us. However, before He dwelt in us, He dwelt among us, because he "was seen on earth and interacted with people, and was found in the appearance of a human being." Dwelling among human beings he stood outside for a long time, for a long time he knocked. . . •





# A Bumper Crop

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

IN THE YEARS AFTER THE MONKS MOVED TO THE CURRENT SITE OF THE MONASTERY IN 1979/1980, THERE WAS A VEGETABLE GARDEN IN THE southeast corner of the lawn behind the monastery. It had ceased to function by the time I arrived in 1996. Not long after that, Fr. Jude Anderson, who was formation director at the time, assigned Thien Vu, a green-thumbed postulant who grew up in Vietnam, to re-establish the garden. The young man worked heroically to establish a fine garden that produced many different vegetables. Then Fr. Jude and Thien both left, and the garden was once more abandoned.



*Thien Vu's wife, Xuyem Kim Nguyen and their daughter, Bao-Nhi Vu*

After a few years, I decided to try my hand at gardening and took a Master Gardener class from the Jerome County Extension Office. From that I went on to take the Master Food Preserver class as well. Armed with much theoretical knowledge and no experience, I carved out a small plot in the 3,000 square foot garden area and grew some things. In a year or two the whole garden was under cultivation with good results for my psyche and the world food supply. Much of the produce went to make salsa, which we sold to create a fund to send oblate representatives to meetings around the country. We have even sent two of them to meetings in Rome. The produce that we didn't use for salsa we gave away or used in the kitchen.

A couple of years ago, through the good offices of JoAnn Robbins, who heads the local extension office, the local Master Gardeners helped install a drip irrigation system and plant the garden. They have continued to do that. For several years, Melanie McCaughey has started tomatoes, peppers and eggplant in her greenhouse for us.

This year the garden has taken a new turn. For one thing, several generous master gardeners—oblate Joanne Draper (and her sister-in-law Jodi), as well as Evelyn Fitch and Joanna Marsh have helped with the weeding, thinning, and harvesting of produce. For another, Fr. Eugene has been at the monastery. He applied his green thumb to several rows of the garden and produced award-winning vegetables and some items we'd never grown before, including cantaloupe and garlic. Our chef, LuAnn Kraft, has been able to use more of the garden produce than before, and so monks and visitors have been treated to fresh tomatoes, carrots, zucchini, eggplant casserole, squash, and various pumpkin deserts. She has made fresh salsa and put up tomatoes. Br. José introduced us to fresh roasted peppers. At the same time the traditional uses of the garden continue. From an astoundingly bountiful crop of tomatoes, peppers and onions, this year I put up about fifty quarts of salsa, which we sell for \$7.00 a quart. Oblate Lynell Jutila and I picked some peaches and cherries at an orchard in Kimberly, Oregon. That fruit became jam, as did gooseberries given us by Ed and Sylvia Crumrine, apricots from a tree in oblate Anita Koehn's backyard, and blueberries picked and brought from Oregon by Kat Pliska. The garden itself produced rhubarb, which has come to rest in jars of rhubarb-orange and rhubarb-berry jam. Because the harvest was so bountiful, we were able to take large quantities of squash and tomatoes to the food pantry at the local parish and to share vegetables with friends and guests who either picked them in the garden or collected them after Sunday Mass or at other times.

All of this has enabled us to eat more locally and organically grown food, while at the same time connecting us with our neighbors. This has certainly been, as the title of Craig Godwin's fine book about opting out of consumerism to live simply and buy locally declares, *A Year of Plenty*. Thanks to all who made it possible! (And let us know if you would like to buy some homemade jam or salsa). •



# Upcoming Events

**Workshop on Growing Wisdom.** Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski, OSB (March 16-17, 2012).  
Some topics covered: Living life with vitality. The gift of forgiveness. How to harvest your Wisdom. Our lives as one cycle of the year.

Please register in advance with Anita Koehn, 208-324-8094; [anita\\_koehn@q.com](mailto:anita_koehn@q.com)

**Square-foot Gardening Training** (April 20-22, 2012) (commuters welcome)

**Pilgrimage to Northern Italy** (May 19-June 2, 2012)

**Road Scholar Programs at the Monastery** (commuters are welcome)

Ireland: History, Myth and Culture (June 4-10, 2012)

Windows into the Lives of Medieval People (July 2-8, 2012)

Ancient Rome: Life, History, Literature, Christianity (July 16-22, 2012)

Religion and the Settling of the West (July 23-29, 2012)

Quilting (August 8-14, 2012)

Hiking (August 27-September 2, 2012)

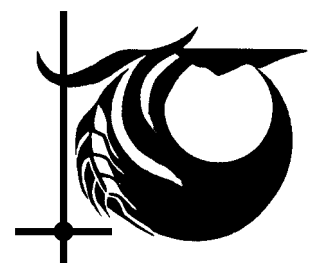
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