



life, to think your private thoughts without interruption, except perhaps the chant of the monks in prayer.

Our first full day started with a clanging bell at 4:00 a.m. The rigid schedule called for prayer to start in 20 minutes. As visitors, we weren't bound by the rules, but two of us quickly rose and attended "Lauds", the first of seven periods of prayers commonly called the canonical hours, observed by the monks. Matins, a night office, is not yet attempted by the monks.

The schedule of prayer comes from Psalm 118: "Seven times a day I give praise to Thee."

After Lauds, there is a short time for personal duties, then the second hour of prayers, "Prime" and at 6:00 a.m. Mass in the Tridentine Rite (that is, the old Latin Rite, used exclusively prior to Vatican II).

After Mass it's time for breakfast. The monks ordinarily take their meals in silence, but on this day the prior lifts the rule. The dispensation lasts only through breakfast (pancakes and coffee); other meals are eaten in the silence that is so much a part of their life.

The monks were given work assignments after breakfast — tending the flower beds that line the entry road, laying a brick walk around the new building, working on the church that is now well on the way to completion.

"God willing, and giving us the strength, we will have Christmas Midnight Mass in our new church," Father Leonard Giardina, O.S.B. the monastery prior explains.

As he conducts us on a tour of the new building, he points to the cornerstone where nine small rocks are embedded. Three of those small rocks came from Subiaco, one of the order's original monasteries in Italy. Three others come from Monte Cassino, another Benedictine Monastery in Italy. The single stone in the middle came from the