The Campaign for Saint John’s
In Brief: Boniface Wimmer, OSB

"FORWARD, EVER FORWARD"
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That’s a quote from Abbot Boniface Wimmer, founder of the Benedictine order in the U.S.
Images from [http://gallery.stvincent.edu/current_exhibition](http://gallery.stvincent.edu/current_exhibition) and St. John's Abbey Archives
Boniface Wimmer’s “firsts” for the Benedictines in the U.S.

- Established the first Benedictine monastery in North America despite the doubts of many church leaders both in America and Europe.

- Created the first modern Benedictine monastery whose monks were predominantly lay brothers upon whom the prosperity of the community at St. Vincent depended.

- Convinced the bishop of Pittsburgh to name him the first "irremovable" pastor in the U.S. by granting him and his successors perpetual rights to the parish at St. Vincent.

- Persuaded the Holy See to establish St. Vincent as the first exempt religious community in the United States.

What seemed unattainable goals to others were merely challenges to meet and overcome for the Projektenmacher of Metten.

Letter from Boniface Wimmer to Alexius Hoffmann, May 1875, in the St. John’s Abbey Archives.
[In June] a frost killed our whole winter wheat crop. I got more than $3,000 (8,000 florins). I got only half a bushel and now must buy wheat at a cost of as the same in Carrolltown, Indiana, and St. Marys. We had to buy wheat everywhere because for a radius of 100 miles, everything was killed by the bitter cold.

This year there is wonderful outlook on nature. May it please God to keep it that way. Otherwise, it will be very bad for us because we feel the pressure of not having money. Everywhere commerce and business are at a standstill, and at the same time, there is not enough on the table for certain hypochondriacs. Something has to be done.

In such cases, all the trouble is piled on the poor abbot. Nevertheless, we must move on.

Forward, always forward, everywhere forward. We will not be held back by debts, by difficult times, by an unfortunate year. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

(a great quote, in the midst of Wimmer's rather mundane commentary)

I did not sell an excellent stallion even though I was offered $600 (1,500 florins).

Everywhere there is a need for priests, both in the East and especially in the Far West. Often I must turn down an opportune offer for the simple reason that I do not have the people or do not want to divide the work of my priests...

Image from http://cis2.stvincent.edu/bioinformatics/images/basilica_in_shadow.jpg
Image from http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/img/college-photo_3849..JPG
Arboretum in the mist – photo by Peggy Roske, October 2008
Compiled in November 2013 from resources in the archives of Saint John's University, Saint John's Abbey and elsewhere as noted by Peggy Landwehr Roske, CSB/SJU Archivist. All rights reserved.

From a Feb. 2013 exhibition at St. Vincent's

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