

last summer someone mailed him a check for \$3,500.

"I've been walking on water for seven years," he says grinning. "The whole thing is a pure gift."

**M**odeled after the 12th Century Tintern monastery in Monmouthshire, Wales, Stevens's monastery will resemble the original Tintern in both looks and spirit. A scale model of the H-shaped building designed by architect Les Shulz of Lincoln, sits in the upstairs chapel of the barn. The monastery is designed to hold some 30 to 40 monks, Stevens says.

"All this will be," he says, "is a life of study, work and prayer."

Monks will study for five years to learn Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the Gregorian chant and the writings of theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas or Karl Rahner. They will live a doistered, contemplative life and earn their livelihood from the land and crafts. The 39-page constitution written by Stevens, contains a daily routine

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patterned after the lifestyle of 8th century Benedictine monks. Rising each morning at 2:30, the monks will spend the day praying, working and studying until they retire at 9 p.m. The emphasis on academics is essential, Stevens says, because the monastery will lack community life. Each monk will be forced to live on his own resources — his mind.

"We are recovering a way of life here that's been lost for hundreds of years," Stevens says, "a tradition that has been cast by the wayside in the name of practicality."

Some critics have labeled the monastery too conservative. It is, they say, a giant step backwards for the Catholic Church. Stevens scoffs at such comments, saying his monastery will only benefit the church by breathing new life into a priesthood that has been consumed by activism.

"A priest has to be first of all a prophet and a contemplative and a mystic," he says. "There is too much over-involvement in the priesthood today, almost like a Messiah complex, and we lack judgment and imagination."

But despite all of Stevens's intricate planning, he admits he is still waiting for a "modest miracle." A \$4.5 million miracle to be exact.

That's how much he needs to build the monastery.

"It will happen, and right out of the blue," he says leaning back in his chair. "Somebody is either going to call me on the phone or drive up in a nice, big Cadillac and give me some money. There are people like that."

Pulling a pair of thick glasses from a pocket beneath his white cloth robe, Stevens grabs a box of index cards he keeps on the windowsill. In it, he has alphabetized the names of Tintern contributors.

"The money comes in different increments," he says. "Lloyd Skinner was giving \$5,000 a year (Skinner died last year). A druggist in Cincinnati sends money from time to time. Ten dollars, five dollars, sometimes only one — and that's only the S's."

The priest's face brightens with excitement.

Stevens's unquenchable enthusiasm and optimism have been his trademark since childhood. One of nine children, Stevens was born in Battleboro, Vt. He remembers

