

Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

The coming year 2003 will mark the 50th anniversary of our foundation by Abbot Leo A. Rudloff, OSB, of Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem. These past months have been a time of preparation, with occasions to anticipate the celebration of our year of jubilee.

June 2002

In early June, we visited the Benedictine nuns of the Abbey of Regina Laudis, in Bethlehem, Connecticut. In addition to an opportunity for intercommunity exchange, the brothers participated in the daily rhythm of the sisters' life, sharing in their work on the farm, and participating in their celebrations of prayer. Abbot Leo once served as their extraordinary confessor, and the decision to locate our monastery in Vermont was made at Regina Laudis. We thank Mother David Serna, OSB, abbess, and the entire community for their warm and joyous welcome.

July 2002

We began July by welcoming a group of young men for our Summer Experience "Living With a Monastic Community." Twice a year, we open our community life to young men interested in exploring the relevance of Benedictine values to life in the contemporary world. With each Experience, we brothers discover how much we have been blessed by the searching and dreams of those who participate in the program.

Dr. Edward Mahoney, Director of Graduate Theology and professor of moral theology at Saint Michael's College in Winooski, Vermont, is a long-standing friend of our community. Ed organized three days of stimulating study and discussion with us, centering on recent developments in Catholic moral theology, and currents in theologies of the environment and ecology.

Later in the month, Brother Richard traveled to Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, for a meeting of the Alliance for International Monasticism (AIMI), on whose Board of Directors he has been asked to serve.

One of our ongoing projects to commemorate our Jubilee Year has been the production of a short film on our community. We have the privilege and joy of working with professional filmmaker David Skillicorn. A man of deep artistry and social conscience, David has been filming and conducting interviews during each of the four seasons -- capturing our community life through the course of a year. He is now editing 26 hours of film and six hours of interviews into a 30-minute video presentation! We wish to express our gratitude to David and to his son Michael for working with us on this expression of our life and values.

Once again this year, young people from Paterson, New Jersey, spent a day working with the brothers as part of a summer program co-sponsored by the Father English Center in Paterson and the Southeastern Vermont Community Action Agency.

August 2002

In mid-August, the entire community packed a picnic and drove to Burlington, where we celebrated Mass and shared dinner with Bishop Kenneth Angell. This year the diocese of Burlington is celebrating the tenth anniversary of Bishop Angell's ministry in Vermont. We extend to him our brotherly affection and prayer.

August 17, 2002 marked the twentieth anniversary of the death of our founder and brother, Abbot Leo. Each year we gather for a special eucharistic celebration in thanksgiving for Brother Leo's life and legacy. The celebration was especially meaningful as we begin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our foundation as a monastery.

Near the end of August, we welcomed members of other monastic communities to join us for a "Symposium on Monastic Profession in the Rule of Benedict," led by Sister Aquinata Böckmann, OSB. The symposium was the first "event" beginning the celebration of our Jubilee Year. Sister Aquinata, a member of the Tutzing Missionary Benedictine Congregation in Germany, has served for 30 years as professor of monastic studies at the Benedictine College of Sant' Anselmo in Rome. Gracious, gentle, and enthusiastic, she exuded a love for the Rule of Benedict and an immense skill in making the sixth century text come alive for all the participants. It was a privilege to welcome this Benedictine woman, who has shared the riches of monastic tradition with communities the world over. We were likewise blessed by the presence of monks and nuns from Mount Saviour Monastery, Pine City, New York; the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, Abiquiu, New Mexico; the Abbey of Regina Laudis, Bethlehem, Connecticut; Saint Gregory's Abbey, Portsmouth, Rhode Island; Saint Scholastica Priory, Petersham, Massachusetts; and Saint Paul's Abbey, Newton, New Jersey.

October 2002

Monastic hospitality takes a variety of forms. For a great many people, it takes the form of being welcomed into our celebrations of monastic prayer. Others, both individuals and groups, ask to spend some days at the priory for personal retreat. A unique experience of hospitality for us is the opportunity to open our community life to men who are discerning their personal path in life.

At the beginning of October we welcomed Alvaro Mota de Oliveira (from Brazil) and Michael Sepidoza Campos (originally from the Philippines) as observers. We are thankful for their joyous presence among us, enriching us with the gift of their persons and their cultures.

Felipe and Elena Ixcot, Guatemalan refugees who live in sanctuary here at the priory, continue to work tirelessly for their people, organizing the Guatemalan refugee community in the United States, and focusing on the preservation of their endangered Maya culture. Their work has now reached back to their beloved homeland, where they are coordinating "The Midwife Project" to serve various indigenous communities. Through the Project, 40 women are now working cooperatively as midwives, often in isolated hamlets. Plans are now underway for the construction of a birthing clinic that will be accessible to the poorest women. In mid-October, Felipe and Elena hosted a public presentation at the monastery on the Midwife Project. The presenters were María Antonia Sánchez Méndez (president of the Mam Area Midwife

Association and vice president of the National Midwives of Guatemala) and Berta Carmelita Juárez Fuentes (treasurer of the Mam Area Midwife Association).

November 2002

In mid-November, members of the three communities at New Skete monastery (monks, nuns, and lay persons) came to the priory for a day of mutual exchange. The topic for our reflections was stimulating: how has monastic life changed in the past 15 years, and what directions do we foresee for the future of our respective communities? The sisters and brothers from New Skete shared some of the rich music of their Orthodox liturgical tradition at the celebration of Midday Prayer.

Work continues on the production of a new recording of our liturgical music. Instrumental and vocal overdubs were a focus during late November. The recording, in celebration of our 50th anniversary year, will be entitled "With an Everlasting Love."

December 2002

The opening words of the Rule of Benedict invite us to an active stance of listening: to the word of God in scripture and in life, to one another, to our deepest yearnings. Pope John XXIII, echoing the Gospel, called the entire church to listen to the signs of the times. The struggle of the "two-thirds world" challenges us to listen to the voices of the poor. All these invitations to listening will inspire the celebration of our Jubilee Year. As with the people of Israel, Jubilee is a time to look prayerfully to the future, and to plant the seeds of justice and communion.

A small group of Benedictine men and women, from monasteries throughout the Americas, will join with our community at the beginning of December for some days of reflection on "The Prophetic Role of Monasticism in Today's World and Church." Invited participants will be Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie; Sister Fidelina Monzalvo, OSB, from Casa San Benito, Managua, Nicaragua; Sister Maria del Carmen Cruz, OSB, from the Monasterio Reina de la Paz, Cobán, Guatemala; Brother Marcelo Barros, OSB, prior of the Monastery of the Annunciation in Goiás, Brazil; Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, from Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas; and Sister Patricia Henry, OSB, from the Monasterio Pan de Vida, in Torreón, Mexico. The days of reflection will include a panel and discussion on Saturday, December 7th at 2:15 p.m., to which all are invited.

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