



Wild Goose Island, St. Mary Lake, Glacier National Park, Montana

*Day after day, God's wisdom at play in the universe,
delighting to be with us, the children of earth.*

*Wondrous Wisdom, rejoicing in earth's birth and rebirth:
majestic mountains, rolling hills, roaring waters, flowing streams.*

*Creative Wisdom, dancing on the edge of chaos;
divine desire dwells deep within, risking passion, daring us to dream.¹*

THE WORDS OF THE REFRAIN AND VERSES OF THE TITLE song from our new CD, *Wisdom at Play*, reflect our community's journey of faith and especially an experience over the past few months.

Immersed in the season of Advent and Christmas, we are deeply aware of God's intense love for creation incarnate and made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus invites us to discover the mystery of God's Incarnation that has been unfolding from the beginning, when the Creator Spirit brooded over the emptiness and breathed life into the universe.

In our monastic life the promise of stability clearly roots us in the soil of this earth in a particular place and with each other in a way that brings us into relationship as brothers to all persons and to all of creation.

In Jesus' own life journey, he frequently went to the mountains to pray and listen to the luring guidance of the Spirit. Here he was inspired to name his companions on the journey: the disciples, his co-learners in the kin-dom; to discover the sun and snow blazing in his face and body; sing the parabolic lore of the flowers and grasses of the fields, the sheep and goats; and to become a seed, a kernel of wheat broken open, and grapes of the vine pressed down and poured out for others—the gift of his

very self. The mountains led him to *conversatio morum*—a conversation in dialogue with the entire universe. He went to the depths of his/our own heart wherein he discovered the image of God's faithful presence and unfathomable beauty.

The salvation that Jesus sought for us was to restore a healing relationship with one another and with all creation. He taught that at the core of our being we are not broken and divided, but that we are all one. We all emerge from the same soil of the earth—evolve from the same dust of the stars. Jesus opens our hearts to a journey of faith, inspiring unity, interdependence, and oneness of being. He promises that our lives will be blessed with a joy and wisdom that spirals into eternity.

Christmas celebrates stardust and guiding stars, shepherds and animals, mountains and hills, and especially the little ones of the earth who ventured to Bethlehem (the house of bread). These humble ones recognized that life need not center on themselves but is nurtured through the mystery of the other. Life emerges out of the seemingly impenetrable darkness of emptiness and chaos, into a creative word resounding in the silence of our hearts.

This edition of our bulletin chronicles some reflections evoked by an incredible gift—a trip to Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in the section of the Rocky Mountains that straddles the Canadian Province of Alberta and the US State of Montana. At the end of August and early September, we explored the majesty of mountains. We encountered the beauty of ancient glaciers, cascading waterfalls and pristine lakes, vibrantly-colored rock formations, and flowing prairie-grasses. We were engaged with thrillingly fearsome bear and bison, mountain goats and bighorn sheep, deer and chipmunks, geese and western-mountain birds; and they all spoke to us.

Stretching limbs and muscles while hiking a mountain trail, one of the brothers slipped and fell and experienced what turned out to be a not-too-major head injury. The skillful attention and generous care of the park rangers brought us to a local hospital of the Native American Blackfoot Nation in Browning, Montana. The native people of the hospital personnel so joyfully welcomed us and provided a professional care whose healing went way beyond stitching and bandaging a wound. We recognized ourselves as one family, and were humbly touched. Our eyes and ears were opened once again to the profound beauty of our Native American sisters and brothers, the first peoples of the continent, to their unconditional appreciation of others, and to their innate relationship with nature and all creation. God's incarnation, in them, was made flesh among us.

In the wonder and lure of the child within each of us, no matter our age, our imagination continues to unfold the lore, the stories, reminding us that all is sacred—all are sacraments of God's incarnate presence. They speak this day Wisdom's Word playfully breathing from the beginning: "Let there be . . ." ■

¹ Words from the recording, *Wisdom at Play*, The Monks of Weston Priory, © 2011 The Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc. Weston, VT 05161