



Suesa nuns and Weston brothers with the Laredo Trinitarian nuns.

Living “The Joy of the Gospel”

- *brother Mark*

POPE FRANCIS, THE BISHOP OF ROME IN HIS APOSTOLIC exhortation, from which the title of this reflection is taken, encourages us all to live out the challenge of the gospel of Jesus with enthusiasm, hope and joy.

During our September retreat days we brothers of Weston journeyed to Suesa, Spain, to share in the life of the community of Trinitarian nuns who first reached out to us 4 years ago. Our time together in September was clearly an experience of living the joy of the gospel as we shared the various times of prayer together in silence, song, dance and word (Castilian and English), as well as almost daily gatherings in which the two communities shared our experience as we explored many aspects of monastic life and the underlying values that motivate our efforts to live a vibrant, meaningful and sustaining community life in this 21st century.

The Suesa community did everything possible to make our visit together a truly memorable time including some delightful meals in an outdoor gazebo-like structure behind the monastery building.

Our exchange also took us outside the monastery with, among other short outings, visits with some nearby craft people in their workshops as well as a rich exchange with staff and pilgrims at one of the many hostels along the Camino of Santiago (the ‘road’ of St. James to the shrine at Compostela).

A culminating experience was a delightful afternoon exchange at the monastery with a large group of friends; some coming from a lay community in Madrid, other Trinitarian nuns from a nearby monastery, as well as people we had met during our visit to the hostel along the Camino. It was during that final gathering that one of the Suesa sisters commented that their community had gone searching for a small community of women for mutual exchange and support, and instead came up with our community of brothers!

Indeed a wonderful two week experience of living “The joy of the Gospel!” ■