

WESTON PRIORY

FALL/WINTER 2014



Peaceful Heart of Silence; Prayer of Hope for Our World



Weston brothers with the Suesa Trinitarian community in their chapel.

BULLETIN

*Peaceful Heart of Silence;
prayer of hope for our world.*

*Heart of joyful hope,
where warmth and love abide.*

*Heart of wisdom,
attentive listening.*

*Heart of humble faith,
light of trusting love.¹*

THESE WORDS WERE COMPOSED AS A CHANT-LIKE SONG that flows from our communal prayer and memorable experiences in this season of our life. With these words we send you our greetings during these days of Advent and the Christmas celebration.

As we begin our celebration of Advent we want to share the joy of welcoming our brother Nhan as a novice among us. He has been with us in community for over a year and he is enthused to continue the integration of his life journey into our monastic quest as a brother among us.

In our monastic life we hope that out of the heart of silence we can incarnate the Word-made-flesh for the life of the world: living with joyful hope in the warmth of compassion, attentive listening and trustful love.

The Gospel of Luke begins with the mystery of God's Spirit hovering over a humble young woman invited to give birth to God's own Son. The parables and words of Jesus speak of the simple, the insignificant and little as the signs of God's reign among us. Such signs do not always correlate well with current social/political and even religious thought or the logic of the world today. Imagine leaving all ninety-nine sheep to search for the lost "one"; or sweeping the whole house simply to find "one" small coin.

Over the years our small monastic community has found life and the blessing of God speaking in what may appear as little and marginal and not easily noticed in our society and world. In the last few years, through an unexpected and welcomed small-still-breath of the Spirit, we have met and discovered monastic resonance with a small community of Trinitarian Nuns and their friends in Spain.

In early September our community was graced with the opportunity to experience the life and monastic witness of these sisters in their monastery in Suesa, Cantabria, in northern Spain. In their beautifully renovated monastery they welcomed us and opened their hearts to us for a twelve-day visit—a journey together into the "heart of silence and prayer of hope for our world."

Through their vibrant and open life of shared prayer we encountered many of their friends, people who join them frequently in this search for God. We met lively and creative women potters like Rufina and Coco;

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and welcomed members of a lay community from Madrid, the Shekina (Overshadowing/Hovering Spirit) Community who pattern their family and communal lives on the early Christian communities, sharing all and reaching out in service to the marginal of society, to those struggling for justice and peace.

We spent a day with Ernesto Bustio who opened his beautiful family home as a pilgrim hostel in Güemes, Cantabria, to pilgrims journeying along the Camino de Santiago Compostela (the Way of Saint James). We had the opportunity to share the quest of some of these travelers coming from many different places in the world. With Ernesto we also visited the lovely 12th century Church where he is pastor, Santa María de Bareyo.

On the feast of Mary, September 8th, we boarded a fishing boat and sailed out into the ocean to experience the annual blessing of the fleet popular among the people of the fishing town of Santoña.

We met creative-thinking and searching persons, including theologians who are friends of the Sisters, deeply committed to renewal in the Church in the light of Vatican II. We found ourselves on common ground with them as they too have been deeply touched by the faith experience of an emerging church and base communities in Latin America as well as in Africa and Asia.

One of these theologians, Avelino Seco Muñoz, a pastor and teacher in the neighboring city of Santander, is a long-time friend and fellow-pilgrim with a mutual friend-bishop, Dom Pedro Casaldáliga, the bishop-emeritus of São Félix do Araguaia in Brazil. Dom Pedro is a Claretian Missionary of Spanish origin—an outstanding prophetic bishop of our times. Avelino, along with Ernesto Bustio, had recently been to Brazil to see Dom Pedro and published a small book about Pedro. The book includes an interview that Avelino and several friends had with Pedro on that visit. We have translated this interview and are sharing in this bulletin some of Pedro's inspiring thought for the future of the church today, especially through the work and experience of the Base Christian Communities.

We also went to the Archeological Museum of the famous Paleolithic/ Stone Age Caves of Altamira, near the town of Santillana del Mar, about an hour from the sisters' monastery in Suesa. The ancient cave paintings featured drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals (bison, deer, horses, wild boar). So innate to the human spirit is the wondrously deep relationship we have from our origins with nature, the animals, and all creation!

The visit to our sisters, the Trinitarian Nuns of Suesa, revealed a very rich and profoundly meaningful communion between our two communities and a mutual outreach of hope to our world. Through the pages of this bulletin we hope to share together in some small way what this journey has meant to both communities. It is just a beginning of what we trust will unfold into the future as a gift of Christ-mas.

May your hearts be filled with joyful hope and the warmth of compassion, attentive listening, and the light of trusting love. ■



Monastery of Trinitarian Nuns in Suesa.

Signs of Hope: the Nuns of Suesa

- *brother Elias*

THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER FOUND US TRAVELING by air from Boston, to Paris, to Bilbao, and then on to Suesa, Cantabria, Spain, to a monastery of Trinitarian Nuns. The nuns of Suesa are part of a religious movement founded in 1198 by Saint John of Mata. The mission of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity is for the liberation and redemption of captives in occupied lands and in praise of the Trinity. In their origins the monasteries were also places of healing and hospitality for the poor, the sick, and pilgrims. Still today the sisters open their monasteries as places where people from far and near can continue or even begin their “camino”, their inner life journey of liberation in an atmosphere of “being at home” and “feeling safe” within the context of prayer, silence, and hospitality offered by the nine sisters in the monastic community.

A week after returning home and reflecting on our unique encounter with the sisters, we tried to summarize it in one sentence: “In their Gospel inspired life, the sisters inspire HOPE . . . pure and simple.”

We observed and we felt the joy of their greeting; in their strong embraces; in their questioning, searching, and vulnerability during our daily discussions; in the movement/dance that graces their common prayer; in the feminine face of God that they radiate in their reflections,



Trinitarian Cross, gift of Suesa nuns.

songs, and chants; in the spontaneity and warmth of their hospitality; in their outreach to women, youth, young couples, and people held in modern day forms of slavery; and in the very joy and enthusiasm of their being. All of this is sourced in their creative prayer, gentleness, authenticity, nurturing wisdom, playfulness and harmonious way of life.

The sisters gave us several gifts to take home and to share with several brothers who were not able to be with us in Suesa. There was one particular gift that brought joy and gratitude to our hearts. It stands as a symbol of what we had been about in the previous fourteen days. It is a handmade cross, about the size of an open hand, with segments of thick, red and blue, stained glass inserted into the two horizontal and vertical pieces of wood. Crafted by the sisters, this beautiful cross now has a special place in our monastery where it calls us to remember the love and friendship that has grown among us. We delight in the way the light filters through the various thicknesses of the glass, refracting in subtle and surprising ways. The cross captures, like an icon, the deeper dimensions of our shared two weeks of intercommunity experiences and dialog that have continued to bless and inspire us to this day. We are grateful! ■

Suesa sisters' website: www.montrinisuesa.com



Brothers and Sisters around the Eucharist table.

Two Communities: One Heart

- brother Michael

IN OUR TRIP TO SPAIN THERE WERE MANY EXCITING places to visit. We went out on a fishing vessel that received its annual blessing from “Our Lady of the Port.” The prehistoric caves of Altamira with the 35,600 year old paintings of bison and deer charged our imaginations with the wild nature of time past. And there was the Church of St Mary of Bareyo, built between the 12th and 13th centuries—a jewel of Romanesque Cantabrian architecture. Just the sheer beauty of the Suesa countryside with its rolling fields of corn being harvested during our stay would have made the trip worthwhile.

Yet what “made” the trip was not these outings. The trip became meaningful for us through our common prayer and the times of discussion that are a regular part of monastic life. In the exchange with each other we encountered ourselves as two communities that live in the present moment of our world. There are challenges that are unique to our time, as there are perennial challenges, but we did not shy away from our common quest of trying to live as vibrant and prophetic witnesses to the Gospel.

Our regular times of prayer were inspiring. The sisters have a presence to each other and their guests that is permeated with silence, soft lighting, and respectful movements to reverence the Scripture and the table of Eucharist. Their table is fashioned from an old tree stump that speaks to the theme of “Creation.” It is large and solid and has a presence to it that asks the question, “Where are you now?” So when we came to prayer we were simply at prayer. That may sound simple, but often times there are so many distractions that we are never quite present to the actuality of prayer.

One of the feast days was for the "Triumph of the Cross," and we were invited to make the sign of the cross consciously. The action of making the sign of the cross can be reduced to an automatic motion. Our slow movement and our letting the dimensions of relationality permeate our hearts complemented the soft light of the dawn that was gently illuminating the church.

My favorite prayer was Midday Prayer which consisted of singing a mantra in Spanish, "Tu estas aqui. Dios, tu eres amor." "You are here. God, you are love." This was followed by a single verse of scripture. Again this may seem too simple. "Where are the psalms?" you may ask, as I did. Yet this moment of prayer took on a solidity of rock for me. "How is it that prayer can be so simple?" is a question that we are still exploring.

To complement the rhythm of prayer was the vulnerability of sharing personal experiences on various dimensions of monastic life. Common areas of understanding abounded. Our love for scripture, the challenge of communication with each other when there is fear or anger, and our hopes for the future were topics that immediately resonated with everyone and the spirit of exploration and adventure was tangible in the silences and the laughter.

Two discussions continue to amaze me. The first was when the sisters presented a 17 minute video on their life. That short video took about two and a half hours to see. We would stop at each picture, from the first to the last, and enter into the journey of their long history. Questions and stories would pour forth. The days of "The Grill" with its very strict and perhaps dehumanizing cloister had given way to a vision of the Trinity dancing. That kind of journey is fraught with risk and opposition both internal and external. That the whole community continues to move together is a witness to the courage of the sisters.

Another discussion on "Personal Prayer" still informs my imagination. This time together held a depth of heart. None of us were defensive, nor were there any triumphal pronouncements of spiritual achievement. A spirit of wonder and gratitude pervaded, along with the realization that we are still beginners. How is it that we can go to our own rooms, after being nurtured and supported by common prayer, and continue our deeply personal seeking for the face of God? The Atlantic Ocean separates us in a very real way, and yet the search is the same. We are participants and agents in a vast mystery which is both loving and challenging. To feel that common bond encourages a desire to move forward with our lives.

When the sisters drove us to the airport to leave, one driver, sister María José, had trouble parking the van we used for transportation. It was a large van with a high ceiling which made for great window area, but the parking decks have height restrictions. By the time we boarded the plane she was not present to say a last "Good-bye." For me it was a sign that we were not truly leaving. Our hearts had connected in a way of spirit that is open to the future, and we will let the path unfold. There are neither plans nor blueprints. We hope to continue listening and to respond as best we can with one heart. ■

A Gospel Visitation

- *The Trinitarian Nuns of Suesa*

THE VISIT OF THE WESTON BROTHERS TO OUR HOME was comparable to the encounter between Mary of Nazareth and her cousin Elizabeth in her village of Ein Karem. Two women from different places, with different personal stories, different journeys, different ages, different circumstances . . . were both eager to share good news, the good news of new life gestating in their wombs. The encounter was similar for the Suesa and Weston communities. We have differences in our histories, our cultures, the charisms of our monastic communities, our ages, and even in our gender, yet . . . both communities were filled with Good News because new life was gestating in each community's womb.

To share these few days with the brothers was without any doubt very invigorating for us. Even before their arrival we were living through a very interesting time among ourselves. The more 'external' preparations were already telling us: something good is about to happen. The time that we sisters were giving to reflect among ourselves, to lovingly prepare the topics that we would discuss, to anticipate the exchanges . . .

With them among us our home was filled with deep moments of shared prayer, lively afternoon discussions, welcomed leisure time, nourishing meals in silence, and special celebrations of life . . . and through all of these we were becoming one community.

We believe it has been a great privilege to experience such an intense encounter with other persons who are living the same monastic call and who, from the silent word of their daily life, initiate new paths that stimulate us to live our monastic choice anew in today's reality. From them we have learned the strength of a community's heart; respect and real affection for each brother; concern to savor time, valuing each moment; recognizing the constant presence of a humble God in the little things of everyday; and living with a spirit of gratefulness.

Mary and Elizabeth said their good-byes after spending some time together, and then each returned to her own life. The Gospels do not tell us any more about their further encounters, yet they do tell us that the lives gestating in the wombs of these two women blossomed into the lives of two men in love with God. ■



Suesa nun's Visitation statue.



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!” ■

Two Poems

- *brother Columba*



O Light of Christmas,
inviting us to peace and expectation
as the snow deepens
into mounds of sledding bliss.

O Light of welcoming love
lifting hearts in joy and praise
with gratitude to the Creator
of the winter light.



Autumn arrives with gold
colors array the mountains.
Time of harvest
seeds of thanksgiving
the whole earth rejoices.
In the sunsets of life
God lifts our spirit to the Sun.
Alleluia!



Suesa nuns, Weston brothers and a gathering of friends.

As at a Banquet!

- *brother Peter*

THERE IS AN AMBIENCE OF CONVIVIALITY AT A BANQUET among friends and companions. There is an ambience of stressed confrontation at a debate where only one wins and all others lose. In the church, Francis, our new Bishop of Rome, is clearly embodying the spirit of banquet. Not that disagreement and dissent never occur among friends and companions at a banquet, but assuredly and determinedly in the context of continued friendship and fellowship. With Pope Francis we are learning again what it means to be a church where acceptance, inclusion and mercy create the foundational climate for genuine communication and communion.

On our recent visit in September with our sisters, the Trinitarian Nuns of Suesa, Cantabria, Spain, we were given a booklet of an interview with Pedro Casaldáliga, bishop emeritus of the Prelature of São Félix do Araguaia, Mato Grosso, Brasil. In it Bishop Pedro speaks about Base Christian Communities as model and form of being church:

The great challenge for today is *convivencia* (convivial fellowship) in every area of life: in the family, in the neighborhood, at work, in church communities . . . *Convivencia* presupposes that as a church we assume an attitude of equality: relating as equals with other churches, with other religions, with other spiritualities, and with the whole human family. Our starting point must be this macro-ecumenical posture, not one turned in on itself. We must begin with a vision that is open and in communion with all other movements, spiritualities

and religions. We must present our faith not as superior to all, but rather as contributing the particular experience and story of Jesus of Nazareth to all.¹

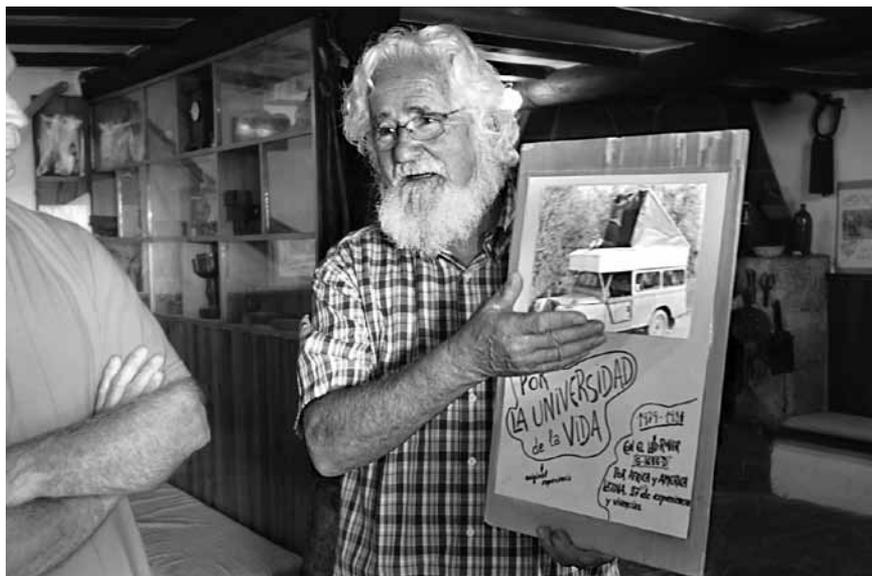
Our visit and interchange with our Suesa sisters was just such an experience of *convivencia*. Our communities are from particular monastic traditions, Trinitarian and Benedictine. We are embedded in American culture and history, they in European and Spanish. Yet we relate as equals, men and women. We experienced the joy and benefit of sharing mutually our distinct and challenging experiences of monastic prayer, work and community life. We were with them as at a banquet.

Thankfully, we have had many graced-filled experiences of being church. Within our community we have been nurtured by years of consensual living together as brothers in the Benedictine tradition. Our now 38 year association with our Mexican Benedictine sisters has been a gift of mutual support, challenge and on-going learning together. With the sisters, we have witnessed and participated in the proverbially exuberant fellowship of poor and simple people in Base Christian Communities in Mexico. Brother Simón Pedro Arnold, from the Benedictine monastery in Chucuito, Peru, recently spent a 6 month sabbatical with us. In our last bulletin, he wrote about his experience of interculturality with the Aymara culture and religion of Peru, an example of how religions can fruitfully relate in mutual acceptance. He was with us for the intercommunity encounter in Cuernavaca, Mexico, last February, also described in our last bulletin. Pope Francis and Pedro Casaldáliga have given us words to describe what we have been living in these and many other interactions. With this clear articulation, we are also challenged to a more conscious and profound practice of *convivencia*.

The Trinitarian sisters shared with us something of the rich cultural, historical, and ecological riches of their area – the beautiful seashore at Somo on the Atlantic coast of Cantabria, the traditional procession of sea craft – fishing boats and otherwise – before the “Virgin of the Port” at Santoña; a day spent at a nearby hostel for pilgrims on the “Camino de Santiago” with Ernesto, a priest friend; a visit to a nearby 12th century Romanesque church at Bareyo; and a visit to the site of the Paleolithic drawings at Altamira and it’s wonderful museum. The lay community from Madrid who has befriended the sisters came to spend a weekend with us and the sisters. We renewed contact with Luis Arancibia and his wife, Teresa Casillas, who were among them and had visited us in Weston in June of 2012.

But what most enlivened all of these encounters was the daily community ambience of prayer, exchange, and interaction with our Trinitarian sisters which gave meaning and specialness to our visit. That is the grounding of our ongoing search together for monastic authenticity, peace, and joy. That is both the source and the fruit of the *convivencia* which we share. ■

¹ Pedro Casaldáliga, *utopía encarnada*, by Avelino Seco Muñoz, © 2013, Editorial Nueva Utopía, Madrid, pg. 38-39 (*my translation*)



Ernesto Bustio describing his journey on the road of the "University of Life."

Ernesto

- brother Daniel

AS WE GAINED ALTITUDE, THE RIDE THROUGH RURAL Cantabria was dotted with quaint stone houses whose red tile roofs playfully shone over the meadows. We were going to the mountain village of Güemes, where a friend of the Trinitarian Nuns, Ernesto Bustio was waiting for us.

Ernesto is the host at the Cabaña del Abuelo Peuto. He explained: "I named it in honor of my grandfather Peter." Ernesto, ordained as a priest 52 years ago, inherited the ancestral household after his grandfather died and turned it into a hostel for pilgrims on the Way of Saint James. He told us: "A gift is meant to be shared."

Previously he had served as a bricklayer worker-priest among poor laborers in Santander. Early on, he was also sent to serve in a very remote village of illiterate shepherds in the middle of the Picos de Europa, a high and inaccessible mountain range dividing the provinces of Cantabria and Asturias in northern Spain. As he poured coffee and gave us some local pastries, he said: "Those simple people taught me more about the gospel and my own call as a priest than all the books from my seminary training."

Ernesto began to show us the pictures that covered his walls and then told us: "... doctors, lawyers and other professionals have their degrees showing their credentials on the walls. These are my credentials from the

Universidad de la Vida (the University of Life) and all these photos of people and places that I remember with love and gratitude are my Ph.D.”

In 1979, after serving the poor of Santander, Ernesto wanted to experience how the poor live in other places. He restored a Land Rover and, with some friends, traveled through Europe into the Middle East, down to India, put the vehicle on a boat back to Africa, crisscrossed the continent, worked in the mines in Senegal and again went by boat to South America. To pay for the transportation they had to work on board in slave-like conditions. From Venezuela they drove up north and eventually returned to their beloved Cantabrian Mountains. He is now the pastor at Santa María de Bareyo, with its beautiful 12th century Romanesque church.

As we drove from Güemes to Santa María de Bareyo, the people of the different villages waved smilingly at him. He acknowledged them and also greeted the walking pilgrims on The Way of Saint James. They often put down their backpacks to exchange a few words with him. He loves these people!

Arriving at the hostel, he talked to the pilgrims about the way . . . “El camino de la vida”, describing it as the path we travel through life, how we journey and choose and learn to relate to our fellow travelers and to the world around us. He articulated Gospel values without mentioning religion; he told anecdotes from his prior experience as the young people listened attentively.

Many of these young pilgrims return to the hostel after completing their journey to Saint James’ Cathedral in Compostela to be of service in order to help others as well as themselves. They are deeply touched by his example, his hospitality, the warmth of other volunteers at the hostel, and the deep sense of community they find there. One of the social workers at the local jail often brings some of the inmates to share experiences with the pilgrims and the volunteers and also to do community work.

When we returned back to the sisters’ monastery in Suesa I remarked that it felt like going to visit an uncle. Sister Isabel replied: “Oh Ernesto is as good as bread, simple, down to earth and genuine. He likes to stay away from conflict; some time ago the bishop phoned him ranting and scolding him for being carefree with the rubrics — “I received complaints that you are not doing the *epiclesis!*” Ernesto responded “Bishop I am so sorry.” He chose not to get into a discussion. He was always polite with his bishop. After hanging up he called a fellow priest, a friend who teaches Theology. “Hello,” he said, “this is Ernesto. What is an *epiclesis?*”

We brothers are still questioning ourselves about the deep meaning of being a People of the Way — as the gospel describes the followers of Jesus. How do we continue to learn from the University of Life as we journey together? As monks we continue to explore! We felt inspired and challenged by this humble man who was so hospitable and loving, to become a truly Eucharistic community — loving, serving, welcoming, disarmingly free and hopefully “as good as bread.” ■

Excerpts from the Interview with Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga¹



Photo: J. M. Concepción

Dom Pedro Casaldáliga.

AFTER MORNING PRAYER a group of us visiting Dom Pedro remained sitting on stools for almost an hour listening to Pedro speak passionately about the Church Base Communities in an informal interview.

As Dom Pedro sits down, he looks full of energy. We ask him to speak of the Church Base Communities; what are they, what is their place in the renewal of the church?

Casaldáliga: These communities emerge from the grassroots, from the simple folk, and they are the base of the church. In Brazil we say that this is a new way of being church. I add that this is a new way of being for the whole church. Bishop Leonardo was a bit excited, so he said to me: Pedro, that is a dream. Yet it would be the way to be church: communitarian, faithful, joining together faith and life, putting the Bible in the hands of simple people, having a capacity for dialogue with an ecumenical awareness. We have always said that there must be a dialogue between the people and their culture. The challenge, and it is a big one today, is *convivencia* (a Spanish term signifying convivial fellowship, peaceful and happy living together). Its challenge emerges in every area of life: in the family, in the neighborhood, at work, in the church community. The Minky Indians say that *vivir es convivir* (to live is to live together). *Convivencia* presupposes that as a church we assume an attitude of equality: relating as equals with other churches, with other religions, with other spiritualities, and with the whole human family. Our starting point must be macro-

¹ Translated from the original Spanish in the book: *Pedro Casaldáliga, utopía encarnada*, by Avelino Seco Muñoz, © 2013, Editorial Nueva Utopía, Madrid

ecumenical (wide-ecumenism) rather than a posture that turns in on itself. We must begin with a vision that is open and in communion with all other movements, spiritualities, and religions. We must present our faith not by imposing it from a place of superiority, but by offering our contribution through the concrete story and experience of Jesus of Nazareth.

Q.: Can you explain what you mean by saying that there cannot be faith without politics?

Casaldáliga: There cannot be a Christian faith that is not enfleshed. Incarnation (God-become-flesh) is the mystery of God entering fully into our humanity through Jesus of Nazareth. This presupposes that we assume the challenges of life each day. Everything is politics, although politics is not all there is. Jesus said that he came so that all would have life, and have it abundantly. If I don't care about the land, health, education, communications, or even about vacations in order for people to take a break, I am not caring for human life. Life in the other world is God's business, God will take very good care of it because there will be life, abundant life for everybody. Yet we are to improve life and make it universally available to all here and now, in this world. And if the church, the pope, the bishops, the priests, the nuns and all of us who want to be followers of Jesus do not take part in politics, do not promote social causes which have the faith's political and economic consequences, what witness are we giving to love?

Mino Cerezo (one of the participants): I am asking myself if the bottom line is not about believing in Jesus but believing in what Jesus believed. We seem never to touch that. To believe as Jesus believed is a very important aspect of prayer, because Jesus believed in others; he prayed with others in mind. Leaving the apostles behind, he used to go up to the mountain by himself and spend the whole night in prayer. Yet he would always come back to be with the people to proclaim the Reign of God. He placed prayer foremost in his practice. I feel that we are falling short here. Young people believe in Jesus. However my question is for them as it is for us older folks as well: are we believing as Jesus believed, or only in Jesus?

Casaldáliga: When you think of T-shirts, it is easy to carry Jesus on your chest, it is very challenging to have in our chest, that is, in our heart, the courage to follow Jesus.

To finish, I would like to offer An Epilogue in Memory of Dom Aloisio Lorscheider [who was the former cardinal archbishop of Sao Paulo]. Dom Aloisio used to say: The church needs the church base communities in today's world, especially in the world of the impoverished, the marginalized, the forgotten. The church is and ought to be essentially a community of faith and struggle, fostering truthful bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood, and not just gathering crowds in order to entertain them. All Catholic movements and all pastoral ministry must have the church base communities as their model, as a way of being church today. ■

Life Together in One Heart



OUR EARLY MORNING VIGIL PRAYER BEGINS IN darkness and silence as we come together for a new day in prayerful presence. The silence gradually gives way to the sound of a rain stick, flute, and rhythmic drumming that reminds us of that time, long ago, when God's Spirit hovered over the cosmic chaos. "*Time of Change and Transformation*"¹, a simple mantra chant, is begun, building in intensity with each repetition, calling us to open our hearts to the present moment and inviting our discernment and response for the day's journey ahead.

Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome reminds us that: "God is always first and makes the first move . . . We read it in the prophets. God is encountered walking along the path. You are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him. You must, therefore, discern the encounter. Discernment is essential."²

Leonardo Boff cites a companion text by the pope where he said: "God manifests himself in time and is present in the processes of history", and insightfully comments: "The times are pregnant with God."³

The following chronicle of events sketches some brief moments in our community discernment of this God with whom we journey in the daily of the here and now.

May

We hosted the second Monastic Living Experience of the year from May 26th to June 1st. Two men participated in the seven day experience of prayer, community living, and exploration of monastic values. Dustin Goffron of Deerfield, Illinois, and Christian Mollitor of Vienna, Virginia, shared the richness of their



Christian and Dustin.

¹ © 2014 The Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc.

² "A Big Heart Open To God" in America Magazine of September 30, 2013.

³ Francis of Rome/Francis of Assisi, A New Springtime for the Church, by Leonardo Boff, © 2014 Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

spiritual search and their varied life experiences. We had several opportunities for exchange and reflection together during the days. We are grateful for the generous and joyful spirit they brought to the experience.

June

Our friend and video-maker, Nicholas Tuff, who lives in Vermont, came for a day in early June for the filming of a 20 minute video entitled "The Gift to Be Simple,"⁴ which he offered to our community as a gift. It is centered on several interviews with brothers and gives insights into the life of the community here at Weston. The finished piece was uploaded on YouTube⁵ in mid-July. Our community is grateful to Nic for the beauty and sensitivity which is expressed in this creative video. His reflection on the day's experience: "I was blessed to have been in the presence of so much spirit."



The Irish theologian and Dominican, Wilfrid Harrington, gave two presentations in the village of Weston at the Church on the Hill on June 17th. Fr. Harrington is the author of many books and has lectured at numerous colleges in the U.S. and abroad, including Vermont's Saint Michael's College. Many of us brothers went to the presentation which focused on "Answering the Call of God: How our traditional assumptions concerning the nature of God do not provide an adequate view of immanence and transcendence."



Fr. Wilfrid Harrington

Sunday June 22nd was a day of celebration with the Dismas Community of Vermont. We brothers joined many friends, volunteers, supporters, and benefactors of this new transitional home for former prisoners coming out of Vermont's correctional facilities. The opening of the fourth Dismas House in Hartford, Vermont (White River Junction is the adjacent larger town), signals the growth of a continuing compassionate response in the hearts of many people who hear God's call in Isaiah 61: 1 :



Photo Debbie Diegoli

Brothers at Hartford Dismas House dedication

⁴ Access it at the priory website: www.westonpriory.org. Click on "What's new" then "Photos and videos" then "The Gift to Be Simple."

⁵ On YouTube enter a search for "Alternative Life", "Monasteries", "Monastic Life", or "Spirituality."

God has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison.

We are truly blessed by the gospel ministry of everyone at Dismas.

July

Our annual celebration of the Feast of Saint Benedict was marked by a festive Eucharist, picnics, and folk dancing on Sunday July 13th. The actual feast day is July 11th and our custom is to mark the occasion on the closest Sunday. In the early afternoon of Saturday, July 12th, our Benedictine brother, Simón Pedro Arnold, gave a presentation, along with audio visuals, on the experience of his monastic community in



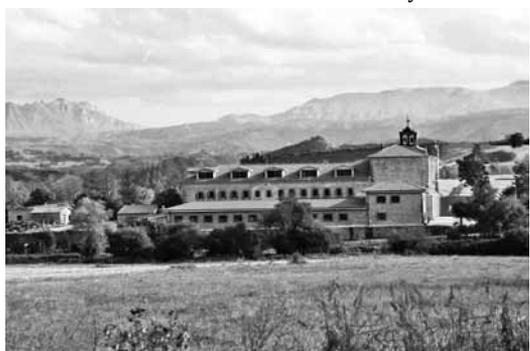
brother Simón Pedro Arnold.

the Andean Altiplano, living and serving among the Aymara indigenous people on the shores of Lake Titicaca in Chucuito, Peru. More than a hundred friends and neighbors came to the Saturday gathering in our Visitors Center to listen to the voice and witness of this Benedictine monk from the southern part of our continent of the Americas. Brother Simón Pedro's six months' sabbatical with us in Weston came to its completion in mid-August with joyful expressions of fraternal love and "hasta luego."

September

From September 2nd to the 16th, most of our community traveled to north-east coastal Spain where nine Trinitarian Nuns of the monastery of Suesa

welcomed us warmly with open arms. Established in 1860 this monastery has a significant outreach to many people in Spain who seek a renewed experience of liturgy and spirituality in the contemporary Church. The sisters welcome guests from throughout Europe to their newly renovated guest facilities and have also established the Association of the Friends of the Monastery of Suesa that gathers searching



Monastery of Trinitarian Nuns in Suesa.

people who value friendship with the sisters and their efforts to explore

questions that relate to culture, spirituality, and social concerns. Having heard of our community from two women friends who knew us, as well as from our internet website, they contacted us seeking to establish an intercommunity dialogue that would mutually benefit both our monastic communities.

A small group of four of us went to Spain in 2010 and spent two weeks with the sisters that included participating in the beginning of the Feminine Monastic Forum they were hosting to celebrate the 150th anniversary of their foundation. In 2012, three of the sisters came to Weston for an initial visit and to discuss mutual interests and challenges while deepening the friendship that had begun to grow among us. At the beginning of this year, sister María, who is prioress, and sister María José joined us at the Centro Guadalupe in Cuernavaca, Mexico, for a four-day intercommunity encounter with representatives of five small monastic communities who are searching for a renewed expression of monastic life in today's world and global church. With each of these encounters we have grown in understanding and appreciation of what our monastic communities have to offer to all those whose hopes and dreams resonate with a renewed expression of monastic life. (See other articles in this issue related to our visit to the Nuns at Suesa).



Stained Glass of the Trinity in Suesa.

October

A group of conscious and committed Catholics, called Concerned Catholics of Vermont, came to the priory on October 18th for an afternoon meeting in our Visitors Center. A warm greeting and hearty welcome was offered to all by several brothers on behalf of the community. After the 11:30 AM Eucharist and indoor picnic lunch, the group pursued a discussion among themselves about issues relevant to the future of Vermont's Catholic community.

On the last Saturday of October we placed the cremated remains of Anne Hoveling, brother Michael's mother, in the earth of our small hillside cemetery. Anne and her husband, George, were born in Amsterdam, Holland, and



Anne with Clara, her great granddaughter.

immigrated to southern Alberta, Canada, in the early 1950's where they lived and raised their three children. After a simple Midday Prayer in our stone chapel, our brothers and many friends of the community accompanied George, daughter Yvonne, and younger son Mark to the gravesite. Anne will be remembered as someone who would spontaneously and joyfully say: "I thank God", "I am thankful for life" and "I thank my family."

November

On Saturday afternoon, November 1st, a group of brothers met with some local friends and others who traveled to the priory to participate in a discussion about the Dalai Lama's "Human Approach to World Peace" and Pope Francis' lament that "War is madness . . . so irrational; its only plan is to bring destruction."

Over the weekend of November 7-9, members of the boards of the four Dismas Houses of Vermont had their annual retreat with us at the priory. We are always deeply touched by their sharing and personal witness to the gifts they say they receive from persons transitioning out of prison and seeking to reintegrate into a society or a neighborhood that is not always very welcoming. ■

