

CHRONICLE: June – November, 2015

THE IRISH TEACHER, POET, AND MYSTIC, JOHN O' DONOHUE, WRITES: "GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, and life itself is the primal sacrament, namely, the visible sign of invisible grace. The structures of our experience are the windows into the divine"¹.

Laudato Si (On Care for Our Common Home), the encyclical letter of Pope Francis, offers us a new window of expression to God's call for all of us to awaken to our responsibility as caretakers of the earth and all our sisters and brothers. It reawakens our hearts to care for all of creation and to protect and care for the most vulnerable in our human family. Francis challenges our moral responsibility with questions that ask: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? What is the purpose of our life in this world? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?"

In light of Pope Francis' dynamic witness to a new paradigm of being Church in today's world we have been reading several related books that give the measure of the man in his papal ministry and also reprise some of his significant talks/speeches/writings. Three of these insightful books read in our dining room are: *The Church of Mercy – A Vision for the Church; Walking with Jesus – A Way Forward for the Church; and Francis of Rome / Francis of Assisi – A New Springtime for the Church* by Leonardo Boff.



Mother Lucia of Regina Laudis

June

Daniel Frank of Manchester, Vermont, participated in the seven-day Monastic Living Experience.

To celebrate the newly elected Abbess, Mother Lucia Kuppens, O.S.B., at the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Connecticut, the brothers traveled to the Abbey to spend part of a day with the monastic community.



Daniel Frank

July

Saint Benedict's weekend – July 10, 11 & 12:

On Saturday, Ayman Nijim, a Palestinian, studying at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, whose wife and family live in the Gaza Strip, gave a moving presentation to one hundred neighbors and friends in our Visitors' Center. He narrated with heartrending emotion the discrimination and suffering that is the daily lot of Palestinians in that conflicted and occupied part of the Middle East. Ayman manages programs in the Nuseirat Refugee Camp which are designed to help children and mothers heal from the trauma of decades of occupation, seven years of brutal siege, and two recent Israeli military actions. In thanking all who came to the presentation Ayman wrote: "It was my true honor and privilege to speak for our brothers and sisters. Your generosity is special, your kindness is unique. May God bless every step in your life, and with your utmost effort, the love message will prevail."



Ayman Nijim

The summer months began with some needed renovations and building re-insulation updating several of our buildings. St. Gabriel's, the original farmhouse/monastery, received new closed-cell foam insulation in the basement and the second floor attic. The second floor rooms were also refurbished with the addition of new baseboard heating. The woodshop

¹ *To Bless the Space between Us*, © 2008, Doubleday, Introduction, p. xvi

was moved into the renovated shipping room and candle making/bee supply storage area. New windows and insulation were installed as a heat conservation measure. The candle shop was moved to another part of the same building. The dormitory building, where each of us have our individual rooms, had the old insulation removed on all the west walls and closed-cell insulation installed. Many of the old windows were replaced with energy-efficient windows.

Our brother Robert (age 93) had a serious fall towards the end of July damaging his right hip and femur. He previously had hip replacement surgery a number of years ago. He was hospitalized for a week before going into rehab. Since brother Robert is a Marine Corps veteran he was able to be received at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington, Vermont, where he received rehab therapy and continues to receive wonderful assistance and care.



Listen with the ear of your heart

August

In early August we celebrated the oblation of several friends of the community who asked to enter more deeply into the spirituality and teaching of Saint Benedict as Benedictine Oblates. Brother John accompanied the group at monthly meetings over a period of twelve months. A thematic approach to the Rule of Benedict, beginning with Saint Benedict's very first words—"Listen with the ear of your heart"—were topics of reflection and discussion. Sharing in the prayer life and spirituality of the community, each oblate follows the Rule in the context of the reality of their own life. This opportunity is available for others to follow.

October

On October 1st two of our Mexican Benedictine Sisters came to be with us for two weeks. We were blessed by the presence of Sister Rosa, who is the newly elected prioress of the community, and Sister Miguelina, who has just finished six years offering the ministry of prioress. The sisters made the most of this opportunity for rest and renewal as they prepared to refresh their energies for the year ahead. The days were marked with community sharing, common prayer, value discussions, and catching up on news in both of our communities.



Sister Rosa and Sister Miguelina

On October 7th Brother Richard and Brother Placid represented us at the semi-annual meeting of monastic women and men serving in leadership in their respective Benedictine and Cistercian monastic communities in New England. The day-long event was hosted by Abbot Mark and the community of Saint Anselm's Abbey in Manchester, New Hampshire.

One of our abiding joys over the years has been the welcoming and nurturing of new expressions of music and song into our life and prayer. Through the spring and summer months Brother Michael has offered us creative expressions of scripturally-based songs, mantra chants and psalm modes. We are blessed and enriched to have these new expressions in our celebrations of liturgy and common prayer.

November

For the past thirty five years a group of Lutheran pastors, women and men from the New England region, have come on retreat in the first week of November. We marked the occasion with expressions of gratitude for the friendship, mutual support, and affection that we have been able to share over these years. ■