

CHRONICLE – May to November, 2017

Often in his (Thomas Merton's) writings is the idea of potential, new beginnings, growth, and becoming, and a realization that it is there for the having—a gift and a grace.¹

DURING THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS OUR COMMUNITY HAS EXPERIENCED MANY moments of recognizing “gift and grace” in our lives. Being present to these opportunities for growth and integrating them into our daily rhythm of life is both challenging and inspiring.

May

From May 22nd to May 28th we welcomed Danny Freeman from Texas to the seven-day Monastic Living Experience.



Danny Freeman.



June

During our two week extended Retreat and Quiet Time at the beginning of the month, the wood flooring was taken up and replaced in the choir section of the Stone Chapel. Over a period of sixty-five years, since the 1952 conversion of the cattle barn into a chapel, the original floor had become unstable due to being heavily sanded and refinished a number of times. Locally sourced white oak now offers a warm and inviting feeling to all who join us for prayer and Eucharist. Some of the historic old flooring is now being used in our woodshop where we are crafting a series of small crosses and plaques for sale in our Gallery Shop.

¹ *The Only Mind Worth Having: Thomas Merton and the Child Mind*, Fiona Gardner, Cascade Books, 2015, p. 210.

On June 27th a small group of three oblates made their oblation in the Stone Chapel gathered together with others in the oblate community, friends, and our community of brothers. This becomes the third occasion that oblations have been celebrated here at the priory since renewed interest was initiated in November of 2015.



Our three new oblates with the brothers.

July



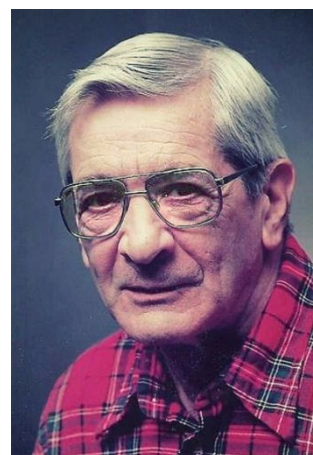
Betsy Hardy of VTIPL.

On Saturday, July 8th, in conjunction with our annual celebration of the feast of Saint Benedict, Vermont Interfaith Power & Light made an enlightening presentation in our Visitors' Center. Betsy Hardy, VTIPL coordinator, brought the attention of around 120 persons to consider "God's Creation and Global Warming". She described how the carbon footprint left by those in affluent countries has had a devastating impact on the poorest of the poor who share mother earth with us. The climate crisis which is threatening the world is, at heart, a spiritual crisis. VTIPL seeks to empower members of

Vermont's faith and spiritual communities to advocate for our earth and future generations through concrete locally-based actions. see: www.vtipl.org

On this same day, July 8th, our former brother, David George Baril, was lovingly remembered and buried in the priory cemetery. A large number of his family and friends joined us for this celebration

Sunday, July 30th marked the 35th anniversary of the AA *At The Priory Group* which has been meeting weekly in our Visitors' Center. This was a Speaker Meeting open to anyone wishing to celebrate a remarkable achievement of perseverance, continuity, and everyday solidarity. The Visitors' Center was filled with current and former participants, as well as friends, who gathered in gratitude for what this transforming AA Meeting has meant in the lives of hundreds of people over the years.



David George Baril



VAMOS In Mexico 30th Anniversary gathering in the Weston Priory Visitors' Center.

August

On August 19th, celebrating here at the priory, *VAMOS In Mexico* marked 30 years of making a difference in the lives of children, the elderly, women, and the poor in the state of Morelos, Mexico, in the area surrounding the city of Cuernavaca. The Spanish word, *vamos*, means “let’s get going”. Initiated here in Weston by a small group of locally committed advocates for the poor and disenfranchised, *VAMOS* has been offering a broad spectrum of aid to small groups of people who find it challenging to survive in an ever changing society that continually forgets those most in need. Their slogan, *Todos Somos VAMOS* (We are all *VAMOS*), conveys the dynamism that permeates the many persons who have continued to generously support *VAMOS* over these many years. With pride, the leadership of *VAMOS* has stated from its inception: Every dollar donated goes directly to help the Mexican poor! see: www.vamosinmexico.org

Father Jerome Kodell, former abbot of Subiaco Abbey in Subiaco, Arkansas, was with us from August 22nd to 25th for our quadrennial Monastic Visitation. We are grateful to have Father Jerome as the direct representative of Abbot Primate Gregory Polan who represents the Benedictine world/family in Rome. Our several days together were filled



Father Jerome Kodell (*front center*) with the brothers.

with encouraging affirmation, insightful observation, fraternal accompaniment, and brotherly care. Father Jerome is an exceptionally good listener who often makes a point with his wonderful laid-back sense of humor. At a meeting with a group of our oblates he was impressed by the process by which our oblates are developing into community-like small groups where persons can relate deeply and share their journey in discovering the richness of the spirituality of Saint Benedict embodied in his Rule for Monks.



Kimberly Kelly and Arvel Bird in concert.

On Saturday, August 26th, Arvel Bird, Native American violinist, flutist, and composer, presented a tapestry of music and stories in our Barn Chapel with a gathered crowd of 250 neighbors, friends, and visitors. His *Celtic Indian* brand is a reflection of his mixed-blood American Indian and Celtic heritages as well as his love of diversity. Accompanied by his wife, Kimberly Kelly, his presentation of Native American folk and Celtic rock orchestrations offered everyone a glimpse into his Native American heart and Scottish soul.

September

On Friday, September 1st, we remembered with gratitude and buried our friend, Bill Comstock. Together with his wife, Sue, he served in the hospitality and care of our guesthouses for 22 years. We are grateful for the friendship and gift that they offered to us and to the many guests who came to the priory for retreats and times of prayer.



Bill and Sue Comstock

October

Representatives of six New England Benedictine and Cistercian monastic communities (four monasteries were not able to be present) gathered in Weston for the semi-annual regional meeting. These one day events offer an opportunity to renew the bonds of inter-community friendships, update one another on happenings in each community, strengthen our common interests as women and men monastics, and exchange on a topic of mutual interest and challenge. The topic for this meeting was: “Monastic community as a sign of hope in a fragmented world: How can monastic leadership witness to the humility and joy of the Gospel as inspired by the Rule of St. Benedict through listening to and dialoguing with the voice of all”.



Benedictines and Cistercians meeting with the Weston brothers.

November

Brother John Thompson and Brother Gabriel Duffee of Mount Saviour Monastery in Elmira (Pine City), New York, came for a four day visit from October 29th to November 1st. It was a great joy to welcome our *cousins* from western New York and to have this time to re-engage our mutual friendship, common roots, and Benedictine heritage. The founder of their monastery, Father Damasus Winzen, and our founder, brother (Abbot) Leo Rudloff, both arrived in the United States from Germany on the same trans-Atlantic ship as refugees from Hitler's tentacles in 1937. While their individual trajectories varied as the years went by, both went on to establish small monasteries in the spirit of renewal that was abroad in the Church during the years before Vatican Council II. Their desire to plant the seeds of Benedictine renewal in the fertile soil of America has born witness in the hearts and minds of those who were inspired by their courage and vision. Thus our sense of fraternal relationship runs deep.



Brother John and Brother Gabriel of Mount Saviour (*center*) with the brothers of Weston Priory.



Meeting of *Dismas of Vermont* in Weston Priory Visitors' Center.

On the weekend of November 10-12 more than 40 board members of Vermont's four Dismas Houses, which offer Gospel-inspired transitional housing for men and women leaving incarceration, held their annual retreat at the priory. Our community participated in a Saturday afternoon open discussion and video presentation on the impact of the Dismas charism on the lives of individuals who are making a transition as well as on the lives of staff, volunteers, and the wider community. ■