

Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

"We share with you some of the events which have marked our community life during the past months..."

DECEMBER 2000

Spanish-speaking peoples of the Americas share with the rest of us a beautiful custom for the waning days of Advent, called *Las Posadas*, in which Mary and Joseph's search for lodging is enacted each of nine nights before Christmas.

¡Entren, santos peregrinos! ("Come in, holy pilgrims!") sing the men and women representing the innkeepers, as "Mary" and "Joseph" are welcomed into the houses of the neighborhood. In this centuries-old tradition, we have come to experience God's drawing near to us in humility and poverty. We brothers have incorporated a celebration of Posadas as part of our Advent customs. As in years past, it was during this season of welcoming that a group of our Mexican Benedictine Sisters came to Weston for two weeks, to share in our celebrations of Christmas.

JANUARY 2001

- Twice each year, we brothers enter into a unique experience of hospitality which we call "Living With a Monastic Community," during which young men share more fully in our monastic life, and explore the relevance of monastic values for their lives.

At the beginning of January, seven men from varied backgrounds in work or study participated with us in this experience. We are thankful to each of them for the enthusiasm with which they shared themselves as they entered into our common life.

- With the conclusion of the Winter Monastic Experience, the community entered into a few days of quiet, to prepare for our annual encounter with our Mexican Benedictine Sisters. This yearly visit has become a primary experience of communion and solidarity for our community -- and always, it is an opportunity for greater challenge in the living of the Gospel.

We take these experiences with our sisters very seriously, and eagerly anticipate them with community preparation. This year, however, we visited our sisters not in Mexico, but in their two communities in Nicaragua.

The first "leg" of our journey brought us to Managua, Nicaragua's capital city, where the sisters' small community, called Casa San Benito, serves as a

house of formation for Nicaraguan women who have entered the sisters' congregation.

Our time in Managua included meetings with young people, visits to communities resettled after Hurricane Mitch with the assistance of the Nicaraguan Conference of Religious, and an inspiring morning with Ernesto Cardenal, a world famous poet and the former Minister of Culture in the Nicaraguan government.

We then traveled north to the sisters' mission in the municipality of San Nicolas del Oriente, another region devastated by the 1998 Hurricane Mitch.

A highlight of our days in San Nicolas was the First Monastic Profession of two young Nicaraguan women, Sister Yerenia and Sister Carolina.

We spent two overnights in the highlands, in a remote settlement named La Garnacha, where the Little Brothers of the Gospel have a small fraternity.

We were also given the opportunity to visit the newly built homes of families who had lost everything in the hurricane.

A few short, descriptive articles about our Nicaraguan pilgrimage can be found in this issue of the Bulletin. ([A Longer Account](#))

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2001

- After our return from Nicaragua, Brother Richard participated in the annual meeting of Benedictine abbots and priors at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California.

Theologian Tom Beaudoin, author of *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*, was the presenter, offering insights into the experience and searching of young people today.

- The same concern -- reaching out to young adults—was the focus of the March regional meeting of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, in which Brother Richard and Brother Philip participated.
- Our growing friendship with the Benedictine community of the Monastery of the Annunciation, in Goias, Brazil, has been signed over the past few years by reciprocal visits of brothers from both communities.

Our communion was deepened this spring by the presence of Brother Fernando da Costa, who lived with our community for three months, in preparation for his First Monastic Profession, in Goias on July 14, the Sunday nearest the summer feast of Saint Benedict.

- Nine students from Merrimack College, accompanied by Prof. Padraic O'Hare and campus minister Fr. Scott Ness, OSA, spent the weekend of March 8-11th at the priory—their first indepth exposure to Christian monastic life.

While we were grateful to have been able to share our life with them, we were also greatly inspired by these young men and women who gave of their time to be with us.

- On the winter feast of Saint Benedict, March 21st, we visited the Buddhist monks and nuns of Maple Forest Monastery in Vermont, for a day of exchange.

Maple Forest is a foundation of Plum Village monastery in France, led by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. The ancient monastic value of hospitality, which both traditions practice, was the focus of our discussion together. We also shared tea, walking meditation, Midday Prayer, and dinner.

- It has been seventeen years since we welcomed Felipe and Elena Ixcot and their family, refugees from Guatemala, into public sanctuary here at the priory. On March 24th, the feast of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, we also celebrated the anniversary of their arrival. While Felipe and Elena have been able to return to Guatemala for a few short visits, the climate of violence has not subsided enough to permit a permanent return. Yet, in this long exile, they continue to be an untiring voice for their people, the Maya.

APRIL 2001

- During Holy Week, author James Carroll met with the community, and reflected on the painful history of Jewish-Christian relations, the topic of his newest book, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*. We are grateful to him for the immensely stimulating conversation together.
- On Wednesday of Easter Week, Brother Richard and Brother Peter traveled to Saint Paul's Priory in Newport, Rhode Island, for a meeting of representatives of the Benedictine and Cistercian communities of New England. While in Rhode Island, they received the generous hospitality of Abbot Mark Serna, OSB, and the monks of Saint Gregory's Abbey, Portsmouth.
- The following weekend, the brothers welcomed all the friends who work with us here at the priory, for a weekend of retreat with us. These men and women, our co-workers, are the ones who enable us to extend the welcome of the monastery to so many who come here. More than work, it is really the values of the Benedictine tradition that have come to unite us. Each year, this weekend of sharing is a concrete celebration of our gratitude to each and all of them.

MAY 2001

- The Reverend Hal Harrison, in conjunction with Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, directed another Benedictine Experience at the Priory in May, as six men and women shared the rhythm of daily prayer, reflection, and work with us. Their presence among us witnessed to the vitality and attraction of the Benedictine spirit to so many people in the church and world today. Such thirst in the lives of non-monastic men and women is always a challenge to us to live our monastic life with deeper fidelity and authenticity.

JUNE 2001

- From Weston Priory's earliest days, the Benedictine community of Mount Saviour Monastery, near Elmira, New York, has been a support and encouragement to us. The founders of both monasteries were friends and associates during their student days at Sant'Anselmo in Rome -- immersing themselves in the exciting currents of monastic renewal. Their paths would lead them to the United States during World War II. In 1951, Father Damasus Winzen would found Mount Saviour Monastery, and two years later, Abbot Leo Rudloff would begin Weston Priory. Both communities were established on the solid foundation of a simple, renewed Benedictine monasticism.

This year, the monks of Mount Saviour celebrate their fiftieth anniversary of foundation. In June, our entire community joined them for a weekend of celebration, in thanksgiving for the witness of their life and for the brotherhood we share.

- Also in early June, we visited our monastic neighbors in nearby Cambridge, New York -- the monastery of New Skete—for a picnic with the monks, dessert with the nuns, and a visit with the lay monastic community. The day concluded with the celebration of Vespers in the beautiful New Skete Church,

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