

Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

With certitude
Simeon opened ancient arms
to infant light.
Decades before the cross, the tomb, and the new life,
he knew new life.
What depth of faith he drew on,
turning illumined toward deep night.
DENISE LEVERTOV

TO KNOW NEW LIFE. ISN'T THIS THE ASTOUNDING PROMISE and unearned gift of the Gospel? We come to the texts of scripture each day, hoping to hear once again these precious words. Our monastic ancestors fashioned a way of life in which men and women-day by day-might become more receptive to God's promise and gift. These forebears lived in a world "deep in the gloom of death's shadow," no less tumultuous than ours. Yet in the midst of it they became a light for generations of believers, "turning illumined toward deep night." They entered onto this Way, not because it was meant for them alone, or because they were "special," but because it was purely and simply the Gospel path they shared with every follower of Jesus. For all of us, the gift of new life entails the task of becoming the light we wish to bring to our world. Turning illumined toward deep night.

As companions with you on the Way, we share some of the highlights of our life since we last wrote to you.

DECEMBER 2005: Preparing for Christmas

Our Advent preparation for the feast of Christmas included three special events. On the Second Sunday of Advent, the Solstice Singers, from --Massachusetts, presented a concert of seasonal music in our chapel following Mid-afternoon Prayer. At the Eucharist on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we continued our custom of remembering the plight of the homeless-in our state, in the country, and throughout the world. That evening, we celebrated Las Posadas (the Latin American preparation for Christmas, welcoming the homeless Mary and Joseph) with the family of Felipe and Elena Ixcot from Guatemala.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2006: Monastic Exchange

The new year began as we welcomed three young men, Soheil ---Majd, Nick Blake, and Nicholas Melucci, to share in our community life for a week-long Experience in Monastic Living. In each Monastic Experience, in summer and in winter, we are always gifted and challenged by the life-experience and friendship of the men who participate.



Participants Nicholas Melucci; back row, second from left: Soheil Majd; back row, right: Nick Blake).



Art Kirwin, Brother Daniel, and Brother Philip.

Also at the New Year, Art Kirwin, OP, a Dominican friar of the Southern Province and a close friend of our community, arrived to spend six months with us. Our daily life has been greatly blessed by Art's gentle presence among us.

Near the end of January, the brothers traveled to Mexico for a time of sharing with our wider Benedictine family. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston offered us their generous hospitality prior to our leaving for Mexico.

The morning of our scheduled departure brought heavy snows to New England, forcing the cancellation of our flight. Sharing the gracious hospitality of the Benedictine Sisters in Mexico. The next morning, we flew from Boston to the city of Torreón, in the Mexican state of Coahuila, for a time of sharing with the Benedictine Sisters of Monasterio Pan de Vida. A small group of our Benedictine Sisters from Mexico City, as well as Sister Lupita Barrejas (prioress of the monastery of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Tucson) and Sister Bernadine Rojas (prioress of Benedictine Sisters' monastery in Boerne, Texas) had come to join us for the visit.



Although our delayed arrival shortened our time in Torreón, our experience with the Sisters and with their oblates proved to be extraordinarily rich. Living a simple monastic life in the heart of a metropolitan area with a population of over one million, the Sisters of Pan de Vida share the richness of Benedictine spirituality with a number of groups associated with the monastery, with a special outreach to women. The visit proved to be a gift of mutual support and encouragement, continuing the small, inter-American monastic dialogues held previously in Weston and in Cuernavaca, Mexico. A reflection on the experience, written by Sister Patricia Henry, OSB, is included in this Bulletin.

50th Anniversary of our Mexican Benedictine Sisters From Torreón, we traveled to Mexico City and Cuernavaca, to be with our Mexican Benedictine Sisters, the Misioneras Guadalupanas de Cristo Rey, OSB. In 2005 we celebrated the 75th



anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters' congregation. This year had no less a cause for fiesta! 2006 marked the 30th anniversary of our relationship with the Sisters, and the 50th anniversaries of monastic profession of four of the Sisters, including two former prioresses, Sister María de San Pablo Durán and Sister Fidelina Monzalvo. Almost the entire congregation of Sisters gathered at the Casa Central (motherhouse) for the Eucharist during which the jubilarians renewed their vows. The liturgy was followed by a festive dinner, accompanied by the music of the marimba. While in Mexico City, we were also welcomed by the now extended family of our brother Daniel. We are always grateful for the love and gracious hospitality with which we are blessed when we visit the Saavedra Olavarietta family.

Fr. Clodomiro Siller met with the sisters and brothers on our final day at the Casa Central in Mexico City. Clodomiro has worked with the Mexican Bishops' Conference in developing a truly inculturated pastoral ministry with the indigenous peoples of Mexico. An anthropologist as well as a theologian, he is a fluent speaker of Nahuatl, one of Mexico's indigenous languages. Clodomiro spent a morning in an animated presentation of the Guadalupe Event and Message, as understood from the perspective of the culture, symbology, and cosmovision of the native peoples. While



later interpreted by the Spanish as a Marian apparition, the indigenous peoples understood the event of Guadalupe as a theophany, a revelation of God's compassionate, life-giving presence as Mother/Father amidst a suffering and defeated people. Theologian Daniel Groody has called it "an encounter with the divine heart." The event was a reaffirmation of the dignity of the native peoples, and a call to a doubting church (symbolized by the bishop, Fray Juan de Zumárraga) to be converted to God's preferential option for the poor. In the Event of Guadalupe, the ancient Nahua-Aztec experience of God encounters the Gospel message incarnate in Jesus Christ, and they embrace:

"[Juan Diego's] gaze was fixed on the summit of the hill [Tepeyac], toward the direction from which the sun rises: the beautiful celestial song was coming from there to here. And when the song finally ceased, when everything was calm, he heard that he was being called from the summit of the hill. He heard, "Dignified Juan Diego, dignified Juan Diego. ... In this place I will show and give to all people my love, my compassion, my help, and my protection. ... There I will hear their laments, and remedy all their miseries, misfortunes, and sorrows" (Nican Mopohua: 12, 23, 25).

"Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro ... and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing but was not consumed. ... God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses! ... I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them" (Exodus 3: 1-2, 4, 7-8).

"[God] has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of God's favor" (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61: 1-2).

For us, the meeting with Clodomiro was an experience of being welcomed into the world of another people, and of receiving their faith and wisdom with reverence, openness, and respect.

At the Centro Guadalupe in Cuernavaca, we had the opportunity to share life with the community of Sisters there, and to reflect together on our common values and matters of mutual concern. We have continued to maintain friendships with many of the people from the Base Christian Communities in Cuernavaca, many of whom are part of the parish in La Nopalera, for which the Sisters had pastoral responsibility for fifteen years. Again this year, we were enriched by the opportunity to renew our friendships with people from La Nopalera. Friends from the Base Christian Community of La Nopalera with the brothers at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca.



Gerardo Thijssen at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca.

A highlight of our days in Cuernavaca was a gathering with our friend Gerardo Thijssen, a lay missionary, originally from the Netherlands, who spent the last 50 years among the poorest in Latin America. Gerardo died at the end of May, at the age of eighty. A few weeks before his sudden death, Gerardo sent us a reflection on the meaning of the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca, jointly sponsored by the brothers of Weston and our Mexican sisters. The article, including a brief resumé of his remarkable life, is printed in this issue of the Bulletin.

Shortly after our return to Weston, Brother Richard participated in the annual meeting of Abbots and Priors, this year held at Conception Abbey in Missouri. Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, was the principal presenter at the meeting.

MARCH 2006

In Vermont, the signs of spring are few during the month of March. However, care for our animals moved into a new season as eight lambs were born. Brothers' enthusiasm for beekeeping was enhanced when our friends Gus Skamarycz and Mike Bayko brought nine new beehives to complement the hives which we kept over the winter. Some of the new beehives have been placed in our apple orchards (with sufficient protection to prevent our neighbors, the bears, from getting near the sweet honey).



The care of the animals brings great joy. Yet unfortunate circumstances can also bring a note of sadness. In mid-March, fourteen of our fifteen hens were attacked and killed by a mink, whose distinctive tracks were clearly evident. Five days later, we lost seven of eight young rabbits (all five weeks old) when the mink returned. (In May, fifteen new chicks and 2 piglets arrived.) Because of the vulnerability of these our animals, despite our best efforts to secure them, we have recognized the need for more secure housing for them—a project which begins at the end of May.

Students and alumni from Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts came to the priory for a weekend retreat, accompanied by three Augustinian friars from the college, together with our good friends, Padraic and Peggy O'Hare. Padraic is professor of Religious and Theological Studies and director of the Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations at Merrimack College. His most recent book is *Spiritual Companions: Jews, Christians, and Interreligious Dialogue* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2006). The Merrimack College retreat has been a special part of our spring for some years now, and we are grateful for the friendships which have developed because of them.



APRIL 2006

As the snow began to disappear in early April, the work on the new chapel plaza and walkway (which began last August) resumed. The plaza is now completed, and the walkway to the chapel should be finished by mid-June.

As with Christian communities the world over, Holy Week and Easter are the center of our year of prayer and worship. In addition to the very many people who come (often from quite a distance) to celebrate the

holy days with us, we were blessed to have as a guest Fr. Bob Holmes from Toronto, a priest of the Congregation of Saint Basil. Bob has spent significant time with Christian Peacemaker Teams, as a nonviolent, reconciling presence in places of conflict, including Israel/Palestine and Iraq. He now coordinates pastoral care for the Canadian members of Christian Peacemaker Teams. The brothers' meeting with Bob during Holy Week challenged us to recognize the ongoing suffering of "crucified peoples" today, and to recommit ourselves to the transformation of our world.

As we have often said, our association with Benedictine communities in Latin America has blessed our communities in so many ways. During Easter Week, we welcomed Leandro Pagnusatt, a candidate for the Monastery of the Annunciation in Goiás, Brazil. Leandro is spending approximately nine months with us, experiencing our monastic life, as part of his process of discernment. In addition to the daily rhythm of our life, he is studying monastic spirituality as well as English. Leandro has entered wholeheartedly into our life. We are grateful for his joyful presence.



Leandro and Brother Daniel

Near the end of April, Brother Richard and Brother Philip participated in a regional meeting of Benedictine and Cistercian communities, at Saint Benedict's Abbey in Still River, Massachusetts.

MAY 2006

On Memorial Day weekend, Brother Richard's brother, Bob, marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Brothers Richard, Elias, Peter, and Mark traveled to New Jersey for the celebration, with the best wishes of the whole community.