



Busy Bees and Time to Pray

—*brother Placid*

FOR MANY YEARS NOW HERE AT THE PRIORY, WE HAVE been keeping bees. It is a wonderful experience, but one full of surprises. Flowing with the rhythms of the seasons, the bees' tender touch graces and awakens the spring flowers; filling the budding trees, they pollinate the early blossoms. With a single-pointed attention, they tirelessly and humbly go about their work. Our eyes may be on the gleaming of honey in the fall, but they are busy about many other things. As we have learned, "The bees do not read the same books we do!"

When we look around there is much in nature and the world that defies our schemes and our dreams. It all reminds us that we live in a large world we did not make, and that we are still novices having so recently arrived on the scene with much to learn. It seems so much in life is like that: it does not fit our plans and preconceived ideas! Our world is full of surprises.

It may come as a surprise that humans have a history when time was a very different experience from our sense of time today. There is *chronos*: the clock time of our culture and work; and there is an older way of speaking time that is *kairos*: the opportune time, Sacred time, God's time. *Chronos* remains bound to our needs and obligations. But *kairos*

opens us out into a liberated space of the not-yet-and-still-to-come where we let go and learn to live in God's present/presence. It does not foreclose the present. We open *chronos* to *kairos*. And it seems this is what we are talking about when we speak of prayer. Certainly Jesus' words hit home here: "So stay awake, praying at all times..." (Luke: 21:36).

Throughout the world's spiritual traditions and down through time people have cultivated this practice of prayer, humbly looking for a bright opening, desiring a relationship to the stupendous mystery of creation and life. Through prayer we open the human heart to a searching. We yearn to gain a larger view of things. We pray together and we pray alone, in silence or chorus. Stumbling, bumbling, groping, we try to set ourselves in a closer relationship to the Sacred, to the Divine, to God, daring to trust. The fruit of such experience can be learning to hope: acknowledging the unfinished character of life, realizing all is not yet complete and more is still to come. What a gift!

Perhaps all of this is simply to say that when we pray we are learning to take a long view, glimpsing a time that is sacred time. To be awake in this moment is to hope. To pray is to keep from closing down future possibilities, keeping ourselves and time open and supple. Might it be then that the time of prayer becomes the time of hope in our lives and in the world?

If we take this "long view" we see that the faithfulness to hope has seen us through the tough times "when our nights have been too long". Hope lies in the vision that all is still "in the works", open and unfinished. We are awake to the new and the surprise that keeps us from foreclosing on our future and learning to tell time anew. Then, like the bees, we will have no fear of wasting our time! We will be living by another clock, one divinely inspired, reverencing the now. ■



Morning Walk

Leaves, pine cones, twigs
lying on ice-crusting snow
absorbing light of warming Sun
gently unmask
beauty of seed-budding earth—
our heart.