

– The Provisional – It Is Good for Now!!

– *brother Mark*

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR PEOPLE TO HAVE AN IMAGE of monks which has been fixed in a specific moment of history. This perception of the monk which comes from novels and films distorts a dynamic embodied way of life into something of a dusty museum piece wrapped in exotic clothes, incense and nostalgic sounding music. Our community at Weston Priory, from the earliest years, has been challenged to keep moving forward by embracing “what is *good for now*” as we continuously try to be aware of and respond to the ‘signs of the times’; adapting to changing situations and circumstances.

One of the ideas of our founder, Abbot (brother) Leo, for the new community in 1953 was that the Vermont community at Weston would provide new vocations for the founding community in Jerusalem, and would support itself by farming. When both objectives proved untenable the young community re-focused on establishing a Benedictine monastic life rooted in the physical and cultural environment of its location. The brothers developed a process of evaluation and decision-making that values moving beyond fear and being open to trying the new, the different. Many examples of this dynamic present themselves: in time a traditional hierarchical form of governance gave way to consensus; community prayer sung in Latin evolved to prayer composed by the community itself sung in English; and while farming continued in various forms, the personal interests and gifts of the brothers introduced a variety of small industries including crafts. Daily life within the monastery was expanded to include welcoming God’s presence and voice in other people and places especially in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

As we celebrate our first sixty years, the brothers’ hearts are full of gratitude for each moment and period of our monastic journey. We are especially grateful for the profound grace that has enabled us to constantly evaluate our “present way” of living the Rule of St. Benedict and to make creative new choices that require us to leave behind aspects of life that worked well and were valuable yesterday so that we could move forward, full of hope, into a meaningful future for ourselves, our friends, and all the fellow sojourners who walk with us. ■

