



*l to r, (back row) brs. Augustine, Placid, Thomas, Columba,
(front row) brs. Elias, John, Gregory, 1967*

The Gift

- brother Placid

SIT, A MONK QUIETLY READING BY THE FIRE. IT IS EVENING in late winter. Sunset: a gentle orange light fills the chilly air outside. Peaceful and calm, the fire purring softly, warming the room, I realize suddenly the long journey to this moment. As a child of the 20th century it has taken much practice and example to come to enjoy this simple moment. Raised in an atmosphere of activity and constant motion, the air saturated with noise, achievement the purpose of life, the turn to a gentler sense of living had to be taught to me. I needed to learn the monk's craft and skills: unlearn so much. Fortunately I have had good teachers.

Monastic living is always a new learning: it is a school of the Lord's service; always beginning. I was taught this monastic way by others who themselves were learning, but who were eager to pass on to a young novice what they had gleaned through hard practice.

Coming to the community of Weston was to enter upon this road and to meet brothers willing to share this unique way of life. They became and continue to be good teachers. Teaching is an embodied thing. It happens in the concrete persons with whom I came to live. Guiding me through the unfamiliar waters of this life: Brother Gregory, as my *socius* (a helper/friend for the initial years of monastic life), patiently and wisely guiding me; Brother Thomas was always there with the gift of laughter; and Brother John, with loving wisdom; and on and on through the whole community. The Brothers always were engaged in a process of discovering and exploring, "growing in all ways into Christ (Eph.4:15)." These were the early influences which have brought me gratefully to this day: the gift of brothers past and present. ■