

WESTON PRIORY

SPRING/SUMMER 2013



**We Are a
People of Hope!**



BULLETIN



*Halleluiah, halleluiah, halleluiah,
We are a people of hope.*

*Give us your freedom and light, Halleluiah.
Creating our world anew, Halleluiah.
Transforming our lives with joy, Halleluiah.¹*

HOPE HAS BEEN FOUNDATIONAL TO OUR MONASTIC COMMUNITY from its earliest days. Abbot Leo, our founder, envisioned a return to the original simplicity of monastic life. He had to search hard, and with numerous setbacks, to find monks who would commit themselves to birthing this founding vision. He bought an abandoned farmhouse and property in Weston, Vermont, on a shoestring of funds mostly donated by lay friends who were searching in their own lives of faith and who believed that such a vision could become a reality.

As Paul wrote to the community of the church at Rome: “Hope is the way we find salvation and new life...We hope for what we do not fully see, yet await its fruits with persevering confidence.” (Romans 8: 24-25)

We continue as “a people of hope” celebrating the 60th anniversary of our founding. Weston Priory was just beginning to grow in the midst of the theological, liturgical, ecumenical and sociological ferment that led up to Pope John XXIII’s summoning call to Vatican Council II. This year is also the 50th anniversary of his encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). In this Spring/Summer Bulletin our brothers continue to offer reflections about persons and events that have been personal and communal sources of inspiration for our monastic life over these years.

With the celebration of Pentecost—the gift of God’s Spirit inspiring us to new visions and hope-filled dreams—we recall the words of paradox quoted in the psalms and likewise spoken by Jesus: “the stone that some of the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” (Psalm 118: 22; Mark 12: 10; Acts 4: 11)

Returning to the sources of our inherited tradition (*ressourcement*) and

engaging in dialogue with the contemporary experience of the world today (*aggiornamento*) are the cornerstones upon which Pope John called the Council. These values lay deeply at the heart of our monastic life from our founding to the present day. In responding to the monastic call in the modern world, we reach back beyond the development of a “golden age” of medieval monasticism, and return to the original sources of inspiration for the people of God in the Scriptures, for the followers of Jesus in the Gospels, and for the early monastic searchers in the desert. We listen to them and respond in the light of the signs of our times.

Simplicity in prayer, fraternal life, creative work and hospitality are the inspirations of God’s Spirit enabling us to strip away the ideological accretions that accumulate and to humbly touch in the poverty of our own being an open and vulnerable heart. This is the unity of all creation and peoples for which Jesus gave his life. He saw all creation as “very good” and coming from the “one” breath of God from the beginning. He called us to be his friends—the friends of God and friends to one another. The *conversatio* of our life is to move beyond the divisions that we at times fabricate through isolation and control, and to enter as a humble child into a dialogue/conversation wherein we recognize each other as part of ourselves, one with each other and creation as brothers and sisters. This is resurrection—the seed that burrows into the earth to break open and become the sprout of the kingdom of God.

The New Pentecost to which we are all called by Vatican II includes everyone and everything on this earth. The call challenges us to responsibility for ourselves and for all others; it invites us all to (w)holiness with a mission to proclaim the Good News not just by speaking about the words and deeds of Jesus, but through our own concrete acts of love, care and service to one another.

The will of God for our happiness is what John XXIII highlighted in the encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, as the “universal common good”: what is good not just for ourselves but for the whole human family, for the whole community of creation throughout the universe.

Pope John challenged us: “...bring the relationships of daily life into conformity with a more human standard based, as it must be, on truth, tempered by justice, motivated by mutual love, and holding fast to the practice of freedom.”²

Hope is not striving for “success” according to contemporary standards. Hope is living with confidence that, through our faithfulness with one another on the Gospel path, the Spirit of God continues creating with us and bringing to fruition the gifts we have received “to make all things new.” With trust in our hearts and with gratitude for all who have made us who we are today, we joyfully hasten on, for truly, “We are a people of Hope. Halleluiah!” ■

¹ Words from the song of this title © 2011 Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc.

² *Pacem in Terris* #149

In the Beginning . . .

- brother John

A BENEFIT OF LONGEVITY IN OUR COMMUNITY AT WESTON Priory is the opportunity to work in the archives. It is a place where I can be right at home amidst the chaos of accumulated photos, documents, news and magazine articles, and correspondence. It would be a temptation to get lost in nostalgia were it not for the vibrant, creative and engaging daily life that continues in our small Benedictine Community today.

As we celebrate our 60th anniversary with the publication of yet another Bulletin of Weston Priory, I decided to look back and see what the first Bulletin was like. With the help of technology that we didn't even dream of sixty years ago, I was able to scan the first Weston Priory Bulletin, written and edited by Father Michael Ducey, the first resident Prior of Weston, and to share an excerpt with you, our current friends.

Our scanner is a great gift of contemporary technology and makes it possible to share the contents of a faded and crumpled two-page, 8½" x 14" document that might otherwise have gone quite unnoticed. It works wonderfully well but does need a little help in translating some of the blemishes and distortions that creep in with aging:



South Park, Burlington, Abbot Leo presiding at Pontifical Mass, 1953

BULLETIN

OF

WESTON PRIORY

Vol. 1, No. 1.

Weston, Vermont

Advent, 1953

It is indeed a pleasure to send you this report of progress at the start of a new Church Year. Many great and good blessings are in store for all of us, we know, in the coming weeks and months of 1954, from God's abounding granary of grace and mercy now opening wide its doors again, as Mother Church begins a new cycle in her liturgical celebration...

Almighty God has been very good to us during these past months, making it possible, despite many trials and difficulties, to organise at least a rudimentary monastery on this remote Vermont "backwoods" farm...

To begin with a rapid survey of events, the chief one being the purchase of our 280 acres of land last December. Abbot Leo Rudloff, of the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, had long sought a suitable site and sufficient personnel for establishing a branch of his Abbey in the United States, which would eventually serve as a source of strength for his community in the Holy City, now beset by so many critical problems. He was finally able to obtain the abandoned Peabody farm, four miles from the town of Weston, at an attractively low price... Almost simultaneously with this transaction, he was also able to acquire the services of Dom Hugh Duffy, former prior of Delbarton Monastery in Morristown, New Jersey, who was loaned to the new foundation through the kindness of his superior, Abbot Patrick M. O'Brien, of Newark...

Thus, having secured an appropriate site for his projected foundation, together with a competent American Benedictine to supervise its initial development, Abbot Leo left for his Abbey in the Holy City, where he arrived early in January of this year. Unfortunately however, even before his arrival there, Father Hugh, who had already begun negotiations with local contractors for remodeling the Peabody farmhouse into a temporary priory, suffered a severe heart attack and had to be taken to a hospital in Boston.

... Hearing of this, ... Abbot Patrick made contact with Dom Michael Ducey, former prior of St. Anselm's Priory in Washington, who had previously been associated with Father Hugh in a similar project at Fifield, Wisconsin. Father Michael received permission to come and fill the breach almost at once. Arriving in mid-January, he succeeded in re-starting the machinery temporarily halted by Father Hugh's illness...

...Months passed, and when Abbot Leo was able to return. early in June of this year, everything was ready for an official opening of the Priory. The two Fathers moved in, bag and baggage, on July first...

Two events during this period were of special significance. One was the Pontifical High Mass celebrated by Abbot Leo on the Fourth of July at the American Legion Stadium in Burlington, which had been arranged by our good friend, monsignor Towne, of that city. Father Abbot preached a splendid sermon and the Trapp Family Singers constituted the choir at this edifying Field Mass. The other outstanding event of the Summer was an "Open House" held at the Priory on August fifth for the general public. In connection with this, Bishop Ryan, our beloved Local Ordinary... preached a moving sermon on the significance and importance of the new foundation, to the clergy and laity assembled in our rustic oratory...

This brief digest of events does no more than scratch at the surface, as it were, of the joys and sorrows, trials and consolations, that have attended the coming-into-being of this newest American foundation of the Benedictine Order. More difficulties are sure to come, no doubt; but we are not afraid, having had such comforting and concrete evidence of divine help and protection overshadowing us here...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are happy herewith to acknowledge publicly (we have done so privately to all of them, we hope) our deepest gratitude to the many individuals who, by their generous contributions, have made this foundation possible; but above all, to the American Benedictine Abbots and communities, who, almost without exception, have given us substantial aid and comfort. May this generosity on their part, as well as on that of all our benefactors, return to them rich blessing and reward, here and hereafter. This will be the constant grateful prayer of all at Weston Priory and Dormition Abbey.

A. M. D. G.

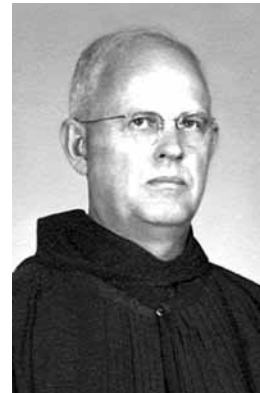
(Cum Permissu Superiorum)

Father Michael was the author of that first informative Bulletin of Weston Priory in 1953. Even though he was not able to be present at the Pontifical Field Mass of welcome in Burlington on July 4, he offered a vivid description of the event. I had the personal good fortune to be among the parish priests present on that occasion. I can verify, as Michael stated, that Abbot Leo gave a 'splendid' sermon during the Mass.

Abbot Leo spoke of a hope, an invitation, and an adventure to create a new kind of monastic community. It would be open, reconciling, contemporary and rooted in the rich and ancient Benedictine spiritual tradi-



South Park, Burlington, Trapp family singers, 1953



Fr. Michael Ducey, 1953



South Park, Burlington, (ctr) Fr. Robert Hammond (br. John), 1953

tion. He spoke with warmth and enthusiasm of a fraternal community of equals, of brothers. It would welcome the stranger, all seekers, and especially those of other faiths. The new community would not return to some 'golden age' of monasticism. It would toil to bring the spirit of the Gospels and the Rule of Benedict into the flesh of contemporary life.

In my years as a seminarian I had frequently visited the friendly, fraternal Benedictine Community of St. Benoît-du-lac in Canada. The writings of Thomas Merton and Dom Columba Marmion sparked a desire for a monastic community and deeper spiritual search. After ordination I found that parish life as a diocesan priest did not fulfill this hope in me. Abbot Leo's sermon was a powerful call that moved me decisively on my journey to become a brother at Weston Priory. The invitation to join in the adventure resounded in my heart.

Beyond the particular gift for those present at the Field Mass in Burlington on July 4th, 1953, Abbot Leo's vision for a new monastic community at Weston Priory foreshadowed Pope John XXIII's dream for renewal that would envelope the Catholic Church ten years later in the Second Vatican Council. Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, sixty years since the founding of Weston Priory, we celebrate and continue that journey. ■



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

The Gift

- brother Placid

ISIT, 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. ■

Stability / Change

- brother Columba

Seasons of our life,
Seasons of nature,
All change.

To live "by the work of our hands,"

To till the land,

To cut the wood,

Tend the animals,

Welcome guests,

Compose the music,

Sing our songs,

To Celebrate

in prayer

together,

To be Faithful

to Place and Community

to Stability in the midst of Change.

Hope-filled Spring

- brother Columba

Afternoon light
rests softly on snow.

As icicles drip,

once-heavy branches bounce up,

kissed by sun's rays,

playful spring of hope and joy.

A Land of Promise!

- brother Peter

THE ARCHBISHOP, WORRIED ABOUT A GROWING SHORT-
age of priests, was quite unhappy to see me go. For me, this was a turning point in my life of faith and I was determined to see it through. A major storm and flooding in Vermont at the end of June 1973 delayed my arrival by more than a week. I had to drive through the now-passable West River where the bridge had washed away on VT Route 100 halfway from Weston village to Weston Priory. The clutch of my Toyota Corona burnt out and the car made a dead stop at the Cross-Garden at the top of Priory Hill Road just in sight of the priory. The brothers were surprised to see me, having forgotten about my coming in the confusion of the storm's aftermath and the rescheduled date. They quickly found a place for me in the storage area of the upper sacristy where I stayed for a week while they arranged for a rental house where I could stay across Route 100 from the property where the Extension Community would eventually locate. Looking beyond all this, I was so happy at the Eucharist that evening of my first day, sensing I had finally come home. I felt as if I had crossed the Red Sea into a land of promise.

In the early 70's Weston Priory numbered fourteen monks. With eight young men expressing interest in joining the community, the brothers felt they could not absorb more and yet maintain the familial monastic brotherhood they had become. Wanting to be open to new life in the community, after much deliberation, the brothers proposed to the eight of us to come together with them to form an "Extension Community" that would be nurtured and guided by them and eventually grow into a second house of Weston Priory. After a few meetings



l to r, brothers Claude (Peter), Ronald (Mark), Harry (Philip) and Luke, Extension Community, 1977

to discuss the plan, only Harry Fronckiewicz (later brother Philip) and I, Claude Anctil (later brother Peter), remained interested. I arrived in early July of 1973. Harry arrived at the beginning of September. Living in the rented house, we set to work along with some brothers and the Randall Company of Rutland, VT, in converting the old barn on the Route 100 property into the dwelling where we would live for the next eight years. Thus we began a journey that called on all of us to trust in each other and the promise of an open future.

I first noticed mention of Weston Priory in Liturgical Arts Magazine in a late 60's chronicle of the editor, Maurice Lavanoux, describing the simplicity of the Weston Priory monastic chapel and the beauty and warmth of the liturgy celebrated by the twelve brothers around the rustic altar. The author was delighted even more by the familial brotherhood of the community than by the architecture. Then there was the photo essay in Vermont Life Magazine (1972) by the Time/Life photographers, Angelo Lomeo and Sonia Bulaty. I was disillusioned in my experience of parish life and the pace of implementation of the spirit of Vatican II. Talk of parish family, team ministry, lay participation, Gospel community and collaboration, while encouraging, did not easily translate into the change of heart and practice I was seeking. Here in this community appeared people who tried seriously to live fully these values in a renewed and contemporary monastic life.

After several visits and spending my retreat times with the community, I learned more about Weston Priory. Brother Leo, the founder, had a vision of brothers living together as equals, viewing Benedict's Rule as



Extension Community House (East Family House), 1977

it could be lived in our own time and place, embedded in our culture. Brother John, as prior, further invited the brothers to live consensually, assuring honest communication with daily chapter meetings, monthly retreat days together and paying attention to human growth and maturity. The brothers were encouraged to balance work and creativity, to value persons and personal experience and to grow into communion and unity in living a simple lifestyle. Their monastic prayer was an authentic expression of their experience of brotherhood. I longed for all this in my life.

In the Extension Community, brother Harry and I spent the day at the priory with the brothers for prayer, work and meals; and we lived in and maintained the renovated barn house on Route 100. We had our own daily chapter meetings with a group of the priory brothers, and we had our own retreat days, he and I together, each month. We assured continuity of prayer and work during the priory brothers retreat days. Those interested in joining the community spent time with us and followed our daily schedule with the priory brothers. In 1977, Ronald Nicolosi (later brother Mark) and Bob Gambone (brother Luke) came and joined us, making a community of four. By then we were called the East Family, following the tradition of the Shakers whom we had come to know at Sabbath Day Lake, Maine. By 1982, three of us, having made our monastic professions as brother Philip, brother Peter and brother Mark, moved into the main priory community and are now, with all the brothers, simply the one community of Weston Priory.

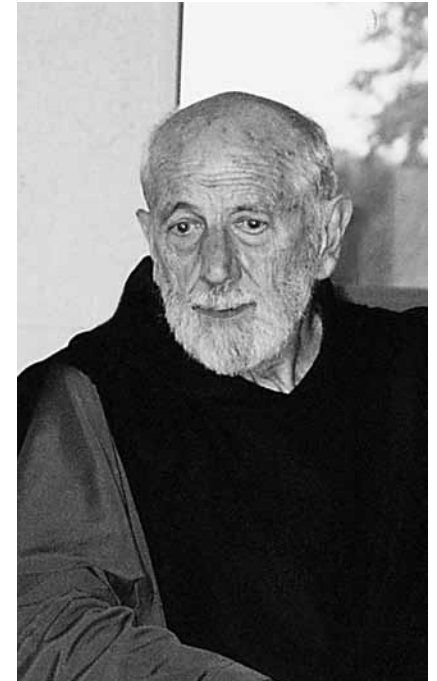
The experience of brotherhood, the deep commitment to live the Gospel and the Rule of Benedict in the spirit of Vatican II, and the joy of community life drew me to begin this journey. Openness to change and to risk new directions has brought us to the present moment. We know each other more fully. We know how these values have been embodied in our history. Yet we have not reached the Promised Land. Gratefully, we still live in a land of promise. ■

LIVING WATERS

- *brother Michael*

Love makes us give ourselves as far as possible to our friends.

- Thomas Aquinas



Father Martin Boler, 1989

AS ONE OF THE YOUNGER BROTHERS I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED, "How do we ('youngsters') create our own events that we have not historically participated in?" I have never wished to be born earlier, and certainly not later! In my reflections I turn to our shared brotherhood with Father Martin Boler who passed to New Life last year.

Our community was born a year or two later than Mount Saviour Monastery in Elmira, New York. Abbot Leo Rudloff and Father Damasus Winzen, the founders of each community, were German monks who came to America at the behest of their original communities. Both became enthralled with the possibilities that the American culture contained. Father Martin became Prior of Mount Saviour after Father Damasus' death, and by the time I met him, he had grey in his beard and a smile that reflected the gentleness held within his eyes.

My first encounter was during his stay, with Abbot Luke Rigby of St. Louis Priory, for our Visitation. Visitations usually happen every four years at each monastery in the Benedictine Confederation, and I saw it as a kind of "Final Test" that one must pass or be banished



l to r, brothers Augustine, Michael, Mark, and Father Martin , 1989

forever into the outer darkness. He communicated with his words and actions that he came as a brother to be among brothers for a time of inter-community exchanges, conversation and prayer.

On this particular visit he wanted some exercise. At Mount Saviour they wear their tunic and scapular more regularly outside of prayer time, and when he used our stationary bike his scapular got entwined in the chain. I knew how to use a sewing machine and hemmed the scapular, losing about ten inches of material in the process. A scapular of these dimensions was normally the garb worn by novices.

He was so happy with the repair and boldly walked into Vespers with this “new scapular.” His being at ease with himself taught me a deep lesson in monastic living. This same spirit permeated our community gatherings over the years, although these grew less frequent as both communities aged.

The gift that Father Martin brought to our community was the gift of his person, of his being a brother among us. This is reflected in the way we practice loving one another. When we love each other it is like drinking Living Water from a deep well. The source of water is unseen but that one glass of cool water tastes so good. So it is with all authentic sources and authentic persons. We are not simply connected through factual knowledge or our limited personal experiences. We are connected as the well is to the ocean. We are connected by Spirit. In this we rejoice in our own authentic being. ■

Elusive God

- brother John 4/28/04

Elusive God,
Silent as a gentle breath,
Whisper too soft for sound,
Blinding light, too strong for us to bear,
We give you thanks and sing our song of praise.

Like a passing cloud
Before the rising sun
Your Word comes to us,

with earthbound steps
and stumbling speech
to failing friends
unveils his human heart;

a helping hand,
a healing touch,
forgiving glance,
a sign of peace.

Along this clouded path,
He is our way to you – and
because of him,
we sing this song of praise.

Who Finds a Friend, Finds a Treasure

- brother Daniel

*Let your love be sincere.
Rejoice with others when they rejoice,
and be sad with those in sorrow.
Treat everyone with equal kindness.
Never be condescending,
but make real friends with the poor.*

- Rom. 12, 15-16

IT HAD BEEN A LONG TRIP IN THOSE STIFLING VANS OVER a hazardous winding road in the mountains of the Sierra Huasteca, in Mexico. After the precarious ride, the brothers walked uphill through a worn path towards a remote rural village. Everybody felt rewarded by the stunning view: a sea of multi-layered, green hues extended far and wide over the lush valleys below!

The villagers were extraordinarily hospitable. There was a big flower arch at the entrance of the village reading “*Bienvenidos hermanos*” – Welcome brothers. There were children running and dogs barking while an off-pitch band played a musical rendition that repeated itself on and on. We discovered that some village folks had walked for hours on those mountain paths simply to arrive, say hello and shake hands before they had to go back to their hamlets!

Our Benedictine sisters had prepared a lovely welcome with the people. We ourselves were hot, sweaty and hungry. As the welcome proceeded, one of the brothers decided to inquire discretely about the food. He leaned towards a young woman sitting on the bench and asked her: “*¿Tienes hambre?*” – Spanish for “Are you hungry?” However, with his English accent, it sounded more like “*¿Tienes hombre?*” – which in Spanish means: “Do you have a man?” The young woman hastily got up and disappeared! We never saw her again . . .

After many years, both sisters and brothers still laugh as we recall the awkward incident, which has become part of the myth of those adventures when both communities were young and energetic! How in the world would a monastic community from northern New England find itself in such an improbable setting?

The year 2013 marks 60 years since the founding of our monastery. I wonder, as I reflect with gratitude for all the people who, through the years, have touched our lives: What kind of monastic community would we have become if we had not met our Mexican Benedictine Sis-



brothers and sisters in the chapel of El Ojite, Hidalgo, Mexico, 1987

ters? Their gentle influence has been a 37 year old, ongoing invitation to conversion. The Weston brothers have experienced in their midst the reality of the Gospel among the poor of Latin America.

Our sisters have opened our eyes and our hearts in the diverse places where they live and work: amidst slums of earthquake stricken towns, arid villages of impoverished peasants, refugee camps in cold mountains, hurricane ravaged communities of farmers, and among prisoners in jail.

With the sisters, we befriended indigenous leaders who, defending their communal lands, had been abducted and tortured. We sang and wept among injured children who were victims of exploding land mines in Nicaragua. We experienced piercing fear as we listened to Mayan families harassed by death squads in the militarized area of the highlands of Chiapas.

All these experiences have truly educated us in our monastic journey, showing us a new way to read scripture, to practice hospitality, to become brothers to the poor, and to appreciate the leadership of women.

Above all, the love and tenderness of the sisters themselves have prodded us in the ways of simplicity and attentiveness, even in the midst of struggle and distress. In those moments our common humanity shines through all these difficulties because a mutual trust has emerged between our two communities.

If we experience some concerns, there is engaged conversation, then an “aha!” moment, and finally joyful smiles. Through discernment and dialogue we discover our truth. If there are tears, they last only a few minutes. In the end, the memories of joy and laughter remain for a lifetime. ■

– 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. ■



Life Together in One Heart



December 31, 2012 to January 6, 2013

– Monastic Experience

Twice each year the Priory Community offers the opportunity for young men to experience the Benedictine monastic life with us for a week. Participants join with the brothers in the daily experience of prayer, work, and friendship as lived by the monks of Weston Priory. It is an opportunity to have a first-hand experience of monastic life as lived today.

Participants are welcomed into the monastic choir for some times of prayer, they join the brothers in the refectory for meals, have opportunity to take part in outdoor work and crafts, and engage in conversation concerning monastic life and spirituality with the brothers. The exchange also offers the brothers an opportunity to remain in touch with the challenges and experience of young men in contemporary society.



l to r, Matthew and Patrick

Patrick Murphy from Southern California and Matthew Tarlecki from Connecticut came for the monastic experience at Weston from December 31, 2012 to January 6, 2013. They participated in the life of the Community with enthusiasm and grew in friendship with the brothers during their stay. Their time with the Community was a joyful mutual gift.

January 13 to February 17 – Community Retreat

The Community enjoyed a quiet Vermont winter retreat at home from January 13 to February 17. The rich blend of quiet time for personal prayer and reflection along with Community prayer, value discussions and relaxed time together, refreshed and renewed the brothers spiritually and physically. Regular chores and a little informal creative work offered a balance during this special time for the Community. The constant and faithful assistance of friends helped to make such an enriching time possible for the brothers.

During these days, February 1 to 5, brother Richard represented the community at the annual Abbots and Priors Workshop held this year at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California. Presentations at the workshop were offered by Brother Simeon Leiva-Merikakis, a monk of

St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts. The theme: "Christian Joy in Monastic Life and its Refusal in Modern Culture" was based on the Parable of the Marriage Feast from the Gospel of Matthew 22: 1-14.

March 1 to 24 – Group visits

In the month of March, three different college groups brought a lively and youthful presence to the Priory. Members of the Middlebury College Newman Club were with us March 1 to 3; a group from Merrimack College came from March 14 to March 17; and we welcomed several students from St. Michael's College during Palm Sunday weekend, March 22 to 24.

Each group brought their unique spirit and hopes. It is always inspiring for the brothers to be able to share prayer and our simple way of life with these groups of searching, young people and their devoted leaders.

March 24 to 30 – Holy Week

Prayer services during Holy Week at the Priory were especially enriched this year with new music and more simplified celebrations.

The development of simple mantra-like music engaged brothers and visitors in choral responses focused on the scriptural texts. Readings were simplified and more space given to musical refrains. The active participation of all enhanced the beauty of the celebrations.

Beginning the first morning prayer at 6:00 A.M. throughout the week and beyond resulted in more lively participation and attendance. Adjustments in the schedule enabled a relaxed and reflective spirit for brothers and guests.

April – Sugaring

Sugaring season was later than usual at the Priory. Trees were tapped and buckets were hung before the end of February. But the snow was still deep in the woods in the first week of April. With the generous help of friends, all turned out well. After a successful harvest the operation was all cleaned up in time for the Community to embark on a late visit to our sisters in Mexico on April 17.

April 17 to 30 – A Visit to Mexico

A highlight of celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the founding of Weston Priory was a Community trip to Mexico, April 17-30. After a very joyful celebration of Eucharist together, our Mexican Benedictine Sisters hosted the brothers with a festive meal accompanied by live marimba music at their Casa Central (Sisters' Motherhouse) in Mexico City. The event concluded with the surprise appearance of an extraordinary Mariachi Band that performs at the famous Palacio de Bellas Artes. Brothers and sisters joined in a joyous afternoon of dancing and music and viewed a DVD highlighting Priory events over the past two years. The gathering also marked nearly forty years of friendship between the Weston brothers and Mexican sisters.

As always, the brothers enjoyed a visit with the elderly and infirm

sisters at their residence, the old Novitiate. Their hopeful and joyful spirit is ever an inspiration to the Weston brothers. Before leaving Mexico City for Cuernavaca, Sister Chayo expertly drove the brothers through the city to a happy and celebrative gathering with brother Daniel's family. His mother, Lupita; his brothers, Alberto and José Arturo and their spouses; uncles, aunt, cousins, nieces and nephews, all offer a warm familial spirit of welcome.

In Cuernavaca, the local community of sisters shared with brothers their experience of offering hospitality at the Guadalupe Center. With fewer groups travelling to Mexico in the past few years, sisters have reached out to an increasing number of different Mexican guests. Six women from the Cooperative Ruben Jaramillo who embroider lovely T-shirts that will be for sale in our Gallery Shop on St. Benedict's weekend, came to share their experiences with the brothers at the Center.

While in Cuernavaca, the brothers were gifted with a day trip to Amatlán, a Náhuatl village in the state of Morelos. In the village they enjoyed warm Mexican hospitality at the home of the family of Lucio Perez and his wife. Amatlán is an important archeological site of the indigenous people. Lucio and his friend Nacho are gifted leaders in the village. The Weston brothers enjoyed the warm hospitality as well as the rich information shared by Lucio and a village elder, Doña Julia, as she sat in her little yard sorting seed for planting the next crop of corn.


Another fruitful visit to Mexico was concluded with a gathering with the junior sisters of the Congregation and a meeting with Sister Miguelina, the prioress, and the members of the leadership council. The enthusiastic spirit of the young sisters and the wise and sisterly guidance of the sisters in leadership is always a strengthening sign of hope and love as the brothers return home to Weston Priory. ■



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