



Brothers and sisters meeting in Cuernavaca.

How to Speak of Faith?

- brother Michael

WHEN WE GATHERED IN CUERNAVACA THIS YEAR WE had the opportunity to listen to our brothers and sisters from Mexico, Peru, and Spain. We gathered together for a number of days to share with each other our experiences of faith. One of the insights I treasure from our encounter is that there are various ways to speak of faith.

We gathered each day for two discussions which were about an hour and a half long. We would share our reflections and stories that come from our community life. As we listened to each other with the ear of our heart a common bond of trust and understanding was woven. As each person spoke the various threads of our sharing created a weaving of faith that was beyond any single thread of expression. Our words held a vulnerability that comes from trying to articulate what is beyond words.

A simple example of this is when Sister María de los Ángeles, whose ministry is in Mexico City, shared her experience about a little boy who was dropped off at school late one day and could not stop crying. Sister Ángeles is the principal of the school and the boy was sent to her. She was very patient with him and finally learned that his alcoholic father was abusing his mother. As she spoke the silence in the room was so complete that we could sense our hearts beating as one. The pain of the little child, the patience of Sister Ángeles, and our own empa-



Sister María de los Ángeles.

thy to this suffering are vital expressions of faith.

In our time together we related to each other in a spontaneous way. A tear flowed from Sister Patricia when she spoke of their community's hunger for a celebration of Eucharist that would feed the needs of the people they serve. She spoke of how their monastery in Torreón, Mexico, is called, "Pan de Vida," which means, "Bread of Life," and her deep hopes that their community continues to be a nourishing presence.

Our brother, Simón Pedro whose monastery is in Peru, is an author and is articulate. His action of coming to Weston Priory for six months of Sabbatical Rest speaks to our hearts. His prayerful presence is an example of being still and listening to God's voice.

Laughter filled the air when Sister María José from Spain shared how the Trinity is not so much a triangle made of straight lines and pointed edges, but more a circle: like a snowball! Having left the snow and cold behind in Vermont for the warmth and flowers of Cuernavaca, we happily contemplated how our gathering could warm our hearts.

Perhaps the most resonate expression of faith was our gathering for Eucharist on Sunday. Earlier in the morning we had shared varied and insightful reflections on the Gospel of the day and so our prayer was simple and without many words. Also present at the Eucharist were the Mexican sisters who work at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca and who offered the service of preparing all our meals. Although they had not been part of our formal discussions, they had fed us not only with food but with their loving kindness, delighting in being present at meal times and at evening recreations.

Tears, laughter, enjoying each other, and being together in silence and prayer are expressions of faith. Isn't it wonderful that our faith escapes the trap of definitions and frees us to become bread for each other? ■

Oh! Sabiduría Divina
Tú fecundas nuestro ser
Y del seno del Misterio
Nueva vida haces nacer.

Oh! Divine Wisdom
You make fertile our being
And from the womb of Mystery
You give birth to new life.

- Sister Maricarmen Bracamontes, O.S.B.