

Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

One of Saint Benedict's lasting gifts to us is his unshakable confidence that God's creative grace is able to redeem ordinary men and women (yes, *us!*) into a living alternative to the hopelessness plaguing our human family.

He believed that God is simply *more* than, *greater* than, *more imaginative* than our narrow, pinched lives. We, who at times are so small-souled ("pusillanimous" is the classic word), can be transformed into large-souled ("magnanimous") men and women.

Benedict trusted that God will encounter us in the deepest yearnings of our hearts -- yearnings far stronger than disillusionment, disappointment and failure.

In the prologue to his Rule, he wrote, "Seeking workers in a multitude of people, the Lord cries out and asks, 'Is there any here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?'... What, dear brothers [and sisters], is more delightful than the voice of God calling out to us? See how, out of love, God shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see the One who has called us to the Kingdom" (RB Prologue 14-15, 19-21).

Imaged as Wisdom, crying out in the alleys and squares of daily life, God's voice reaches every one of us, freely offering the bread of life, and inviting all to a response of partnership in the re-creation of the world.

Monastic life seeks to be one such response to this invitation. A simple common life -- expressed and nourished by prayer, open to welcome all others as Christ, built-up by honest work and the sharing of goods, and healed by love and forgiveness -- can become one more space where the non-violent grace of the Gospel is being etched into our world.

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We share with you some of the events which have marked our community life during the past months.

JUNE

One of the great achievements of the Second Vatican Council was the rediscovery of the full dignity of all the baptized in the community of the church. This reaffirmation, based on the experience of early Christianity and the best of our tradition, initiated a revolution and expansion in the understanding and exercise of ministry, both ordained and non-ordained, in the church.

We have again come to see baptism as the foundation of all ministries in the community of faith. In particular we have come, once again, to recognize ordained ministries as parts of the larger "concert of charisms" flourishing within the community.

In retrospect, Saint Benedict, in the Rule, seems prescient when he writes about the service of the ordained monks within the fundamental equality of all the brothers of the community. Benedict challenges us, even today, to understand ordained ministries within the more fundamental context of baptism and monastic profession.

The call to lead the community in prayer is a beautiful and necessary gift within a community of equal members, each of whom has gifts and responsibilities.

In June, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Brother John's ordination as a priest. Ordained in 1950 for ministry in the diocese of Burlington, Brother John served Vermont parishes for seven years before entering the monastic community of Weston Priory. We brothers are grateful for Brother John's example in embodying a renewed (and therefore, more ancient) vision of ministry in our community.

Later in the month, Rabbi Michael Cohen, rabbi emeritus of Congregation Israel in Manchester, Vermont, visited us for a lively afternoon of exchange.

JULY

In July, gathered together with many friends, we celebrated the feast of Saint Benedict with a festive Eucharist, picnic, and dancing to music provided by Cold River Band. A group of area young people, who had recently returned from an experience with our Benedictine Sisters in Mexico, offered a public presentation on their Mexican journey and the challenges it presented to them.

AUGUST

Directors of religious education from the diocese of Burlington came to the priory for a day of reflection in August. Later in the month, Brothers John, Robert, Augustine, and Kurt participated in a study day at the Foundation for Biblical Research, in Charlestown, New Hampshire, focusing on the interface of contemporary theology and science.

SEPTEMBER

As August passed into September, Brother Richard left for Rome, to participate in the Congress of Abbots and Priors at the Benedictine College of Sant' Anselmo. Although it was his first Congress since election as prior, Brother Richard nevertheless presented a petition to the assembled monastic leaders, asking that the Congress support the possibility of the election of non-ordained, as well as ordained, monks as abbots or conventual priors.

The petition was very well received, and was approved by a large majority. (Two related articles are published in this issue of the Bulletin: "Brother Richard reflects on his experience at the Congress in Rome", and "Brother John offers an explanation of the structure of the Benedictine Confederation.")

Following Brother Richard's return from Rome, the community's annual retreat centered on themes from the address of Timothy Radcliffe, OP, to the Congress, and on the practice of non-violence within the community (based on an essay by Michael Crosby, OFM Cap.).

OCTOBER

In October, Brother Mark and Brother Richard traveled to Saint Anselm's Abbey in Manchester, New Hampshire, for a brotherly visit with Abbot Matthew Leavy and with Father Daniel Dempski (who recently suffered a stroke). Our brothers were warmly received by the Saint Anselm's community, and greatly appreciated this opportunity to offer support as Father Daniel returns to the life of his community.

Later in the month, Brother Richard and Brother Philip participated in the regional meeting of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, in Waltham, Massachusetts. Fr. Stephen Rosetti, executive director of the Saint Luke Institute in Washington, presented reflections on the spirituality of leadership.

NOVEMBER

Bishop Kenneth Angell of the diocese of Burlington spent a day with the community in early November. Following common prayer, dinner, and a time with the whole community, Bishop Angell joined brothers in the pottery and in a rehearsal in preparation for the recording of new music. The next day, we recorded six new songs, and hope to do so again in the spring.

As a member monastery of the Benedictine Confederation, a regular feature of our life is the canonical visitation, during which time monks from other communities reflect with us on the essential dimensions of monastic life here at Weston. This year we were honored to welcome Father Luke Rigby, OSB, former abbot of Saint Louis Abbey in Missouri; Father Martin Boler, OSB, prior of Mount Saviour Monastery, near Elmira, New York; and Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, of Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas. We thank each **of these brothers for their insight, challenge, and encouragement.**

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