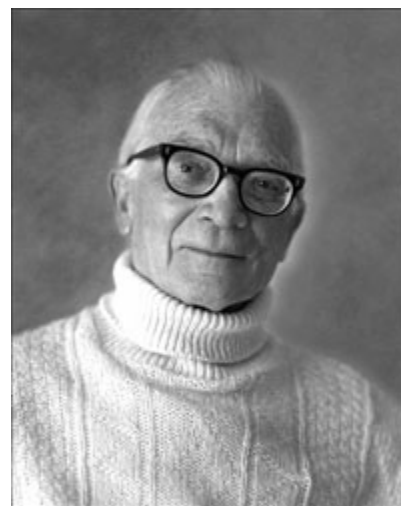


Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

A friend of our community, writer Christopher de Vinck, co-authored a book with Elizabeth Mosbo VerHoge, entitled *Compelled To Write to You: Letters on Faith, Love, Service, and Life* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2001). In many ways, the book's title captures our hope for the *Weston Priory Bulletin*, and in a special way, the sharing of the significant events of our community life over the weeks and months. Our "life together in one heart" has been enriched by the lives of so many persons, and — we hope — has widened in offering welcome to all who come to the Priory. Think of this as a letter to friends.

The past months have been rich and rewarding for the brothers. Summer marks a time of special hospitality, as many more persons join the brothers for common prayer, and for times of retreat. It is also a season of more intense involvement with nature: the garden and flower beds, the grazing of the sheep, and the arrival of baby chicks, rabbits, and young piglets.

Brother John has completed work on the manuscript of his book on the life of our founder, brother Leo, to be entitled *A Benedictine Legacy of Peace: The Life of Abbot Leo A. Rudloff*. The project is nearing its final stages of production, and will be available in a few months.



Abbot Leo Rudloff, founder
& brother of Weston Priory

July 2004

From the first days of our foundation, the spirit of the community has been imbued with the conviction that monastic life is meant to be a living, dynamic reality in the church and in the world. From his days as a young monk studying at Sant' Anselmo in Rome, brother Leo learned from teachers like Dom Lambert Beaudoin that a return to the original sources of the Christian monastic tradition would make possible a way of life able to address the deep longings of contemporary men and women with the hope of the gospel. Embracing an alternative set of values to those of the dominant culture—values rooted in the gospel, prayer, and genuine brotherhood—the monastic community would be able to engage the critical issues of the day, and to offer their common life as a response.

The first weeks of summer culminated in the weekend Feast of Saint Benedict. Gathered with hundreds of friends, we gave thanks for this living tradition bequeathed to us, for monastic women and men throughout the world, and for the faithfulness of one another in community. The gathering at the eucharistic table overflowed into the sharing of picnics and an hour of dancing in the open field near the monastery.



Celebrating the Feast of St. Benedict with a traditional contradance

Mid-month, a group of brothers visited the mosque in the Islamic Society of Vermont, in Colchester. Aware of the unjust climate of suspicion and prejudice directed at Muslims and Arab-Americans in our country, we hoped to offer a simple sign of solidarity with the Muslim community in Vermont, by asking to attend Friday prayers. The response was immediately "Yes," and the hospitality extended to our brothers was exceptional. When Friday Prayers were completed, the brothers were invited to stay for conversation and a sharing of experiences, which lasted for more than one hour.

At the end of July, the community traveled to Saint Michael's College in Winooski, for a presentation on Christian feminism by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, a member of the community of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania — a renowned writer and speaker, and a prophetic voice in our church and world.

September 2004

From their home-in-sanctuary here at the Priory, Felipe and Elena Ixcot, Maya refugees from Guatemala, continue to devote all their energy to the situation of other refugees in the United States, and to humanitarian projects in Guatemala. Out of their own experience of suffering and exile, they have consistently chosen to place themselves at the service of those who continue to suffer. A major focus for the past few years has been the Midwife Project.



The new Midwife Center in Concepción Chiquirichapa, Guatemala, on the day of its inauguration.

The project culminated in the construction and dedication of a midwife center in their native town. It will serve the needs of poor, indigenous women, offering them a place of dignity, respect, and adequate care in which to give birth. On Labor Day weekend, two midwives involved in the Midwife Center came to the Priory to share their experiences with the people of the area.

Following Labor Day, we had our community retreat, during which we reflected on the central dimensions of our common life, using a paper by Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, as a stimulus for discussion.

As our retreat drew to a close, Brother Richard traveled to Rome for the Congress of Abbots and Priors. Once in Italy, just before the opening of the Congress, Brother Richard accompanied Abbot Jerome Kodell, of Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas, in visiting two monasteries of Benedictine nuns.



Brother Richard and Abbot Jerome Kodell, with Antonio Pomárico (left), a friend of Brother Richard's family from San Marco.

These visits afforded the opportunity for them to spend a few hours in the town of San Marco dei Cavoti in the region of Benevento, from which Brother Richard's family emigrated to the United States.

October 2004

The harvest from our garden was exceptionally abundant this year. As the work of harvesting came to an end, a new, quieter season began.

Near the end of October, Brother Richard and Brother Placid represented our community at the autumn meeting of Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in New England. We are grateful to Mother Agnes and all the sisters of Mount Saint Mary Abbey (a Cistercian monastery in Wrentham, Massachusetts) for their warm hospitality.

November 2004

Contact with monastic communities continued in November, with a day's visit to Green Mountain Monastery in northern Vermont. The monastery, greatly inspired by the vision of ecological theologian Thomas Berry, CP, is the beginning of a renewed expression of Passionist contemplative life, with a strong focus on the healing of the earth.

In mid-November, Abbot Jerome Kodell (of Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas), Abbot Thomas Hillenbrand (of Blue Cloud Abbey in South Dakota), and Father Martin Boler (prior of Mount Saviour Monastery in Pine City, New York) came to Weston for our Canonical Visitation, which is held every four years. We are grateful to each of them for their gifts and insights in leading us **in this unique time of prayerful community reflection.**

Looking Ahead

In January, we will visit our Benedictine Sisters in Mexico for two weeks of exchange. Our visit will have a double focus. First, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the sisters' congregation and our gratitude for their presence in our life. Second, we will gather with Benedictine men and women from Mexico, Peru, Brazil, and the United States for continuing reflection on the prophetic role of monastic life in today's world and church.

(At right: Ceramic tile bas-relief image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, at the Centro Guadalupe Cuernavaca, Mexico.)



Fall/Winter 2004 Bulletin



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