

“Small Is the Bee...”

Brother Placid

Soon behind the bright October foliage comes the cooler weather of autumn. These messengers of approaching winter signal a time of preparation. The garden soil is turned, and tools are cleaned and stored away. The haymaking equipment is readied for that “long winter’s nap.” And as the cold deepens, the animals are moved to the winter barn. This year, we added a new chore to the winter preparations: preparing our bees for the winter.



Last spring, with generous and encouraging support from friends-hoping to have some bees to pollinate our apple trees, and perhaps to glean a little honey-we installed two strong hives. Later we added a third, and an observation hive. The observation hive is a small plexiglass hive allowing a view into the inner workings of the hive. The remaining three hives are full sized; from these we gather honey.

To our delight, throughout the summer we could hear and see the bees busily working the apple blossoms and finding their way to the garden, the flowers, and the berry bushes-all this work accompanied by the constant melody of the gentle buzz of the bees. Then came the time for the sweetest treat: honey.

We had three honey gatherings. The first was in July, another in August, and a final harvest in early October. Altogether we collected nearly six gallons of delicious honey. Each collection bore a distinct color and taste. The whole experience served to whet our appetite to continue with the bees, including the addition of several new hives. But for now, we must concentrate on getting the hives in shape for the winter: mouse-proofing, feeding the bees, and wrapping the hives against the cold.

All the brothers are quite happy with this experience, and are deeply grateful for our friends' help and encouragement. All 'round, it has been fruitful and enjoyable. Now as we prepare our bees for the long winter, we also look forward to a new season.

“Small is the bee... but her produce is the sweetest of the sweet” (Ecclus. 3:11).

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