

The Gift of Presence

Brother Michael

During the last week of September, two of our Benedictine sisters from Mexico, Sister Rosa and Sister Fidelina, came to stay for several days with us at the monastery. It was when the colors of fall were at their peak, and the weather was still nice and warm, so they could easily go out for walks in the woods.

We have known them both for many years now, and have come to see them as women of strength and vision, who offer many gifts not only to their own sisters, but to the Mexican people whom they serve. This gifting of themselves is always new, since it is rooted in the gift of their persons. So, it was exciting for us not to have any plans, but to just let the Spirit lead us into our days together.

At our Wednesday Eucharist we read the gospel of Luke 9:1-6, in which Jesus sends out the disciples on their journeys. The gospel reads in part, "Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic." The sisters spoke about the beginning of the mission at a very poor rural village called El Ojite. They said, "After days of planning with the parish priest, and pages of analysis and objectives and goals – we put everything aside and simply started listening to the people."

To listen with the ear of our heart does not require much, except a deep desire—a desire to be present to those who are with us on our journeys, and that means everyone and everything that we meet each day. And so, in our days together, we talked about how the sisters in Mexico are doing, and how the recent passings of sisters have touched their own hearts. We shared about our hopes for our trip in January. The two sisters had even brought a power-point presentation on the solemn profession of two of their young sisters from Nicaragua. Just listening, and laughing, and knowing we are on a journey: that is what it means to be present, and we believe it is the pathway to radical change – one step at a time. ☒