



Twenty-Five Years of Welcome!

*She [Sophia/Wisdom] crowns Him not with what is glorious,
but with what is greater than glory:
the one thing greater than glory is weakness/nothingness/poverty.
She sends the infinitely Rich and Powerful One forth
as poor and helpless in His mission of inexpressible mercy,
to die for us on the Cross.*

*The shadows fall. The stars appear. The birds begin to sleep.
Night embraces the silent half of the earth.*

*A vagrant, a destitute wanderer with dusty feet,
finds his way down a new road.*

*A homeless God, lost in the night, without papers,
without identification, without even a number,
of frail, expendable exile*

*lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world
and entrusts Himself to sleep.¹*

ON MARCH 24, 1984, THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador, an indigenous Guatemalan refugee family, Elena & Felipe Ixcot and their five children: Marta (Sonia), Julio, Alicia, Juanita, and Inez (Maya) arrived at Weston Priory, seeking Sanctuary as they fled the brutal repression and threats upon their lives in Guatemala. This year we have been celebrating the 25th anniversary of this Sanctuary and their arrival in Vermont.

In these pages of our bulletin we hope to share with you some of this story over these years told in the reflections of our brothers, friends, and from each of the family speaking for themselves.

The poetry of Thomas Merton quoted above reflects some of the depth of this experience in the light of the Christmas message: God's love incarnated among us in "inexpressible mercy," born in "weakness/nothingness/poverty...homeless, lost in the night, without papers, without identification, without even a number, of frail, expendable exile..." And like the story of Jesus in the Gospels, this is a story of searching and growing in love, of becoming gift for each other, that flowers into new life and vision in service to others.

The Rule of St. Benedict (Chapter 53) urges us as monks to open our hearts and monastery home to the stranger in the spirit of the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 25) wherein Christ is heard saying: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Benedict continues, in the Rule (Chapter 66), to instruct the monk at the door of the monastery to rejoice when a stranger arrives and say: "Thanks be to God!" Then the monk requests of the stranger: "Your blessing, please." Benedict's image of the monastery is that it is the house of God in which the monastic community itself lives as the guests of God.



The monastery is a place where all feel safe to speak their truths and listen from their hearts. It is to provide an ambience that offers those without a voice the opportunity to find one and the freedom to become fully the gift of who they are.

We hope the reflections that follow will tell part of the story that fills us with deep gratitude for the 25 years we have lived with this family, and through them, with the indigenous people of Guatemala. ■

¹ From the book *Hagia Sophia* by Thomas Merton, © 1962 by The Stammeria del Santuccio, Lexington, Kentucky. - Opus 17, Number 24, p. 8.