



Life Together in One Heart

AS THE RULE OF BENEDICT REMINDS US, OUR BENEDICTINE monastic life is characterized by hospitality and the awareness that each guest who comes brings, in his or her person, a blessing for the community which enriches the lives of the brothers.

May

At the end of May, on the Vigil of Pentecost, we buried the ashes of our brother Philip in the priory cemetery. We were blessed with an outpouring of love and affection brought in the hearts of gathered family, friends, and neighbors from both far and near.

Seven of our Mexican Benedictine sisters came to be with us to celebrate brother Philip's life and to be present for the burial. Sisters came both from Mexico City and from Cobán, Guatemala: Sisters Rosa, Evelia, Reyna, Miguelina, and Catalina—the community's leadership council; Sister Fidelina, a former prioress; and Sister Carmelita, currently serving in Guatemala.

Elena and Felipe Ixcot also came from Guatemala to offer their love and their presence to all of us at this important moment. After twenty-five years of living with us here in Weston they have now returned to their village in Guatemala to live their lives in service to their people there. "We give thanks to God for these twenty-five grace-filled years during which we journeyed together as sisters and brothers, friends, co-workers for peace and justice, and witnesses of Jesus' gospel of love and service of others."

June/July

In the first week of June the community was invited by Tomie dePaola, our good friend of many years, for a visit to his art studio and home in New London, NH. Always a gracious host, Tomie gave us an "insider's" view of his expansive workplace and its inner workings. (Visit www.Tomie.com for more about Tomie and his more than 100 children's books.) Tomie introduced us to his friends, Martin and Christine Marklin, at Marklin Candle in Contoocook, NH. They have established a remarkable handmade candle-making enterprise using 100% beeswax with innovative designs and techniques. (Visit them at www.marklincandle.com.)

The Summer Experience in Monastic Living brought three men to our monastery to share seven days together. Two of the participants were with us for a full week: Mark Chrisinger of Johnson, Vermont, and David K. Balasubramanian of the Sultanate of Oman and of North Carolina. John DeLancey of Irving, Texas, was able to participate for several days. The time was filled with experiences of shared discussions on monastic and community values, reading and lectio, prayer, work, study, and recreational exchanges. We grew in friendship, understanding and respect through our exchanges and interactions. Above all, we knew that we had experienced blessing in a new way.

August

Our good friend and brother from the Benedictine community of Chucuito, Peru, brother Simon Pedro Arnold, came to be with us from August 4 to 10 for some days of reflection and fraternal exchange. Brother Simon Pedro has visited us in Weston twice before and we have also been together at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca, Mexico, with our Benedictine sisters for an inter-community exchange of Benedictine women and men from Mexico, Brazil, Peru, and the United States. The Benedictine community of Chucuito is located in the high altiplano in the south



brother Simon Pedro

of Peru on the shore of Lake Titicaca, adjacent to the border with Bolivia. The monastic community's witness there includes biblical studies and education, and cultural exploration with and among the Aymara people.

September

Brothers have been exploring new avenues of enriching our community life through craftwork. We are now harvesting some select trees from our land to be sawed into planks for use in our woodshop. Over the coming years our woodshop will be supplied through the sustainable harvest of our own timber. Instead of buying a new piece of equipment to saw the logs, brother Augustine, with the help of other brothers, has constructed a Weston-made portable sawmill.

Brother Peter has been taking some amazing nature photos and offering them in the format of note cards and mounted prints on archival paper

in our Gallery Shop. Visiting moose, blue heron at the pond, geese in flight, autumn foliage, wildflowers, honey bees, butterflies, and other select subjects have been seen through the lens of his camera and been printed with our professional ink-jet printer.

Brother Alvaro has been continuing to make short video presentations both for our web-site and for presentations to groups who come to the priory. Included in his efforts is an annual "The Year in Review" which highlights some of the yearly rhythms and activities of the community. This year's twenty minute video included a moving tribute to our brother Philip and was shared with many friends on Saint Benedict's weekend in July.

New music and new songs continue to find a resonance in our daily rhythm of monastic prayer. Brother Michael has shared several new pieces that have been born in the context of our shared life and experience during the past several months. The Spirit continues to open our hearts and bless our prayer with song that is both poetry and praise.

Our flock of sheep is now guarded by a new llama, Noel, who was gifted to us by our nearby friend, Barbara Storrs. Noel is a replacement for Pipin, our previous llama, who died suddenly during this past winter. Under the watchful care of brother Daniel, the new llama has bonded well with our twelve sheep.

Brother Richard and brother Placid represented us at the twice-yearly gathering of Benedictine and Cistercian women and men from across New England. The September 30th meeting was hosted by the Benedictine nuns of Regina Laudis Abbey in Bethlehem, Connecticut. These inter-community meetings provide the opportunity for discussions on general and specific monastic concerns, as well as provide a touchstone for strengthening the bonds of friendship and understanding among the various communities.

October

Two of our Mexican Benedictine Sisters came to be with us for the first nine days of this month: Sister Miguelina, who has recently been elected prioress of the sisters' congregation; and Sister Rosa, who recently completed six years of service as prioress. It was a joy to have them with us for some inter-community exchange and sharing as well as time for their rest and relaxation. Both sisters exemplify the remarkable qualities of service and generosity which the sisters offer, not only within their congregation of sisters, but especially to the poor whom they serve in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the United States.



Sister Miguelina and Sister Rosa

We are enriched by these opportunities to be with our Mexican Benedictine sisters for sharing and discussion on both community concerns and the monastic values by which we live. New insights and broadened perspectives always mark the fruits of our exchanges. ■