

Life Together in One Heart



OUR EARLY MORNING VIGIL PRAYER BEGINS IN darkness and silence as we come together for a new day in prayerful presence. The silence gradually gives way to the sound of a rain stick, flute, and rhythmic drumming that reminds us of that time, long ago, when God's Spirit hovered over the cosmic chaos. "*Time of Change and Transformation*"¹, a simple mantra chant, is begun, building in intensity with each repetition, calling us to open our hearts to the present moment and inviting our discernment and response for the day's journey ahead.

Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome reminds us that: "God is always first and makes the first move . . . We read it in the prophets. God is encountered walking along the path. You are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him. You must, therefore, discern the encounter. Discernment is essential."²

Leonardo Boff cites a companion text by the pope where he said: "God manifests himself in time and is present in the processes of history", and insightfully comments: "The times are pregnant with God."³

The following chronicle of events sketches some brief moments in our community discernment of this God with whom we journey in the daily of the here and now.

May

We hosted the second Monastic Living Experience of the year from May 26th to June 1st. Two men participated in the seven day experience of prayer, community living, and exploration of monastic values. Dustin Goffron of Deerfield, Illinois, and Christian Mollitor of Vienna, Virginia, shared the richness of their



Christian and Dustin.

¹ © 2014 The Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc.

² "A Big Heart Open To God" in America Magazine of September 30, 2013.

³ Francis of Rome/Francis of Assisi, A New Springtime for the Church, by Leonardo Boff, © 2014 Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

spiritual search and their varied life experiences. We had several opportunities for exchange and reflection together during the days. We are grateful for the generous and joyful spirit they brought to the experience.

June

Our friend and video-maker, Nicholas Tuff, who lives in Vermont, came for a day in early June for the filming of a 20 minute video entitled "The Gift to Be Simple,"⁴ which he offered to our community as a gift. It is centered on several interviews with brothers and gives insights into the life of the community here at Weston. The finished piece was uploaded on YouTube⁵ in mid-July. Our community is grateful to Nic for the beauty and sensitivity which is expressed in this creative video. His reflection on the day's experience: "I was blessed to have been in the presence of so much spirit."



The Irish theologian and Dominican, Wilfrid Harrington, gave two presentations in the village of Weston at the Church on the Hill on June 17th. Fr. Harrington is the author of many books and has lectured at numerous colleges in the U.S. and abroad, including Vermont's Saint Michael's College. Many of us brothers went to the presentation which focused on "Answering the Call of God: How our traditional assumptions concerning the nature of God do not provide an adequate view of immanence and transcendence."



Fr. Wilfrid Harrington

Sunday June 22nd was a day of celebration with the Dismas Community of Vermont. We brothers joined many friends, volunteers, supporters, and benefactors of this new transitional home for former prisoners coming out of Vermont's correctional facilities. The opening of the fourth Dismas House in Hartford, Vermont (White River Junction is the adjacent larger town), signals the growth of a continuing compassionate response in the hearts of many people who hear God's call in Isaiah 61: 1 :



Photo Debbie Diegoli

Brothers at Hartford Dismas House dedication

⁴ Access it at the priory website: www.westonpriory.org. Click on "What's new" then "Photos and videos" then "The Gift to Be Simple."

⁵ On YouTube enter a search for "Alternative Life", "Monasteries", "Monastic Life", or "Spirituality."

God has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison.

We are truly blessed by the gospel ministry of everyone at Dismas.

July

Our annual celebration of the Feast of Saint Benedict was marked by a festive Eucharist, picnics, and folk dancing on Sunday July 13th. The actual feast day is July 11th and our custom is to mark the occasion on the closest Sunday. In the early afternoon of Saturday, July 12th, our Benedictine brother, Simón Pedro Arnold, gave a presentation, along with audio visuals, on the experience of his monastic community in



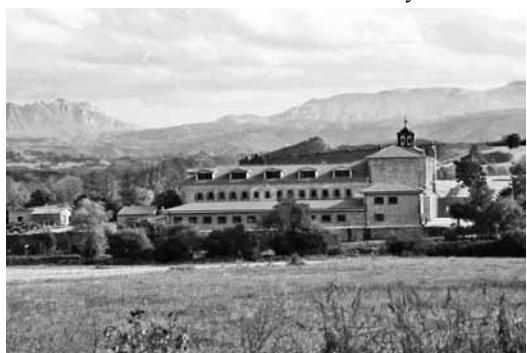
brother Simón Pedro Arnold.

the Andean Altiplano, living and serving among the Aymara indigenous people on the shores of Lake Titicaca in Chucuito, Peru. More than a hundred friends and neighbors came to the Saturday gathering in our Visitors Center to listen to the voice and witness of this Benedictine monk from the southern part of our continent of the Americas. Brother Simón Pedro's six months' sabbatical with us in Weston came to its completion in mid-August with joyful expressions of fraternal love and "hasta luego."

September

From September 2nd to the 16th, most of our community traveled to north-east coastal Spain where nine Trinitarian Nuns of the monastery of Suesa

welcomed us warmly with open arms. Established in 1860 this monastery has a significant outreach to many people in Spain who seek a renewed experience of liturgy and spirituality in the contemporary Church. The sisters welcome guests from throughout Europe to their newly renovated guest facilities and have also established the Association of the Friends of the Monastery of Suesa that gathers searching



Monastery of Trinitarian Nuns in Suesa.

people who value friendship with the sisters and their efforts to explore

questions that relate to culture, spirituality, and social concerns. Having heard of our community from two women friends who knew us, as well as from our internet website, they contacted us seeking to establish an intercommunity dialogue that would mutually benefit both our monastic communities.

A small group of four of us went to Spain in 2010 and spent two weeks with the sisters that included participating in the beginning of the Feminine Monastic Forum they were hosting to celebrate the 150th anniversary of their foundation. In 2012, three of the sisters came to Weston for an initial visit and to discuss mutual interests and challenges while deepening the friendship that had begun to grow among us. At the beginning of this year, sister María, who is prioress, and sister María José joined us at the Centro Guadalupe in Cuernavaca, Mexico, for a four-day intercommunity encounter with representatives of five small monastic communities who are searching for a renewed expression of monastic life in today's world and global church. With each of these encounters we have grown in understanding and appreciation of what our monastic communities have to offer to all those whose hopes and dreams resonate with a renewed expression of monastic life. (See other articles in this issue related to our visit to the Nuns at Suesa).



Stained Glass of the Trinity in Suesa.

October

A group of conscious and committed Catholics, called Concerned Catholics of Vermont, came to the priory on October 18th for an afternoon meeting in our Visitors Center. A warm greeting and hearty welcome was offered to all by several brothers on behalf of the community. After the 11:30 AM Eucharist and indoor picnic lunch, the group pursued a discussion among themselves about issues relevant to the future of Vermont's Catholic community.

On the last Saturday of October we placed the cremated remains of Anne Hoveling, brother Michael's mother, in the earth of our small hillside cemetery. Anne and her husband, George, were born in Amsterdam, Holland, and



Anne with Clara, her great granddaughter.

immigrated to southern Alberta, Canada, in the early 1950's where they lived and raised their three children. After a simple Midday Prayer in our stone chapel, our brothers and many friends of the community accompanied George, daughter Yvonne, and younger son Mark to the gravesite. Anne will be remembered as someone who would spontaneously and joyfully say: "I thank God", "I am thankful for life" and "I thank my family."

November

On Saturday afternoon, November 1st, a group of brothers met with some local friends and others who traveled to the priory to participate in a discussion about the Dalai Lama's "Human Approach to World Peace" and Pope Francis' lament that "War is madness . . . so irrational; its only plan is to bring destruction."

Over the weekend of November 7-9, members of the boards of the four Dismas Houses of Vermont had their annual retreat with us at the priory. We are always deeply touched by their sharing and personal witness to the gifts they say they receive from persons transitioning out of prison and seeking to reintegrate into a society or a neighborhood that is not always very welcoming. ■

