

*Peaceful Heart of Silence;  
prayer of hope for our world.*

*Heart of joyful hope,  
where warmth and love abide.*

*Heart of wisdom,  
attentive listening.*

*Heart of humble faith,  
light of trusting love.<sup>1</sup>*

**T**HESE WORDS WERE COMPOSED AS A CHANT-LIKE SONG that flows from our communal prayer and memorable experiences in this season of our life. With these words we send you our greetings during these days of Advent and the Christmas celebration.

As we begin our celebration of Advent we want to share the joy of welcoming our brother Nhan as a novice among us. He has been with us in community for over a year and he is enthused to continue the integration of his life journey into our monastic quest as a brother among us.

In our monastic life we hope that out of the heart of silence we can incarnate the Word-made-flesh for the life of the world: living with joyful hope in the warmth of compassion, attentive listening and trustful love.

The Gospel of Luke begins with the mystery of God's Spirit hovering over a humble young woman invited to give birth to God's own Son. The parables and words of Jesus speak of the simple, the insignificant and little as the signs of God's reign among us. Such signs do not always correlate well with current social/political and even religious thought or the logic of the world today. Imagine leaving all ninety-nine sheep to search for the lost "one"; or sweeping the whole house simply to find "one" small coin.

Over the years our small monastic community has found life and the blessing of God speaking in what may appear as little and marginal and not easily noticed in our society and world. In the last few years, through an unexpected and welcomed small-still-breath of the Spirit, we have met and discovered monastic resonance with a small community of Trinitarian Nuns and their friends in Spain.

In early September our community was graced with the opportunity to experience the life and monastic witness of these sisters in their monastery in Suesa, Cantabria, in northern Spain. In their beautifully renovated monastery they welcomed us and opened their hearts to us for a twelve-day visit—a journey together into the "heart of silence and prayer of hope for our world."

Through their vibrant and open life of shared prayer we encountered many of their friends, people who join them frequently in this search for God. We met lively and creative women potters like Rufina and Coco;

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and welcomed members of a lay community from Madrid, the Shekina (Overshadowing/Hovering Spirit) Community who pattern their family and communal lives on the early Christian communities, sharing all and reaching out in service to the marginal of society, to those struggling for justice and peace.

We spent a day with Ernesto Bustio who opened his beautiful family home as a pilgrim hostel in Güemes, Cantabria, to pilgrims journeying along the Camino de Santiago Compostela (the Way of Saint James). We had the opportunity to share the quest of some of these travelers coming from many different places in the world. With Ernesto we also visited the lovely 12<sup>th</sup> century Church where he is pastor, Santa María de Bareyo.

On the feast of Mary, September 8<sup>th</sup>, we boarded a fishing boat and sailed out into the ocean to experience the annual blessing of the fleet popular among the people of the fishing town of Santoña.

We met creative-thinking and searching persons, including theologians who are friends of the Sisters, deeply committed to renewal in the Church in the light of Vatican II. We found ourselves on common ground with them as they too have been deeply touched by the faith experience of an emerging church and base communities in Latin America as well as in Africa and Asia.

One of these theologians, Avelino Seco Muñoz, a pastor and teacher in the neighboring city of Santander, is a long-time friend and fellow-pilgrim with a mutual friend-bishop, Dom Pedro Casaldáliga, the bishop-emeritus of São Félix do Araguaia in Brazil. Dom Pedro is a Claretian Missionary of Spanish origin—an outstanding prophetic bishop of our times. Avelino, along with Ernesto Bustio, had recently been to Brazil to see Dom Pedro and published a small book about Pedro. The book includes an interview that Avelino and several friends had with Pedro on that visit. We have translated this interview and are sharing in this bulletin some of Pedro's inspiring thought for the future of the church today, especially through the work and experience of the Base Christian Communities.

We also went to the Archeological Museum of the famous Paleolithic/ Stone Age Caves of Altamira, near the town of Santillana del Mar, about an hour from the sisters' monastery in Suesa. The ancient cave paintings featured drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals (bison, deer, horses, wild boar). So innate to the human spirit is the wondrously deep relationship we have from our origins with nature, the animals, and all creation!

The visit to our sisters, the Trinitarian Nuns of Suesa, revealed a very rich and profoundly meaningful communion between our two communities and a mutual outreach of hope to our world. Through the pages of this bulletin we hope to share together in some small way what this journey has meant to both communities. It is just a beginning of what we trust will unfold into the future as a gift of Christ-mas.

May your hearts be filled with joyful hope and the warmth of compassion, attentive listening, and the light of trusting love. ■