

# Life Together in One Heart Chronicle

SINCE OUR LAST BULLETIN IN DECEMBER, the earth's northern hemisphere has traversed the silence of winter, the beauty of spring's blossoming, and now unfolds in summer's abundance. As a faith community, we too have traversed the journey from Christmas, through Lent, into Easter's fifty-day feast, culminating in the blaze of Pentecost Sunday. Earth's natural cycles have allured monastic communities from the beginning. They become poetic analogies of our common pilgrimage into the mystery of God, embracing birth and death, planting and reaping, steady patience, and, ultimately, a free surrender to the loving Gift who is greater than all of us.

These themes have marked our community life during these past months. We share some of the highlights with you, all nourished by the living spring of daily common life, prayer, work, study, and play.

## January 2004

Last summer, our Mexican Benedictine Sisters held their Chapter of Election, choosing a new prioress and leadership council.

In late January, we welcomed the newly elected sisters (accompanied by two of the sisters from the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca) for two weeks of exchange with our community, as well as for a time of retreat for the sisters themselves. Every six years, following the sisters' election, we mutually affirm and celebrate the covenant (our *Alianza Arco Iris*) which expresses the deep communion and love uniting our communities. At the close of their visit with us, we had the opportunity to share a few days of retreat together.



Our Mexican Benedictine sisters, newly elected to leadership: Sister Miguelina, Sister Reyna, Sister Evelia, Sister Rosa (prioress), Sister Catalina and Sister Berta.

## February-March 2004

In February Brother Richard traveled to Saint Bernard's Abbey in Cullman, Alabama, for the annual meeting of Abbots and Priors.

In February, our brother Timothy (Kenneth G. Hebert) presented to the solemnly professed brothers his request for a dispensation from his monastic profession, and in April left the community. He has asked that we share the following letter with you:

“Dear friends,

After a few years of serious reflection and discernment, I have decided to leave the monastic life. And so, in February, after our extended quiet time, I asked the brothers for a dispensation from my monastic vows. This has been the most difficult experience in my life, and through it all, I continue to 'listen with the ear of my heart' to God's call in my life and direction. These many years at the Priory have been a profound blessing in my life. I am deeply grateful to all the brothers of the present monastic community who have gifted me with such life and challenge, and, most importantly, with their love and support through these many years (more than half my lifetime!).

“During this period of transition, which has brought with it the pain of separation, the brothers have been a tremendous support to me. They are indeed my brothers! Although I leave the daily monastic life, my love and gratitude for each brother remain very much alive. To quote the words of our founder, brother Leo — which we read in our dining room at meals just before I left the community (brother John's history and memoirs about brother Leo), 'When I love someone... I love them forever...'

“I am grateful too for all those brothers who have journeyed with me and are no longer at the priory as well. These brothers offered us all many gifts that continue to live on in each of us, and bear fruit and witness in our world.

“I am realizing during these days of transition how many friends I have made throughout my years at Weston priory. I am saddened that I will not be able to speak with everyone personally, and so I have asked the brothers for this space in the bulletin to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your friendship and your love. I'm sure we will meet again at the monastery in the future.

“My more immediate plans have come together well, with the help and support of the brothers, friends, and my family. I will begin studies at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, doing an interdisciplinary major in psychology, social work, and gay and lesbian studies. Once receiving a B.A. from Goddard, I hope to continue on for an M.A. in social work, and then to work with the larger community as a social worker, and more specifically, with the GLBT community.

“I ask your prayer during this time of transition and immense life change for myself and for the brothers. I will remember each of you in my daily prayer as well.

“With my heart full of gratitude and love,  
Kenneth G. Hebert”

We brothers are grateful for the many ways Kenneth has blessed our lives during his years with us as brother Timothy—most importantly through the gift of his *person* among us. We pray that, in the weeks and months ahead, our faithful God may continue to hold him in care, and to bless all those whom Kenneth will touch in these next steps in his life.

## March 2004

In early March, Brother Richard participated in a weekend meeting in Washington, D.C., for persons in leadership in monastic and religious communities and in dioceses, sponsored by the Saint Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The offering of monastic hospitality takes many forms and involves many hands. Here at Weston — in the office, gift shop, guesthouses and visitors' center, kitchen, grounds care, and parking lot — a large group of friends collaborate with the brothers in extending welcome to all who come to the monastery. Each year, we welcome these generous men and women as our guests for a weekend of retreat, in order to say a word of gratitude for each of them. This year, we reflected together on "God's Workshop," an address by Archbishop Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, originally delivered at a symposium, *Shaping Holy Lives: A Conference on Benedictine Spirituality*, in April 2003. The text can be found on-line at

[www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons\\_speeches/030429.html](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/030429.html).

Near the end of the month, Brother Richard and Brother Michael represented the community at the Region I meeting of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, in Waltham, Massachusetts.

## April 2004

Early April led us to the celebrations of Holy Week — climaxing in the Easter Vigil with its fire, water, renewal of baptismal promises, and the Breaking of the Bread. Throughout the holy days, we welcomed large numbers of persons who came to the monastery to participate in the liturgy of those days. Each of them brought a spirit of prayer and reflection, which enriched this year's celebration of our Passover journey.



Brother Augustine  
marvels at the gift  
of new life.

Following Compline on Easter Sunday evening, all the brothers retired, the busyness of the previous days finally catching up! We awoke on Easter Monday morning — which we traditionally keep as our community "Emmaus Day" — to find two newborn lambs in our winter barn. Without any human assistance, the mother ewe knew precisely what to do, and presented the world with two gifts of new life. Not surprisingly, these firstborn lambs (two out of nine born this spring) were named "Emmaus" and "Emma." Later during Easter week, another of the ewes gave birth to triplets!

At the end of April, Brother Richard and Brother Placid represented our community at the spring regional meeting of Benedictine and Cistercian communities. The gathering was held at the Abbey of Regina Laudis, a community of Benedictine nuns in Bethlehem, Connecticut. We are grateful to Mother David Serna, abbess of the community, and to all the sisters, for the warm welcome extended to our brothers.

## May 2004

The month of May was ushered in with the arrival of two baby piglets, who now join the family of farm animals for which the brothers care. An article in this issue of our *Bulletin*, "[Monks in the Wilderness](#)," is a reflection on our care for the land and our relationship with the natural environment surrounding us.



With full attention, Brother Michael handfeeds one of our hens

## June 2004

During our quiet days in June, we visited the monks and nuns of New Skete, Eastern Orthodox monastic communities in Cambridge, New York. Our communities have gathered annually for a day of exchange on questions of common interest in living our monastic charism in the world today.

### Spring/Summer 2004 Bulletin



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