



Ceramic bas-relief plaque at the Guadalupe Center, Cuernavaca

The Guadalupe Faith/Hospitality Experience in Mexico

You are welcome to further explore this Experience
with our Benedictine Sisters in Mexico.
Updated information is available
on our website:

www.westonpriory.org/mexico/index.html

or by mail: Weston Priory
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Life Together in One Heart



SAINT BENEDICT CONCLUDES THE PROLOGUE OF HIS RULE for Monks with this exhortation: “As we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God’s instructions, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.” Our path through life, towards God, is marked by encounters with many persons and occasions, some of which can be foreseen and others unexpected. Our faith and our monastic practice are enriched by them all. The following chronicles some of these community encounters over the past several months.

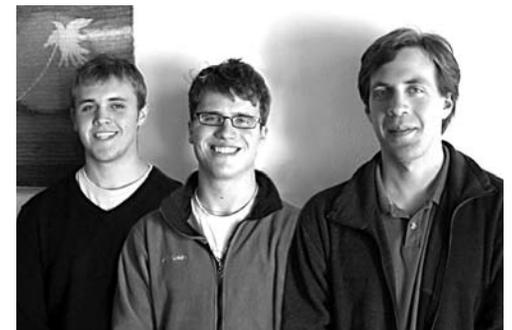
November 2009

The coming of winter brings more opportunities to focus on the work we do in our craft shops. A good friend, John Gorman, has been helping brother Michael in our woodshop by demonstrating and sharing his expertise in wood working and woodshop safety. We have purchased a lathe and are delighting in the simple yet beautiful bowls and candle holders that are the fruit of our own labor. Even more, as part of this creative endeavor, we are now milling various kinds of wood – ash, cherry, maple, and apple – all harvested from our own forest land.

December 2009

An Exploration of Monastic Values:

From December 28th to January 3rd we welcomed a group of three men to share in “An Experience of Monastic Living” for seven days: Jim Tomlinson of Hartford, Connecticut; Joseph Carlsmith of Madison, Wisconsin; and Jacob Paysour who hails from southwest Virginia. This privileged time was filled with rich exchange and profound



l to r: Jacob Paysour, Joseph Carlsmith, and Jim Tomlinson

reflection on our monastic life of prayer, work and hospitality. We were blessed by the lively presence of these three men, and we wish them well as they integrate this experience into their future choices and path of life!

January 2010

Early in the month we brothers accepted an invitation from good friends to visit their new community service center, located in the neighboring town of Londonderry, Vermont, called "Neighborhood Connections: A Center of Health and Social Services." This nonprofit organization is



Gloria (front row, left), Delores (front row, 2nd left), Carol (back row, 2nd from left)

dedicated to the service of people within the eleven towns in our local geographic area. We were inspired by the in-depth exchange we had with our friends Delores Barbeau, Carol Olmstad and Gloria Dawson who form part of the coordinating team for the Center. As they articulated in a published brochure announcing the Center:

"Our mission is to provide preventive healthcare, education, and social services with particular emphasis on those most vulnerable. We are dedicated to excellence in our work to improve the health and quality of life for all."

The growing circle of providers at Neighborhood Connections attests to the genuine need for such services in this area of Vermont. It is a touching sign of the generosity of so many who want to help their neighbors in need.

February

For two weeks at the end of January into the beginning of February, our community journeyed south to visit, exchange, and enjoy the hospitality of our Benedictine Sisters in Mexico City and Cuernavaca. We are always blessed and enriched by our encounters with our Sisters and the people of Mexico. (Note the articles about the experience in this Bulletin).

Brother Richard represented our community at the annual gathering

of Benedictine Abbots and Priors held this year at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California. The meeting was enhanced by presentations of a renowned speaker and author, Dr. Michael Downey, who is also a personal theologian to Cardinal Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles.

March

Our flock of sheep increased prolifically with the birth of eleven lambs during the first part of the month. Brother Augustine and brother Daniel were so happy. Our black ewe, named Olivia, brought forth triplets, one of which is also adorably black. This lamb has become a favorite of brothers and visitors alike.

Our ten bee hives did not fare well over the winter months. The bees in all of the hives eventually died during the harsh winter. Despite all the effort we expended to thoroughly insulate the hives and feed the bees during the coldest months, none were able to survive. Brother Placid and brother Daniel are hoping to restore our bee colonies using hardy Russian-stock bees in place of the Italian bees we have been using. Perhaps the Vermont climate is more akin to Russia's when it comes to over-wintering bees.

Two of the rabbits have each had a litter of 8 and 10 baby rabbits respectively. Brother Elias and brother Mark find them delightful to care for. They are such beautiful and friendly little ones, much like their mothers. Also, two new baby pigs have arrived and brother Placid has dubbed them with this year's names: "Half and Half!" And, over this past year the chickens have been consistently keeping us stocked with delicious, healthy fresh eggs. Their successors for the coming year, the new baby chicks, will be here in the coming weeks. A sure sign of spring!

April

Over the past several months there have been a number of requests to film, photograph, and write articles on the Priory. We were contacted by Kathleen James, the editor of Vermont Magazine, who wrote a very fine article about the community for the winter issue. The article was ac-



accompanied by some striking photographs by Anthony Reczek. (Vermont Magazine is a quarterly that features people, places, and experiences available throughout the State of Vermont.) The Manchester Business Journal of Manchester, Vermont, as well as The Message from Chester, Vermont, also did articles about our community. In recent weeks, a local community-access television station from Londonderry, Vermont, came to film various aspects of our life and to interview some brothers.

We especially enjoy responding to local requests for stories about our community life. Local connections with our neighbors in the surrounding towns, the region of south-central Vermont, and throughout the state are valuable ways in which we share the values of our life and the beauty of our home. As the people of Vermont quip: just being “downright neighborly”!

Wood Burning:

April marked the end of our first full wood heating season with the new gasification wood burners we purchased in late 2008. The new system functioned very well as we worked out some of the kinks that were initially encountered.

We have been happy, even enthusiastic, about heating the main buildings of the monastery with wood during the cold season. Our forest land continues to yield a bountiful harvest of wood that brothers and friends can gather, cut, split, stack and burn—keeping us comfortably warm during the winter months.



May

Throughout the year we have been blessed with the generous assistance of many neighbors, guests, and friends too numerous to mention by name. Visitors often ask us how a small community can offer hospitality to so many. The secret, of course, lies in the thoughtful people who surround us. We recognize that the hospitality we offer at the Priory is the work of many hands and hearts—from the preparation of nutritious meals to the care of our guesthouses, from the maintenance of the priory grounds and buildings to the processing of fire wood to heat the monastery, tending the Gallery Shop, answering phones, performing office tasks, parking cars, welcoming newcomers, and joining us in prayer. For the joyful and generous spirit of so many who work with us in these ways, we are deeply grateful. ■

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