



*Halleluiah, halleluiah, halleluiah,
We are a people of hope.*

*Give us your freedom and light, Halleluiah.
Creating our world anew, Halleluiah.
Transforming our lives with joy, Halleluiah.¹*

HOPE HAS BEEN FOUNDATIONAL TO OUR MONASTIC COMMUNITY from its earliest days. Abbot Leo, our founder, envisioned a return to the original simplicity of monastic life. He had to search hard, and with numerous setbacks, to find monks who would commit themselves to birthing this founding vision. He bought an abandoned farmhouse and property in Weston, Vermont, on a shoestring of funds mostly donated by lay friends who were searching in their own lives of faith and who believed that such a vision could become a reality.

As Paul wrote to the community of the church at Rome: “Hope is the way we find salvation and new life...We hope for what we do not fully see, yet await its fruits with persevering confidence.” (Romans 8: 24-25)

We continue as “a people of hope” celebrating the 60th anniversary of our founding. Weston Priory was just beginning to grow in the midst of the theological, liturgical, ecumenical and sociological ferment that led up to Pope John XXIII’s summoning call to Vatican Council II. This year is also the 50th anniversary of his encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). In this Spring/Summer Bulletin our brothers continue to offer reflections about persons and events that have been personal and communal sources of inspiration for our monastic life over these years.

With the celebration of Pentecost—the gift of God’s Spirit inspiring us to new visions and hope-filled dreams—we recall the words of paradox quoted in the psalms and likewise spoken by Jesus: “the stone that some of the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” (Psalm 118: 22; Mark 12: 10; Acts 4: 11)

Returning to the sources of our inherited tradition (*ressourcement*) and

engaging in dialogue with the contemporary experience of the world today (*aggiornamento*) are the cornerstones upon which Pope John called the Council. These values lay deeply at the heart of our monastic life from our founding to the present day. In responding to the monastic call in the modern world, we reach back beyond the development of a “golden age” of medieval monasticism, and return to the original sources of inspiration for the people of God in the Scriptures, for the followers of Jesus in the Gospels, and for the early monastic searchers in the desert. We listen to them and respond in the light of the signs of our times.

Simplicity in prayer, fraternal life, creative work and hospitality are the inspirations of God’s Spirit enabling us to strip away the ideological accretions that accumulate and to humbly touch in the poverty of our own being an open and vulnerable heart. This is the unity of all creation and peoples for which Jesus gave his life. He saw all creation as “very good” and coming from the “one” breath of God from the beginning. He called us to be his friends—the friends of God and friends to one another. The *conversatio* of our life is to move beyond the divisions that we at times fabricate through isolation and control, and to enter as a humble child into a dialogue/conversation wherein we recognize each other as part of ourselves, one with each other and creation as brothers and sisters. This is resurrection—the seed that burrows into the earth to break open and become the sprout of the kingdom of God.

The New Pentecost to which we are all called by Vatican II includes everyone and everything on this earth. The call challenges us to responsibility for ourselves and for all others; it invites us all to (w)holiness with a mission to proclaim the Good News not just by speaking about the words and deeds of Jesus, but through our own concrete acts of love, care and service to one another.

The will of God for our happiness is what John XXIII highlighted in the encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, as the “universal common good”: what is good not just for ourselves but for the whole human family, for the whole community of creation throughout the universe.

Pope John challenged us: “...bring the relationships of daily life into conformity with a more human standard based, as it must be, on truth, tempered by justice, motivated by mutual love, and holding fast to the practice of freedom.”²

Hope is not striving for “success” according to contemporary standards. Hope is living with confidence that, through our faithfulness with one another on the Gospel path, the Spirit of God continues creating with us and bringing to fruition the gifts we have received “to make all things new.” With trust in our hearts and with gratitude for all who have made us who we are today, we joyfully hasten on, for truly, “We are a people of Hope. Halleluiah!” ■

¹ Words from the song of this title © 2011 Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc.

² *Pacem in Terris* #149