

CHRONICLE: December 2014 – May 2015

At the end of October, 2014, a group of students from Vermont's Middlebury College Newman Club came for a retreat and exchange with brothers.

December, 2014

The seven day Monastic Experience began on December 29th with five participants from several regions of the country: Joshua Reinke from California; Christopher Gys from St. Louis, Missouri; Jason Brown from Evanston, Illinois; Luke Colburn from upstate New York; and Kevin Platte from Washington, D.C.

2015 marks the 20th year that we have been offering this opportunity to share our monastic life and witness and its values with young men exploring their own future and deepening their spiritual quest.



1 to r, Luke, Joshua, Jason, Kevin and Chris

January – February, 2015

On January 18th we began our extended Winter Retreat/Quiet Time which included a two week experience with our Benedictine Sisters in Mexico. It is always a gift for us brothers to be welcomed into the love and friendship of all of our Mexican sisters.

During our stay we had the opportunity to visit the rural town of Hueyapan/Tetela del Volcán in the state of Morelos in the foothills of majestic volcano, Popocatepetl. We were hosted by local residents and two coordinators of an agronomic NGO that is helping townsfolk reclaim some of their historical-cultural indigenous traditions in respect to animal husbandry, heritage seed conservation, and preserving precious water and soil resources.

At the Guadalupe Retreat Center in Cuernavaca our awareness of Mexico's cultural and religious realities were broadened and challenged by an afternoon presentation by a friend of the sisters. Sister Marilú Rojas, a member of the Missionary Religious of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, is a Doctor in Systematic Theology who teaches at the Jesuit Ibero-Americana University in Mexico City and at the Union of Mexican Religious Women and Men. She also works empowering women



Sisters and brothers at the Casa Central



Sister Marilú Rojas at the Cuernavaca Center

on all levels of society and church. Her insightful and piercing analysis of the reality of present day Mexico was an unforgettable encounter with the “spirituality of the street.” Her challenge to religious men and women is: “to make visible what the ruling class and those in power want to make invisible.”

March

We chose to celebrate Holy Week and Easter in the Stone Chapel this year. The severe winter, which brought us freezing temperatures and mountains of snow, presented us with a safety challenge for access to the Barn Chapel. There was sufficient space for everyone, even though the space is smaller, and each time of prayer was marked by a warm sense of intimacy.



April

In April Donna Taranko-Moulton and Melina Menzie of Weston came to share with us about the work of “Just Neighbors” which serves people in Weston and ten surrounding towns. This entirely voluntary group, which numbers around 100 persons, began when three local residents recognized some pressing unaddressed needs in the local area. Communication between members is done through e-mail and texting. Monthly meetings are held in homes as there is no central office, a choice to keep overhead to a minimum.

A couple weeks later three members in the leadership of “Neighborhood Connections”, a community-based organization staffed by professionals and volunteers, came to update us about present and future ventures for this dynamic and still emerging service outreach. Our friends and neighbors, Delores Barbeau, Gloria Dawson, and Tom Dougherty (the new director) related experience after experience of helping to bring a sense of hope and care into the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our area and surrounding towns.

May

Our brother Columba died on Thursday, April 30th. Following surgery for a broken hip after a fall in his room, complications set-in within 24 hours. Brothers Richard and Peter were preparing to bring him home to the monastery when he died peacefully in the hospital. He had been living with Alzheimer’s-related dementia for several years.

We celebrated the fullness of his life and the 57 years of his faithful monastic witness at the 11:30 AM Eucharist on Saturday, May 2nd. His body was cremated and buried on Saturday, May 9th, in our hillside cemetery next to our brother Leo and our brother Philip.



A six week Hospice Training Course is being offered in our Visitors’ Center each Monday between 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM from May 11th to June 15th. Sponsored and coordinated by Visiting Nurse & Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire the training is free for anyone wishing to be a hospice volunteer in the surrounding eight towns. “All you need is a caring heart and a willingness to share your time with a neighbor who needs you.” ■