

CHRONICLE: November 2015 – April 2016

READING THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES REMINDS US of the many and varied ways in which the Spirit led, challenged and surprised the post-resurrection community of Jesus' disciples. We find traces of this same Spirit at work today blessing and nurturing our community in recent encounters and happenings.

November 2015

On November 8th a group of fifteen people gathered to explore their hopes to become Benedictine oblates here at the priory. They met with brother John and the six members of the first group of oblates from the previous year. Those who choose to continue as oblate novices are being accompanied in their process of integration and exploration of St. Benedict's Rule by brothers and the present group of oblates.

Board members of Dismas of Vermont held their annual retreat here at the priory November 14th and 15th. Our community hosts this committed group of nearly thirty persons who have focused and dedicated their energies to create supportive communities for former prisoners transitioning from incarceration. Leaving behind a constricted form of life, residents at the four Dismas Houses in Vermont focus on their healthy integration into the wider society and dedicate their energies to becoming healed and reconciled persons offering a supportive presence to help others.

December 2015

Nhan The Nguyen, who had been integrating as a brother in our community for more than two years, left us shortly after Christmas. His joyful presence among us as a postulant and novice was a blessed and growthful experience for all of us. We wish him well on his return to Louisiana and all that the future holds out for him.

During the last days of December and into January we welcomed Francisco Savka from Rochester, New York, into the seven-day Monastic Living Experience which we offer twice yearly. We are grateful for his bright enthusiasm in exploring the rhythm and values of monastic life, and the unique perspective he brought from his personal searching and life experience.

January 2016

Most of the brothers traveled to Mexico from the 13th to the 28th to be with our Mexican Benedictine Sisters and to celebrate 40 years of the love and friendship that have marked our ongoing intercommunity



Our Benedictine Sisters at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca.

relationship. In 1976, then Benedictine Abbot Primate, Rembert Weakland, suggested that we might visit the sisters when we traveled to Mexico. A seed was planted. Something akin to the biblical oak of Mamre, which stood outside the desert tent of Sarah and Abraham, began to germinate and grow. The friendship, joy, and blessing that have been born from that seed have become an overarching canopy that offers welcome and inspiration to the many persons who have met the sisters and/or been welcomed in Mexico as their guests.

(See articles in this Bulletin)

February

Along with other religious and lay communities of the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont, our monastic community was a participant in a special event hosted at St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral on Sunday, February 21st. Invited and warmly welcomed by the new bishop of the diocese, Christopher Coyne, we were able to join in the solemn Vesper Prayer with the hundreds who gathered for the celebration. Additionally we were asked to begin and end the time of prayer by leading the singing of two of our Weston community songs. As everyone in the church joined in singing there was a vibrant and full experience of resounding gratitude and praise.

(See the article "Vespers in Burlington" in this Bulletin)

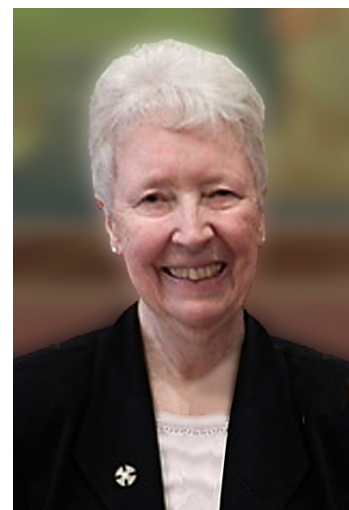
March

Iyad Burnat, husband, father, and many-generation citizen of Bil'in, offered a presentation of the current reality in Palestine (West Bank) in our Visitors' Center on the 29th. Approximately 50 neighbors and friends came to hear Iyad speak about the effect of the Israeli Security Wall on the lives, homes, and lands of Bil'in and other Palestinian villages. Nonviolent weekly demonstrations against the Wall and against the illegal seizure of land and of olive orchards have drawn international attention and the ensuing solidarity against the injustice of the Wall.

(See the article "Psalmody and Nonviolence" in this Bulletin)

April

Sister Patricia Crowley, former Prioress of the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Scholastica in Chicago, offered an opportunity for open discussion about her experience of Benedictine monastic life and ministry in our Visitors' Center on Saturday, April 9th. Sister Patricia is currently the president of the Federation of American Benedictine Prioresses (approx. 50 monasteries) and is enjoying a well-deserved sabbatical after her eight year of service as prioress of her community. She has spent a month of her sabbatical with us including the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. Another part of her sabbatical experience will be participating in an international monastic dialogue between Christian monastics and Iranian Shi'a Muslims.



Sister Patricia Crowley

An overnight visit by Lutheran Pastor Kim Erno was an opportunity for an update on the status of Mexican farm workers who do the heavy labor on most of the dairy farms in Vermont. He ministers for half the year in northwestern Vermont through FARM (Franklin County Alliance for Rural Ministries) and the other half in Mexico with CREAR (Convergencia de Resistencia y Esperanza en las Américas). Through CREAR people come from the United States and Canada for group immersion experiences during which they can engage in the reality of the poor of Mexico and touch this suffering people's hope for justice and solidarity.

(See the article "Mexico in Vermont" in this Bulletin)

Our brother Robert continues to be in residence at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington, Vermont, where he is thriving and welcoming many visitors and friends from the priory. At age 94 he is receiving excellent care and medical supervision since his accidental fall and hospitalization in July, 2015, and subsequent rehab therapy offered by the skilled staff at the Veterans' facility. The exceptionally warm and friendly personnel at the Home create a family-like atmosphere that brother Robert affirms with joy and gratitude. One of the new staff at the Veterans' Home questioned who he was since he was receiving so many visitors. She was heard to say: "He has more visitors than the pope!" ■