

¡Presente!

– brother Peter

***May the Spirit of God remain always with us
—and with our absent brothers and sisters !***

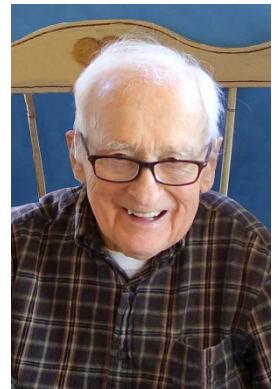
THIS CONCLUDING BLESSING TO OUR PRAYER—MORNING, NOON AND NIGHT—ARTICULATES THE JOYOUS mystery of the communion that binds us in one heart in brotherhood and sisterhood. As our journey in community progresses and matures with the years and with aging, absence becomes a human reality we are called to integrate into our deep presence to each other in the Spirit.

Years ago, in the 80's, we visited our Mexican Sisters' new mission in Nicaragua. We witnessed the people's sense of unity in their struggles when they responded in prayer to the calling out of each of the names of their lost and absent companions with the acclamation: *¡presente!*

Our brother Robert is 95 and, for special care, now resides in the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington, Vermont. This year, for reasons of health and the difficulty of travel, three other brothers (brothers John, Augustine, and Peter) remained in Weston when the brothers went to Mexico to be with our Mexican Benedictine Sisters at the end of January. We maintained contact through our email, but the blessing of daily prayer is what really gave witness to the Spirit that unites us profoundly.

While the brothers in Mexico had wonderful exchanges with our Benedictine Sisters and the people they serve, we three in Weston had opportunities to spend time with brother Robert, with brother John's sister, Marie, and her family in Burlington, and with friends in Weston. The Sunday Agape celebrations with the gathered friends in Weston were especially rich and encouraging.

Such experiences help us grasp the deep presence of the Spirit in our lives that unites us as a community beyond the separations and absences that are an inevitable part of our human journey. ■



brother Robert



brothers Augustine, John and Peter