

Sent on a Journey

—*brother Elias*



Hike to Bertha Overlook, Waterton

IN THE RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT, CHAPTERS 50 AND 51, WE find wise counsel in regard to brothers who are sent on a journey. In both chapters there is an emphasis on brothers “being sent.” Implied is the fact that the journey is not self-initiated. There is also an emphasis on the plural “brothers”, rather than the singular “brother” in the headings of both chapter texts: “Concerning brothers who are sent on a journey.” Saint Benedict wants to highlight the fact that it is the whole community that he is addressing.

Our founder, brother Leo, was an avid traveler, especially with his responsibility as Abbot of the Monastery of the Dormition of Mary in Jerusalem, the Monastery of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha in Galilee, and our Monastery of Weston Priory in Vermont. For many years he made an annual journey by freighter from Jerusalem to Vermont, stopping in Athens, Rome, Germany, Paris, London, and New Jersey (places where family, friends and monastic responsibilities drew him to stay for a few days.)

In his teachings on the Rule he often suggested that in reading the text we consider what is written there as well as what St. Benedict found no need to mention since it was already the common observance of the community. Moreover, we often find that St. Benedict is opening a window of wider consideration and exploration into the fraternal life of his brothers through the way in which he selectively treats only certain aspects of a particular concern.

With this insightful approach to the Rule, brothers have been able to discern broader and varied meanings in this foundational docu-

ment which now embraces more than 1,500 years of Benedictine legacy, history, and lived tradition.

All twelve of us entered into a journey that was both challenging and richly rewarding in our understanding of who we are as a monastic community. Our hope was to journey in a way to make it possible that each one of us could participate with our varying abilities: from those with unlimited energies to those less agile.

We travel together to deepen our personal relationships and to strengthen our bonds of unity as a community of brothers who find ourselves led to cross over into the lives and realities of people living very different lives from our own. We travel to learn, to meet people, to make connections beyond our immediate environs, to be influenced by traditions and cultures beyond our own, and to strengthen our bond of brotherhood.

We are grateful for the opportunity and experience.

We are sent. ■