

Life Together in One Heart



SAINBENEDICT BEGINS CHAPTER 35 OF HIS RULE FOR monks with this injunction: “Let the brothers serve one another in love.” Service is the “leitmotif” of our lives as monks and it brings us to the realization of what it can mean to live our lives to their full potential.

Pope Francis, from the very beginning of his ministry as the new bishop of Rome, has continually reminded us, as the Church, of our call to serve others, especially the poor and the marginalized, so that we might mirror the example of Jesus, the poor man of Nazareth. Forms of service vary in the unique lives of each of us. Our underlying commitment to be faithful in response to our calling is the leaven that makes each day a joyful celebration of life and a breaking open of our hearts as bread for others.

There are many ways in which to do this. The monastic tradition highlights: daily community prayer, inner reflection, manual work, joyful hospitality, and living lives marked by blessing and gratitude. The following chronicle highlights some moments of blessing that have come to us during the past several months. For all of these... we are grateful.

May

Two special guests from CHABHA (Children Affected by HIV/AIDS) spent an evening sharing with the community. Grace Muhimpundu, country director for CHABHA Rwanda, and Patrick Nimubona, project coordinator for Rwanda, explained the current work and projects being done in the east African nations of Rwanda and Burundi. Of the 16 million children to have been orphaned by AIDS worldwide, almost 15 million live in sub-Saharan Africa where CHABHA,



Grace



Patrick

through its many volunteers, focuses its energies and resources. The work of CHABHA is to create realizable opportunities for educational access, transitioning pathways out of poverty, and accessible healthcare and psychological care for children whose plight is largely ignored. CHABHA was founded in 2003 by Susanna Grannis of Windham, Vermont, who is the author of *Hope Amidst Despair*.¹

From May 27 to June 2 we welcomed Samuel Bauer of Cambridge, MA to the priory for our bi-annual Experience in Monastic Living. Samuel had already participated in a previous seven day Experience and wanted a further opportunity to pray, work, and share with the community. Times for reflection, study, mutual exchange, and conversation with brothers brought new growth in friendship and trust.

June

For a good number of years our brother Peter has used his photographic eye, as well as his camera, to capture vibrant images of the priory and its environs. Brother Peter has an attraction for photographing wildlife, butterflies, insects, fungi, wildflowers, and landscapes—especially priory landscapes—in all seasons. Gathering together a selection of these new images we produced three new series of cards for the enjoyment of our guests and visitors and for sale in our Gallery Shop: ten postcards including two aerial views of the priory; five butterfly note cards with individual botanical identification for each butterfly; and three landscape note cards with reflective/meditative photos.

July

On Saturday, July 13th, as part of our celebration of St. Benedict's weekend, Brayton and Suzanne Shanley of Hardwick, MA, gave a presentation in our Visitors' Center to a gathering of 100 friends from far and near. Their sharing was based on Brayton's newly published book: *The Many Sides Of Peace, Christian Nonviolence, the Contemplative Life, and Sustainable Living*.² Co-founders of the Agape Community, Brayton and Suzanne have been practicing Peace by leading sustainable living retreats and participating in nonviolent opposition to social and environmental injustice.

The well-known Irish theologian from South Dublin, Fr. Dermot Lane, presented two lectures in the village of Weston on July 15th. The lectures were sponsored by Weston's Church on the Hill and



Brayton



Suzanne

¹ © 2011, Pluto Press, London, England

² © 2013, Resource Publications, Eugene, OR

the Center for Faith and Culture at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, VT. The morning lecture, *Interreligious Dialogue*, spoke to the new challenge for Christian faith in the 21st Century. The afternoon lecture, *Pneumatology: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, opened up a new way forward in dialogue with other religions and the renewal of Christian faith. A number of brothers along with many friends, attended and were enriched by Dermot's engaging insights and expertise.



Dermot Lane

August

From August 5th thru 8th our community was blessed and enriched by the presence of fellow Benedictine and friend, Abbot Jerome Kodell, of Subiaco Abbey in Subiaco, Arkansas. Every five years the Abbot Primate of the world-wide Benedictine Confederation, currently Abbot Notker Wolf, requests the presence of a trusted

monk to make an official visit to our community here in Weston. The experience of Visitation has similar qualities to Mary of Nazareth's visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, as recorded in the gospel according to Luke: joy in one another's presence; abiding trust; a willingness to listen; and recognizing the presence of God in our lives. The community and Abbot Jerome came together as brothers in confidence and expectation: to celebrate the blessings of faithful living our monastic life; to affirm the on-going nature of monastic dialogue and obedience; and to identify strengths for future growth. We are grateful to Abbot Jerome for his wisdom, insight, and sense of humor.



Abbot Jerome

On the 17th we celebrated the annual remembrance of our brothers Leo and Philip at Evening Vespers/Eucharist. Our prayer included a procession to their gravesite on the beautiful knoll that overlooks the pond in front of the monastery buildings. This year we concluded the prayer singing one of our newest songs, Cantic of Creation, which was inspired by St. Francis' Cantic of the Sun. The song concludes with these verses:

Mindful of our sister death, receiving all, the weak and the strong.
As we journey along the Way, with hope and trust we greet each day.
Blessed are the pure in heart, children of God, children of earth.
We dance the dance of life with joy, responding to God with songs of praise.³

³ Cantic of Creation © 2013 The Benedictine Foundation of the State of Vermont, Inc.

Our good friend, Jim Tomlinson, currently doing post-graduate work at Boston University, spent most of his summer with us as a volunteer. Jim helped with the work of the monastery especially in the garden and getting in the firewood. We are grateful for his generosity and friendship.

September

The town of Weston repaved Priory Hill Road. Over the past ten years the road surface had deteriorated and made travel unpleasant and precarious, especially in the winter months. The top-to-bottom reconstruction should make for safer driving for brothers and guests alike.

Both Bethany and Morningside guesthouses received some needed renovations over a period of five weeks. Bathroom remodeling, some new kitchen appliances, furniture and furnishings have brought new luster to these two well-used guesthouses. We trust that all who use them will have a more pleasant time of retreat.

October

We are happy to welcome Nhân Thế Nguyễn to experience and share our monastic life in these months. His search for God in prayer, his joyful spirit and his generous service to the community are gifts for which we are grateful.



Nhân Thế Nguyễn

The semi-annual meeting of Benedictine and Cistercian monks and nuns from New England was hosted by the Benedictine nuns of Regina Laudis monastery in Bethlehem, Connecticut. Our community was represented by brothers Richard and Elias. Representatives from eight of the twelve monasteries in the region met for the one day gathering. These meetings are held to foster on-going communication among the monasteries as well as to offer opportunities to share the developments, concerns, and insights of each community.

November

This month we welcomed again our friends from Dismas of Vermont for their annual retreat weekend. Dismas House is a supportive community for former prisoners transitioning from incarceration and university/college students who are also in transition with their lives. They have four homes of transition here in Vermont for persons who have left prison and who are seeking reconciliation with society. For more information: www.dismasofvermont.org

Also we welcomed a group of New England Lutheran Pastors who have been having their annual retreat with us for over 30 years. ■