



Sanctuary and Frogs

- *brother Augustine*

JUST DOWN OUR ROAD, AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL, THERE is a large, old beaver pond. It has been home to many families of beavers, each having moved on and left behind their house built of sticks and mud. Each family has altered the size and character of the pond, extending the length of the dam, and clearing away more shrubs and trees.

During the springtime of April and May, the pond is also home to many spring peepers and frogs. The warming sun brings them out of the mud and woods to breed in the waters of the pond. Part of the breeding ritual involves a constant trilling and singing with one another, especially in the late afternoon and evening. Here in rural Vermont, this sound of the peepers and frogs singing with abandon in their ponds heralds the awakening of nature in bringing forth new life.

At the priory on most Wednesday evenings, after the Eucharist and supper, the community would visit for a while with Felipe and Elena and some of the children. Then after the night prayer I would drive the family home, passing by the beaver pond at the foot of our hill. Most times, certainly in the springtime, we would pause for a moment to be enchanted by the chorus of singing peepers and frogs.

After many experiences of this evening ritual it seemed to us that the frogs in their own way were offering a song of hope—that our lives can begin again in nature’s rebirth. To Felipe and Elena this chorus of nature’s coming alive in the pond seemed to offer a healing—a hope for new life, so present in nature’s own Sanctuary. ■