

Evolving Monastic Community Life

- *brother Mark*

EVERY NOW AND THEN PEOPLE WHO VISIT THE PRIORY will ask about various aspects of our evolving monastic community life [sometimes it's a question and other times a disappointment or a criticism]. Perhaps there is an expectation rooted in the thought that monastic life, or any religious practice, is fixed-in-stone rather than being an expression of the developing growth of persons who are alive and evolving. The challenge always is to maintain the deepest values of our monastic life faithfully while discerning the appropriate specific expression in the present situation. That discernment is a process rooted in the progressive unfolding of a shared life experience and reflection on that experience, which the full community chooses daily and evaluates regularly, especially in retreat discussions and scripture sharings.

A basic founding principle of the Weston community, prescribed by Saint Benedict in his Rule and flowing through the teaching of our founder, Abbot/brother Leo Rudloff, has been to listen and be open, or as Saint Pope John XXIII encouraged the Church: to be aware of the "Signs of the Times" and respond.

An example of this effort is presented in this bulletin as some brothers reflect on our community experience of offering 'Sanctuary' 30 years ago to the Ixcot family who had fled from life-threatening violence in their native Guatemala. That story is really about the courage and commitment of an indigenous Maya family. For our part it speaks of the effort to implement our Benedictine value of hospitality which calls us to welcome Christ in all persons especially those who are most needy. While the specific expression can and must take different forms that flow from our shared community life experience, the value being implemented remains constant. This approach is very clearly visible especially in our community prayer where our music, spoken words and actions embody the attitudes and concerns that are relevant at the moment as we seek to faithfully enter into meaningful prayer together. ■