

Chronicle:

December 2018 to May 2019

*O Spirit of God give us faith.
O Spirit of God give us hope.
O Spirit of God give us love.

O come, come be with us,
O Holy Spirit of God*

EACH DAY AT MIDDAY PRAYER we begin singing this invocation as we remember each other and all our brothers and sisters throughout the world. With faith and hope we long for the fullness of God's Spirit of love to abound in our hearts and rest upon all creation. ■



Holy Saturday Midday Prayer 2019



l to r- Alejandro, Marcos and Isabella

Dignity and Respect for Migrants

ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2019, during our stay at the Guadalupe Center in Cuernavaca, we brothers met with two migrants from El Salvador, Alejandro and Marcos, and Isabella, a young Mexican volunteer at *Albergue Tochan-Nuestra Casa*, a hospitality center in Mexico City where the two migrants are staying. Alejandro and Marcos told their story and emphasized that they would prefer to live in El Salvador but were in Mexico to escape violence and death threats from gangs in their home-country where they would either be recruited or killed if they refused. Instead of

spending billions to build a border wall to keep them out of the United States, could not that money be better spent to help address the violence of the gangs in their country so that they could live safely in El Salvador? They thanked us for listening to their story and for taking them seriously – humble hopes for human dignity and respect! ■

Visiting Our Mexican Sisters

WHILE STAYING WITH OUR BENEDICTINE SISTERS at their motherhouse in Mexico City, we met Mexican theologian Mariana Gómez Álvarez-Icaza. She spoke about the challenges facing Mexico today: ecological catastrophe, economic uncertainty, and horrendous violence especially against women and Indigenous communities. In describing them as authentic outcries demanding a response, she suggested we need to embrace them with a prophetic eye that enables us to recognize, however faintly, signs of God's grace already acting. Equally important is what she described as a "Samaritan attitude" that is willing to engage risk with compassionate commitment.



Mariana Gómez Álvarez-Icaza, Mexican theologian

It was marvelous to listen to her sense of hope, grace, and possibility of real transformation. All of it grounded in humble tenderness!

After Mariana's talk concluded, I was fully aware that our interactions with the Sisters were always colored by their tender care. The witness of these simple women, attentive to their sick and elderly Sisters, to their poor neighbors, and to us as their guests, is a self-effacing, living example of a response to which Mariana was inviting us all through her powerful talk. ■



A Golden Harvest in Spring

Maple Sugaring Season at Weston Priory

WHEN I OFFERED TO WRITE A BRIEF ESSAY on maple sugaring at Weston Priory, little did I realize how great the challenge to do that! For more than sixty years, sugaring has been a rich and vibrant community experience, too complex to capture in a short article.

As the title to this article suggests, maple sugaring at Weston Priory was an amazing harvest in Spring—a surprising gift in the very beginning that sustained the community's economy in difficult years, and trained aspirants for the community when qualified teachers were lacking.

For almost seventy years, nature has continued to offer this gift of a delightful harvest before the time of planting. In turn, the brothers and friends have strenuously opened arms and hearts to embrace and harvest the gift. Translucent, odorless, taste-free sap was boiled to transform the precious pure liquid into gold or amber sweetness. It was then shared or sold in gallon and half-gallon containers at a very low price.

In the Spring of 2019, two hundred trees yielded 36 gallons of golden syrup which was poured into pint and half-pint containers. This joyful harvest in Spring continues to be nature's sign of our faithful and loving God whose life-blood is so generously poured out and shared with our monastic community and friends. ■

(See brother John's full historical reflection at <http://www.westonpriory.org/bulletins/ss2019-4.pdf>)



On going to the woods

***We went to the woods
For the gift of sweet sap—only
When the trees would decide.***

***We went to the woods
To fathom in awe—how trees
Are children of the Sun.***

***We went to the woods,
In truth, and without knowing,
To learn about ourselves.***

A Solar-Energy Project

WITH CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, in thanksgiving for the gifts of the earth, and through a collaborative effort with *Same Sun of Vermont* (a solar-electric design company based in Rutland) we are installing an array of solar panels to provide electricity for the monastery, our guest houses, and two Dismas Houses (who provide a safe house of integration for persons integrating back into society after incarceration).

We are excited about getting solar power since we are transiting out of heating with wood. The forest is one way of using solar power, and this new way will hopefully contribute to creating a sustainable future.

The panels will be located in the field adjacent to the parking area. ■

The Farm

THE VAST FOREST SURROUNDING OUR monastery is home to many wild creatures, furred and feathered: fox, moose, owl, bear, deer, geese, ducks...to name some. With the coming of Spring we prepare to welcome other creatures. It is time to welcome our farm animals. By the end of March, we have ordered our three sheep, fourteen chickens, two pigs and our rabbits for May arrival. Our bees that have overwintered in six hives will be put out to pollinate trees and garden, gathering honey to be harvested in the Fall. Our barn cat, Shadow, will start her patrolling. By the end of May, the oinks, bleats, clucks, and buzzing of a small Vermont farm will mix with the coyote calls, fox barks, hoots and honks of the forest celebrating another year of life around us. ■



Exploring the Rule of Benedict



OUR EXPLORATION OF THE RULE OF BENEDICT continues with our oblates and oblate novices. Four times a year we gather together to experience the Rule as a living document which gives us wisdom to live by. One of the texts we shared was RB 66: 3 which reads, "As soon as anyone knocks, or someone poor calls out, the porter replies 'Thanks be to God' or 'Your blessing, please'; then with all the gentleness that comes from the fear of God, he provides a prompt answer with the warmth of love."

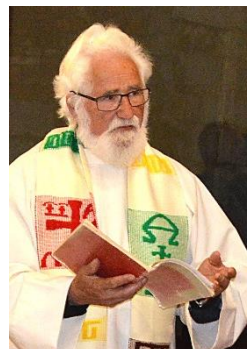
We shared how 'the poor' could include the migrant, our neighbor, or even those we are closest to; but no matter who the other person is, we are always challenged to give a response of gentleness with the warmth of love.

We all have blessings to offer each other! ■

An Unexpected Gift

OUR VISIT TO THE TRINITARIAN NUNS OF SUESA was marked by the opportunities to share with open hearts our common monastic journey with its questions, hopes, fears and joys. The love and trust between the two communities grounded this visit. Moreover, an unexpected gift that made our communion palpable was the visit of Ernesto Bustio, a priest-friend who hosts a shelter/hostel along the *Camino de Santiago* in the little town of Güemes.

Ernesto showed up one morning with a young Swedish couple and their little baby. The sisters announced that we were going to have the baptism of the baby as part of our morning prayer. Then Ernesto told us the story behind this couple: Solvor, who is the mother of the baby, had worked in the refugee camps in Kenya for a few years, and she also served among the Gypsies in Romania. After years of giving herself without seeing any real improvement in either situation, she lost hope. It was during this dark time that she walked the *Camino de Santiago*. During her stay in Güemes, talking with Ernesto and reflecting on the beautiful paintings of Gospel-discipleship in the chapel at the hostel, she found hope and





a new joy for life. When she returned to Sweden, she shared the powerful experience with her then-boyfriend Jans. He was a communist, father of two young sons, who had taken-in three Afghan teenage boys he was hoping to adopt to prevent their being deported. When they married, they came to Güemes, and Ernesto brought them to the sisters' monastery in Suesa. There the stained-glass window of the Trinity and the community life of the sisters impacted Jans so much that, in Ernesto's words, "...just as she had found her hope, he found his faith!" Jans simply rejoiced in how compatible his communist identity was with his wife's Christian commitment. The depiction in the stained glass was to Jans so playful: God as three dancing women.

The baby was baptized Efraín Ernesto. Not only because of Ernesto Bustio but also in tribute to Ernesto Cardenal and Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Reflecting on the experience: here is a couple who bring together in love what would have seemed irreconcilable and even tainted by conflict – Christianity and communism! with a vision of Gospel service open enough to nurture three young Muslim boys at home. Isn't this ecumenically inclusive witness a life-giving path for a world so fractured by fear, hatred and rejection?

As the Trinitarian sisters and the Weston brothers were named the 'godparents' of Efrain Ernesto, we prayed that we may nurture this vision of faith and inclusion in the family of God for the future and peace of our world. ■