

September 30, 2007

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

Autumn has arrived, and around us signs of the change of season multiply... Along the roadsides in the surrounding towns of Orwell and Richland, it's easy to notice how the mid-summer's Joe-Pye Weed (common in ditches and along streams in August) is succeeded by early fall's Goldenrod and New England Asters -- even these have passed their peak in certain places. The last weeks of the summer were dry -- and consequently the level of the water in the branch of Trout Brook which flows through our property had been unusually low, though a few days of rain recently have caused some increase.

It has been a good summer for us at the Acres, I think. Despite the dryness of the weather, the gardens were productive. Many people stopping into the Acres have remarked how well the vegetable gardens have looked throughout the spring and summer. As of this moment, all of the vegetables have been harvested, with the exception of the pepper plants. Zinnias are still blooming, and marigolds, in the flower gardens.

In the meantime, our cattle herd is significantly reduced. We are down to just one cow, 'May', and her six-month old calf, 'Nick'. The reduction in the number of cattle has been a little sad for many of us -- no more daily visits to the pasture at Saint Francis Farm to check on the cattle's drinking water, no more spring and fall round-ups as we 'walk' the herd along the trail between their summer and winter quarters, no more bailing hay.

Sad as it is to be closing the cattle-raising chapter in the story of Unity Acres, we can report good progress these last weeks in other areas. The re-construction of our Pig Barn was completed in early August, and we have obtained six piglets. These will be raised until the age of about six months, at which time they will be slaughtered. We will use the meat produced in this way for the preparation of meals for the men. We started the summer with an effort to accomplish major repairs to the roof of the Main Building on the Unity Acres. A contractor was hired and that job has been completed: subsequently long overdue repairs to several other roofs have been completed. Many thanks to Gary, and Mark for tireless efforts in planning and carrying out this necessary work.

Two recent gatherings at the Acres brought many guests: our annual Picnic on August 19, and a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by the newly-ordained Father Thomas McNamara, OFM Cap on September 23. As always we were glad to enjoy the presence of our visitors on each of these days. The theme of our Mass on the day of the picnic was hospitality: remember Abraham, who ran to offer hospitality to his guests. After Mass was celebrated, a large assembly of guests and residents of the Acres shared a meal: hamburgers and hot dogs, corn from our garden, cakes and so on. Every available space in the dining hall was taken -- many people ate outdoors on the picnic tables under the shade of the pine trees.

For those who don't know Tom McNamara, he has been part of the Saint Francis Farm community since the mid-1990s. Tom joined the Capuchin Friars in 2000 and was ordained to the priesthood in Yonkers NY on September 8. Congratulations, Father Tom, on your ordination, and wishing you peace, joy and happiness. And thank you, Tom, for including Unity Acres among the celebrations of your ordination.

Finally, we ask you prayers for the repose of the souls of Thomas Scanlon and Howard Deal, former residents of Unity Acres, who died recently in the city of Syracuse.

Tom and Howard, Rest in Peace.

Steve Dickhout

Prayer: September 2007
Labor Day-Dignity of Work

"I will proclaim Your greatness, my God... I will thank You forever...
I will meditate on Your wonderful works....
The Lord is righteous in all He does, merciful in all His acts."

-Psalm 145: 1, 5, 17

We thank You, God, for the beauty of Your creation: the Universe, in its
awesome splendor, the work of Your hands.

We thank You for any work we are able to do. Especially do we thank You for the
work of the men here at Unity Acres. You provide a home here for many. The work of
their hands makes it a home whose beauty and stability bespeak welcome, safety and peace.

Yet, O God, too many who seek work have no opportunity. Too many labor
under cruel, unjust and inhuman conditions. Rescue them, we pray. Help us to raise
our voices and efforts against greed and power that suppress and enslave.

"Prosper the work of our hands, O God, prosper the work of our hands."

-Psalm 90: 17

Saint Joseph the Worker, Pray for us!

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest."

-Matthew 11: 28



August 19, 2007--Mass at Unity Acres Family Picnic