

Lay Cistercian Community – Weggemeinschaft St. Benedikt Zisterzienserklöster Langwaden

Spiritual Journey

Through ups and downs the Weggemeinschaft St. Benedict (Path community of St. Benedict) has so far seen good times. Monthly meetings were held, as well as small pilgrimages to Neviges and Banneux, and larger pilgrimages to Scotland.

The path community has its origin in 2002, when at the Cistercian monastery of Stiepel some lay people found themselves seeking to walk together on a Christian path in connection with the monasteries of Stiepel and Langwaden. At that time the initiative found the support of the then Prior Father Christian Feurstein OCist, who is now Abbot of Rein. The first meeting, mainly families, was on November 23rd, 2002. Also the Cistercian monastery of Langwaden supported the group. In the following years the initiative went through different phases. On December 14th in 2003, during a weekend retreat at the Cistercian Monastery of Langwaden the name „Weggemeinschaft St. Benedikt“ - Path community Saint Benedict“ was born. In 2005, we realized that it was possible to join links within the Cistercian Family, as Lay Cistercians. Since then we are linked to these other Cistercian monasteries and lay people within the Cistercian family. In 2007 the Weggemeinschaft joined the Lay Cistercians, and attended the International Encounter in Huerta in 2008. In 2009 the members of the Path Community were seeking the association as a Lay cistercian community with the two monasteries where we had held regular meetings. With the Cisterian monastery of Stiepel no association could be achieved. The monastery of Langwaden accepted us as an associated community of Lay Cistercians. In November 2012 we celebrated 10 years Weggemeinschaft St. Benedict in Langwaden with the monks, many guests from other monasteries and the Procurator General Father Meinrad Tomann OCist who gave the official speech. In December 2012 the community signed as an official member of the International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities. There is no promise. Those who want to make a promise to the Monastery Langwaden have to do it as oblates. Members have to confirm their membership in a written form to the Prior.

Father Prior Bruno Robeck OCist is our monastic connection. We are, however, supported by the other monks, too. We have regular visits to Langwaden and the monks come and give retreats for us, as far as the situation at the monastery permits and to help the members of the community to get to know Cistercian spirituality. Two oblates from Langwaden work together with the monks for the Weggemeinschaft St. Benedict: Gabriele Franziska Heitfeld-Panther and Father Heribert Weinbrenner. Both are involved in retreat work and spiritual guidance. Apart from the monks the community is also supported by a number of secular priests and has support from other monasteries. Some of us are oblates, most of the members however did not make a promise. As Lay Cistercian Community Weggemeinschaft St. Benedikt of Kloster Langwaden we have also been accepted among the spiritual communities of the diocese and meet with the other spiritual Communities in the diocese of Essen and the auxiliary bishop about three times a year. To support community formation we have also been on many short and long Pilgrimages to Scotland (Pluscarden and Nunraw), Banneux and Neviges and have visited other Cistercian monasteries in Hyning, Arnheim, Himmerod and Seligenthal, and hold connections with other Cisterian monasteries and the generalate in Rome.

At the moment the path community counts about 40 people interested, attending now and then, depending on the topic of the meeting. There are 17 members. Meetings are always open to everybody and guests are always very welcome.

We meet monthly, in different parishes in Bochum and at the monastery of Langwaden. The dates are made known for the whole year in advance.

Each meeting should try to convey: Here the doors and the hearts are open for each person seeking. The vital point is: to seek God and strive, every day new, to orientate our lives towards God „ under the guidance of the Gospel and living the Cistercian charism, in our lay community, in our places, wherever we

live, in the tasks of their everyday life, in our families, at our places of work, in our parishes. On this path of seeking God „Nothing is to be preferred to Christ.“ In particular the eucharist, the prayer of the Church and lectio form the firm ground, which gives orientation and growth and stability to the life of the community based on seeking God.

Since 2005 there has been a formation program each year, under a set annual topic which leads deeper into Cistercian spirituality, as there were 2005 – Faith and everyday life, 2006 – Paths to God, 2007 - Lectio Divina, 2008 – the Eucharist, 2009 - Prayer, 2010 - Community, 2011 – Prayer, 2012 – Lectio divina, 2013- Faith and life, 2014 – Seeking meaning and seeking God. Each year the following aspects are part of the topics: Cistercian Charism, the Documents of Huerta, the prayer of the Church, the psalms, lectio divina, silence, community. We meet for a day each month, start with morning prayer at 9:45, followed by the formation topic of the day until 11:45, then we hold midday prayer, followed by lunch at 12:20, a short break, then another formation time or lectio sharing from 13:30 to 14:30 and the Eucharist at 15 hours.

Besides the monthly retreats there is the Oasis Time, held by members of the community in a parish church in Bochum every Monday evening. Those of us who have time meet and invite for prayer, lectio, adoration, silence and compline at the end of the evening. Every Monday we invite and offer to share anybody interested. Any of our meetings are open to people interested. In between meetings we have regular contact with each other and with the monastery. Some of us also attend the Langwaden oblate meetings. Every 26th of January we celebrate the Feastday in Langwaden together with the monks and the Oblates. We also share the other feastdays with the monastic community, as far as our personal situations permit. But it is more than just getting together to have a good time. It is the effect that counts: people say it changes them and gives them strength, spiritual strength. When people introduce themselves and tell us why they are interested in the community the answer is very often the same: search for solidarity in faith, because they find it hard to live according to the values deriving from our faith without communal support. This support in most parishes cannot be found. Search for love in a world that is characterized by materialism and competition and egoistic behaviour. There has grown a network of prayer and a social network among the members of the Weggemeinschaft St. Benedict and a close link with the community. In particular we share prayers for the monastic community of monks and they share prayers for the lays. Members say that they feel that people who want to live a more active, open Christian life in conversion, often are not understood in the world, even among other Christians. As soon as a deeper search awakes or as soon as people listen to the teaching of the Gospel more carefully they try to find a harbour, in the community they find a spiritual home. We aim at bearing witness and shaping the world in Faith and responsible action. Following the Cistercian Charism we want to live the Gospel in the middle of the city. To us it is a life-giving way and a vital way of evangelization in today's world, where, in connection with the monastery, we try to support each other in various aspects of daily life and spiritual life. Bearing Witness, Shaping the World in Faith and Responsible Action.