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Reflections from the Cobán, Guatemala Pilgrimage April 15-22, 2009

From John Downey –

Memories of our Pilgrimage to Cobán, Guatemala:

- Chanting the Devine office with the Benedictine monks in their monastery chapel each morning as the dawn was breaking.
- Fr. Cletus, who is a vibrant 91 years young and who is celebrating his 70th year in the order of St. Benedict in August, had a very wise and insightful response when asked... “If you were only able to hear for one hour each month, what would you want to hear?” ...He said, “The sound of children laughing.”
- Riding in the back of a pickup truck up into the mountains with Matt, Hernado, Ferdinnan, Edwardo, eight other Q'eqchi' Indians and the water filtration units.
- The speeches by the two Q'eqchi' Indian women thanking the people of the Church of St. Patrick and us for enabling them to have clean drinkable water in their homes, especially for their children.
- Watching the expressions of delight on the faces of the Indian village children upon seeing their face on camera for the first time with their large brown eyes and broad smiles.
- Fr. Carlos' Q'eqchi' Indian Mass with the choir accompanied by three marimbas blasting out *When the Saints Go Marching In* as the communion wine and hosts were processed up to the altar.
- Brother Paul Friedman, OSB, our spiritual leader and guide who so enriched our experience with his continued and detailed explanations of Cobán, the monastery and the Q'eqchi' Indians. He brought our pilgrimage to a level we could never have conceived of without him.
- Sharing a meal of chicken parts in a soup, with rice and tortillas, proudly served in our honor by Q'eqchi' Indians in their metal roof, dirt floor, and one room home. A truly humbling experience.
- Meeting with the Archbishop of Cobán, Rololfo Valenzuela Nuñez in his office was a truly memorable experience. He discussed with us how our pilgrimage of delivering water filtration units to the Q'eqchi' Mountain Indians was actually living out his Easter message which was for people to

