



# The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

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*The mission of the American Monastic Newsletter is to be an instrument of communication and information for Benedictine monasteries of North America and members of the American Benedictine Academy.*

## *Update on Earthquakes in Italy*

At the time of the October issue of this newsletter, the area around the sacred Benedictine sites of Italy was still undergoing earthquakes. Since then, there have been serious seismic events and tragic damage. Early on the morning of Sunday, October 30, 2016, a 6.6 magnitude earthquake shook the already damaged basilica over the birthplace of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica in the city of Norcia, near the epicenter of the quake.

The church, built between 1290 and 1338, was devastated, leaving only the front facade. Miraculously, the large statue of St. Benedict in the piazza still stands, gesturing in blessing over the rubble and tragedy of his hometown. Most of the monks of the monastery there had already fled to another location after the August quake and none were injured.

The sisters, though eventually emerging safely, were trapped in the laundry area of their nearby monastery. Just after the October quake, the superior of the sisters in Assisi struggled to make contact with the several small monasteries in the area. She reported a few days later that several women's monasteries in the quake zone were damaged and some were uninhabitable. One of her reports appears inside on page 8.

There has been much attention to the basilica at Norcia and the monks there have had excellent access to media. They are trying to assist in aid for all the people of the town. Among the more creative efforts is capitalizing on the monks' brewery. Bottles of Birra Nursia which were in the quake are specially labeled, restaurant fundraisers in the U.S. feature the beer, and continued operation of the mostly undamaged brewery continue to offer a source of income.

Meanwhile, there are many other Benedictines in need. A fund has been set up by CIB, the worldwide organization of Benedictine women, to assist the sisters. In the USA, checks may be made out to "Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum" and mailed to Sister Linda Romey, OSB, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, 6101 E. Lake Road, Erie, Pennsylvania 16511-1599. There are also bank funds in the US and Europe to which funds may be transferred. Information can be obtained by contacting Sister Linda ([lromey@gmail.com](mailto:lromey@gmail.com)). All readers are encouraged to contribute and to inform community, oblates and others about the dire need for their support.

## President's Message

You just never know where St. Benedict will show up. On Valentine's Day this year he showed up in *The New York Times* in David Brooks op-ed article "Bonhoeffer, Benedict or Ford" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/14/opinion/how-should-one-resist-the-trump-administration.html>). Brooks looked to each as a model for responding to what could be considered the perceived threat of the Trump administration. He hypothesized that if one perceived the primary threat to be stagnation and corruption, for example, St. Benedict would be the appropriate model for resistance.

Although Brooks was not advocating people flee to monasteries, he did suggest that "if we are at a Benedict moment, the smart thing to do is to ignore the degradation in Washington and make your contribution at the state and local levels." He noted reports that Washington interns are thinking exactly along those lines rather than a career track that would keep them in the capital. I have observed a similar attitude of returning to basics among my university students as well.

The PBS program *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* recently featured a return to basics at New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, Cal. (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2017/01/27/new-camaldoli-hermitage/34280/>), now home to 24 monks and more than 700 oblates. Interviewed as part of the segment, Father Columba Stewart remarked that people are being drawn back to basics, going back to where it all began and finding a more disciplined life that is "helpful, sustaining, and nourishing."

It occurs to me that we might seize this moment and interest in things monastic to invite others to join us at the next ABA convention (July 19-22, 2018) at St. Benedict Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. The focus on "Artisans of the Monastery" should have broad appeal, as should the setting, where we will benefit from the resources of St. Benedict Monastery and St. John's Abbey.

Think now of people with a monastic impulse who might want to join the American Benedictine Academy. I am a member because Father Timothy Joyce of Glastonbury Abbey suggested it to me in 1990. Who are the next generation of scholars and members we should be inviting to join us?

Julia Upton, RSM  
uptonj@stjohns.edu



### ***The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER***

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*The American Monastic Newsletter* is published three times per year and it, as well as other ABA information, may be read online at:

***[www.americanbenedictine.org](http://www.americanbenedictine.org)***

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The ABA Biennial Convention in 2018

*Artisans of the Monastery*

July 19 - 22, 2018

Hosted by St. Benedict's Monastery

St. Joseph, Minn.

## CANON LAW COLUMN

### *Vultum Dei quaerere* apostolic constitution of Pope Francis published July 2016

“Seeking the face of God,” the title of the apostolic constitution issued last summer, is addressed to cloistered monasteries of women around the world. Not since before the Second Vatican Council has this form of life been legislatively addressed, so perhaps this apostolic constitution was needed. In 1950, Pope Pius XII published his Apostolic Constitution known as *Sponsa Christi*. Nevertheless, there have been at least two instructions regarding enclosure of nuns since 1950: *Venite seorsum* in 1969 and *Verbi sponsa* in 1999.) We are currently awaiting an Instruction from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (referred to hereafter as CICALSAL). It is expected that in its instruction, CICALSAL will add further details which, ordinarily, are not found in the more general nature of an apostolic constitution. In fact, Pope Francis, in *Vultum Dei quaerere*, (referred to hereafter as VDQ), referred to additional areas of concern which he expects CICALSAL to address further in its instruction.

In announcing the new apostolic constitution on July 22, 2016, the feast of Mary Magdalene, Archbishop Carballo, Secretary of CICALSAL, stated that religious formation is a foremost concern of VDQ. Also, regarding prayer of contemplative women, in a quintessentially Pope Francis way, the press release indicated Carballo’s impression of VDQ. With reference to the ample space that the document dedicates to prayer, he indicated the pope’s important clarification that prayer and contemplative life cannot be lived as a form of self-absorption, but must instead enlarge the heart to embrace all humanity, especially those who suffer. “If it is a profound desire in the heart of Pope Francis to have an outbound Church,” he affirmed, “this is also applicable to those who are called to live out their lives within the walls of the cloister.”

Perhaps this call to “enlarge the heart to embrace all humanity” is an echo of St. Benedict’s challenge in the Prologue that, “as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing (referred to in previous translations as “enlarged hearts”) with the

inexpressible delight of love.” If we run on the path of God’s commandments, most assuredly we must embrace all of God’s children.

Prior to the publication of VDQ, CICALSAL, in anticipation of the new legislation, sent a questionnaire to all enclosed women’s monasteries around the world in an effort to gather input from women who actually live the cloistered life. However, many monasteries reported that they failed to receive the questionnaire. In discussing this questionnaire with enclosed women monastics, it has become clear to me that there is some concern regarding the focus on the adequacy of initial formation programs, a concern which CICALSAL said was due to the number of women who leave monastic life within a short time of their perpetual monastic profession.

This questionnaire were discussed by Benedictine women gathered in Rome in September 2014 for the quadrennial symposium sponsored by Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB). After this discussion, a small group of the women went to CICALSAL to share some of their concerns about the tenor of the questionnaire. Now that VDQ has been issued, it too was reviewed and discussed at some length by the Benedictine women delegates of the CIB conference at their meeting in Assisi in September 2016. One of their observations was that of the happy inclusion of several references in VDQ to the Rule of Benedict.

After their discussion of VDQ, some of the CIB women went to CICALSAL to address their concerns and hopes regarding the document and the forthcoming Instruction from CICALSAL. One of their requests to CICALSAL was that some women monastics who live in enclosure be consulted about the upcoming document and that the instruction be issued in draft form before its final publication. This would allow those living the life to give feedback after following and living with the directives of the draft Instruction.

Since the publication of VDQ, the only public comment about the forthcoming instruction came from the cardinal prefect of CICALSAL in the form of a letter to superiors of women’s enclosed monasteries on November 1, 2016. This letter concerned only the matter of enclosure itself and was apparently in response to a number of inquiries from cloistered women monastics about the possible changes to the type of cloister presently observed.

In VDO, which outlined the four types of cloister (common, papal, constitutional and monastic enclosure) as referred to in canon 667, the Holy Father stated that each monastery should discern which type of cloister best suits the monastery's tradition and spirit. If desired, the monastery could then petition Rome to change the type of cloister currently called for in present monastic constitutions. The letter from the cardinal prefect stated that until the instruction is published, monasteries are bound to observe the cloister as set forth in their constitutions until potential changes may be permitted.

After voicing esteem, praise and thanksgiving for the cloistered monastic life of women, the most prominent topics addressed by VDO are formation, enclosure, autonomy and federations. Regarding *formation*, the Holy Father suggested the possibility of a longer period of initial formation as well as encouraging enclosed women to look beyond the monastery walls for potentially rich formation experiences, such as those which may be available through digital means or by formators attending classes/courses.

With *enclosure*, as mentioned above, there was discussion of the types of enclosure currently observed in women's cloistered monasteries, including papal enclosure, constitutional enclosure and monastic enclosure. It was also noted that the instruction from CICLSAL would provide norms regarding the various types of enclosure and give monasteries the opportunity to petition to live a different type of enclosure, if they deem it best for their monastic life.

The topics of *autonomy* of a monastery and the requirement of monasteries to become members of a federation are clearly a reflection of the concern for small, aging monasteries around the world. The Holy Father wishes that juridically autonomous monasteries be truly autonomous. He then lists a number of factors such as that there be a number of sisters not "over aged," with a capacity for formation and guidance and a vitality to live and spread the charism. Every monastery is now required to be part of a *federation* unless given special permission by CICLSAL for compelling reasons.

It is expected that in its instruction CICLSAL will provide norms for the establishment of these

federations. This will be a large undertaking as many small autonomous monasteries, particularly in Europe, are not part of federations or monastic congregations. The hope is that being part of a larger federation will give new resources to small monasteries through an interchange with other member monasteries of the federation to which monasteries are to belong. In this way there will no longer be monasteries in isolation.

In the end, we can hope that CICLSAL will consider each monastery on a case by case basis with its own unique strengths and needs rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Also, we hope that the encouragement of the Holy Father to women's enclosed monasteries, and which is expressed in VDO, will be a source of strength and hope for the sisters who have chosen to faithfully live the life they feel called to live.

*If you have a question or idea for a future column, feel free to contact Sister Lynn.*

Lynn McKenzie, OSB, JCL  
Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, Ala.  
lynnmckenzieosb@gmail.com

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## CD RECORDINGS OF PRESENTATIONS

There are recordings available of each of the 2016 convention presentations at a cost of \$5 per CD.

Kerry Egan - Reflections from a Hospice Chaplain

Chris Kean, OSB - Death: We Know Not the Day nor the Hour

Kathleen Norris & Judith Valente - Poetry Reading: What the Living Do

Terrence Kardong, OSB - Writing Obituaries

Panel - The Paschal Mystery in the Life and Death of Monasteries

Order forms are downloadable on the website.

Please make check to "S. Judith Sutera" and send to:

Sister Judith Sutera  
801 South 8th  
Atchison, KS 66002



## COMING EVENTS

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### ***Jesus: The Image of God's Mercy***

*Anselm Gruen, OSB*

*St. Benedict Center - Schuyler, Neb.*

*April 22*

Father Anselm, of the Abbey of Muensterschwarzach, Germany, is one of the most frequently read spiritual authors of our time. Widely respected for his ability to present classic Christian spirituality in a modern context, his one-day retreat will be an encounter with Jesus, “the face of the Father’s mercy” (Pope Francis).

St. Benedict Center, P.O. Box 528, Schuyler, NE 68661, [retreats@stbenedictcenter.com](mailto:retreats@stbenedictcenter.com)

[www.stbenedictcenter.com](http://www.stbenedictcenter.com)

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### ***Following Saint Benedict at the Time of Pentecost***

*Collegio Sant’Anselmo - Rome, Italy*

*May 22 – June 17*

The program, conducted in English, will be open to Benedictine and Cistercian monks and nuns from all over the world. Participants will be living at Sant’Anselmo, which shelters a warm and vibrant community of monks from 40 countries. The period of one month will afford plenty of time for leisure, spent either by enjoying the cloister and its neighborhood or by joining a tour of Rome, arranged daily by a member of Sant’Anselmo.

<http://www.anselmianum.com>

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### ***International Juniorate Congress***

*Collegio Sant’Anselmo – Rome, Italy*

*June 22 – July 6*

The international congress for juniors will offer a unique formative experience for those men new to the monastic way of life. It is open also to all those responsible for monastic formation in their monasteries. Consequently, there will be no junior conference in the USA this summer. Brother John Mark Falkenhain, OSB is the major presenter. Participants will gain perspectives on monastic vows, learn about the life of Saint Benedict, and become more aware of Benedictine life in various parts of the world. This program will be in English, and translation will be provided as needed.

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### ***Monastic Worship Forum***

*Subiaco Abbey - Subiaco, Ark.*

*July 17-21*

Father Michael Joncas, the main speaker for this gathering of monastic liturgists and musicians, will present on the topic of the liturgical year. There will also be opportunity to hear from Fr. Joncas regarding his new selections of hymns and psalms. Breakout sessions will focus on sharing of music, rituals, and environment ideas for Benedictine feasts, initiation rites, and installation of leadership. A table will be available for sharing of resources on the liturgical year.

[www.monasticworshipforum.org](http://www.monasticworshipforum.org)

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### ***National Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors Convention***

*St. Scholastica Monastery - Duluth, Minn.*

*July 14-19*

Oblate directors and assistant/associate directors of oblates are encouraged to attend along with two oblates from each monastery. If a director is unable to attend, one or two designated oblates may still attend as representatives. This year’s theme is “Benedictine Values & Practices: Tools for Living, Tools for Life.” Speakers will be Sisters Theresa Schumacher, OSB and Mary Reuter, OSB (St. Benedict’s – Saint Joseph, Minn.) and Father Rene McGraw, OSB (Saint John’s – Collegeville, Minn.)

[www.naabod.org](http://www.naabod.org)

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### ***Monasticism in the 21st Century:***

***A View from the Trenches***

*Michael Casey, OCSO*

*Benedict Inn - Beech Grove, Ind.*

*June 30-July 1*

This series of lectures by the renowned Australian monk will look at the nature of tradition, formulating some rules for interpretation of the Rule and other texts within the tradition, and how this sixth-century text can be used as a means of renewal in the different circumstances in which it is lived. He will look more closely at the situation of the monastic world today

and ask by what means this tradition can serve as a guide to a more creative future.

Call 317.788.7581 or email [benedictinn@benedictinn.org](mailto:benedictinn@benedictinn.org)

[benedictinn.org](http://benedictinn.org)

[www.benedictinn.org](http://www.benedictinn.org)

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***Monastic Oblate Institute***

*Sophia Center - Atchison, Ks.*

*July 20-23*

The speaker for this year's institute will be Father Meinrad Miller, OSB (St. Benedict's Abbey - Atchison, Ks.). Oblate director and spiritual resource person for St. Teresa of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity, he will speak on "Steps to Good Living." Registration has been sent to all oblate directors, and is limited to the first 50 oblates.

Sophia Center, 751 So. 8th St., Atchison, KS 66002, [maryliz@mountosb.org](mailto:maryliz@mountosb.org)

[www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org)

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***Fourth International Oblate Congress***

*Il Salesianum - Rome, Italy*

*November 4-10*

Benedictine oblates from all over the world, whose participation is endorsed by their director, will gather to discuss, share, celebrate, pray and work together, exploring the theme "A Way Forward - The Benedictine Community in Movement." The keynote speaker will be Sister Joan Chittister, OSB (Mount St. Benedict - Erie, Pa.). A special workshop for accompanying oblate directors will be arranged. The official congress language is English, with plenum lectures translated into several other languages. Each country or region has been assigned its own quota of voting delegates. Once this quota has been filled, additional participants are welcome as non-voting representatives.

[http://www.anselmianum.com/programmi/2017/congressus\\_oblati/english/welcome.php](http://www.anselmianum.com/programmi/2017/congressus_oblati/english/welcome.php)

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***32nd Annual Monastic Institute***

*Saint John's School of Theology - Collegeville, Minn.*

*July 2-6*

The theme of this year's institute is "Unpacking Laudato Si': The Monastic Response to Caring for Our Common Home." Participants will take a deeper look at Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. In the world we live in today, we know that caring for creation is of utmost importance, as the pope lays out for us in this lengthy encyclical. How and why was this document written? How does the decline of the environment affect the poor? What implications does it bear for monastic communities? We will explore these questions, and many more, with speakers Msgr. Kevin Irwin, Sister Michelle L'Allier, OSF, Sister Anne McCarthy, OSB, Dr. Bernie Evans, and Abbot John Klassen, OSB.

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## NOTICES

Cistercian Studies Quarterly has recently made changes to their subscription management department. All subscribers are asked to renew their subscriptions in one of the following ways: call 1-844-363-3297 (toll-free); email [CistercianStudies@CDSFulfillment.com](mailto:CistercianStudies@CDSFulfillment.com), including name, full address, and the account number located above name on the address label, or visit website: <http://www.cistercian-studies-quarterly.org>. If new to the site, use the account number above name on the address label to sign in. If you prefer to contact us by mail: Cistercian Studies Quarterly, PO Box 37773, Boone, IA 50037-0773. Please note that prices have increased for 2017. All payments are to be made in USD. For U.S. and Canada: 1 year: \$35; 2 years: \$68  
Foreign: \$45.00 / \$88.00

Thank you and God bless you,  
Fr. Jerome Machar  
Administrator, Cistercian Studies Quarterly

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Please update your contact information to note that Sister Susan Hooks has replaced Sister Elizabeth Carrillo as executive secretary of ABA. All dues and other ABA business should be sent to Sister Susan at:

Susan Hooks, OSB  
P.O. Box 577  
Nashville, Ind. 47448  
Email: [susanh@thedome.org](mailto:susanh@thedome.org)



Recent monastic elections include:

Abbot Augustine Myslinski, OCSO – Holy Spirit Abbey, Conyers, Ga.

Abbot Aidan Gore, OSB Oliv. – Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey, Pecos, N.M.

Abbot Joseph Wittstock, OCSO - Holy Cross Abbey, Berryville, Va.

Abbot Benedict Neenan, OSB – Conception Abbey, Conception, Mo.

Prioress Susan Rudolph - St. Benedict’s Monastery, Saint Joseph, Minn.

Sister Mary Bratrsovsky was re-elected to continue her leadership at Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, Ill.

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Abbot President Emeritus Patrick Reagan OSB, 79, of St. Joseph Abbey, Louisiana, and the Swiss-American Congregation, died February 8, 2017. After study at Institut Liturgique, Paris, Abbot Patrick taught at Sant’Anselmo, Rome. He was elected abbot in 1982 and he served until 2001. His work appeared regularly in the liturgical journals *Ecclesia Orans*, *Worship*, and elsewhere.

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IN THE MEDIA

A Feb. 23 article on *Atlantic* magazine’s website describes in words and photos the work being done by the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and Father Columba Stewart to preserve manuscripts in the Middle East. The story may be viewed at [www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/the-monk-who-saves-manuscripts-from-isis/517611/](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/the-monk-who-saves-manuscripts-from-isis/517611/).

The online U.S. edition of *The Guardian*, a prominent British newspaper, reported, Feb. 21, on the plight of Big Sur area residents suffering from the wet weather, and gave attention to the Camaldolese monks who have been isolated by mudslides there. The story is at [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/21/california-storms-big-sur-rain-flood?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/21/california-storms-big-sur-rain-flood?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

Sister Linda Romey, OSB (Mount St. Benedict - Erie, Pa.) wrote an article on the future of

religious life which was published online January 12 in the “Global Sisters Report,” a project of *National Catholic Reporter*. It may be read at <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/take-action-welcome-emerging-future-religious-life-44336>.

See also two other recent news stories cited in the president’s letter on page 2 of this issue.

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The Camaldolese congregation has received the members of the Monastery of the Risen Christ, San Luis Obispo, Cal., as members. Monastery of the Risen Christ had been part of the Olivetan Congregation for a number of years. When the Olivetans decided that the monastery should be closed, the monks officially requested that New Camaldoli Hermitage accept them.

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The Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses held their annual meeting at the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, Ariz., from January 30 - February 4, with the theme “Bless the Work of our Hands.” In addition to their business meeting, they heard a series of joint presentations by Sister Irene Nowell, OSB (Mount St. Scholastica - Atchison, Ks.) and Abbot John Klassen (Saint John’s Abbey - Collegeville, Minn.) on expression of Benedictine values in the monastery. The prioresses also issued a statement on racism which appears on page 10.

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Abbot Primate Gregory Polan has appointed Father Benedict Nivakoff, OSB, to succeed Prior Dom Cassian Folsom OSB, founder of the Monastery of St. Benedict (Norcia, Italy), the birthplace of Saints Benedict and Scholastica. Father Cassian explained, “The earthquakes of the past several months have presented us with incredible challenges, which require vigorous, creative leadership. While I am in good health at the moment, I do not have the strength or energy necessary to meet these challenges.” Dom Cassian had been the founding superior for 18 years. Prior Benedict had been serving as novice master.

## Earthquake Report from Assisi (Nov. 16, 2016)

*The following email was sent to Sister Judith Ann Heble to be conveyed to the Benedictine sisters in the U.S.*

Dear Sister Judith Ann,

Here is my report:

1. Monastero S. Antonio Abate – Norcia (Monache) The nuns of Norcia were taken by the Civil Protection and Firemen from their laundry room where they were trapped after the bell tower of their church collapsed and fell on the altar of their church and turned their church and monastery into rubble. That was the only safe place for them to stay. They are all staying at the Monastero of S. Lucia-Trevi together with the Poor Clare nuns. . . .

2. Monastero S. Margherita – Fabriano - I talked to Sister Emmanuella . . . . They already have taken action for repair on some parts of their monastery which were very risky.

3. Monastero S. Lorenzo - Amandola - The whole monastery is unfit. They transferred nearby to a structure owned by them.

4. Monastero S. Onofrio – Ascoli Piceno - increasing cracks and lesions. They are still in their monastery.

5. Monastero S. Caterina – Monte S. Martino - before they were staying in the laundry room but now they transferred to their guesthouse because their monastery is unfit to stay.

6. Monastero S. Marco – Offida - They have some damages but I don't exactly know how big or small it is. So far they are still staying in their monastery.

7. Monastero S. Giacomo – San Ginasio - the whole community evacuated after the October 30 earthquake. The whole monastery is unfit. That night they slept in a hostel together with other evacuees, around 200 people. Since then, I invited them to come to our monastery. . . . They are 7 nuns: Sr. Maria Pia-95 years old in a wheel chair, Sr. Giovanna 94, Sr. Scolastica 87 yrs. old with sight problems, Sr. Fortunata 82, Sr. Bernarda 75, Sr. Maria Concetta 48 and the abbess Madre Cristina 82. They were so happy and thankful to us when they arrived at our invitation. They were brought by their civil protection squad November 1, 2016 - Solemnity of All Saints. That's why I told them that all the saints brought them to us. My community was really very happy in

welcoming them. They really feel at home with us since day 1. . . . They were all surrounded by each of my nuns' affection and love. . . .

8. Monastero S. Maria delle Rose – S. Angelo in Pontano - . . . They are now staying in Volturmo near Cassino. . . . Perhaps they have no plans to come back since their structure in S. Angelo was turned into a monastery but originally they were 3 houses put together and adapted into a monastery. Since their community is big, the structure is very small for them. The Abbot of Cassino invited them there.

These are the situations of the 8 monasteries which were affected by the August 24th earthquake. After October 26 (2 bigger quakes) and the worst one last October 30th, I tried to contact other monasteries:

1. Cingoli (Macerata) - They are still in their monastery. Their monastery has some cracks and lesions.

2. Fermo (Ascoli Piceno) - They are all fine intact, the nuns in San Giusto stayed with them because their monastery is now unfit for them to stay.

3. S. Vittoria - the nuns transferred to their guesthouse and were advised to stay in the lower part because the inner part is very dangerous and risky.

4. Potenza - they are all fine, only some cracks.

In Assisi - just this morning - firemen and civil protection with the engineer of our municipality came and checked our bell tower (due to my request) and they found out that our bell tower is very dangerous. There is a possibility to collapse if there is another earthquake like the one October 30 of 6.5. Also the ceiling of our altar bread room was declared unfit to stay. We are not allowed to work to make hosts unless we repair the damage which has the possibility to collapse. Our viewpoint is that our novitiate is at risk. Under this area is where we pass going down from our dormitory to the ground floor. I was so sorry upon hearing these statements. I hope and pray that they will act at once especially on the bell tower of our church. Please pray for us especially for the tremors to stop.

Pax et bonum!

M. Mariangela



## Monastic Essay Contest

### *The Essay*

The word “essay” is derived from the French verb *essayer*, meaning to try, probe, test. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, essays give a sense of probing and concrete evidence of the thinking that has gone into a piece of writing. Essays are a genre that attracts and delights as well as informs; they maintain a balance between the objective and the subjective, certainty and ambiguity; they provide coherent and illustrative content leading to something that is worth thinking about.

On the basis of this definition, we encourage new monastics and new oblates to submit essays of 3,000-3,200 words dealing with a Benedictine topic (see below) on an abstract level, i.e. using some published sources, and a concrete level showing the writer’s personal engagement. An essay is not a research paper, but rather a more personal statement about some aspect of the RB/Benedictine life showing the writer’s personal process of thinking and feeling that led to his/her conclusion.

We suggest that you choose a topic along these lines:

- ◆ How have you used RB in a concrete way in your daily life?
- ◆ How is RB 7 relevant in issues today?
- ◆ Is contemplation possible in the age of Snapchat, Twitter, etc.?

### *Requirements for Participation*

Be a new monastic/oblate up to ten years after first profession or oblation

Submit an essay of 3,000 - 3,200 words as a double-spaced and computer-generated Word document

Deadline : March 31, 2018, i.e. the year of next ABA convention

Send to: Sister Marianne Burkhard OSB at [srmarianne@cdop.org](mailto:srmarianne@cdop.org)

Winners will be notified by May 10, 2018

### *Prizes*

Winner will receive a 2-year membership in ABA with waiver of registration and housing fees for the 2018 convention and a book of interest to monastics/oblates

Second place essay will receive a book

The winner will receive help in publishing the best essay, and all entrants will have the possibility of mentoring by ABA members to help them further develop their thoughts/writing.

## STATEMENT ON RACISM

In the spirit of the centuries-old Rule of Benedict which urges us to listen with the ear of the heart and to respect the gifts of each person as unique individuals, we, the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, recognize the injustices caused by racism in our society. Our communities have made many efforts to address this injustice as a social sin in which we take part. We recognize that our society, culture, and country are at a time when many implications and effects of racism are emerging on every side. The conversion called for is pervasive. In solidarity with other religious/faith leaders, we recognize that racial injustice is social sin –

To speak of social sin means in the first place to recognize that, by virtue of a human solidarity which is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual's (and corporate) sin in some way affects others. "... Every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family." *Pope John Paul II, December 2, 1984.*

Therefore, at this time in our history, we join with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and with all people of faith to commit ourselves to:

- Examine the root causes of injustice, particularly of racism, as a consequence of unacknowledged white privilege, and our own complicity over the years in this societal reality;
- Work to effect systemic change that will promote a society that respects all people and that recognizes the equality, human dignity and human rights of all.

We commit ourselves to use our collective voice, resources, and power in collaboration with others to establish racial justice which reflects God's abundant love and mercy.

We recognize the value of:

- Racial solidarity training;
- Creating safe spaces for truth and reconciliation processes;
- Training in nonviolent conflict transformation;
- Programs training unarmed civilian peace makers in our regions;
- Ongoing de-escalation training for police;
- Dialogue with people of color and varied origins.

We pledge:

- Our prayer;
- Educational efforts;
- Advocacy

Adopted by the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses  
February 4, 2017

## MONASTIC STUDIES GRANTS

All ABA members are invited to apply for Monastic Studies Grants, which provide funds to support projects that foster the mission of the ABA, “to cultivate, support and transmit the Benedictine heritage within contemporary culture.”

Grant support may be used for research, travel, or other modes of exploring and promoting the Benedictine heritage. It may also be used for travel expenses and registration fees for the purpose of presenting a scholarly paper on a monastic topic related to the Benedictine heritage at a scholarly convention. A total of \$1150 is available to fund these annual grants.

Applicants must be members of the ABA. Applications will be selected on the basis of: quality of the proposal (originality, feasibility, clarity of purpose), potential benefit for monastics, and relevance to the purposes of the Academy. Recipients must be willing to submit a report on the use of the grant and/or a brief summary of the topic of the scholarly paper to the ABA board within a year from the completion of the project/presentation for which the grant was given.

Recipients will be chosen by the ABA Awards Committee and approved by the ABA Board of directors at their meeting and awards will be announced immediately thereafter.

To apply for a grant please supply the following information:

Name, address, phone number, e-mail address

Religious or academic affiliation (if any)

A brief description of the proposed project

The goal(s) of the proposed project

An itemized budget which includes:

Total cost of project

Sources of funding other than the ABA

Sum requested from the ABA

Send completed grant applications to:

Greg Peters

THI, Biola University

13800 Biola Avenue

La Mirada, CA 90639

or submitted by email as a Word document to

greg.peters@biola.edu

## SOME BRIEF BOOK NOTICES

*The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life* by Georg Holzherr, newly translated from the 2005 edition by Mark Thamert (Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., 2016). ISBN 978-0-87907-256-8, \$59.95.

The completely revised seventh edition of this monastic classic provides a wealth of resources and insight of benefit to both the beginner and the serious scholar of the Rule of St. Benedict. It is worth investing in this version for its significant upgrades. It uses the latest translations of historical texts, applies contemporary research methods, updates the bibliography, and has an expanded commentary. It also makes some effort to include historical references to monastic life and rules for women.

At 596 pages, with index, chronology chart and the full Latin text of the Rule, the book is a must-have for a personal or communal monastic library.

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*A Listening Community* by Aquinata Böckmann, translated by Matilda Handl and Marianne Burkhard (Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., 2015). ISBN 978-0-8146-6922-0, \$24.95.

Another German scholar of the Rule, Sister Aquinata has devoted an entire book to her commentary on the prologue and first 3 chapters. The book is typical of her extensive analysis of the structure and phrasing, bringing to light new ways of looking at the text. She, too, provides many resources in the way of bibliographic material and referencing of early sources.

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*Thomas Merton and the Noonday Demon: The Camaldoli Correspondence* by Donald Grayston (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2015) ISBN 978-0-7188-9416-0, \$45.

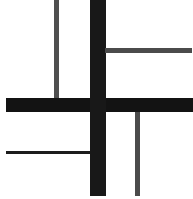
Struggling with his vocation and his desire for the hermit life, Merton spent some time in Camaldoli, Italy, and the text of many of his letters remained in that monastery until this book brought them together, providing a trove of new material for Merton devotees and researchers.

**DON'T FORGET: ABA MEMBERSHIP IS CONCURRENT WITH THE CALENDAR YEAR**

All memberships, regardless of what time of year they were paid,  
are due for renewal on the first of January.

Please renew as soon as possible and encourage others to become members.

**Be sure to note the contact information and mailing address for the new executive secretary.**



**The American Benedictine Academy**

*www.americanbenedictine.org*

**Membership Application**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY \_\_\_\_\_

(or) OBLATE AFFILIATION \_\_\_\_\_

(or) ACADEMIC/OTHER AFFILIATION \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any areas of interest/expertise you wish to share with the Academy?

Please check if you wish to participate in one or more of the ABA sections:

Monastic Research \_\_\_ Visual Arts \_\_\_ Archives \_\_\_ Library \_\_\_ Visual Arts \_\_\_

Enclosed: \$35 for one year membership \_\_\_ \$50 for two years \_\_\_\_\_

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