



The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

Published under the auspices of the American Benedictine Academy

www.americanbenedictine.org

Volume 47, Number 3

October 2016

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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.

American Elected Abbot Primate

At the international gathering of the Congress of Abbots in Rome on September 10, Abbot Gregory Polan, OSB, was chosen to be abbot primate. Abbot Gregory, a monk of Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo., has been abbot of his community since 1996. He will replace Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, who has held the position since 2000. A farewell message from the outgoing abbot primate appears on page 8. More about the new abbot primate will appear in the next issue.

The Realities of Monastery Closings

At the 2016 ABA convention, one of the sessions was entitled "The Paschal Mystery in the Life and Death of Monasteries." In it, four panelists spoke frankly about their experience with the recent closing of monasteries. Father Denis Quinkert was abbot of Blue Cloud Abbey when it closed; Sister Ruth Feeney was a member of St. Bede's Monastery in Eau Claire, Wisc. The final two panelists offered two perspectives on the closing of Red Plains Monastery in Piedmont, Okla., Sister Melissa Letts as a member of the community and Jenny Fenner as an oblate. The panel demonstrated that there are as many different experiences of closing as there are monasteries. It also highlighted some of the common elements, such as the discernment about viability, the practical concerns, and the need for both pastoral concern for individuals and group rituals. In the discussion that followed, many members of the audience shared experiences from their own communities and the great concern that exists throughout the monastic world regarding the number of monasteries that are, or will be, facing such transitions in the next decades.

Elsewhere in this issue, Father Roman Paur reports on the closing of Saint John's Abbey's Japanese foundation. With the report, Father Roman included a very insightful and comprehensive analysis of factors in the closing of a monastery. It is being included here in order to give readers a small taste of what must happen and the complexities. His description of the realities of closing a monastery begins on page 5.

(continued on page 5)

President's Message

Although it might seem strange to you that a Sister of Mercy is now president of the American Benedictine Academy, my association with the Benedictines goes back to 1978 when a priest friend (an oblate) suggested that I go to Mount Saviour to recover my equilibrium you might say. I did! It might not be much of an exaggeration to say that the Benedictines saved my life and continue to do so on a daily basis. Two years later I became an oblate of Mount Saviour.

Located in rural western New York State, Mount Saviour is about as remote from New York City life as one can get. The nearest town is at least six miles away in any direction. The thousands of acres, including an extensive hilltop farm, orchard and woodlands, are restorative for anyone who visits, but most healing for me was the chapel. It is an octagonal, central plan worship space with white-washed walls and an exquisite simplicity.

A few years later, before first profession as a Sister of Mercy I made retreat at St. Augustine Monastery in Nassau, Bahamas. That was a very different monastic experience and a very different worship space, but it had the same exquisite simplicity as Mount Saviour. Everything – vestments, chalices, plates, pitchers – all were beautiful, simply beautiful. I remarked about this to Fr. Elias Achatz one day and he more or less told me that it was the Benedictine way to reverence the “tools” of the monastery.

How unlike that reverence is – for the land, for people (especially guests) and for things (books, works

of art, music) – from the way the rest of the world handles them. At the 2018 convention we will pay particular attention to that reverence for tradition and Chapter 57 of the Rule, “Artisans of the Monastery.” Of course we are thinking about the visual arts, but not only the visual arts. Artisans of the monastery come in many shapes, sizes and styles. We are also thinking about the artist in all and the importance of activating our own creative energies as a reflection of God’s creative impulse. So, help us to think about that and develop an interesting program.

The convention will be held at St. Benedict’s Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn., from July 19 to 22, 2018. There we will have the treasures of both St. Ben’s and St. John’s to feast on, and we hope to have a special exhibit at the Haehn Museum of the exquisite vestments the St. Ben’s sisters so lovingly made once upon a time.

In addition, 2018 will be the 70th anniversary of the ABA and our archives are housed at St. Ben’s. Soon after I was elected I went digging around those archives, very carefully of course. There I enjoyed learning about the genesis of this organization beneath and beyond the chronology listed on our website.

As you probably know it was originally the National Benedictine Educational Organization, begun as what today we might call a faculty development organization – for monks who had doctoral degrees or their equivalent and taught in Benedictine colleges and seminaries. Its stated purpose was (and is!) “to serve as an agency to stimulate and promote the scholarly interests of its members and to cultivate and transmit the best of the traditions of Benedictine life and scholarship.” In 1965 the constitutions were revised to include women. Until its reorganization in the mid 1970s, though, members met in sections, originally a very broad range of sections: education-psychology; fine arts; language and literature; library science; natural science and mathematics; philosophy; sacred studies; and social sciences. An even broader range of interest groups developed later, but before 1972 there were no single conventions like this. Our organization has had a rich history and there might be an artistic way for us to explore that at the next convention too.

So there is a lot for us to consider as we look ahead to 2018. If you have ideas now or in the coming months for speakers or approaches to the topic please share them with me. I look forward to the collaboration.

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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

CANON LAW COLUMN

For this issue our regular columnist, Sister Lynn McKenzie, has invited our former longtime contributor, Father Dan Ward, to write a guest column.

Church Laws:

Dispenser of Mercy or Community of Mercy

During this year of mercy, Pope Francis reminds us that all persons, including himself, are in need of mercy, since we are all sinners. In the language of Christians, “sinner” is the word that describes our imperfect state as human beings. However, for me and perhaps for others, sinner indicates not so much the human condition, but rather the personal wrong that I commit. I am a sinner who is responsible for the wrong that I do. In many cases, this is true, but it is not the whole story. There is something fundamental to our human existence that is imperfect. Theologically this is referred to as original sin.

The concept of sinner and original sin does not always speak to contemporary people and especially those who are not of the Christian tradition. Therefore, I suggest that perhaps rather than “sin,” the word “broken” might better speak to people on all levels of faith and to those not of the Christian tradition. The use of these words is not something new. A number of years ago, I read an article by the French Cistercian abbot, Andre Louf, who wrote that all persons who come to a monastery to be monks are broken. The monastery is to be a community of healing brokenness. Thomas Merton wrote in *New Seeds of Contemplation*: “We are bodies of broken bones.” And in our time, attorney Bryan Stevenson in his book *Just Mercy* (p. 289) wrote: “We are all broken by something. We have all hurt someone and have been hurt. We all share the condition of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent.”

Whether “sinners” or “broken persons,” what is being conveyed is that we share a common humanity. Each one of us searches for comfort, meaning, and healing. We all share in this search. It is our common destiny. This, then, is the basis for the salvific message of Jesus Christ. It is the basis for why we all need not just a year of mercy, but a lifetime of mercy.

Pope Francis and Bryan Stevenson both begin their views of humanity with the solidarity of humankind as sinners/broken persons. In both cases, this solidarity determines how they approach law. In

the Church, this is important if we are to understand the teachings given by Pope Francis.

The title of this paper is “Dispenser of Mercy or Community of Mercy.” A dispenser of mercy is when the institution, in this case the Church, emphasizes that the purity of the institution is primary. The role of its representatives, that is the clergy, is to mediate the mercy of God to the members. This idea of the Church through the clergy dispensing mercy can be seen in the present prayers used in the new missal.

On the other hand, a community of mercy emphasizes that the members, who form a common bond of brokenness, minister to one another. The members of the community, the Church, heal one another on the journey of life. Healing is mutual among all members. This is primary. The Church, similar to the monastery as described by Andre Louf, is the community in which people heal one another.

I posit that Pope Francis understands the Church as a community of mercy and, therefore, Church law is to be based on, interpreted and applied within the context of a community of mutual mercy. But this has not always been the understanding within the Church and the function of Church law.

The first Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1917, had 2414 canons and it was posited that there would never be a need to add additional canons. 2414 canons reflected the perfect society of the Church. Since the Church was perfect, no changes would be necessary. There may be a need to add subsections to some canons over time to clarify the meaning of the canons in a new situation. Church law was designed to maintain the perfect society whose members were sinners. Because the Church was a perfect society as described in the Code, its role in the world was to be a dispenser of God’s mercy through its clergy. The clergy were to dispense God’s mercy. Thus, the sacrament of penance entailed judgment by the priest, the imposition of a penance to make compensation, and finally the granting of God’s mercy. The prayers at the Eucharist said by the priest were in the third person, that is, the priest praying for the people. Seldom did the prayers of the priest use the words “we” or “us.” The language of third person is again used in most of the prayers of the new translation of the *English Roman Missal*, especially in the opening prayers.

The Second Vatican Council changed this emphasis on the perfect society (See “Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church,”

Second Vatican Council). The Church was described as the “People of God,” a community of people. “Communio” described the relationships of the members of the People of God: a mutual relationship of equality among all the members. Canon law was to be interpreted not to protect the structures and doctrine but to facilitate the members of the People of God assisting one another on the journey toward the full reign of God.

In my own life, I learned what *communio* meant from an older brother of mine in the monastery. Sometime after ordination, he told me that unless I was able to give myself the same leeway with the law and the same understanding of my own failings that I extend to others, then my ministry would be patriarchal. I would think of myself as better and more perfect than the people among whom I was to minister. I would be a dispenser of God’s grace from my status of being much better than the rest of the members of the Church.

During the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, there emerged “revisionists” of the Second Vatican Council who began to move away from a community of mercy back to a dispenser of mercy. This became obvious when *communio* no longer meant a mutual relationship within the Church. Rather, it began to refer to a relationship with the hierarchical structures of the Church. No longer was *communio* among the members but rather the members maintaining *communio* with the bishops. It was no longer *communio* among the churches, but rather each church maintaining *communio* with the Church of Rome. *Communio* became one-way. The result was the re-emergence of an emphasis on obedience and the centralization of authority in the Roman Curia. Revisionists again emphasized the Church as the perfect society. The Church did not sin, only some of its members. Thus, the Church was something apart from its members. The Church, through its structures and clergy, dispensed mercy to the faithful members and disciplined those who did not conform to this notion of *communio* as obedience to the hierarchical structures.

With the advent of the papacy of Pope Francis, a change began to happen. The vision of the Second Vatican Council as the People of God in mutual communion again has come to the forefront. He has not changed doctrines, but has taught that doctrine and their applications in pastoral ministry must be

understood within the context of the solidarity of humanity as sinners and of the call to mutual mercy. This can be seen in many ways in canon law. The grounds for the granting of a dispensation from the obligations of priesthood have been broadened, so that the dispensation does not have to be based on the wretchedness of the priest’s life or his psychological problem, but rather on his present life circumstances. The changes to tribunal procedures for marriage annulments recognize that the procedures are to assist persons in their faith journey rather than merely rigidly uphold a doctrine. The recent papal teaching on family, based on the synods on the family, reflects the role of conscience and a person’s own understanding of God’s mercy and his/her present relationship.

We are all broken; we are all sinners. There is no perfect society and thus no perfect and even uniform way of applying the law. Pope Francis once cited this old canonical axiom “in dubio pro reo” that is “when in doubt the decision must favor the person.”

Under Pope Francis there have not been doctrinal changes nor a major re-writing of the *Code of Canon Law*. Rather what has changed is how the law is interpreted and applied. The starting point is that the Church is a community of mercy, which is composed of persons with a solidarity in our brokenness. We live life with the understanding that “*communio*” is our solidarity of mutuality in brokenness.

I conclude with quotes from Bryan Stevenson and Pope Francis. I think that these quotes lead all of us to the depth of what it means to be human and to be broken, to be the People of God and to be sinners, and to live in this solidarity. They can be reminders of how law should function when we understand ourselves as persons living in the solidarity of mutuality of brokenness.

“Each one of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” (Stevenson, 17)

“In fact, there is a strength, a power, even in understanding brokenness, because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy.” (Stevenson, 290)

“Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.” (*Misericordia Vultus*, par. 10, 11 April, 2015)

In December 2014, the monastic chapter of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., voted to close Trinity Benedictine Monastery in Fujimi, its dependent priory in Japan. The priory was established in Tokyo in 1947 and then moved to the small city of Fujimi in the Nagano Prefecture in 1999.

In 1931, monks from the abbey of Beuron came to Japan and founded the first Benedictine monastery in the country. Closed in 1940, two monks remained. Shortly after the war they traveled to the U. S. in search of a monastery willing to support a Benedictine presence in Japan. Saint John's responded, and a priory/parish was established in the Meguro ward of Tokyo. The work of the monks was primarily pastoral, serving a rapidly increasing post-war Catholic population of converts.

The community was always small. Although some Japanese did express an interest in monastic life, only two made solemn vows and persevered. In the mid-1990s, the community, with the encouragement of its motherhouse in Minnesota, decided to turn the parish over to the Tokyo archdiocese and to establish a freestanding monastery. It was hoped that a more contemplative form of monastic life would attract Japanese men. Land was purchased in Fujimi, a small city in the mountainous area about 200 km. west of Tokyo, and a Japanese architect was commissioned to design the monastic complex.

The community moved to Fujimi in 1999. Over the next 16 years, a good number of men expressed an interest in joining the community. Seven of them completed the novitiate and made simple vows. However, only one (from China) professed solemn vows. In November 2014 the five solemnly professed monks at the Fujimi community voted unanimously to petition the monastic chapter of Saint John's Abbey to close the monastery.

On August 11, Bishop Raphael Masahiro Umemura of the Yokohama Diocese, celebrated a closing liturgy at which about 120 friends of the monastery participated. Abbot John Klassen of Saint John's concelebrated and offered closing words of gratitude and farewell. The monastery will be purchased by the Fujimi Kogen Hospital.

Roman Paur, OSB
Prior of Holy Trinity

ON THE CLOSING OF A MONASTERY

Closing a monastery is a multi-faceted challenge for everyone involved . . . Some of the major issues that required our attention were:

1) *Whether or not to close:* Beginning in June 2014 the community had a series of discussions about its future and concluded that it could not survive. The reasons included the advanced age of several of the monks, the inability of the motherhouse to continue sending monks to Japan, the absence of a Japanese-speaking monk for longer term leadership and formation, and the unlikelihood of attracting vocations.

The initial challenge during these discussions was to recognize that hopeful dreams had to give way to historical facts and a realistic assessment of the future. Once there was consensus in this area, the rest of the process became smoother and less painful. Coming to such a consensus, however, took time and demanded that the viewpoint of each monk be expressed, heard, and respected.

Early on, it was recognized that others needed to be involved in making the decision to close. In our case, the members of an advisory board and the oblates of the monastery were informed and asked for their opinion. We had to find ways to respond to their expressions of regret and resistance as we explained the painful facts to them and the conclusion they pointed to.

2) *The impact of the decision on each monk:* The decision to close the monastery can have a traumatic impact on some members of the community. It is crucial that the feelings of individuals be respected in community discussions and in one-on-one conversations with the superior about planning for and deciding on the future of each member of the community.

3) *Developing a flexible timeline for specific decisions and actions:* In order to attend to all the details involved in closing a monastery and to reassure the community that progress is being made, it is important to draw up an agenda with a schedule for the completion of each task. Such tasks include - communicating with individuals (e.g., the local Ordinary, close friends and supporters of the monastery), the local community, and the general public about the decision to close and the timeline; - informing oblates, donors, and frequent guests monastery directly and through publications; - phasing down pastoral, and other ministries;

- having the property evaluated by appraisers;
- promoting the sale of the property to other religious institutions and, if necessary, to the public at large; meeting legal requirements of public notice of sale, property liens, and mortgages;
- confirming that property lines are accurate;
- itemizing valuable objects such as books, furniture, art and artifacts, and determining how they are to be disposed of.

Inevitably, important but unanticipated issues will arise and will have to be attended to.

4) *Documenting decisions, authorizations, records:*

There will very likely be legal requirements (civil and canonical) to furnish appropriate documentation of such actions as:

- resolving to close the monastery and dissolve the tax-exempt corporation;
- authorizing the local superior to initiate the closing process and to alienate property;
- selling or distributing moveable goods;
- clearing all legal claims (liens) on the property;
- deconsecrating the church;
- informing civil authorities and recording transactions as appropriate, etc.

5) *Disposing of moveable properties:* This is not a simple task and can be quite tedious and even painful. Moveable properties include such items as books, furniture, art and artifacts, vestments, liturgical vessels, worship aids, etc.

It will also be necessary to review documents of all kinds to determine which should be preserved in the archives. Financial and insurance records should be catalogued and made easily accessible. Architectural, engineering, and construction drawings, mechanical operations, warranties, and the like, should also be preserved for future owners of the property.

6) *Preparing and disposing of real estate:* There are especially important decisions to be made about the property and the buildings. Are there specific maintenance requirements? Do electrical or heating and cooling systems need to be upgraded? Are the buildings in need of a thorough cleaning? Is there work to be done on the grounds? Should the future use of the monastic land and buildings be restricted to religious purposes - Catholic, Christian, other - or can they be sold to the highest bidder without consideration for their future use? Can the property be donated to support a specific cause or purpose? Who benefits from the sale of the property? How should the money from the sale be used? How is the

disposal of the real estate managed and by whom? Who is responsible for making these decisions?

7) *Community meetings:* The importance of regular meetings of the community for updates and clarification cannot be overemphasized. Such meetings are necessary to communicate information and to involve the community in continuing decision making, as well as to minimize rumors, discouragement, and alienation. It is also important that individual monks have regular discussions with their superiors regarding plans for their future.

8) *Finale:* Monasteries have a special place in the hearts of many. For that reason, carefully planned farewell liturgies and other events are important to honor the blessings the monastic community has received from and given to the individuals and communities who have been associated with it throughout its history. Such celebrations can also help promote acceptance and closure.

9) *Learning:* Closing a monastery is likely an entirely new and challenging experience for all the monks. There may well be a sense of urgency to get the task done and over with as soon as the decision to close has been made. However, it is especially important to provide the time needed for everyone in the community to work through the range of emotions that accompanies the closing of a monastery, and also to allow for and encourage input from such constituents as advisory councils, oblates, parishioners (if a parish or parishes are involved), donors, and neighbors. These people can provide important and helpful information for considering other options or for preparing themselves and the public for the decision to close.

Being alert to canonical and civil requirements including, for example, a property alienation tax to be paid to the Vatican, can forestall legal obstacles that might otherwise complicate the process of closing.

Finally, the role of the superior is a demanding one. He must be patient but persistent, flexible but firm, capable of absorbing frustration without becoming resentful, willing to allow sufficient time for discussion and decision making, considerate of confreres with other ideas, capable of organizing and implementing the sequence of required actions, focused on the goal, and effective in communicating clearly, in detail, and in a timely fashion the actions that have been taken and those that still await implementation.



Earthquakes Again Rock Norcia

The thoughts and prayers of all have been with the monks and nuns of Norcia, birthplace of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, since the devastating Aug. 24 earthquake. Damage to the church and monasteries has been substantial.

On the night of Oct. 26, more quakes began, with the epicenter being very near Norcia. An Oct. 27 posting by one of the monks describes the situation as follows: “The Basilica fared the worst. Entire walls of decorative plaster crashed to the floor and the dome has begun to cave in. The roof collapsed in two places, leaving the ancient Basilica exposed to all the elements. Most dramatically, perhaps, the Celtic Cross which adorned the 13th century facade came crashing down. . . . The 50% of the monastery which had been considered ‘habitable’ after the August quakes has now been damaged far beyond what one might call safe livable conditions. At 10:30 PM last night, 5 of the town monks escaped to San Benedetto in Monte to join the 8 of us already here, where, after a common sip of Birra Nursia Extra, we camped out for a night of turbulence. After a few scant moments of sleep, we rose at 3:30 for Matins and started to accept once more that our life is not our own and God had altered our path once again, solidifying it here on the mountain top. Sadly, for the foreseeable future, this means it will no longer be possible for us to offer Mass in the crypt of the Basilica for the public.”

Conditions at the sisters’ monastery within the city are not known at the time of this printing but the ancient church of St. Scholastica below the city was already in very poor condition before the quakes. According to Sister Lynn McKenzie, president of the Federation of St. Scholastica, “. . . based on engineer’s evaluation, it would cost approximately 220,000 Euros to repair the church . . . before the August earthquake.”

Fundraising efforts had already begun around the world. The monks of Norcia have a website with regular updates and ways to help at <en.nursia.org>.

Abbot Primate Gregory Polan OSB has appointed Father Mauritius Wilde OSB, prior of Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, Neb., to be prior at Sant’Anselmo. With this appointment, Father Joel Macul, OSB, former abbot of St. Paul’s Abbey in Newton, N.J., has become the new prior of the Schuyler Otilien community.

Other recent changes in monastic leadership include the following:

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak OSB - St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Ind.

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

Re-elected to continue in service:

Prioress Eileen Schepers, OSB - Dwelling Place Monastery, Martin, Ky.

The general chapter of the American Cassinese Congregation was held June 19 to June 24 at Belmont Abbey, N.C. The delegates to the chapter elected Prior Elias Lorenzo OSB, monk of Saint Mary’s Abbey, Morristown, N.J. as their new abbot president. For the past seven years Abbot President Elias was prior at Collegio Sant’Anselmo, Rome. He succeeds Abbot Hugh Anderson OSB (St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.). His council for the 2016-2019 term consists of Abbot Mark Cooper, OSB (St. Anselm Abbey), Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, OSB (St. Vincent Archabbey), Father Edward Mazich, OSB (St. Vincent Archabbey), Father James Flint, OSB (St. Procopius Abbey), and executive secretary Father Prior Michael Calhoun, OSB (St. Bede Abbey).

Formation directors of Benedictine and Cistercian monks met for a workshop at Subiaco Abbey in Subiaco Ark., June 14-18. Their principal presenter was Father Joel Rippinger OSB (Marmion Abbey, Aurora, Ill.). Two days of the meetings consisted of round-table discussion of topics related to the formation of novices and work with men in formation to be monks. The workshop, once annual, will now meet every other year, with the next meeting planned for June 12-16, 2018.

Abbot Primate Notker Wolf Bids Farewell

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

On 9 September, my term of office [came] to an end. I am often asked what I am going to do afterwards. Well, I will just go back to my home abbey of St. Ottilien. I will not be arriving there as a stranger. I have had good contact with my brothers all these years. Twice a year, I have given courses of several days for ninety people of all ages and backgrounds in the monastery retreat house.

I just want to make a contribution to the life of my community and sing God's praises with them as I had done formerly and as I continued to do here in Sant' Anselmo. I am also asked how I would feel if I no longer have a so-called "high position," whether I am worried about being nothing special. I always seemed to be somewhat helpless when asked this question and never knew just quite how to respond. Such thinking is foreign to me.

With [the] gospel about wrangling for higher places at a banquet, I finally found the solution. The problem is that we think we are Christians, but the Gospel never really gets under our skin. It is secular standards that define us, not the thinking of Jesus. Are we not all created and loved by God? Who has precedence before others? Who is of less value? In a community, there are no greater or lesser services. Whether it is the abbot or the maintenance person, we are all one in Christ. This is not about a special humility, but simply about what is necessary. That is service, not what I choose for myself.

In our communities, secular categories, for example, sympathy and antipathy, often play a greater role than selfless love of one another, love of all without exception. S. Anselmo is a wonderful field where we can learn that all have equal value before God, beyond the color of our skin, language and even our own culture. God calls all of us, the baptized as well as monks or nuns. But it takes a long time until we realize that often other, secular values are playing a role. Fear of ourselves often leads us to an exaggerated need for recognition and to all kinds of power games.

We can also hide behind discipline. But too much discipline can suffocate love. I am not a pessimist. I have experienced much love in our monasteries: the patience with which the young deal with the old, the

interest the seniors take in the juniors, the natural and uncomplicated assistance that is shown to outsiders, the love for students and the attention given to guests.

Benedict's advice to the cellarer applies everywhere: "A kind word is better than the best gift." Let us give each other a kind word, over and over. Let us bring our communities to life not only by modern standards of communication but on the basis of the Gospel. The Gospel is, in fact, the real key to our communities, our brothers and sisters, becoming human.

We certainly remain people with our various abilities, with our strengths and weaknesses. To follow Christ, or as St. Paul says, to become "a second Christ," is a lifelong learning process. We need much patience with ourselves and with others. We need the mercy that we can learn from God. Our psalms sing so often of the merciful love of God!

Jesus makes the compassion of his heavenly Father clear in his parables and powerfully gives witness to it through his life and death. His resurrection is the sign that loving mercy overcomes death and sin and leads to a life of freedom and joy. May our liturgical celebrations not only be celebrations of a high aesthetic quality but, especially and above all, be praise for the loving mercy of God.

Dear Sisters and Brothers! With these words, I would like to say goodbye to you. I have come to know many of you. It was always a joy for me, and I hope occasionally to meet one or the other of you as I continue forward into the future. A simple Thank You for everything you have done for Sant' Anselmo and for me.

Jubilate Deo!

In fraternal solidarity, I remain, yours

Notker

ABA Biennial Business Meeting

At the convention in July, the members in attendance elected a vice-president to succeed to the presidency in 2018 and four at-large board members. Antoinette Purcell, OSB (Our Lady of Grace, Beech Grove, Ind.) was elected as vice-president. Three board members were re-elected: Greg Peters (oblate of St. Andrew's, Valyermo, Cal.), Judith Valente, (oblate of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kan.), and Marianne Burkhard, OSB (St. Mary, Rock Island, Ill.). Because of a change in the constitution that was approved by the members, the first two will serve a four year term and Sister Marianne a two year term. Also serving for two years will be newly elected board member Sister Renée Branigan (Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton, N.D.) They will join Sister Julie Upton, RSM (oblate of Mount Saviour, Pine City, N.Y.), the incoming president.

The business meeting included reports on finances, newsletter and website, grants and awards, and the various special interest sections which met during the convention. Some of the reports are published in this newsletter, as is the constitution change.

Change in Constitution Approved

Article V, Section 1.B read: "Electees to the Board hold office for two (2) years from the date of their election or until the next elections." Because no board member can serving more than 2 consecutive terms, there was significant turnover and a whole board might conceivably be new except for the president in any given term. The Board proposed a change to read: "Electees to the Board hold office for four (4) years from the date of their election or until the election closest to the four year anniversary of their original appointment to the Board." Elections will be staggered so that two new members are elected at each convention instead of four (More detailed rationale appeared in the June 2016 *AMN*). The change was approved by the membership.

Sister Lynn McKenzie's October 2015 canon law column was reprinted in the German monastic journal *Erbe und Auftrag - Monastische Welt*. Other items have been reprinted in various monastery publications and at least one abbey in England.

CD RECORDINGS OF PRESENTATIONS

There are recordings available of each of the 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

Father Malachy McCarthy, archivist for the Claretian Missionaries Archives USA-Canada, gave a special presentation to a joint section meeting of the monastic researchers and the archivists entitled "Keeping the Charism Alive: Challenges of Benedictine Archivists and Historians." In it, he spoke of the importance of the archives of religious communities in broader areas of history, noting the meticulous chronicles of particular parishes, cultural groups and ministries that may be found. More historians are discovering these resources and appreciating them.

He also introduced his listeners to some of the cooperative resources available to them, especially The Claretian Archive Workshops, which offer intensive training for new archivists (archiveworkshops.wordpress.com).

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.

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

The board of directors of the ABA met in conjunction with the 2016 convention. Besides committee reports and financial accounting, they considered several matters related to the future of the Academy. They plan to invite an ad hoc finance committee to assist in fiscal planning and hope to take several measures to expand membership. In procedural and policy matters, past presidents will no longer receive free lifetime membership. Although the immediate past president does not stay on the board, that person will be asked to remain available in a consultative capacity for one year. Because of a number of other operational matters that have changed in recent years, a committee from the board will be evaluating the entire handbook.

Sister Elizabeth Carrillo announced that she will end her service as executive secretary at the end of this year. Sister Susan Mary Hooks was appointed to replace her.

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In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Mount Tabor Ecumenical Centre for Art and Spirituality presents “The Arts and Ecumenism - Theology and the Risk of Artistic Creation in May and October, 2017.” With the collaboration of other ecumenical and academic institutions, this symposium will focus on the evolving visions of the function of contemporary sacred art. Presentations in Paris, Strasbourg, Florence and New Haven will discuss Catholic and Protestant approaches to art through history, theology, liturgical contexts, and post-Vatican II developments, with specific references to areas of exchange between American and European viewpoints. For further information see <www.artsandecumenism.org>.

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Copies of the late Sister Dorothy Neuhofer’s book “In The Benedictine Tradition: The Origins and Early Development of Two College Libraries” are available and will be shipped free-of-charge to any requestor.

Contact: Carol Ann Moon, Librarian

Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library

Saint Leo University

MC2128

Saint Leo, FL 33574

352-588-8261

Carol.Moon@saintleo.edu

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Medieval Congress Report

The ABA sponsored one session at the 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 12-15, 2016 at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich.

Shana Thompson, doctoral student in art history at the University of Texas, Austin, discussed a portrait of Hugh of St. Victor found in a 12th-century manuscript from the Benedictine Abbey of St. Alban's, which had close ties with the canons regular of St. Victor in Paris. Larger than the three students sitting on a bench and looking up at him, Hugh gazes upward at a lamp suspended from the roof, above which is depicted the heavenly Jerusalem. Hugh thus mediates heavenly wisdom to his disciples. His book or tablet divided into four parts by horizontal lines, perhaps signifies the four senses of Scripture. One of his students holds a small version of the same book. Hugh, as teacher, embodies the Victorine conviction that they had a responsibility to share the fruits of their study and contemplation with others.

Colmán Ó Clabaigh, OSB, of Glenstal Abbey, visiting professor at Boston College, discussed a manuscript from St. Thomas Abbey, Dublin, a Victorine community. Containing 30 different works, it seems to have been designed for the instruction of novices. Among the texts are the *Rule of St. Benedict* and the *Speculum monachorum* of the Cistercian Arnulf de Boeriis. This interspersing of Benedictine and Victorine texts ran both ways; many Benedictine manuscripts include both Benedict's rule and Hugh's *On the Instruction of Novices*, as this manuscript does.

A. Compton Reeves, emeritus professor at Ohio University, described a long poem on St. George written by Alexander Barclay while he was a monk at Ely Abbey. In the 1520s he became a Franciscan. At first he resisted Henry VIII's break with Rome, but he reappears in the 1540s at a priest of the Church of England. Based on a Latin life written in Italy, this poem presents St. George as an ideal chivalrous knight who rescues a princess by charging and spearing a dragon with a lance. He converts the princess's town, turns down an offer to marry her, and rides off into the sunset to Palestine, where he is instructed by Carmelites, and then to Persia where he is martyred.

The theme for 2017 is "Auctoritates: Bible, Rule, Customary and Tradition in Medieval Benedictine Monasteries."

Hugh Feiss, OSB

DIMMID Report

The major event sponsored by DIMMID (Monastic Interreligious Dialogue) this past year was the 4th monastic/Muslim dialogue with Iranian Shi'a Muslims held in Qom and Mashhad, Iran. It dealt with the place of human rights in the monastic and Muslim traditions. Of the 6 monastic participants from 6 countries, I was the only American Benedictine. Two American sisters who had planned to attend were unable to be present. A report of the meeting appears in *Dilatato Corde*.

Dilatato Corde, the multi-lingual, bi-annual, online journal of DIMMID focuses on the dialogue of religious experience and practice and is the main feature of the DIMMID website <www.dimmid.org>. The major articles of the first five years have been published in book form. As a special offer, DIMMID is making these five volumes available to monastic communities at half price: \$100 for all five. Any monastery may purchase these volumes by going to <https://lanternbooks.presswarehouse.com/books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=487367>, clicking on "Add to cart," and then following the instructions for paying with a credit card. Shipping cost will be automatically added. If any monastery wishes to pay by check, it should be made out to Lantern Books for \$120 (\$100 + \$20 shipping) and sent to: Lantern Books, 128 2nd Place, Brooklyn, NY 11231-4102.

"Strangers No More," the 2015 documentary film on MID, is now available on YouTube. Go to the DIMMID homepage and click on the link provided in the "News" sidebar. It can also be accessed on Vimeo. The password is STRANGE.

Plans for the future include a fifth monastic/Muslim dialogue in Nairobi, Kenya, in the late summer or early fall of 2017. Also in the works is a week-long monastic experience for Benedictine sisters in a large Taiwanese monastery of Buddhist nuns, probably Fo Guang Shan monastery. Regional representatives of CIB (Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum) will inform monasteries in their respective regions about this event and determine if there is sufficient interest to move forward with this proposal.

William Skudlarek OSB
DIMMID Secretary General

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.



The American Benedictine Academy
ABA website: americanbenedictine.org

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (____) _____

Preferred email: _____

Community: _____

Oblate affiliation: _____

Academic/Other affiliation: _____

Do you have any interest or expertise to share with the Academy? _____

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

Monastic Research _____ Visual Arts _____ Archives _____ Library _____

Enclosed: _____ \$35.00 for one year membership _____ \$50.00 for two years membership

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