

Daily log
CIB Symposium 2010
Sister Nancy Bauer, OSB
Entry: September 10, 2010

Bonjour. Day 3 of the CIB Symposium was French Day. French-speaking Sisters from West Africa, Belgium, Canada, Vietnam and, of course, France, enhanced our liturgical prayer with their singing, psalmody and reading of Scripture. Mother Isabelle Thouin from Quebec played the organ for Lauds, Vespers and Eucharist. Sister Maria Fidegnon from Togo and Mother Henriette Wêndbala Kalmogo from Burkina Faso played the “kora,” a stringed instrument that is used regularly in liturgies in their countries. In fact, Sister Maria informed us that young women who enter her community, Monastère de L’Assomption – Dzogbegan, are required to take kora lessons.

We heard the second of our two keynote speakers: Mother Thérèse-Marie Dupagne, prioress of Monastère Notre-Dame d’Hurtebise, Saint-Hubert, Belgium. She used words (in French), pictures and music in her reflections on the theme of hope. Her morning presentation was entitled, “Hope Against All Hope.” She used the imagery of the biblical “plagues of Egypt,” in identifying modern plagues, especially individualism and sectarianism.

Looking for a response to these plagues, Mother Thérèse-Marie turned to the *Rule of Benedict* which advises us to put our hope in God (*RB* 4:41). “As long as we anchor our hope elsewhere, we’ll be terribly vulnerable,” she said. “Hope in our achievements? Our strengths? No! Our achievements, our plans, our strengths can light stars in our night, but they can’t make the darkness go away.” To live in hope, she said, is to live in Christ.

Mother Thérèse-Marie concluded her morning presentation with a message of hope that emerged through music after the attacks of September 11, 2001. “Two orchestras, one from the East and the other from the West, build a bridge between Mozart and the world of Egypt. Listen to ‘Mozart the Egyptian,’ especially in the piece, ‘Al maghfèra’ or ‘forgiveness’: It combines the “Qui tollis” from the Mass in C by Mozart with a Sufi incantation, a Coptic prayer, and a Greek prayer. This passage is a wonderful source of hope. In the ostinato rhythm, played by all instruments, listen to the heartbeat of our God!”

In her afternoon presentation, which was entitled, “Living in Hope: Rediscovering the Art of Living,” Mother Thérèse-Marie identified “indifference” as another modern plague. Again, the *Rule of Benedict* proposes a solution — a

new way of looking at things, at every object and every person. The way of life described in the *Rule* is an invitation “to restore savor to mundane routines . . . to make every act a liturgy, i.e., a service which binds us to the Lord and connects us to others, as opposed to the ‘negligence’ which breaks bonds!”

My thought after hearing Sister Maricarmen Bracomontes’ lively and impassioned presentation yesterday and Mother Thérèse-Marie’s reflective words today is that, despite their differences in style, their message was the same. The Benedictine way of life, when lived with deep devotion and commitment, is a witness of hope for the world and the church.

I urge you to read the texts of both keynote speakers. They are accessible on this website.