

Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum

www.benedictines-cib.org

Bulletin #12

2016 CIB CONFERENCE ASSISI ITALY



CIB Visits the community at Bastia Umbra, Italy

The Benedictine Monastery of San Giuseppe on the rocky hillside of Assisi was the site of the 2016 Conference of the Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB) from September 1 to 3. Twenty-seven sisters and nuns came from various regions of the world to be a Presence of Benedictine Solidarity. The hospitality and prayer of the Benedictine Community of San Giuseppe were distinct blessings that marked our gathering.

The days were overflowing with joy mixed with the business-at-hand. We also visited Monasteries in Bastia Umbra and Orte. While the agenda was very full, a few points are worth highlighting here.

- The Earthquake in Central Italy Not far from Assisi, the Region of Umbria lay in shambles from the devastating earthquake of 24 August. We were informed that at least 13 monasteries were affected by the earthquake. The extent of the damage was yet unknown; we learned that several communities suffered severe damage including Norcia, but no loss of lives. It was decided to invite Benedictine CIB communities throughout the world to have a year-long prayer of solidarity with those affected by the earthquake. Information on this will be forthcoming from Sr. Judith Ann Heble, Moderator of the CIB.
- Fragile Communities While hearing the reports from the various regions, the word “fragile” came often to our ears. We became keenly aware that many Benedictines in all parts of the world are struggling in one way or another. Our need to pray for and support one another became ever more evident.

- *Vultum Dei Quaerere* Most interesting to me were the presentations by Sr. Scholastika Häring of Dinklage, Germany, and Sr. Lynn McKenzie of Cullman, Alabama, USA, on Pope Francis' most recent Apostolic Constitution on Women's Contemplative Life issued on 29 June 2016: *Vultum Dei Quarere*. While addressing contemplatives, this document is inspiring for all Benedictines. *Vultum Dei Quarere* is a revision of *Sponsa Christi* (1950) and is meant to update/replace *Verbi Sponsa* (1999). The main part of the document is completed, and the norms related to the document are expected to be forthcoming in the next year. One notable part of the document is calling Benedictine Nuns to form federations. This is a way of collaboration and support to communities, especially those that are in an aging process.
- Dissertation on the Historical Development of the CIB Sr. Scholastika Häring, OSB, presented her published doctoral dissertation on the historical development of the CIB. The document is in German and will be translated into English.



CIB Conference meets with the Italian Abbesses

Submitted by: S. Rosann Ocken



2016 Congress of Abbots Participants

THE CONGRESS OF ABBOTS

Following the CIB Conference in Assisi, the delegates were invited to join the 250 Abbots who gathered from September 6-16 at San Anselmo in Rome for the Congress of Abbots.



Early on the agenda was an amazing report from Abbot Primate Notker Wolf on the past 16 years of his administration as Abbot Primate and a look into the future challenges of San Anselmo. Abbot President Jeremias Schröder responded to the Abbot Primate's report with these words: "You and all those who came to work with you, have given us back a house in Rome to which we look with pride, and where we feel both welcome and at home..."

There was so much more, of course....reordering the life at the collegio, advancing the strategic process of the Ateneo...and then your whirlwind presence throughout the globe....your physical presence a sacrament of our Benedictine Unity." The congress members applauded in affirmation of these words.

Then the process of electing a new Abbot Primate began. Following days of discernment, Abbot Gregory Polan of Conception, Missouri, USA, was elected as the tenth Abbot Primate on 10 September. Abbot Gregory is universally known for:

- His twenty years as abbot of Conception Abbey
- His teaching of the Scriptures in the USA and at San Anselmo
- His scriptural translation work on parts of the New American Bible
- His complete translation of the Psalms, resulting in the Revised Grail Psalter.

Truly our Benedictine World will find a friend and spiritual guide in our new Abbot Primate.

The days of the Congress were filled with outstanding presentations, and opportunities to meet and network with Benedictines from around the world. However, the audience with Pope Francis on September 8 was a clear highlight. Pope Francis' words were encouraging. He said, "Indeed, at this time and in this Church, called to focus increasingly on the essential thing, monks and nuns are guardians, by your vocation, of a particular gift and of a special responsibility: that of keeping alive the oases of the Spirit, where pastors and faithful are able to draw from the wells of divine mercy."

Following his address, Pope Francis briefly greeted each person (about 300 persons in all). Interestingly, before I left Jinja the sisters chided, "If you meet the pope, thank him for coming to Uganda." So, what did I say when I really did meet the pope? I said it slowly, hoping he could grasp my words, "Thank you for coming to Uganda."



Submitted by: S. Rosann Ocken

TWO CANONISTS GO TO VATICAN CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

After the July 2016 publication of the Apostolic Constitution, *Vultum Dei quaerere*, two women Benedictines who are canonists and who met each other through the CIB Symposium, Sisters Scholastika Häring, OSB (Dinklage, Germany) and Lynn McKenzie, OSB (Cullman USA), began studying the document and sharing insights about it via email. This culminated in a presentation at the meeting of the CIB Delegates in Assisi, Italy. Sister Scholastika, together with Sister Lynn, presented an overview of the document for the Delegates then discussed it at some length. The meaning of this new legislation for women of cloistered monastic communities was received with appreciation, but also with many questions. Because the document said that a further Instruction would be forthcoming from the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Lynn had already scheduled a meeting at the Congregation to pose questions and make suggestions for the expected Instruction before coming to Rome and Scholastika had agreed to join her.

On September 8, 2016, after the private audience with the Holy Father and the Congress of Abbots and CIB Conference, Scholastika and Lynn met with Father Hank Lemoncelli, OMI of the Vatican Congregation. Father Lemoncelli, while not serving in the monastic section of the Congregation, received the canonists graciously and listened well to their concerns and gave his own insights about the document. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that Father Lemoncelli would seek some responses to the questions of the canonists and respond to them. Thereafter, the two canonists will have an opportunity to submit in writing observations, questions and suggestions about the new Apostolic Constitution and the forthcoming Instruction from the Vatican Congregation. It is expected that the new Instruction will be published within the next year.

Lynn and Scholastika gave a report on their meeting with Father Hank to the Conference of Delegates on September 9, 2016 in the afternoon. They sent this report out to Delegates via e-mail as well.



**S. Lynn McKenzie and
S. Scholastika Häring**

CONFERENCE MEETING AND CONGRESS OF ABBOTS' REFLECTIONS

Thanks be to God, I am happy to have this opportunity to share with you all my gratitude for the grace and rich experience I was privileged to live in my monastic journey as abbess, through the CIB. Due to historical and geographical circumstances, I have been involved in the CIB as a delegate since before this new millennium.



M. Isabelle Lise Thouin and
Abbot Dom Michel Jorrot

It is truly a unique chance to be able to learn from Benedictine Sisters throughout the world and share our common values through our differences, as we all embrace our one common Benedictine charism.

These meetings have allowed me to experience how strong is our common identity as we are all shaped, by the grace of God, with the Rule of St. Benedict, based on humility, as we share with one another in good zeal, hospitality - when welcoming and accepting our Sister as she is, - our love for Liturgy, our thirst for the Word of God and hunger for the Bread of Life.

Being a moniale with papal enclosure, I always felt much respected as such with the choices of way of living this understates. I have been always profoundly grateful for this respect I have constantly experienced. As a contemplative with a heart open to

all, universally, the CIB has allowed me to be enriched by this sharing of concern and experiences on an international level, bringing back to my region this spirit of collaborative relationship between our Benedictine communities... thus fostering always stronger fraternal bounds among Sisters of our Monasteries. Now I can testify that these bounds are strong as they can be. We have grown from ignoring each other to becoming true Sisters in Christ through the Benedictine charism. Our communities are so happy and deeply grateful for this strong spiritual friendship which has grown among us as we uphold each other in true affection and mutual support, exchanging helpful ideas and means.

This would not have been possible if Benedictine women with a strong charism had not worked hard in collaboration with the Holy Spirit to give birth to this wonderful International Communion, putting in this endeavor all their energies, cleverness, gift of self and prayers, in order to knit always closer this communion between Benedictine women and developing it as much as possible. God has blessed all of them ...and He has also blessed all of us, Benedictine Women, giving us such leaders as dear Mother Maire Hickey and Sister Judith Ann Heble. In our founder's spirit, these Moderators, with the collaboration of their Sisters, have faithfully held in honor special aims set before them... aims that are grounded in our strong Benedictine traditions. Judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal (PC, 2), they have helped us to become One in heart as Benedictine Women. Pope Francis told us in September that Benedictines are the Heart of the Church. The CIB has helped us to grow deeper into this spiritual Reality.

Blessings,
M. Isabelle Lise Thouin

POPE FRANCIS TO BENEDICTINES:

Monasteries are Oases of God's Mercy



**M. Thérèse-Marie Dupagne
meets Pope Francis**

(Vatican Radio 2016-09-08) Pope Francis says today's society "is increasingly showing its need of mercy" and described Benedictine monasteries "as oases of spirituality" where people can obtain that mercy. The Pope's comments came on Thursday during an address to participants of the International Congress of Benedictine Abbots and Abbesses taking place in Rome.

Pope Francis said when we talk of our world needing more mercy, this is not "a slogan or a recipe" but instead something that comes from the very heart of Christian life making that person "more attentive to the needy and showing solidarity with them." This, he declared, is the concrete quality of the love that shows "the authenticity and credibility" of the Church's message.

In a Church that is called to concentrate increasingly on the essentials, the Pope said monks and nuns have a vocation of nurturing their special gift and responsibility: namely "to keep alive the oases of the spirit, where clergy and the lay faithful can dip into the springs of divine mercy."

He praised the Benedictines for living as "people of mercy" in their communities and for "their silent yet eloquent" work, saying it allows God to speak amidst the "deafening and distracted lifestyle" of today's world.

Pope Francis urged the abbots and abbesses not to become discouraged if the members of their monastic communities diminish in number and they become older and stressed it was necessary to have the courage to establish new communities even in the most difficult countries.



CALENDAR

2017 January Kaunas, Lithuania

Jan. 11-13 - Meeting of the CIB Administrative Council

2017 March Lisle, IL

March 3-5 - Meeting of the Symposium Planning Team

September 5-20 South Korea

** Exact dates of the meetings of the CIB

Administrative Council and Conference will be sent to you as soon as plans are in final form.

2018 January Rome, Italy

January 16-19 - Meeting of CIB Administrative Council

2018 September Rome, Italy

(Subject to adjustment)

Sept. 3 Arrival of the CIB Administrative Council

Sept. 4 CIB Administrative Council Meeting
Arrival of CIB Delegates
First arrival of Symposium Participants

Sept. 5 CIB Conference Meeting
Arrival of Participants
Optional Trip to Monte Cassino

Sept. 6-13 2018 CIB Symposium

Sept. 14 Departure of Non-Conference Participants
CIB Conference Meeting
CIB Administrative Council Meeting

Sept. 15 Departure of CIB Administrative Council and Conference



CIB INFORMATION

For more information on the
CIB Conference Meeting and
the
Congress of Abbots go to:

www.benedictines-cib.org