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## 2017 CIB CONFERENCE, DAEGU, SOUTH KOREA

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2017 CIB Conference Delegates and Participants, Daegu, South Korea

### SOME THOUGHTS ON THE 2017 CIB MEETING IN SOUTH KOREA

Prepared by: **Sister Judith Ann Heble, OSB, Moderator**  
**Sacred Heart Monastery, Illinois, USA**



September 20<sup>th</sup>, the day after our return from South Korea, we celebrated the Feast of St. Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn, St. Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, and Companions, a feast that never held much significance for me in the past. Throughout the Church we prayed, *“O God, who have been pleased to increase your adopted children in all the world, and who made the blood of the Martyrs Saint Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn and his companions a most fruitful seed of Christians, grant that we may be defended by their help and profit always from their example.”* The birth of the Church in Korea is recorded as

1784, when Peter Yi Seung-hoon, baptized in Beijing, came back to Korea and shared the Gospel with his friends and baptized them in Seoul. It was in the early 1800s that Christian communities

began to flourish in Korea under the leadership of the laity. The faith was preserved through the forming of faith communities or Catholic villages so that the people might encourage one another to remain faithful during the numerous persecutions that took place over some one hundred years. Of the approximately 10,000 Christians that were martyred, 101 of these Korean martyrs were canonized by Pope St. John Paul II in 1984.

Korea is a multi-religious society, particularly Buddhist and Confucian. About 20% are Catholic. The heroic lives of their martyrs who gave witness to Christ have brought about great devotion among the people. The popularity of Catholicism was especially evident in our visit to the Jeoldusan Martyrs Shrine in Seoul. Located on the Han River, the place became known as “beheading mountain”. In many places we could see crosses with a hole in the crossbar – symbolic of the guillotine-style execution many of the martyrs underwent for their faith.

The 1800’s would not be the end of the challenges for the Catholic Church and its religious institutions. In 1910, Korea was invaded by Japan. The Koreans fought against Japanese colonial rule up until the liberation in 1945. With the invasion of China in the 1930’s, communism posed a serious threat to the Church particularly for its anti-communist stance. The Korean War, 1950-1953 saw a further attempt to persecute the Church and destroy any trace of its presence in the north. After the Korean War,

The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters, the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing and the Benedictine monks in Korea were not immune to the persecutions taking place. The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Busan, founded in 1931 in the Yanji diocese in China, would be forced to close and their properties confiscated, when soon after the end of the Second World War in 1945, Manchuria was overtaken by the Chinese communists. The Sisters were either sent back to their countries or fled south into Korea settling in Cheongju. With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the Sisters again had to find refuge and eventually moved further south to Busan the current location of the Congregation.

The monastery of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in Wonsan, North Korea would be closed in 1949 under the communist regime and the Sisters there dispersed. The German Benedictine Sisters, Brothers and Priest missionaries were imprisoned and placed in a labor camp for nearly five years. The Korean Sisters fled to the south over the border before and after the Korean War of 1950 eventually settling in Daegu. Thirty-four monks, three Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing and one of the Sisters’ Oblates were killed. The cause for their beatification is now in the final stage before submission to the Vatican for consideration.

I was very grateful for the careful planning that was done to apprise us of the rich history of the Church and Benedictine life in Korea. We were privileged to hear a presentation on the History



From Left: Mother Enosh Cho (Busan)  
Sr. Judith Ann Heble (Moderator)  
Sr. Maoro Sye (Daegu)  
Sr. Rose Marie Hwang (Seoul)

of the Church in Korea by Dr. Jeong Sook Kim (Therese Kim), professor at Yeungnam University. Abbot Blasio Park of Waegwan Abbey gave us a presentation on the history of Benedictine life in Korea. We also had occasion to view a video on the moving story of the Korean martyrs.

The Olivetan Benedictines and the Missionary Benedictine Sisters took care to schedule time to have us immerse ourselves in the story of the founding of their communities as well as to visit some of their ministries. I believe that we visited three different kindergartens where the children were most delighted to meet us, to perform for us and to gift us – as only children can do – with little items they had made. Even the kindergarten children bowed happily to us. The gesture of bowing shows the great reverence the Koreans have for one another, their guests and all of creation. In addition to joining the community often at Liturgy of the Hours and daily for the Eucharist, we enjoyed special celebrations with each of the three communities. A festive dinner was prepared along with entertainment provided by the large numbers of Sisters in formation. Their singing and creativity were delightful. At Seoul, we celebrated our last day in a type of “talent-show of nations”.



We also visited three communities of monks: Ss. Maurus and Placidus Abbey in Waegwan, home to some 130 monks where we prayed Vespers, toured their abbey departments and enjoyed a delicious dinner with several of them. We also visited one of their foundations, St. Joseph Monastery, a small group of monks, where we toured their huge pear orchard almost ready for harvesting.

On our way to Busan, we visited the monks at the Olivetan Monastery of St. Bernardo Tolomei in Gosung along with the neighboring small Olivetan Sisters community, St. Scholastica Monastery. Both communities have a special mission regarding ecology. Their care for the earth and its fruits was admirable. After praying Midday Prayer with the monks and Sisters, we enjoyed a festive luncheon. Prior Giacomo Ryu not only offered us hospitality, but shared with us some of their homemade gifts. Since Busan is located close to the Sea of Japan, we even had time to enjoy a walk on the beach.

We had the privilege of visiting the Unmunsa Buddhist Temple located in the southernmost part of the Taebaek Mountains in Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea. It was built in 560 and in 1950 it became the largest training center for Buddhist Nuns (KOR.biguni) in South Korea. One of the younger English-speaking nuns was our guide around the huge complex. To culminate this special time at the Temple, we were privileged to enjoy refreshments and conversation with Abbess Jin-Gwang in their guest tea room. This abbess is a friend of Mother Enosh Cho, Prioress General of the Olivetan Benedictines. They became acquainted while participating with many other religious, clerics and faithful from Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist traditions in protests against several national projects threatening to destroy the ecosystem.



Six days were spent in CIB meetings: two for the CIB Administrative Council, four for the CIB Conference. In addition to regular business transactions, invitations to the 2018 CIB Symposium were distributed; plans outlined and lists of special guests reviewed. Special reports included some background information on *Vultum Dei Quarere* (VDQ) by Sister Lynn McKenzie, an informative AIM report by Sister Christine Conrath, Secretary



General of AIM, and a power point display by M. Mariangela Yator of the communities affected by the 2016 earthquakes. Regions also had the opportunity to share with the Conference what steps they have been taking regarding VDQ and an update as to significant news from their respective Regions. Flowing from a discussion begun in 2016, the Delegates further probed some considerations regarding the future of the CIB. As previously requested, we also developed a preliminary list of resource persons that might be helpful to communities.

None of this would have been possible without the efforts of the three local superiors in South Korea who collaborated together to make this happen in a timely and efficient manner. I am particularly grateful to Sister Maoro Sye, Prioress of Daegu Priory, who worked with me over the past two years to put things into place. Mother Enosh Cho, Prioress General of the Olivetan Benedictines of Busan became the CIB Delegate but a few months prior to our visit and Sister Rose Marie Hwang Prioress of Seoul Priory joined in to carry out a most memorable event for all of us.

The Korean peninsula remains in much in need of prayer. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, though on a bus, we joined Benedictines for Peace in a Holy Hour for Peace in Korea and for Nuclear Disarmament. Throughout the prayer service, we chanted “Seek Peace and Pursue It”. Let us stand in solidarity with our Korean brothers and sisters and pray that the blood of their heroic martyrs who gave their lives for Christ may bring about a harvest of peace for the Korean Peninsula and renew in these days the faith they helped to establish.

### **CIB 2017, DAEGU, SOUTH KOREA**

**Prepared by: Mother Angela Strobel, OSB, Prioress General  
Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing**



*“What does CIB mean to you, as belonging to a worldwide Congregation, where internationality is a given?”* This question was put to me during the CIB Meeting in Korea. In fact, it might seem that *“...exchange of ideas and experience among Benedictine women on an international level ...”* (purpose of the CIB) would be redundant for us Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing.

We are, although in a bigger number than individual monasteries, congregations and federations, only a small piece in the richness of the worldwide Benedictine women monasteries all over the world, each with its particular way to live the Benedictine

**Charism. Even in the rather small CIB Conference group assembled in Korea (not all delegates where present) the diversity of the participants and the realities they live, was already evident.**

**That the conference met for the first time in Korea, where our Congregation has the largest number of Sisters, was a pleasure for me. Among several reasons, I would like to mention two of them.**

- **Our Korean Sisters have seen some glimpse of the Benedictine life (other than our own) spread all over the world. The intercession prayer by a novice during the CIB's last Holy Mass in Daegu expressed it very well: *“Dear God of loving kindness. Thank you for giving this opportunity to our community. From the 2017 CIB conference and the participants from all different parts of the world, we could see how dynamic and fruitful the Benedictine charism is....”***
- **The Conference participants of which some struggle with aging communities and lack of vocations can claim with confidence and hope that the Benedictine way of life has not only a great past but also a future.**

**Monastic life came with the end of persecution of Christians with the intent to give continuity to the life and death of the martyrs. The blooming monastic life in Korea is a fruit of the martyrs. Today, monastic life has to embody again the faith and love, the courage and hope of the martyrs. Thanks to the blood of the martyrs which continues to germinate a profound zeal to further the Kingdom of God here on earth. Indeed, a challenge for us all who live the monastic life!**



## **MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF ATTENDING CIB CONFERENCE**

**Prepared by: Sr. Mary Bernadette Sunjaro, OSB**

**Benedictine Abbey Jamberoo - Australia  
Substitute of Region 15**



**It was a privilege and a blessing for me to be able to represent my Mother Abbess Mary Barnes and our Region in attending the CIB conference 2017 in South Korea. There was so much that I learned and enjoyed from the conference, the sharing and discussions, the dancing, as well as our togetherness in prayer, meals, recreation, travelling, etc... As this was my first visit to South Korea as well as my first time in attending CIB conference, I thank you from the depth of my heart for making me so welcomed and being a part of it.**

**The word “Communio” in CIB touched me deeply, and looking back now I can still feel it strongly from our time there, since my arrival at Incheon Airport until my departure. The sisterly bond was so evidently lived day by day amongst the sisters who attended the conference, as well as with the sisters whose monasteries we visited and stayed.**

Though there was so much political tension in Korea around the time of the conference, I was amazed that many sisters from different countries and different parts of the world came, left behind fears, and had solidarity with our Benedictine Sisters who lived and worked in South Korea. There we were all united in prayer for peace in our world, and especially in Korea.

I am so very grateful for the hospitality of the sisters in Daegu, Busan and Seoul; for the valuable input on various topics that we received from the sisters at the conference: Orientation of CIB, VDQ, AIM, Korean Church History, etc; for the friendships we built and which were deepened by sharing photos of our communities, works and ministries; for the kindness and generosity I received in so many ways; and for the beautiful and solemn Korean Liturgy we shared.

Thank you so much for the wonderful and enriching experience that I will treasure in my heart always... Gamsa Hamnida!

### **MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF CIB-2017**

**Prepared by: Sr. Jennifer Mechtild Horner, OSB, Prioress  
Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Indiana, USA**



In February 2016, I was elected Chair of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses and found out that I would be a delegate to the CIB meeting in South Korea. I was very excited as I knew it would be a wonderful experience and a chance to learn more about how the Benedictine charism is lived out in another culture. After attending the CIB meeting I have to say that the experience was more than I could ever have imagined! From beginning to end it is an experience I will treasure forever.

I would like to share two aspects of the experience that touched me deeply. First, the hospitality we received from the Missionary Benedictines in Daegu and Seoul and the Olivetan sisters in Busan. From the moment we arrived at each monastery the sisters welcomed us with open arms. From their beautiful prayer, delicious meals, engaging conversations to the entertainment they provided for us it seemed that nothing was too much. We had the opportunity to visit many of their ministries and each place we were welcomed with love and grace. Their gentle presence and respect for each person was felt so keenly by each of us. The Benedictine way of life is alive and well in Korea. Even though our cultures are different, we felt at home through the sharing of the same Benedictine charism.

The second aspect I would like to share is the experience of being with the other delegates. As we met together, we had the opportunity to share on many levels. The meeting itself was excellent as we learned so much about the Benedictine charism lived throughout the world. As we traveled from monastery to monastery, we got to know each other better as we laughed together, enjoyed meals together and shared stories of our own monasteries. All of this helped us grow closer to one another as we shared an experience of “*communio*” – a coming together as one.

Through my first experience of attending a CIB meeting, I now have a deeper and clearer understanding of the important work that CIB does. While each Benedictine community is unique because of its particular place and culture, we are also deeply connected by the bond of

our charism. Our call to seek God in community is the same call wherever we live. Throughout the world Benedictines gather morning, noon and night to offer prayer to God. Since my return from Korea, I am more keenly aware of the power of our charism lived throughout the world. When I pray my Compline each night, I know that the Benedictine sisters in Daegu, Seoul and Busan are rising to start a new day in prayer. It is comforting to know that twenty-four hours a day, Benedictines somewhere are raising their hearts and voices to God.



### **MAY GOD BE KIND TO YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE!**

Prepared by: Sr. M. Enosh Cho, OSB, Prioress General  
Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Busan  
Delegate of Region 13

The CIB Conference was held in Korea in 2017 for the first time. Thus, there was much interest in and many expectations for the conference. I felt some anxiety, leading up to the conference, because of the ominous political tensions present on the Korean peninsula. Some CIB members were somewhat hesitant about having the meeting in Korea at this problematic time. I, as the delegate of the host country, prayed a lot for a peaceful time. Thankfully, the conference was completed with no major problems. I am deeply grateful that God graciously provided a peaceful time for the participants coming from six continents.



First of all, I would like to thank Sr. Judith Ann Heble and Sr. Mary Jane Vergotz who initiated and supported having the conference in Korea. I would also like to thank the Sisters of the Daegu and Seoul Pories of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing and the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Busan, who made this conference not only possible, but also an enriching experience thanks to their great efforts and wonderful hospitality. I am also deeply grateful to all the CIB delegates who visited Korea. They showed the depth of our ‘sisterly bond’ and ‘communio’ among Benedictine women worldwide.

For me, this CIB conference was a time to relish the ‘unique and faithful expression of the Benedictine charism’ as found in each of our monasteries, as expressed in the CIB Handbook. The description of the historical background of the CIB presented by Sr. Judith Ann and the reports on the situation and challenges each region is facing has helped me understand CIB’s past and present identity and mission. I can see that the journey of the CIB has been a witness to the peace and communion we Benedictine women, both *Moniales* and *Sorores*, experience. We are all descended from the same Benedictine roots. We have all grown up in differing ways with various callings, customs and challenges, listening to the needs of the Church and God’s people. The diversity among us is an abundant gift to the Church in countless ways.

**This CIB conference was an opportunity for us Korean Benedictine women to introduce the Korean Catholic Church and Monasticism to the delegates from the other countries. Through visits to Benedictine monasteries in Korea and through lectures and video clips on the history of Korean Benedictine communities and the Catholic Church which grew up in the midst of many persecutions and hardships, we were able to share not only the past, but also the blessings and graces of the Korea Benedictine sisters today. In particular, it was a graced time for the three Korean Benedictine communities to strengthen our sisterhood through this CIB, preparing the meeting and welcoming guests all together.**

**When the CIB delegates visited Korean Benedictine monasteries, we had time to bless each community with the blessing song which has been a CIB tradition. These moments were a living expression of the solidarity and communion of Benedictine women worldwide. Remembering the CIB visit to Busan, the Busan Olivetan sisters said that the blessing moment was a particularly grace-filled experience for them. The blessing of all regional representatives showed God's merciful face and loving heart toward the peace-threatened Korean Peninsula and all mankind.**



**May God bless and keep you!  
May God's face shine upon you!  
May God be kind to you and give you peace!**

## **CIB CONFERENCE 2017 IN DAEGU, SOUTH KOREA**

**Prepared by: Sr. Maoro Sye, OSB, Prioress**

**Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing Daegu Priory  
Co-Delegate of Region 13**



**Two years ago, right after I was elected to be the prioress of our priory in Daegu, Korea, I was asked to have the 2017 CIB in Korea belonging to Region 13, and host the CIB at our Benedict spirituality center located within the compound of our priory house in Daegu. I have never before attended a CIB meeting. Yet, trusting in the cooperation of the three groups of Benedictine Sisters present in Korea and trusting in the helping hand of God, we started to prepare for the 2017 CIB, the first CIB in the Far East.**

**Despite of the fact that the Benedictine Sisters in Korea do have many members, our attendance in CIB meetings has been low and therefore our situation has not been well known to Benedictine Sisters from other parts of the world, and, though Korean Benedictine Sisters do know the existence of CIB, we also have known little about the CIB. Through the CIB meeting held here in Korea, not only the attendants of the meeting but also the Benedictine communities in Busan, Seoul, and Daegu met directly and personally Sisters living our Benedictine way of monastic life**



in many different parts of the world, and truly it was a grace-filled moment for all of us, Benedictine Sisters here in Korea.

As monastics following the same Benedictine rule, it was a great blessing to experience unity and solidarity through our mutual interests and sharing and friendship in our diversity. Furthermore, not only we, the Benedictine women in Korea, but also the three male Benedictine establishments, the Benedictine Abbey in Waegwan, the Olivetan Benedictine Monastery in Goseong and St. Joseph Monastery in Taeleung welcomed us with their hospitality and abundance. Through this CIB meeting, we felt our sisterly love even with our diverse charisms and different challenges. We came with our presently-given reality to understand the direction and the purpose of our cooperation. Coming from the different parts of the world, both, Nuns and Sisters, experienced the joy of our being invited to live and to bring to blossom in this age our Benedictine monastic tradition.

On September 14, for peace and the reduction of the nuclear armaments in the Korean peninsula the Benedictine Sisters in Erie, Pennsylvania, USA, prayed “Benedictine monastics’ holy hour for peace”. When we were in our bus returning from Busan to Daegu, we joined the Benedictine Sisters in Erie and prayed together! It was a deeply moving moment of praying for peace in Korea where we were. It was truly not only a time and an opportunity to feel gratitude for our unity and solidarity and mutual support of Benedictines working for peace anywhere and everywhere in the world, and it was also an opportunity to renew once again our call for the world.

We had lecture of our Korean Catholic Church history and our martyrs. We made pilgrimages to ‘Jeoldusan’ the holy grounds of the martyrdom in Seoul.

Also we visited Unmunsa a Buddhist Nun’s temple. There we enjoyed dialogues with them exchanging over various topics but mostly about religion and ascetic life. Of course, we Koreans certainly grew up under the influence of our long tradition of Confucianism and Buddhism. I hope that the non-Korean participants of CIB found also the day enlightening and helpful in understanding our Korean culture and monastic tradition.



I thank for the assistance and cooperation of everyone for making this CIB, the first in Korea, possible. Certainly above all I thank for the warm and open heart and kindness of all CIB participants. In the place of our sojourn, we be *PAX Benedictina*, dedicating ourselves for peace, I pray.

May God be glorified for leading and guiding all our plans!



**CIB CALENDAR 2018**  
**Rome, Italy**

<b>January 16-19</b>	<b>Meeting of CIB Administrative Council and Symposium Planning Team</b>
<b>August 31</b>	<b>Arrival of the CIB Administrative Council</b>
<b>September 1-2</b>	<b>CIB Administrative Council Meeting</b>
<b>September 2</b>	<b>Arrival of CIB Delegates</b>
<b>September 3-4-5</b>	<b>CIB Conference Meeting</b> <b>Arrival of Participants for Symposium</b> <b>TBD: Optional Trip to Monte Cassino</b>
<b>September 6-13</b>	<b>2018 CIB Symposium</b>
<b>September 14</b>	<b>Departure of Non-Conference participants</b> <b>AM CIB Conference Meeting</b> <b>PM CIB Administrative Council Meeting</b>
<b>September 15</b>	<b>Departure of CIB Administrative Council and Conference</b>
<b>September 16</b>	<b>Departure of Symposium Planning Team</b>