



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 monastic communities in the Benedictine tradition in North America, members of the American Benedictine Academy, and other interested persons.

Being Benedictine in the 21st Century: Creating a New Roadmap

The intent of the “Being Benedictine in the 21st Century” Conference and Conversation, as stated on the conference website, was to explore “the important questions we haven’t yet asked.” Through listening and dialogue, the goal was to come away from the conference with a new roadmap for spreading the light of Benedictine spirituality well into the 21st century.

The conference took place May 28-30, 2021. Benedictine seekers representing more than 50 monasteries — 220 vowed members, oblates, and others who find meaning in monastic spirituality — gathered virtually to share their inner monkhood and seek ways to carry it into the future.

Being Benedictine keynote speaker, Erie Benedictine Joan Chittister, author, lecturer, and prophet, began by explaining that to be a Benedictine means, “to be a card-carrying member of one of the most long-standing spiritual institutions in the church.” She continued, “But being Benedictine, being in heart and soul a Benedictine, now that is something different. That’s something that develops from era to era bearing its values through time, and as it moves across the world, shaping it to fit the age they are in. Being Benedictine requires us to mean something real today, to shine a light into today’s darkness, to live as Jesus lived, with integrity and courage, not in a particular century but in every century and that makes all the difference between to ‘be a Benedictine’ and ‘being Benedictine.’”

It was a realization that the Benedictine tradition depends on shaping the charism in new and different ways that speak to our time in history that led Judith Valente, an oblate of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., and an author and retreat leader, Sister Judith Sutera, a member of the Atchison community, monastic historian and scholar, and Erie Benedictine Sister Linda Romey to create the space for a broad conversation about being Benedictine today.

(continued on page 3)

President's Message

Dear ABA Members and Friends,

We are just over a year away from our biennial ABA convention, which will have as its theme "Give Me a Word." The convention will be held at the St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, Neb., from July 7-9, 2022. "Give me a word," of course, is a reference to the desert of early Christian monasticism in Egypt wherein one monastic would seek out another monastic for an inspired word of wisdom. Thousands of these words have been preserved for us in the *apophthegmata patrum*. And thankfully many of these sayings are now available in English, thanks in no small part to prodigious translator Tim Vivian, one of our plenary speakers next summer.

But I trust that when we hear the word "word" we are also taken back to the words of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Thus, when we hear the phrase "give me a word," perhaps we even hear it as "give me *the* Word." I would like to think that when the desert elders spoke words of wisdom, they were pointing the hearer not just to some sage advice that might also be available in the works of Plato, Aristotle or Epicurus, but were pointing the hearer to the Word

behind their words — that in their words were the very "words of eternal life" (John 6:68), that Jesus was there behind the words. Thus, the very apophthegmatum was salvific, not just hortatory or didactic.

Early Christian theologian Irenaeus of Lyons saw in the fact that Christ was the Word a fundamental Trinitarian principle: that the Father is rational (*logikos*), "therefore by the Word He created the things that were made" (*Demonstration* 5). Thus asking for a "word" is asking for something rational and, thereby, Godlike. To reason is to be like God. Thus, in Irenaean logic "give me a word" would mean something like this: "Amma, using your God-given rationality, offer me a word that will point me to the Word." Thus, the request for a word was so much more than just an appeal for something sagacious. It was a request for life-giving words of life: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

The twentieth-century Protestant theologian Karl Barth said something similar when he was theologizing about the way in which the Christian Scriptures functioned in the life of the Church. For Barth, behind the words of Scripture was the Word of God. This is what gave the Scriptures their power and authority. Rightly concerned that some Christians elevated the Scriptures to a too elevated position, Barth was attempting to make the Scriptures about Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), in such a way that they not only pointed to Jesus but were an extension of Jesus, if you will. I think that the abba's or amma's words in the desert function similarly for those who have the ears to ear (cf. Matt. 11:15).

So, let us think (*logikos*) upon he who is the Father and upon his Son, the Word, that we may grow in our Word-likeness. And may our own conformity to the Word be a source for us to offer words of life to others, just as they offer words of life to us. "Give me a word!"

Greg Peters
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The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

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www.americanbenedictine.org

The gathering was initially to take place in Atchison in June 2020, until the pandemic hit. “We took advantage of the year-long delay in our conference by holding periodic Zoom gatherings throughout this past year,” said Judith Valente. “The weekend gathering built upon those conversations, and we hope to continue holding this space for ongoing dialogue, a Benedictine think tank of sorts.”

In spite of the limitations of group discussions carried out via Zoom, ideas were surfaced in structured conversations. Complementing physical gatherings via technology, greater mutuality in some areas of decision-making, ongoing conversation and dialogue are areas surfaced for further exploration, as were our response to peace and justice and environmental concerns and how we build and maintain more diverse relationships and relationships with younger seekers. Opportunities for residential and volunteer programs, monastic formation, and leadership development are felt needs.

In an evaluation survey sent to all participants after the weekend that garnered a more than 50% return rate, in response to the question, “What do you recognize you need, after this weekend, to support your being Benedictine that we might possibly answer,” these were the responses:

55% — A virtual space to network and converse with other Benedictine seekers and communities about moving our tradition in to the future.

55% — A think tank where ideas supporting being Benedictine today can be explored and studied and then published or shared.

56.5% — A website that aggregates and publishes lists of study, prayer, and other opportunities available in the Benedictine world.

51.9% — Guidance in integrating forward-thinking conversations into existing Benedictine organizations.

In the 40-year-old classic, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*, Raimundo Panikkar speaks of the “archetype of the monk.” He suggests that this archetype, the yearning for the spiritual, is something within all human beings.

He continues, “the trap of Modernity means uprootedness. It is to think that the world began yesterday, or the day before yesterday, or that what I learn in school or know in a conscious way is all there is to the world. It is to suppose that the technological megamachine in which we live is the entire world. It is cutting ourselves off from the roots of the real, roots that grip deeply down into Reality as a whole. But I would also warn of the stagnation of tradition; that is, when tradition is so thickly overgrown that it does not allow any new growth or change or mutation.”

This, then, is the mandate. It is a mandate for those of us who seek to nourish our inner monk via whatever specific lifestyle we have chosen: to stay connected to the roots of the real as we nourish new growth, whatever form that new growth take. As Sister Judith Sutera reminded those gathered, “We have to back away from the narrow view that the survival of the charism and the survival of my own monastery are synonymous.”

To remain in the know about future zoom presentations and conversations join the email list at <beingbenedictine.org>. You might also save the date for a special Benedictine event that will take place June 21-23, 2022 in Atchison, Kan., with speakers and further conversation about the future. More information will be available soon.

Linda Romey, OSB
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Editor’s note: The American Benedictine Academy and this newsletter were pointed out in discussion at the conference as an institution that is already speaking to some of the desires identified in the survey. In the following days, the ABA website had a spike of more than 150 visits. It is hoped that the ABA will gain greater recognition and membership through this conference and will continue to be an important partner in the conversation.

CANON LAW COLUMN

*Sister Mary Rose (Anselm) Hammerling, OSB
1929-2020*

“Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with the three measures of flour until all of it was leavened’ (Matthew 13:33).

I can hear her now: “Now Danny Boy, what are you doing!” When she was upset with me or wanted me to change my mind, it was “Now, Danny Boy!” So, forgive me, Mary Rose, but I am not changing my mind about writing about how you were the yeast that led Benedictine women in North America to reclaim their monastic heritage and status with the Church.

This is the story of Sister Mary Rose (Anselm) Hammerling of Saint Benedict’s Monastery, Winnipeg, Canada, and her journey with Benedictine women to reclaim the name “monastic.” (For the first part of this article, I will use “Anselm.” Hopefully the reason will be clear in the later part of the article.)

After the 1983 Code of Canon Law was published, I wrote an article on the canons pertaining to religious life and their application to monastics. I was nudged, perhaps by the Holy Spirit, to send a draft of the article to the presidents of the North American Benedictine women’s and men’s monastic congregations/federations.

At the time I did not know Sister Anselm Hammerling, who was president of the Federation of Saint Gertrude. However, I received a letter from her requesting that I meet with her, Sister Margaret Michaud president of the Federation of Saint Benedict and Sister Joan Chittister, president of the Federation of Saint Scholastica. They offered to meet in a conference room at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the article. Later I found out Anselm told the others that “this young monk canonist doesn’t know anything about Benedictine women!” The meeting was the beginning of a great friendship and partnership in working for the equality of women and men within the Benedictine family and the Church.

When the three women’s monastic congregations were established by Rome, each congregation

was categorized as an apostolic congregation even though each was composed of autonomous communities. Because the Benedictine women were “sisters” and engaged in apostolic works outside of the cloister, how could they be monastics? Of course, this same criterion was not applied to Benedictine men’s congregations.

At the airport meeting, I began my education about Benedictine women and how their community life and governance differed from that of Benedictine men. However, Anselm, Margaret and Joan also came to understand that in writing their constitutions in light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the Benedictine women should reclaim their monastic status within the church. I remember Joan standing up and stating with great gusto: “Monastery is not a male term.”

From this meeting grew the movement of reclaiming monastic identity and canonical status for Benedictine women in North America. Anselm was the yeast of the movement. She dedicated herself to the mission of reclaiming. She helped organize a meeting of presidents and canonists to learn how the constitutions that were to be submitted to Rome should reflect the monastic way of life and their monastic status:

1. The governance of a monastery differs from the governance of an apostolic religious institute.
2. A monastic congregation/federation only has “member monasteries” and has limited authority, especially in regard to the internal life of a monastery and its members.
3. The few exemptions in the Code of Canon Law for monks and monasteries equally applies to women following the Rule of Benedict.

Anselm had a goal to express this reclaiming of monasticism: the communities of each federation would no longer be known as “convents” or “priors,” but as “monasteries.” One night while working on the constitutions for the Federation of Saint Gertrude, Anselm exclaimed: “I’ve got it. We will state ‘The monasteries of the Federation are:’ and only state their names without any designation as “convent” or “priory.”

This reclaiming of monasticism was not just a process of convincing Benedictine women; it also involved some politicking within the church! Thus, when the women presidents were in Rome for

meetings, they would invite Sister Sharon Holland, IHM, who worked at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, to a meal in order to help her understand that Benedictine “sisters” were monastics. Over time, Sharon came to understand that Benedictine women were truly monastics and followers of the Rule of St. Benedict. Sharon assisted greatly in helping the constitutions of the three federations get approved as constitutions of monastic congregations similar to the constitutions approved for monastic men’s congregations.

After journeying for years for the church to recognize the equality of women monastics and the individual communities to see themselves truly as monasteries, Anselm also made her own personal statement by reclaiming her birth name, Mary Rose. During the twilight years of her life, Mary Rose and I often spoke on the phone about all that had happened since that first meeting in the airport. She never claimed to be the yeast. What she would say is that we made a good team and that it had been quite a journey!

Mary Rose was not a canonist, but she understood the meaning, the nature and the power of canon law. She understood that for canon law to be an enabling, organizing and inspirational factor in the life of the Church and religious communities, it had to reflect reality. For Benedictine women, that reality was that they are monastic women following the Rule of St. Benedict. She understood that the way to do this was to have the constitutions and the secondary documents written as monastic documents. She knew it would be a journey, but a journey worth making so that men and women following the Benedictine Rule would be recognized and live as equals within the Benedictine family and within the church. A visible tribute to Mary Rose is the sign now at the entrance to each women’s community: “Monastery.”

This now aging monk canonist is forever grateful to Mary Rose for taking the risk with me and inviting me into her journey of life and work. She opened my heart, mind and vision to the great patchwork quilt that makes up Benedictine monasticism. Even more so, I am forever grateful for her loving and enduring friendship.

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RECORDINGS OF CONVENTION PRESENTATIONS

The ABA has recordings of each of the 2020 convention presentations at a cost of \$8 per video DVD or \$5 for audio only CD (includes shipping), or \$2 each for digital mp4 files.

“Stability and Evangelization” - Sr. Pia Portmann, OSB

“The Monastic World in the Bright Light of Equatorial Africa and the Subcontinent” - Fr. Joel Macul, OSB

“Viewing the World of Latin American Monastics” - Sr. Ann Hoffman, OSB

“Benedictine Time Travel: Going Back to Envisage Possible Futures” - Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

Order forms are downloadable on the website or you can make your request and payment directly. Please specify format and desired talks, and send with payment (checks should be made to Sister Judith, not to ABA) to

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

2022 ABA Convention

Give Me a Word

July 7 - 9, 2022

St. Benedict Center

Schuyler, Neb.

BENEDICTINE COMMUNICATORS GROUP

Likeminded communications professionals create and collaborate during a worldwide pandemic

In the fall of 2019, at the annual Communicators for Women Religious conference, I noticed other congregations were arranging to meet up at an upcoming breakfast or lunch to touch base, from the Dominicans to the Sisters of Charity. But I didn't see a shout-out for the Benedictine communicators to meet for a meal, so I arranged it. At that breakfast we immediately connected as like-minded communications professionals for Benedictine women's monasteries, a very niche group. From that breakfast, we thought we would branch out and invite all communications people for women's monasteries to meet virtually and see where we go with it.

Our first meeting with communications folks from across the United States was on February 13, 2020. The energy and enthusiasm at that very first Zoom filled us with hope and a new purpose for our shared work. However, March of 2020 drastically and dramatically altered our world in ways with which we continue to grapple.

We agreed to meet quarterly and our next meeting was in May when the pandemic, coronavirus, social distancing, masks, working from home, and unprecedented times were the all too familiar vocabulary buzzwords of the time. Unfortunately, and sadly, by the May 7th meeting, the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, the community I work for, had suffered losses from Covid-19. The virus had torn through St. Scholastica Monastery and taken one sister and one lay person and a few days later another sister had died of natural causes. Needless to say, our May quarterly meeting was very much about how everyone was coping and adapting during these difficult times.

By August of 2020, our quarterly meeting was a nice respite for connecting and now planning for a collaborative project about Benedictine values. At our November meeting, it was full steam ahead with an amazing idea that we would solicit photos that embody Benedictine values from all women's monasteries. The ten Benedictine values included: Love of Christ and neighbor (gospel values, peace, and justice); Prayer: A life marked by liturgy, lectio and

mindfulness; Stability: commitment to the daily life of this place, its heritage and tradition; Conversatio: the way of formation and transformation; Obedience: a commitment to listening and consequent action; Discipline: a way toward learning and freedom; Humility: knowledge of self in relation to God, others, and creation; Care of Creation: responsible use of creation, culture, and the arts; Hospitality: openness to the other and Community: call to serve the common good (service within and outside of the monastery).

From these values, Sister Judith Sutera created a script and we sorted through the photos to find illustrations of each value. With Sister Judith's voiceover narration and Sister Christine Manderfeld's arrangement of *Lasst Uns Erfreuen* played by the St. Benedict's Monastery handbell choir as our instrumental music, we successfully shared these Benedictine values in a video presentation that premiered during Catholic Sisters Week 2021.

The 21 monasteries that participated submitted unique images of their community portraying these values in ways the editing group couldn't even have imagined. We later added a few more participating monasteries to a second edition of the video that premiered during the Being Benedictine Conference at the end of May 2021.

It has been an incredible journey through the pandemic with these like-minded communicators as a touchpoint personally and professionally. We are so grateful for the creative and collaborative time together and we are very proud of our video presentation that has touched so many viewers. We welcome communications professionals from Benedictine women's monasteries to join us at our next meeting: August 18, 2021 2 p.m. central. Please email me directly if you'd like to join us: smeluso@osbchicago.org. If you are unable to join us for that meeting, you can still be added to our mailing list. Please keep an eye out for emails inviting you to collaborate on our next project. We hope you will! Everyone is invited to view *Benedictine Values: Modern Monasticism* on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/JsDV05l3uUM>.

Siobhan O'Neill Meluso
Benedictine Sisters of Chicago



NEWS

In addition to the regularly scheduled leadership elections this year, a number of communities were able to hold elections that had been postponed by pandemic complications. The following have been elected recently:

- St. Walburga Monastery (Elizabeth, N.J.) - Prioress Mariette Therese Bernier OSB
- Sacred Heart Monastery (Cullman, Ala.) - Prioress Lynn Elisabeth Meadows OSB
- Benet Hill Monastery (Colorado Springs, Colo.) - Prioress Marie Therese Summers, OSB
- Dwelling Place Monastery (Martin, Ky.) - Prioress Kathy Curtis, OSB

- Re-elected to continue in their leadership were:
- Holy Name Monastery (St. Leo, Fl.) - Prioress Roberta Bailey OSB
- Monastery of St. Gertrude (Cottonwood, Id.) - Prioress Mary Forman OSB
- Monasterio Pan de Vida (Torreon, Mex.) - Prioress Maricarmen Bracamontes OSB
- St. Benedict Monastery (Pittsburgh, Pa.) - Prioress Karen Brink OSB

* * * * *

CALL FOR PAPERS

Diversity and Dignity Across Time and Place

The 12th Triennial Conference on
the History of Women Religious

University of Notre Dame - June 26-29, 2022

The Program Committee invites proposals for papers and panels that address the conference theme, “Diversity and Dignity Across Time and Place,” from academics and independent scholars in the fields of history (including, but not limited to, ancient, medieval, modern, Latin American, European, North American, African, and Asian), sociology, literature, anthropology, theology, gender studies, visual and creative arts, material culture, religious studies, and communications.

Throughout their histories, women religious have celebrated and struggled with many aspects related to diversity in their personal lives, congregational histories, and ministries. At the same time, their work has often focused on upholding the “dignity of the human person,” particularly the dignity of women. This conference seeks to explore aspects of diversity and dignity within the history of women’s religious congregations around the world. How did congregations (and individual sisters and nuns) respond to internal issues of diversity and dignity? And how did they seek to encourage diversity and dignity through their many ministries?

The program committee also welcomes proposals for “1,000 Words in a Picture.” These short papers of up to 1,000 words analyze a single image (such as a picture, an artifact, or a document). These papers will be presented in a special session during which each author will present the image in 10 minutes, followed by a five-minute question period.

Proposals for individual papers, including “1,000 Words in a Picture” papers, should include a one-page abstract (title and 250-word description) and a one-page curriculum vita. Proposals for multiple-paper panels should include a one-page abstract (title and 250-word description) for each paper and a one-page curriculum vita for each author. Submissions should be made electronically by August 15, 2021. To submit a proposal, visit cushwa.nd.edu/news/chwr2022cfp.

* * * * *

AIM USA (Alliance for International Monasticism) has welcomed three new members to their board of Trustees: Sister Mariana Olivo Espinoza, OSB, from Pan de Vida Monastery, Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico; Sister Nettie Gamble, OCSO, from Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey, Dubuque, Iowa; and Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB, from St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, Ill.

Sister Mariana has her training in law, and is currently studying Catholic social teaching and canon law. She is actively involved in the organization, planning and participation in Latin American Benedictine-Cistercian gatherings, and in monastic formation. Additionally, she supports families in her city dedicated to searching for their family members who have disappeared.

Sister Nettie Gamble, OCSO, of Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey in Dubuque, Iowa, brings to the board her experiences as community bookkeeper/ treasurer, abbess/prioress, and secretary to the abbess. Her two years of ministry in Norway, immersed in another culture and language is an added benefit.

Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB, a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, is the director of the Center for Life and Learning, an educational outreach program for older adults. Susan is a long-time member/past president of the American Benedictine Academy. She has served her community in several positions, including 23 years of teaching.

* * * * *

The world continues to be introduced to the remarkable work of Father Columba Stewart OSB (Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.). The latest is a story in the June 2021 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine entitled "A Mission for Father Stewart." The colorfully illustrated feature describes such feats as the digitizing of 3300 ancient texts in Syria before the devastating war there and his more recent trips to Kathmandu, Nepal.

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The General Chapter of the Swiss-American Benedictine Congregation will be held this year at Benet Lake Priory from July 29 to August 2, 2021. The council of the congregation met by Zoom on Monday, April 19, 2021 to finalize the agenda for the General Chapter.

* * * * *

Benedictine Liturgists and Musicians will hold their 2021 Monastic Worship Forum Conference July 12-13, 2021. Out of caution and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are offering a completely virtual experience of this year's conference. Dr. Don Saliers will be presenting and engaging the participants in a topic inspired by his experience in working with people throughout the pandemic: "The Rhythms of Lament and Doxology in Liturgy and Life."

Before joining the Candler faculty in 1974, Saliers taught at Yale Divinity School, and has taught in summer programs at Notre Dame, Boston College, Vancouver School of Theology, St. John's University,

and Boston University School of Theology. An accomplished musician, theologian and scholar of liturgics, Saliers is the author of 15 books on the relationship between theology and worship practices,

Though we will miss gathering together in-person, the virtual nature of this conference will allow more community members to attend the content sessions given by Dr. Saliers. The graduated conference fee is based on the number of members of the community who will attend these sessions.

Aside from the sessions presented by our gifted speaker, Dr. Saliers, we will be offering sessions open only to the liturgist and musicians of your community. These will include:

- Sharing about the community's COVID liturgies
- Special prayer service/ritual sharing: This is an opportunity to share about any special prayer services your community has celebrated particular to your community's experience or in response to the current needs in our church and world
- Music Sharing: This is an opportunity to share new music that you or someone in your community has composed and/or the sharing of music that you are singing or playing with your schola or handbell choir, or organ or piano repertoire you are using. In this virtual environment, we will ask you to pre-record your presentation, which will be played during the Music Sharing session. If you note on your registration that you want to participate, we will contact you with the details for submission of your recording and music.
- Talent Show: The Show must go on even in virtual mode! We will ask you to pre-record your performance, which will be played during the Talent Show session. If you indicate on registrations that you would like to perform in this Talent Show, we will contact you with the details for submission of your recording.
- Social with a trivia game
- Celebration of Life and Remembrance of Recently Departed Benedictine liturgists or musicians, as submitted on registrations.
- Business Meeting: One item on the agenda is to determine the committee who will plan the 2023 Conference. Committee members must be either the liturgist or a musician in your community.

Monastic Worship Forum Conference Committee

ABA at Kalamazoo:
The 56th International Congress on Medieval Studies
Western Michigan University, May 10-15, 2021

This year's International Congress on Medieval Studies was held online rather than in Kalamazoo. The ABA-sponsored session was devoted to humility and medieval Benedictines: What did they think humility was? Was it good for them? The well-attended session was chaired by Dr. Maureen O'Brien, professor of history at St. Cloud State University, who has a long association with Benedictines modern and medieval. There were four papers, some of which will appear in the *American Benedictine Review*.

Sister Colleen Maura McGrane, OSB, Benedictine Sister of Perpetual Adoration of Clyde, Mo., contrasted how two Carolingian commentaries on Benedict's Rule interpreted the fourth degree of humility in chapter seven of the Rule. Smaragdus interprets the Rule to say that when one is confronted with hard and difficult things one should embrace patience, whereas Hildemar says one should embrace hard things lovingly as a preparation for martyrdom. Either interpretation cautions the reader to follow the example of Christ and not react blindly to difficulties.

Jacob Riyeff, Marquette University, a Benedictine oblate, spoke about the 10th century Old English poem "Vainglory," which expresses the biblical idea of reversal whereby the humble are exalted. Giving this theme an eschatological orientation, the poem tells of a proud person at a raucous feast and contrasts his fate with that of a humble person.

Father Hugh Feiss, OSB, discussed humility in the writings of Hildegard of Bingen, who sees humility as the queen and mother of all the virtues. Humility is an acknowledgement of the gratuity of existence that expresses itself in obedience, gratitude, and praise. Humility is an attribute of God expressed in the life of Christ. Hildegard was humble in her words and deeds and productive in writing and activity. Her view of humility does not focus on the idea of being a servant to others or on how a community, qua community, should be humble.

Carmen Wyatt-Hayes, Hillsdale College, developed ideas she first expressed in a chapter in the *Benedictine Reader I: 530-1530*. In his life of Dominic of Silos, Berceo presents Dominic as the embodiment of St. Benedict's twelve stages of humility. In emphatically

opposing the economic predations of a king and in being exiled from his community at San Millán, Dominic remained humble and dedicated to work and prayer.

Subsequent to final approval from the planners, the theme for the ABA's sponsored session at the next congress will be "How Did Medieval Benedictines Respond to Crises?" The congress will once again be virtual for the 57th International Congress of Medieval Studies, May 9-14, 2022. It will be a session of four papers and the call for papers will be on the congress website.

To summarize the theme: At the present time of pandemic and a sharp drop in vocations, this session will consider how Benedictine monasteries responded in the Middle Ages to crises such as destruction by invading armies, plague, internal discord, lax observance, fire, or a dearth of members. The motto of St. Benedict's abbey at Monte Casino, "sucissa virescit," "chopped down, it grows back green," describes what happened often to monasteries in the Middle Ages. Of course, monasteries did not always grow back. What factors accounted for survival or lack of survival of one or several monasteries at a time of crisis?

Anyone interested in preparing a paper for this session is welcome to contact Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB, (hughf@idahomonks.org) 208-761-9389, Monastery of the Ascension, 541 E 100 S, Jerome, ID 83338. Abstracts need to be submitted before September 15.

Hugh Feiss OSB
ABA Session Coordinator

The Mount Tabor Centre for Art and Spirituality is hosting a series of talks given by Mons. Timothy Verdon and Dr. Filippo Rossi. This series comes at a time when we find that institutions everywhere need to be especially creative in communicating their message. For the Mount Tabor Centre, whose work is making, exhibiting and interpreting the visual arts in light of the faith in Christ, this will continue online, becoming available to a broader number of people and a larger audience.

In the spirit of its international conferences and art exhibitions in Italy and the U.S.A. in recent years, the Centre will offer monthly lectures by Mons. Verdon, director of the Cathedral Museum

of Florence and Academic Director of Mount Tabor, and by Dr Rossi, Instructor in art at the Stanford University program in Florence and Mount Tabor's Art Director. These meetings are offered via Zoom and will include projection of images and Question and Answer interchange. Information about this and other activities of the Centre are at <https://mounttabor.it/>.

**The Terrence G. Kardong
MONASTIC STUDIES GRANT**

ABA members are invited to apply for Monastic Studies Grants to support projects that "cultivate, support and transmit the Benedictine heritage within contemporary culture." 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. More details are on the ABA website.

To apply for a grant please supply:
Name, address, phone number, e-mail
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 applications to: Greg Peters
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BOOK REVIEWS

I would like to make three points about the wonderful new book by Sister Judith Suter, OSB: *St. Benedict's Rule: An Inclusive Translation and Daily Commentary* (Liturgical Press, 2021, ISBN 978-0-8146-8818-2).

First, her inclusive translation flows beautifully. For example, her use of the title "superior" allows a more gentle flow of the message Benedict wants to convey and allows us to focus on its meaning rather than pausing to mentally convert "abbot" or "abbess" or "prioress" to a more inclusive form. Sister Judith does us a favor here in allowing our train of thought to flow.

Secondly, Sister Judith's commentary provides a gift when it phrases many of the dilemmas, paradoxes and issues raised by Benedict's text in the form of questions or statements emerging in the readers' minds when facing such matters. A fine example of this is the verbalizing of the situation of a monk (us) who believes the community has ignored his inescapable truth in making a communal judgement (p. 45).

And, finally, the reflection questions are the most penetrating, succinct and timely that I have come across. Oftentimes, reflection questions require their own explanations to help the reader make connections with the reading materials. These questions stand alone and almost dare the reader to not get the point!

These three facets are my general takeaways. But I must add that having the book has revived a discipline that had been flagging in me of late.

Dick Brummel, oblate
Kansas City, Mo.

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Few, if any, scholars would be more capable than Tim Vivian of tackling a new translation of the wisdom of the desert. *The Sayings and Stories of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*, volume 1 (Cistercian Publications, 2021, ISBN 978-0-87907-109-7) covers the alphabetical version of the sayings from A to H.

Another great contribution of this volume is that the translation is augmented by extremely meticulous footnoting. On any given page, there might be an explanation of the monastic custom being mentioned, references to related texts and alternative translations for a word particularly difficult to render into English.

The stories are also accompanied by an extensive introduction to desert literature, glossary and indexing to Scripture.

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Father Joel Ripinger, OSB, has been an avid scholar of American Benedictine history for decades. His latest work is *Struggle and Ascent: The History of Mount Angel Abbey* (Liturgical Press, 2020, ISBN 978-0-8146-6503-9). This book tells the 140 year history of the Oregon abbey, and tells it within the monastic and cultural context which enhances the total picture of the abbey's life.

Like so many monasteries' histories, this one includes the almost universal elements of 19th century American Benedictine life. There are the idealistic European founders fleeing the secularization of Europe, the conflicting visions of founders and superiors (which fueled so much of the rapid spread of monasticism across the land), the natural disasters and financial setbacks, the hopeful establishment of institutions in response to the needs of their neighbors, and the eventual flourishing of the monastery and its ministries despite everything.

Father Joel is always a master storyteller, with a clear and direct narrative. He does not sanitize the history but presents the struggles and scandals honestly, portraying through word and photos the journey of an important Benedictine community.

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The Saint Benedict Prayer Book is a compilation of some little-known Benedictine devotions translated, adapted, and introduced by oblate Jacob Riyeff (Paraclete Press, 2021, ISBN 978-1-64060-624-1).

He has gathered mainly medieval liturgies and prayers, offering them to the modern reader for information and potential use. There are four sections to the book. The first part is comprised of Little Offices,

liturgies that were used in addition to the regular Liturgy of the Hours, such as the Office of the Dead or the Office of All Saints.

The Commemorations section comes from the commemoration prayers of Winchester Cathedral Priory, each consisting of an antiphon verse, response and collect. They were intended to give a pause for private prayer around a particular theme or saint after the regular communal prayers. The next group in the book is litanies for different saints; the final portion is a collection of prayers with various attributions. While the style or theology of some of them may not make them broadly popular, it is still interesting to glimpse the prayer life of the medieval monastery and, perhaps, to find something that might still speak and make a contribution to someone's prayer life today.

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There always seems to be another book about Thomas Merton, but this one deserves mention because of its topic. *Thomas Merton's Encounter with Buddhism and Beyond* by Jaechan Anselmo Park (Liturgical Press, 2019, ISBN 978-0-8146-8474-0) has the lengthy subtitle "His Interreligious Dialogue, Inter-Monastic Exchanges, and Their Legacy."

Written by a Korean Benedictine monk, the book takes the reader along the path of Merton's own journey as his understanding of contemplation and faith expanded. His appreciation for Eastern religious traditions enabled him to talk to others across faiths and especially to appreciate the Buddhist contemplative orientation.

Today, we have seen his desire for simple encounters with Buddhist monastic counterparts grow into the Vatican supported and internationally organized Monastic Interreligious Dialogue. This group and others hold regular events that further the conversation and celebrate Merton's legacy.

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