



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 Benedictine monasteries of North America and members of the American Benedictine Academy.

Natural Disasters Touch Monasteries

Once again it is the unfortunate task of this newsletter to report on natural disasters and the monasteries affected by them. While last year's news of earthquakes and monasteries came from the other side of the globe, more recent problems have struck closer to home.

Sister Mary David Hydro, OSB, reports from Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, Florida:

"Most of us have had hurricane experience, some since childhood, but these days hurricanes are more violent/destructive. We heard Hurricane Irma was headed straight for us, so we did our preparations: moved lawn furniture, unplugged the unnecessary, moved things away from windows and drew the blinds. Since we have a new monastery (we've been in St. Leo for 128 years but in this new building for only 3), with a new wing just blessed in May, we had 30 evacuees staying with us.

We had a Vigil Mass on Saturday, September 9, because Sunday was the predicted date of arrival of Hurricane Irma. It was blustery and pouring as the storm approached. We had our scheduled prayer and recreation activities, for which the evacuees joined us, looking out the dining room windows at the rain and wind whipping at the hay field and tree line. Sunday night at 9 p.m. we lost power, which was off until Tuesday noon. We could hear the storm roar throughout the night, but we didn't get the worst of the storm predicted; Irma turned into the Gulf before she got to us. On Monday, we could see we'd only suffered some wind damage to trees and our aquaponics garden didn't blow away. At noon on Tuesday the power came back on; evacuees began leaving, grateful that they had a place with us, good food, fellowship and prayer. Our corporate commitment is to 'respond with the compassion of Christ to the hungers of the people of God' and we fed many 'hungers' for safe shelter, good food, others who care/support and a peaceful place of prayer where God is indeed with us. The storm, bad as it was, worked for good and brought people together in His Holy Name. God and the Kingdom were a little more real to all of us after Hurricane Irma."

The monks at nearby St. Leo Abbey had approximately 700 students of their St. Leo University on campus at the time. Although the school was closed until September 12 in anticipation of the storm, there were many foreign students and others who were on campus.

(continued on page 3)

President's Message

Dear Friends,

Although it is usually the custom for the ABA Board to hold a winter meeting in a convention year at the site of the convention, when we met at Beech Grove, Indiana, last spring for our annual meeting, we decided it might be wiser to have our winter meeting a bit earlier – before the snows arrive in Minnesota. True, I am a New Yorker, but when I was a Studium scholar at St. Benedict Monastery during the winter of 2013 I never saw the ground between January 15th and April 15th. I knew caution was in order. Given our various teaching and work schedules, however, the closest date we could find was the last weekend in September. Thankfully the Spirituality Center at St. Benedict Monastery was able to accommodate us at that time and we spent a fine weekend there working on details for the convention.

We think the result is fortuitous because we are able to give you much earlier in the year a sense not only of the details of the coming convention, but also its cost. That should help you in preparing for your own 2018 budgets.

As you already know we will be focusing our attention on Chapter 57 of the Rule, "Artisans of

the Monastery." The principal speakers for the convention will be dear friend and oblate Kathleen Norris, Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB of St. Meinrad Abbey, and Br. David Paul Lange, OSB of Saint John's Abbey. Greg Evans will again be curating an exhibit of members' artistic contributions, but we will also benefit from an exhibit at the monastery's Haehn Museum featuring the extraordinarily beautiful historic needlework vestments made by the sisters in the Ecclesiastical Art Department at St. Benedict's Monastery (1957-1968). We will spend much of Saturday as the guests of Saint John's Abbey and participants will have the opportunity to visit the artisans of that monastery and see their work first-hand. There will be a hymn sing on Friday evening, the usual banquet on Saturday evening and a few surprises as well.

This will also be the 70th anniversary of the ABA. Sister Ephrem Hollerman told me about Sister Alberta Dieker's history of the ABA, covering its first 50 years, that was published in the *American Benedictine Review*: "Ideas and Ideals: The American Benedictine Academy 1948-1998" (ABR 51.2 June 2000) available through HathiTrust at <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015077514902;view=1up;seq=55>>. It was a good lesson for me in what care we all need to take to foster the growth of the ABA and ensure its future.

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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

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.

Sister Annie Thompson, OSB, sent a message from St. Martin's Monastery in the Bahamas. "About the storms, we in Nassau have been spared Irma and Maria's wrath, but our southeastern islands have received damage from both of them. However, we are still in the hurricane season, so please continue to pray."

The Benedictines in Puerto Rico did not fare as well with Hurricane Maria, which made landfall as a category four only a few kilometers from their homes in Humacao. A report at the end of September from the sisters at Monasterio Santa Escolastica in Humacao indicated that the sisters were fine and the monastery itself had very little damage. However, their trees and smaller buildings were destroyed. At their school, Colegio San Benito outside of town, all the windows of the chapel were blown out and the school sustained other serious damage. The major challenge, as with everyone, has been the lack of electricity and water. Their auxiliary generator also ran out of fuel, leaving them without any power for some time.

Three weeks after the hurricane, the monks at Monasterio San Antonio Abad in Humacao were finally able to send a message. Father Robert Medina, OSB, wrote that they still had no electricity at that time and that there was great devastation in their area, with literally no leaves on the trees. The monks, however, are all safe.

Hurricane Harvey, the first of the devastating hurricanes, took its toll on a small Texas monastery. Holy Cross Monastery in Beaumont, Texas, is a diocesan monastery founded in 1998 by two monks from Mount Saviour (Pine City, N.Y.). Soaked by more than 8 feet of flood water, their monastery and retreat center have been lost and the monks are staying in a rectory in Silsbee, Texas, until they can raise the funds to rebuild.

Although Sister Patricia Henry's monastery, Pan de Vida in Torreon, Mexico, is outside the seismic zone of the Mexican earthquake, she was in Mexico City with the sisters at Monasterio San Benito at the time. she sent this account:

"By a strange coincidence I was visiting our founding Monasterio San Benito in Mexico City on September 19 during the earthquake. People there are well trained on how to evacuate a building at the first warning of an earthquake. The schools practice earthquake drills much like fire drills in the States. We

got up immediately from our meeting, went out the front door, saw some school children out on the street and brought them into our safer garden area, and waited for the movement to stop. It lasts a matter of seconds or a very few minutes, but, like a roller coaster ride, it seems to last forever!

There was only minor damage at the monastery: a fallen statue, a broken mirror. An outer wall collapsed at the boys' school next door; but the most serious damage in the neighborhood was a few blocks away where a seven-story apartment building collapsed. One family with young children in our school lost everything they owned except the clothes they were wearing, but saved their lives because they were away at school or at work.

The first several hours are crucial for rescuing victims trapped in the ruins of a fallen building. People are incredibly generous in helping the rescue efforts. They come with shovels and buckets to help remove the mountains of rubble. They bring water and sandwiches, bandages, clothes, bedding, anything they can to help those who are wounded or have lost their homes. I was at the same spot where I had been in the terrible earthquake of 1985. At that time I was able to participate quickly and then over the long haul, in rescue and reconstruction efforts.

On this occasion I realized that people were trying to take care of me, the 'older sister from out of town,' so rather than being more of a hindrance than a help, I returned home early the next day, and hope to be able to send support from a distance.

My concern is for the thousands of homeless in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Puebla, Morelos etc. The government will see to it that Mexico City is repaired quickly, but the people in the small towns and the villages might have to wait for years to receive the help they need."

At the other end of the United States from the hurricanes, forest fires have burned for months in the Northwest but the monasteries in Mount Angel, Ore., and Lacey, Wash., are safe. While the economy and air quality are affected over a large area, Brother Cyril of Drnjevic, OSB, of Mount Angel Abbey, reports "with the onset of fall weather, the fires are all behind us now," but voices the sentiments of all when he adds, "Let us pray for the many people who are seriously affected by current natural and human disasters."

A PATH FORWARD: A POSSIBLE GOVERNANCE MODEL WHEN REGULAR GOVERNANCE OF A MONASTERY IS NOT POSSIBLE

Across the spectrum of monasteries in North America, the reality is that membership is smaller and older. It is also a reality that in many monasteries there is not a sufficient pool for leadership and governance.

In the past when a monastery could no longer sustain itself because of insufficient membership and leadership, most monastic congregations sought to sustain the monastery, if possible, by appointing someone from another community. Benedictines normally use the term “administrator” while Cistercians of the Strict Observance use the term “superior ad nutum.” If appointing an administrator were not feasible or would not solve the problem, the monastery was suppressed as an autonomous house. In some instances, the monastery became a dependent monastery of another monastery. In other cases, the members transferred and moved to a single monastery or to various different monasteries.

For the monastic congregations in North America, the reality is that there are not sufficient monastics from other monasteries available to be administrators. Monasteries which have members who could be administrators need the members for positions in their own monasteries and in many cases also need sufficient income from such members.

It is also true that there are not enough “strong” monasteries to be able to absorb large numbers of monastics from monasteries that are suppressed. In many instances, transferring older members to other monasteries with an aging population merely delays the inevitable. Further, transferring to other monasteries can be disruptive for the members and difficult for them to adjust to a new community which has its own unique culture and relationships.

At times, a monastic congregation could not suppress a monastery immediately because there were members who did not transfer or seek an indult of departure (dispensation). Therefore, the monastery had to stay in existence until there were no more members. The result has been that the president and

council of the monastic congregation had to maintain a “fictitious” monastery and provide both canonical and corporate governance.

However, is there another possibility that permits the members of a small and older community which can no longer fulfill the requirements for regular governance to stay together as an autonomous monastery? The answer is “yes.” The possibility is referred to as the “suspension of regular government” of the monastery.

The regular government of an autonomous monastery consists of three parts: the monastic leader plus the other members of the leadership staff, the conventual chapter, and the monastic council. Each part requires not just “warm bodies” but persons who are capable of fulfilling their respective duties in governance. When one or more of these parts is not possible in a monastery, then the regular government of the monastery is no longer possible. The model of regular government is suspended so that the three parts of regular government are no longer required. Rather, a model of government is developed that fits the realities of the community. The monastics themselves remain members of the monastery and the monastery remains autonomous.

The consequences of suspension are that there is no longer a conventual chapter, an elected leader, and an elected/appointed council. “Competent authority” appoints a major superior. The competent authority would be the person designated in the proper law of the monastic congregation. For OSB congregations this would be the president and council. For the OSCO congregation, this could be the Father Immediate or the Abbot General. If there is no provision for suspending the government and appointing a superior, an indult from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) would be necessary. The person appointed could be a member of the monastery, a monastic from another monastery, or a member of a non-monastic religious institute.

When CICLSAL appoints such a major superior, the title that is used is “commissary.” The term “commissary” is used in this article to keep terminology consistent with CICLSAL’s terminology. The term also distinguishes a major

superior of a monastery with suspended government from an administrator of a monastery with regular government. According to the present practice of CICALSAL, the commissary must be a member of a religious institute. The commissary is to appoint at least two advisors to assist in the task of governance. The advisors can be from within or from without the monastery and could even be lay persons. The commissary is to involve the members of the community in decision-making when advisable and in deciding the future of the monastery.

The role of the commissary is general oversight of the community, that is, to assure the daily care of the members so that they can continue to live life together in the fullest way possible. Therefore, the commissary does not need to live at the monastery. Rather, the commissary can appoint someone else to take care of the daily needs of the community. This person could be a member of the monastery or another religious institute or perhaps an employee such as the business manager.

Because there is suspended regular government, there are few, if any, canonical decisions to be made. The monastery does not accept new members, it does not make major financial decisions, and there are no canonical appointments to be made.

There are a number advantages to suspending the regular government of a monastery and appointing a commissary. First, the community remains together and continues to live life in the manner of their monastery with adjustments for the age and number of members. Second, an on-site administrator from another monastery is not required. Third, other monasteries do not need to accept transfers to their community. Fourth, if the monastery must be continued in existence for some reasons, the monastic congregation through its leadership does not have to become the canonical governing body of the monastery. In the OCSO houses, this may be the Father Immediate. For OSB monasteries, this may be the congregation/federation president and council.

Two Benedictine monastic congregations, the American-Cassinese Congregation and the Federation of St. Gertrude, have already adopted a norm to their proper law providing that the president and council may suspend the regular government of a monastery

and appoint a commissary. One autonomous monastery presently has suspended government and has a commissary from another religious institute.

Hopefully, this article will help begin a reflection among the monasteries of the United States and the other monastic congregations on adopting such a norm and in the future implementing it when advisable. If such a norm is adopted it would be important to prepare guidelines for the suspension of the regular government. The guidelines could include: the conditions for suspending the government, the procedures for suspension, the continuing rights and obligations of the monastery within the monastic congregation, the term of office of a commissary, governance of the civil corporation, and other issues.

If you have a question, comment, or idea for a future column, feel free to contact Father Dan.

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The Cushwa Center at Notre Dame University has received a gift that will support the Mother Theodore Guerin Research Travel Grant Program. This initiative both celebrates the past and seeks to shape the future. Memorializing the historic connection between Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and Notre Dame, it supports researchers whose projects seek to feature Catholic women more prominently in stories of the past. Grants of up to \$1,500 will be made to scholars seeking to visit any repository in or outside the United States, or traveling to conduct oral interviews, especially of women religious, for purposes of historical, sociological, theological, and peace studies research. An inaugural round of grants will be awarded in late spring 2018 (application deadline: May 1, 2018). Thereafter, applications will be due December 31 each year for research in the subsequent calendar year. Complete application guidelines will appear soon at <cushwa.nd.edu>.

Convention Matters

SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Although full details of the convention are not yet available, there is some preliminary information for those who are planning their calendar for 2018 and also preparing their budget for the year.

The conference theme of “Artisans of the Monastery” will be addressed by three major speakers. Bestselling poet and essayist, Kathleen Norris, an oblate of Assumption Abbey (Richardton, N. D.), will address the topic “Artistic Process and Benedictine Values” and be among those sharing their own creative works.

Brother Martin Erspamer, OSB, of St. Meinrad Archabbey (St. Meinrad, Ind.), is well qualified to speak on “Artisan of the Monastery.” He is a potter at the monastery and also a longtime creator of stained glass for the renowned Emil Frei Stained Glass Studio.

Brother David Paul Lange, OSB, will lead an experience of “The Intersection of Faith and Architecture: Designing an Abbey Church and Other Spaces for a Modern Era.” It will include a tour of Saint John’s Abbey’s famous worship spaces, both the upper church and the crypt chapels with their many art holdings. Brother David Paul is a sculptor, professor of art, subprior of Saint John’s Abbey (Collegeville, Minn.), and director of the Benedictine Institute at Saint John’s University.

Other features are described in the president’s letter on page 2 of this issue.

At a recent board meeting, the following costs for the convention were set:

Housing - \$50 per night for a single; \$35 for a double. All rooms are air-conditioned

Convention fee:

\$200 for ABA members **before May 1, 2018**

\$225 for non-members before May 1, 2018

\$225 for ABA members **after May 1, 2018**

\$250 for non-members after May 1, 2018

The registration form will be available soon on the website and will be printed in the February 2018 issue of this newsletter.

Call for Artwork

The Visual Arts Section of the ABA invites Benedictine artists to submit one to four pieces of their artwork for the ABA Art Show July 19-22, 2018, during the convention in St. Joseph, Minnesota. There will also be a digital art gallery for which artists may submit one to three digital images. The theme for the convention is “Artisans of the Monastery.”

Criteria for submission:

- Original art work in any medium (fiber, ceramic, woodworking, stain glass, photography, etc.)
- Pieces must be ready for hanging or display on a pedestal or table
- Clearly label each piece with your name
- Include the name of your community and its location
- Ship in a returnable container with pre-paid return shipping included
- **DO NOT SHIP ANYTHING WITH GLASS**

Bring art to the convention or ship to arrive at the convention site by 12:00 noon, July 19, 2018.

Please note, ABA is not responsible for returning shipments. Shippers will need to make arrangements for return shipping with Gregory Evans. Information on the address to which to ship your art will be posted in the February 2018 newsletter.

Digital submissions for the digital gallery need to be sent in JPEG format. Please email files to <greg.evans.oblsb@icloud.com> by June 16, 2018.

Please contact Gregory Evans with questions or concerns: Phone (571) 225-7745, Email: <greg.oblsb@gmail.com>.

Board Nominations

It is that time when members of the academy get to exercise one of their rights of membership by placing nominations for vice-president and board members. The election will take place during the business meeting of the 2018 convention at St.

Benedict Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. Nominees must be current ABA members. Membership extends from January through December of each year.

In 2016, Sister Renee Brannigan, OSB of Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton, ND., and Sister Marianne Burkhard, OSB of St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, Ill., were elected for a two-year term. Sister Marianne is not eligible for re-election. At the same time, Oblate Greg Peters and Oblate Judith Valente were elected for four-year terms so they will remain on the board for two more years unless one of them is elected vice president. According to the by-laws, the vice president will serve as president after two years. The by-laws also stipulate that at least one of the board members must be an oblate. Duties of the vice president and board can be found in the by-laws.

Nominations for vice president and board members may be submitted to the current vice president, Sister Antoinette Purcell, OSB, in advance or made from the floor during the business meeting. Having nominations in advance helps to ensure that there is a sufficient slate for the election process. It also allows for information about the candidates to be published in the *American Monastic Newsletter* in advance of the convention for the members' deliberation and prayer.

Please take time to give this serious right of membership your energy and initiative. Members may submit names for vice president or board members to Antoinette by email: <antoinettep1964@gmail.com>, or by hard copy to Antoinette Purcell, OSB / 1402 Southern Ave / Beech Grove, IN 46107.



NEWS

Transitions

The Abbot President of the Subiaco Cassinese Congregation issued a decree in June establishing the Monastery of Thien Tam in Kerens, Texas, as an independent priory. It was founded in 2009 by Christ in the Desert Abbey (Abiquiu, N.M.) as the first Vietnamese Benedictine monastery in North America.

In September, Father Dominic Hanh Duc Nguyen, OSB, was elected first conventual prior.

The Trappist Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity in Huntsville, Utah, has closed with the departure of the last monk in August. The Utah landmark was founded in 1947 and, at its height, was home to 84 monks who sold bread, multigrain cereal, and honey to support themselves.

Sister Barbara Austin, OSB, of St. Joseph Monastery (Tulsa, Okla.) has been appointed administrator of Queen of Angels Monastery (Liberty, Mo.) and Sister Anne Shepard, OSB, of Mount St. Scholastica (Atchison, Kan.) administrator of Monasterio San Benito (Mexico City). Abbot Daniel Maloney, OSB was elected abbot of Assumption Abbey in Richardton, N. D.

* * * * *

Responding to a request from Abbot Primate Gregory Polan OSB, Abbots President Jeremias Schröder OSB (Ottilien) and Elias Lorenzo OSB (American-Cassinese), Bro. Richard Oliver OSB (webweaver), and Prior Mauritius Wilde OSB (via Skype from Sant'Anselmo) met, 23-24 September 2017, at St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, N.J., to discuss renovation of the <osb.org> website. Bro. Richard created the non-profit website in 1995, and it has served as a stable, reliable source of general information about the Order of Saint Benedict. The two-day discussions concluded with the proposal that a renovated version of the site serve in future as the official website of the Benedictine Confederation of monastic congregations. It is to be hoped that the new website will express the diversity and multi-faceted reality of Benedictine life, directing visitors whenever possible to other, independent Benedictine websites of whatever primary language. The committee invites visitors and users of the present website to email your comments or suggestions to <info@osb.org> about the nature and content of the proposed renovation before the next committee meeting in Rome in late November 2017.

* * * * *

Synod of Abbots President

The annual Synod of Abbots President met in the United States this year at St. Meinrad Archabbey, Ind., September 11-15. The theme of the synod was

the pastoral role of leadership. The abbot primate and other officers of Sant'Anselmo's gave reports, as did Sister Judith Heble OSB, as moderator of the women superiors' organization CIB. The abbots approved the 2017-18 budget and 2016-17 audit for the abbey and atheneum at S. Anselmo and discussed the upcoming Vatican Synod on Youth, Faith, and Vocational Discernment. The meeting concluded with reports on Benedictine life in North America by Father Joel Rippinger OSB, Marmion Abbey (Aurora, Ill.); Sisters Kathryn Huber OSB and Barbara Lynn Schmitz OSB, Monastery Immaculate Conception (Ferdinand, Ind.); and Sister Margaret Funk OSB, Our Lady of Grace Monastery (Beech Grove, Ind).

Honors

The state of Arkansas honored the *Olivetian Benedictine Sisters of Holy Angels Convent* in Jonesboro for their 130-year impact on the state as inductees into the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame. The sisters continue to serve in various parish ministries and in administration and pastoral care at Jonesboro's St. Bernard's Medical Center, which they established in 1900.

The *Benedictine Sisters of Holy Wisdom Monastery* (Madison, Wisc.) received the inaugural Assisi Award for faith-based conservation at the 28th International Congress of Conservation Biology's opening ceremony on July 23, 2017, in Cartagena, Colombia in front of nearly 1,500 attendees.

The Assisi Award acknowledges organizations and individuals whose work demonstrates that faith-based conservation is contributing significantly to the common global effort of conserving life on earth.

Sisters Mary David Walgenbach and Joanne Kollasch accepted the award on behalf of their community. Theirs is the first ecumenical Benedictine community in North America where Catholic and Protestant women live, pray and work together with a mission to weave prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth into a shared way of life.

Benedictine Youth Congress

St. Benedict's Abbey and Benedictine College, Atchison, Kan., hosted the Benedictine Youth

Congress, July 16-19 for 60 students from Benedictine secondary schools throughout the country, along with their teacher-chaperones. Ms. Molly Buccola, campus minister at Woodside Priory in Portola, Cal., organized the conference. Students joined the monks in the abbey for Mass and vespers each day and students offered workshops and led lectio divina in small groups.

OCSO General Chapter

The General Chapter of the Trappist Cistercian (OCSO) men and women was held in Assisi, Italy, from Sept. 6 to 27. Representatives from across the globe presented reports on their regions and participated in various commissions. Several talks were given on the topic of a vision for the order in the 21st century. Among the speakers were Dom Mauro Giuseppe Lepori, Abbot General of the Cistercian Order (O.Cist.) and some members of the international association of lay Cistercian communities in addition to monks and nuns from various OCSO communities. A highlight was the audience and Mass in Rome with Pope Francis.

International Conference for Junior Monks

Benedictine monks in simple vows and their formation directors gathered at Sant'Anselmo in Rome June 22 to July 6 for a time of reflection on their commitment to celibacy. Among the 30 participants were American monks from Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Saint Vincent Archabbey, Saint Anselm Abbey, Saint Bernard Abbey, Saint Gregory Abbey, Saint Leo Abbey, and Saint John's Abbey, along with monks from Korea, Hungary, Austria, England, France, Spain, Israel and Brazil. Brother John Mark Falkenhain, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey who is well known for his work in the area of human development and formation for celibacy, was the conference presenter. The program included lectures, discussion among participants from different countries and Benedictine traditions, and visits to important Benedictine sites.

BOOK REVIEWS

Terrence Kardong, OSB. *Benedict Backwards: Reading the Rule in the 21st Century*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn., 2017. \$17.95, ISBN 978-0-8146-4618-2.

Leave it to the prolific and creative Father Terrence to entitle a book “Benedict Backwards” with a cover showing the back side of a statue of the saint. Once he has the reader’s attention, he can explain that his premise is that one can gain new perspectives on the Rule by beginning with the last chapters. Everything should be considered in the light of the final discourse on mutual obedience. From there, the author tackles authority, self-will, and numerous monastic virtues.

With his great knowledge of the tradition, he is able to examine how Benedict altered sources like Cassian and the Master. Moreover, with his keen observation of human nature, he addresses with wit and wisdom many of the challenges of contemporary society.

Irene Nowel, OSB. *Wisdom, the Good Life: Wisdom Literature and the Rule of St. Benedict*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn., 2017. \$14.95, ISBN 978-0-8146-4553-6.

The noted Old Testament scholar Sister Irene Nowell turns her attention to the Rule of St. Benedict as wisdom literature. Suffering, creation, relationships and listening are among the topics for which she provides insights. She takes selections from the biblical wisdom books to highlight each topic and then connects them to the wisdom imparted by St. Benedict.

With her conversational style and ability to connect to the challenges of everyday life, this is a good book for both individual and group reflection. It is a short book, only 82 pages, with chapters of only a few pages, ideal for lectio meditation. The simple yet deep questions included at the end of each section make this book an excellent choice for groups such as oblates.

Daniel McCarthy, OSB and James Leachman, OSB. *Come Into the Light: Church Interiors for the Celebration of Liturgy*. Canterbury Press, Norwich, UK 2016. ISBN 978-1-84825-757-3.

These two monks, one American and one British, have spent years studying and teaching about liturgical spaces. This book presents, in short sections with illustrative photos, their basic principles. From the baptismal font to the ambo, this book explores the meaning of each space and ritual of the Christian assembly.

This isn’t a book just for those who are building or renovating a church. Each brief section begins with consideration of what happens in the particular place or part of Eucharist and what it symbolizes. The authors then invite the reader, whether architect, liturgist, or ordinary parishioner, to think about how to enhance that symbolism by use of space and movement.

Fiona Gardner. *The Only Mind Worth Having: Thomas Merton and the Child Mind*. Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, UK, 2016. \$37.50, ISBN 978-0-7188-9441-2.

In this book, Gardner uses her background as both a psychotherapist and spiritual director to delve into Merton’s observation that a child’s mind is the only mind worth having. Since Jesus also asks his followers to be like little children, this book explores what understanding and retrieving the mind of a child might look like.

She weaves notions of the innocent soul from various traditions with reflections from Merton’s own childhood memories. Then there is considerable attention paid to the wounded child that lives within every adult. Merton is the guide for the reader through recollections of great loss and pain, but then where spiritual healing might occur. This book might offer a new lens not only for those who are devoted to Merton but for those who hardly know him but are grappling with their own healing of memories.

In the past year and a half, Cistercian Publications has produced several volumes of interest in the study of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Among them are two volumes of his sermons, *Sermons for the Autumn Season* (2016, translated by Irene Edmonds, OCSO) and *Monastic Sermons* (2016, translated by Daniel Griggs). Each contains a rich mine of Bernard’s rhetoric from which many quotes and

Monastic Essay Contest

The Essay

The word “essay” is derived from the French verb *essayer*, meaning to try, probe, test. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, essays give a sense of probing and concrete evidence of the thinking that has gone into a piece of writing. Essays are a genre that attracts and delights as well as informs; they maintain a balance between the objective and the subjective, certainty and ambiguity; they provide coherent and illustrative content leading to something that is worth thinking about.

On the basis of this definition, we encourage new monastics and new oblates to submit essays of 3,000-3,200 words dealing with a Benedictine topic (see below) on an abstract level, i.e. using some published sources, and a concrete level showing the writer’s personal engagement. An essay is not a research paper, but rather a more personal statement about some aspect of the RB/Benedictine life showing the writer’s personal process of thinking and feeling that led to his/her conclusion.

We suggest that you choose a topic along these lines:

- ◆ How have you used RB in a concrete way in your daily life?
- ◆ How is RB 7 relevant in issues today?
- ◆ Is contemplation possible in the age of Snapchat, Twitter, etc.?

Requirements for Participation

Be a new monastic/oblate up to ten years after first profession or oblation

Submit an essay of 3,000 - 3,200 words as a double-spaced and computer-generated Word document

Deadline: March 31, 2018, i.e. the year of next ABA convention

Send to: Sister Marianne Burkhard OSB at srmarianne@cdop.org

Winners will be notified by May 10, 2018

Prizes

Winner will receive a 2-year membership in ABA with waiver of registration and housing fees for the 2018 convention and a book of interest to monastics/oblates

Second place essay will receive a book

The winner will receive help in publishing the best essay, and all entrants will have the possibility of mentoring by ABA members to help them further develop their thoughts/writing.

The ABA Executive Board would like to remind members of the availability of Monastic Studies Grant, awarded annually, which provide financial support for monastic learning and research projects. All American Benedictine Academy members are invited to apply for these grants, which provide funds to support projects that foster the mission of the ABA. Grant support may be used for research, travel, or other modes of exploring and promoting the Benedictine heritage. These broad and generous guidelines allow for a range of grant requests, such as “traditional” research projects but could also include funding for oblates to attend a monastic-themed meeting or financial support to create a piece of monastic art. The board eagerly awaits future applications. (See application details below). If you have an idea but you are unsure if it qualifies, you can address questions to Dr. Greg Peters at greg.peters@biola.edu.

MONASTIC STUDIES GRANTS

ABA members are invited to apply for Monastic Studies Grants, which provide funds 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 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

Book Reviews (continued from page 9)

food for thought might be gathered for today’s homilist or reader. Just prior to these two works, Cistercian also published *The First Life of Bernard of Clairvaux* by William of Saint-Thierry et al. (2015, translated by Hilary Costello, OCSO) with scriptural citations indicated in margin, as well as other useful information.

Matteo Nicolini-Zani. *Christian Monks on Chinese Soil*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn., 2016. \$39.95, ISBN 978-0-8146-4699-1.

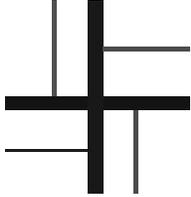
As interest in Christianity in China grows, this book by an Italian monk, translated by Sophia Senyk and Father William Skudlarek, provides a valuable resource. Almost 400 pages and with photos, it chronicles the life and work of Carmelites, Trappists and Benedictines in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as a fascinating very early (8th century) encounter. There are also some documents, including a Chinese preface to an 1894 translation of the Rule of St. Benedict. This is an important addition to the reading of anyone interested in monastic history because it provides a wide-ranging view of missions to China.

Thomas Merton Symposium 2018
First Call for Papers

To mark the 50th anniversary of Thomas Merton’s death, the Monastic Institute of Sant’ Anselmo will help answer the question: “How does Merton’s legacy remain relevant today?” We invite proposals of interdisciplinary reflections on Merton’s work to be presented in an international symposium on the Aventine Hill in Rome in conjunction with the Associazione Thomas Merton Italia. Proposals of no more than 250 words, and a short biographical statement of 1-2 sentences, should be submitted by 30 November 2017, by e-mail to ufficioretore@anselmianum.com. More information is at merton.anselmianum.com.

ABA MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS

The ABA website, *The American Monastic Newsletter*, awards and grants for monastic studies, and conventions (for which members receive a registration discount)



The American Benedictine Academy

www.americanbenedictine.org

Membership Application

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY _____

(or) OBLATE AFFILIATION _____

(or) ACADEMIC/OTHER AFFILIATION _____

Do you have any areas of interest/expertise you wish to share with the Academy?

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

Monastic Research ___ Visual Arts ___ Archives ___ Library ___

Enclosed: \$35 for one year membership ___ \$50 for two years _____

MAIL TO:
Susan Hooks, OSB
PO Box 577
Nashville IN 47448

email: susanh@thedome.org