



The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

Published under the auspices of the American Benedictine Academy

www.americanbenedictine.org

Volume 49, Number 3

October 2018

Inside this issue:

President's Message	2
Canon Law Column	4
News	6
Oblate Symposium	7
Convention Reports	9
Grant Report	11
Membership Form	12

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.

T4 Project Preserves Monastic Wisdom

Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, OSB

Some of you may be aware of the Wisdom Connections T4 program which has been in place for 3 years now. It was funded by a generous grant from the GHR Foundation and implemented by many Benedictine sisters throughout the United States. Because of the stipulations of the grant, during the first three years of the program, only women's Benedictine communities in the United States, with women in initial formation were able to participate. Because the grant concluded November 30, 2017, the program has been opened as a membership-based program for women's and men's Benedictine communities from anywhere in the world.

If you have not heard of T4 here is some information you might like to know. The official name of the program is "Wisdom Connections: Timeless Traditions↔Technological Times" but is often called the T4 program for short. T4 is a Benedictine formation program which uses technology to provide initial and ongoing formation classes for members of Benedictine communities. The program is also used to connect newer members and their formation directors with each other across the world.

The T4 program offers access to a secure digital library with presentations by Benedictine scholars such as Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, Sister Irene Nowell, Father Jerome Kodell, Sister Ephrem Hollarman, Father Terrence Kardong, Sister Joan Chittister, and many more. Some topics include Benedictine History, Liturgy of the Hours, profession/vows, Rule of St. Benedict, Scripture, Benedictine spirituality, and personal awareness/development. There are currently over 260 videos in the library with 40 different presenters.

The T4 program also offers access to a variety of resources to go along with the videos. For each presenter, a biography page is provided. This page includes a photo and information about the presenter as well as titles and descriptions of all presentations s/he has in the T4 library. For presentations where it is applicable, there is access to handouts and any other support

(continued on p. 3)

President's Message

I would like to introduce myself to you and then share with you some things I know and some things I don't know. I am a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana. I made profession in 1964. From 1967 to 1992, I served as a primary teacher and a principal in

Catholic schools, a parish director of religious education, and in the religious education department for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. After taking time for expanding my skills to include spiritual direction and retreat work, I worked as director of programs at our retreat center from 1993 to 2000, which included serving as a spiritual director, retreat leader and speaker. In 1993 I was appointed to serve my community as director of oblates along with these other duties already mentioned. Related to that role, I served as president of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors for six years.

Since 2000, I continue as director of oblates, (I'm beginning my 26th year), serving also as a spiritual director, and retreat leader. In 2017 the role of director of the Spiritual Direction Internship Program sponsored by our retreat center was added to my duties. I have been a member of ABA since about

1999, serving two terms on the board before being elected vice president/president elect.

I see myself as a humble practitioner, not a scholar or researcher. I offer myself to you in this role of service to ABA as I am -- ignorant of many things but knowing a few things. Here's what I know for sure. This is a different time than when I entered the community in 1962. Monastic communities in North America are diminishing in membership and closing. There is a shortage of priests to serve parishes and parishes are closing. There is growth in lay involvement in the church and growth in oblate communities. I know a few more things but I won't bore you with my list.

Among the many things I don't know are several questions of particular significance that I believe we need to address as members of ABA. What will become of ABA as we move into the future with fewer monastics? How can we increase membership and encourage ongoing research and scholarship of things Benedictine? How do we need to adapt or what do we need to change to continue being vibrant and relevant to current and new members? How does who we are and what we do as the American Benedictine Academy impact our monastic and oblate communities as well as our church, society and world?

It is these questions that have played on my mind as I have prayed about and pondered over the future of this association and the best approach to our 2020 conference. The year itself grabbed my attention first as I thought of 2020 as something we associate with eyesight. "2020 Vision" came easily, but how to use that in connection with something that would draw persons interested in Benedictine things took more work. So, after much thought and playing around with "2020 Vision" as a theme I arrived at my final answer: 2020 Vision: Seeing the World in a Single Ray of Light.

I assume everyone reading this knows the story from *The Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*, written in Pope Gregory's Book Two of *The Dialogues* about Benedict seeing the world in a single ray of light. In his commentary on this story, Terrence Kardong writes, "... Benedict does not have a cosmic dream or even a cosmic vision. He is fully within the realm of Christian mysticism, and so what he sees is not of



The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

Submit any announcements or articles to:

Editor: Judith Sutura, OSB

Mount St. Scholastica, 801 S. 8th, Atchison, KS 66002

Email: jsutura@mountosb.org

For all address changes, membership payments, or any other ABA business, please contact the ABA secretary:

Email: ambenacad@gmail.com

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

President's Message (continued)

this world at all. When he sees the whole of creation summed up in a tiny ball, the context is simply the immensity of God himself.” (The Life of St. Benedict by Gregory the Great. Terrence G. Kardong. Liturgical Press, 2009; p. 137)

I hope we can take time to explore the immensity of God; and begin to consider how we might best convey the presence of God alive in this time, in our world, and all creation. I believe it is a message we and our world needs to hear today.

The conference will be hosted at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, from July 16-19, 2020. I am not ready to name all the speakers at this time, but I can tell you that I am asking them to help us consider our past, the current situation of Benedictine monasticism in other parts of the world, and how we can be relevant to our world into the future. I hope we can explore these questions. What gifts do Benedictines in Asia, Africa, Central and South America offer to monastics and oblates of North America? How do the challenges they face impact us? What study, what research will help us to address the challenges we face as part of the community of Benedictines around the world? What will sustain us in seeing the immensity of God and being a peaceful, hope-filled presence in a world of injustice and chaos? How can we as monastics and oblates of North America move the agenda of the Gospel forward to benefit all people and all God's creation?

I believe that this past July's conference, in which we reflected on the role of art and artists, is important as we move to look with "2020 vision" at our world today and what it holds for the future. We need beauty and creativity to sustain us as we "run and do now what will profit us for all eternity." On that note I concluded my convention talk with a poem by Patrick Henry. I understand that this poem has Benedictine roots. It was written in a hermitage at Mount St. Benedict in Erie, Pennsylvania, and it incorporates Benedict's vision of the whole world caught up in a single ray of light. However, due to copyright law the poem is not included here.

Antoinette Purcell, OSB
ABA president
antoinettep1964@gmail.com

T4 (continued from p. 1)

documents provided by the presenters. These can be printed out or saved electronically and used for classes or formation days.

For ease of use, a full list of all presentations in the T4 library is easily available on the T4 web page. This document has clickable hyperlinks that will take you directly to the biographies, videos, and handouts. If a little more guidance is needed, members have access to T4 specific instructional materials including a *T4 Technology Handbook* and homemade videos showing how to use various parts of the T4 program.

If members so choose, there is opportunity for their initial formation members and initial formation directors to participate in T4 Relationship Building Groups using a video conferencing program called Zoom. These groups are organized by T4 volunteer committee members and run by T4 volunteer moderators.

The T4 membership fee is \$500 U.S. dollars per year, due every December 1. This membership fee will grant access to all the T4 resources. For communities who need a little extra help, a 1 to 2 day in-person T4 orientation and training in English may be available (this is an added expense above the membership fee).

For more information about the T4 program, the website address is: www.wisdomconnectionst4.org. If you have questions, or would like further information, please contact the program's Project Director & Technology Administrator, Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, OSB at t4srmichelle@gmail.com or call her at 812-367-1411, ext. 2898.

The ABA welcomes its new executive secretary, Sister Robin Lynn Evans. All ABA business correspondence should be directed to her at the ABA's email address:

ambenacad@gmail.com

and membership dues mailed to her at:

**Sister Robin Lynn Evans, OSB
802 E. 10th St.
Ferdinand, IN 47532**

CANON LAW COLUMN

The Other Side Of The Coin: Canonical Rights Monastics Do Not Have

[This column is a follow-up to the column entitled “The Canonical Rights of a Monastic” published in *AMN*, June 2018]

Canon 670 states: “An institute must supply the members with all those things which are necessary to achieve the purpose of their vocation, according to the norms of the constitutions.” This article will comment on some things that are not canonical rights of a monastic even though the monastic may think he/she needs them to achieve the purpose of his/her vocation.

While it is customary in a monastery that a monastic has the right to many things that are common in society, there is no such canonical right. A monastic does not have a canonical right, but requires permission, either explicit or implicit to: spend money, use a car, a computer, a phone, a TV or radio, and to travel, vacation, or be away from the monastery. In the normal course of monastic life, many of these things are not a problem. However, a monastic superior may give a monastic an obedience stating that the monastic may not have access to one or several of these. Such an obedience is not an action that is subject to penal recourse since the obedience is not a penalty taking away any rights. Thus, safety plans given to monastics who have committed sexual abuse are based on obedience rather than on violation of a penal law in the Code of Canon Law.

While it is assumed that a monastic has the right to health care, this is not an absolute right. A monastic superior may set limits on medical, dental and psychological care without permission. In the case of psychological treatment, permission may be required so that the treatment is not indefinite. In such a case, a monastery may have a policy that permission is not required for visiting a counselor three or four times but permission is required for any treatment lasting longer. The policy may also require that, in long term treatment, the monastic superior or his/her delegate be involved in some way in the treatment program.

What is stated above about health care is also applicable to other assistance a monastic may need. While a monastic has a right to a canon lawyer to exercise or protect his/her rights, the monastic does

not have the right to *any* canon lawyer. The canon lawyer must be approved by the monastic superior. The approval is based mainly on the canon lawyer’s expertise and fees. The same is true when a monastic requires a civil attorney, although in criminal cases the monastic could be required to request from the court a court-appointed lawyer.

A monastic does not have the right to choose a work assignment either within or outside of the monastery. The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) decided in a case before it that the superior is the person who decides on the work assignment of a member. When, with permission, a monastic is working for a diocese, the monastic superior may withdraw the permission at any time (canon 682.2). The withdrawal of permission does not require a reason since the canon states that it is at the “discretion” of the superior.

Similar to a work assignment, a monastic priest does not have a right to exercise priestly ministry or be given an assignment that includes exercise of priestly ministry. The exception to this is that a priest, unless impeded by canon law, has the right to celebrate the Eucharist (canon 900.2). A priest is impeded if he has incurred an irregularity (canon 1044), an impediment or a penalty. Even if the priest is not impeded, he does not have the right to celebrate the Eucharist in a pastoral setting with other persons present.

A monastic does not have a right to hold a civil government office (canon 672 referencing canon 285.3).

A monastic does not have the right, without permission, to manage the affairs and assets of another person (canon 672 referencing canon 285.4). Among financial matters for which a monastic needs the permission of the monastic superior are: to be a guardian, to have the power of attorney over assets of another, and to accept being an executor of a will.

A monastic does not have a right to keep or use a gift, since whatever a monastic with total renunciation receives belongs to the monastery. Therefore, just because a friend or family member will finance a trip to Europe, the monastic is not entitled to accept the gift without permission from the superior. If a monastic receives a monetary gift for some use, the monastic superior may give permission to use some of the money and require he/she to remit the remaining amount to the monastery.

A monastic does not have a right to receive an indult of excommunication from the monastic superior (canon 686). However, the denial of the petition for excommunication is subject to hierarchical recourse to CICLSAL, which has the authority to grant the indult.

A monastic does not have a right to transfer to another monastic or religious institute without permission (canon 684). However, if it is the monastic's superior who denies the approval, but not the superior of the monastery or religious institute to which he or she wishes to transfer, the denial is subject to hierarchical recourse to CICLSAL which has the authority to give the approval.

A monastic priest does not have a right to leave the monastery and incardinate into a diocese without approval (canon 693). However, if it is his superior who denies the approval but not the diocesan bishop, the denial is subject to hierarchical recourse to CICLSAL, which has the authority to grant the necessary indult for incardination.

A monastic does not have the right to a favorable supporting letter from the monastic superior when applying for an indult of departure (dispensation) from CICLSAL. Even if the monastic superior may oppose the granting of the indult, he/she must transmit the petition to the Congregation or to the competent authority of the monastic congregation along with the reasons he/she opposes the granting of the indult (canon 691). The competent monastic superior in the constitutions grants the indult of departure for a member who is in temporary profession (canon 688.2). If the competent superior refuses to grant the indult of departure, the member has the right to hierarchical recourse.

In this article there have been references to "hierarchical recourse." In my next column I will discuss the right to hierarchical recourse and how to exercise this right.

Daniel J Ward, OSB
Djaward44@gmail.com

Readers are invited to send questions or suggestions for future columns to Father Dan.

The Federation of Saint Benedict held its general chapter in July at Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, N.D. This triennial gathering is much looked forward to as our federation is rather far-flung across the world. We are also the smallest federation with ten member monasteries. Four of the monasteries are referred to as the "Island Monasteries," each monastery being located on an island: Japan, Taiwan, The Bahamas, and Puerto Rico. Because of the distance, we communicate in person only every three years, so the gathering is a highlight.

We invited two Benedictines to speak to us of current realities and possibilities. Father Dan Ward, OSB, spoke of the reality religious houses are facing in numbers and age. He spoke of the current discussions regarding allowing sisters to stay in their monastery with the unique governance model of the commissary. Sister Linda Romey, OSB, spoke to us of change. As our reality changes, it is essential to grow and evolve to allow transformation. We are reframing, redefining and reconfiguring not who we are but how we are. We can walk into the future that we creatively shape in the present.

The challenge of our federation gathering is language. A goal for the 2018 federation chapter was to be as inclusive as possible. One new technology that was most helpful is Google Translate. It does translate and, when we asked the sisters of the island monasteries, they said it was adequate. The presentations and resolutions and the schedule were translated into the respective languages and sent before the gathering. At the chapter, we learned greetings in the various languages and did our best to use them. We had an interpreter for one delegation. We listened as the sisters from Puerto Rico shared their experience and their continued reality following hurricane Maria. In the end, we all agreed we had connected as never before and it was a gift for all of us.

Sister Kerry O'Reilly, OSB
President, Federation of Saint Benedict
koreilly@csbsju.edu



NEWS

The sisters of St. Martin Monastery in Nassau, The Bahamas, have elected Sister Marva Coakley, OSB, as their prioress.

* * * * *

The Holy See's Congregation for the Causes of Saints has added "Benedictine Oblate" to "Co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement" as the official title of Dorothy Day's sainthood cause. George Horton, Vice-Postulator of the Cause, heralded the decision as an affirmation of Dorothy Day's guiding spirituality. "The Benedictine balance of work, prayer, and study appealed to Dorothy's heart as well as her intellect," he said. "She infused this spirituality, which she originally learned from Peter Maurin, into her writings and the Catholic Worker." Already deeply committed to daily meditation and attendance at weekday Mass, Dorothy Day became a Benedictine oblate in 1955, affiliating with St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, Illinois. She was especially attracted to this Abbey for its work in forging relationships with the Orthodox Church.

Dorothy Day, Servant of God, is a candidate for sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church. The Archdiocese of New York is responsible for conducting a thorough Inquiry into her life and practice of the Cardinal and Theological Virtues. The Inquiry includes a thorough review of her over 1300 publications and 36 boxes of unpublished writings held at Marquette University's Dorothy Day Archives. The Archdiocese projects completion of this phase in two years if the Cause remains fully funded.

The Dorothy Day Guild has launched its Loaves and Fishes Campaign to raise \$50,000 at dorothydayguild.org. The Dorothy Day Guild was established in 2005 to spread the word of Dorothy Day's life, work, and sanctity; to identify the growing devotion to Dorothy Day; and to document her ability to intercede for people in need of God's healing, mercy, and assistance. To support this work or for more information, contact George Horton, Dorothy Day Guild, Archdiocese of N.Y., george.horton@archny.org.

* * * * *

On April 28, another lay Benedictine oblate was beatified, a significant step on the way to becoming a canonized saint in the Catholic Church.

Blessed Hanna Chrzanowska, who died in 1973, was a Polish nurse who, during and after World War II, organized nurses for home care in Warsaw, and helped feed and resettle war refugees. Following the war she became head of a nursing home where, in addition to the administrative duties, she cared for the residents and worked with nursing students.

Defying later Communist authority, she organized a system of parish nurses in which professional nurses were supported by priests, nuns, students, the family and neighbors of the sick. In this way, clergy and others were brought into more contact with poor, sick and needy people around them. She is thus considered a pioneer of hospice care in Poland. A highly respected instructor of nursing, she was also among the circle of friends of Karol Wojtyla, later to become Pope John Paul II.

* * * * *

Every four years the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* convenes Benedictine women from all over the world for an international symposium at Sant'Anselmo in Rome, the headquarters of the Benedictine Confederation. The 8th International Symposium, which ended on Sept. 13, 2018, looked at the topic of monastic hospitality from many different angles. They also enjoyed an audience with Pope Francis and the English text of his address to them is available on the Vatican website: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/september/documents/papa-francesco_20180908_unione-intern-benedettine.html.

On Sept. 14, elections for the leadership positions of the CIB were held. Outgoing moderatrix (leader), Sister Judith Ann Heble was replaced by Sister Lynn McKenzie, a member of Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, Alabama, and president of the Benedictine Sisters of the Federation of St Scholastica, a union of 20 monasteries in the USA and Mexico. The new moderatrix is both a civil and a canon lawyer and has been in leadership for many years.

Oblates for the Future Symposium

Forty-one professed monastics and oblates from twenty monasteries across the country gathered at St. Gertrude's Monastery in Cottonwood, Idaho, to share how their oblates were preparing for the future. They came from Seattle to Baltimore, from Nassau and from Belgium. Over the five days, honoring the past while envisioning the future gave hope and zeal for the future of Benedictine oblates.

The goals of the symposium were: naming the present reality, articulating a vision for what Benedictine oblate life in the future might look like, and formulating the next steps and plans. Sister Mary Forman, OSB, opened the symposium with her keynote address, "Oblates in the Christian History of Religious Life" in which she outlined the developments of monastic life as responses to the needs of the times. She described how the charism of Benedictinism was carried forth through many changes, challenges and forms. Adult oblates of one kind or another have been present since the Middle Ages and have been integral to the functioning of the monastery, though in defined roles.

Symposium sessions following Sister Mary Forman's address focused on how various monasteries were currently structuring their oblate programs. Terms used included the "oblate movement" over the past 30 years, the "oblate vocation" as a separate calling from the monastic religious vocation leading to consecration, the "oblate community" as a part of and within the monastic community, and boundaries between the two.

Why are more and more monasteries organizing their oblate groups and working to intensify their formation? Over the past thirty years, it has become increasingly clear that the sincere oblate has a vocation, a true spiritual desire that needs to be nurtured and developed through formation. Having oblates and monastics working together to provide structure and formation is seen as the best model for the future of Benedictinism in the world.

Discussion was held about the identity of oblates in monasteries with oblate programs organized and formed by monastic leadership. When oblates are seen as "friends of the monastery," their identity as people with an oblate vocation may be obscured, their initial formation glossed over and ongoing formation is

minimal. Oblate groups take the form of support groups without a serious agenda.

Other monasteries, in contrast, have developed and organized different models of leadership. Oblates who have responded to the oblate vocation and who take formation seriously share group leadership with monastics. This latter example involves oblates serving on coordinating teams and engaged in purposeful on-going formation of oblates. Oblates are seen as part of the monastic community with a different level of monastic vocation, one that is lived "in the world," often in addition to marriage vows. The monastic vows supersede the oblate promises in degree, community life, and consecration. Both belong to the monastic community however, with oblates being "disciples" of the vowed monastics. All are seekers of God and want spirituality on a deeper level.

The symposium examined this perspective on what it means to become an oblate, have an oblate vocation, share in oblate organization and participate in on-going formation. Some small monasteries in attendance have needed the help of oblates due to their small numbers. The larger monasteries wanted oblate organization to make oblates groups more focused and manageable. Most of the monasteries were not accepting candidates for oblation who were not a good fit for their groups. Most of these monasteries wanted to structure oblate groups and formation together with the oblates before monastic community members became too few in number or too elderly to make a sustainable impact on future Benedictine oblate life.

Dr. Charles van Leeuwen of Belgium is an oblate and a consultant to monasteries and oblate groups on oblate organization and formation throughout northwestern Europe. He spoke to the symposium about "Long Term Perspectives in Oblate Formation: Promises, Needs, Competencies, Empowerment and Approaches for the Future." He stated that we have high expectations for the oblate movement but undermine those expectations by having formation programs that lack substance. Some oblates seem to place more value on the feeling of community

and belonging than on the specific formation offered. He said, “Feeling good is not good enough. If the oblate has a vocation, then an enriching formation is necessary for the oblate to reach his/her potential as an oblate. The spiritual life is an attitude of mind we must develop. Conversion requires us to grow and change and requires on-going formation. The credibility of the oblate membership depends on it. The better the formation, the better the oblates are, and the better the community is.”

The goal in any oblate formation must include keeping the desire alive, deepening it, cultivating it and sharing it. Maintaining a lifelong commitment necessitates a growing understanding of one’s vocation as a Benedictine oblate. Many communities ask whether oblates understand what the community really is and what Benedictinism really means. Helping oblates understand what it really means to be Benedictine is the task of monasteries working with oblates. Dr. van Leeuwen said, “Communities work loosely with the Benedictine charism if they have many non-Catholics in their groups; groups that have more Catholic oblates seem to be more able to benefit from a deeper look into Benedictinism.” He referred to the difference between these groups as “Benedictine Lite,” “random DIY formation,” “all peace, love and feeling good,” compared to “exploring the desire, drive and inner motivation for oblate life,” “a life lived with consciousness” and “promoting conversatio.” Monasteries must decide what their legacy will consist of to their oblates. Will the Benedictine charism live on in wholeness or dissipate as a movement that cannot sustain it over time? Ongoing oblate formation in each monastery reflects this choice.

Most monasteries represented at the symposium have some form of appointed or elected oblate group co-leader sharing responsibility with a professed monastic co-leader. In their oblate meetings, different topics in formation are discussed and follow-up readings/materials are distributed. Discussions center around integrating Benedictine virtues/values into the oblates’ lives and practice.

Sister Teresa Jackson, OSB, of St. Gertrude’s Monastery concluded, “Embracing oblates as people with a different yet vital Benedictine vocation can allow monastics to see co-workers in the vineyard.

Oblates can become the people who take our mission and charism to places we can no longer go. If oblates are seen as having a vocation, then formation matters. If formation matters, then oblates have a stake in the coordination and leadership in their groups.”

Beth Denney, oblate
Topeka, Kansas

* * * * *

The U.S. board of AIM, the Alliance for International Monasticism, welcomed several new board members in 2018: Abbot Stan Gumula, OCSO, of Mepkin Abbey (Moncks Corner, N.C.), Sister Michael Marie Rottinghaus, OSB of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters (Norfolk, Neb.), Brother Paul Richards, OSB of Saint John’s Abbey (Collegeville, Minn.) and Abbot Neal Roth of St. Martin’s Abbey, (Lacey, Wash.).

* * * * *

Father Volker Futter, OSB (Schuyler, Neb.) will lead an oblate pilgrimage (but open to anyone) to Germany, Austria and Switzerland including Münsterschwarzach, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Chiemsee, Stams, Einsiedeln, Lake Constance, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Rudesheim, Cologne, Neuss, Düsseldorf, and more. The dates are June 17-July 2, 2019 and details are available at <https://beingbenedic ne.com/2018/07/07/2019-benedic ne-pilgrimage-opportunity-germany-austria-and-switzerland/>

DON’T FORGET

IF YOUR ABA MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY PAID THROUGH 2018, YOUR MEMBERSHIP COMES DUE JANUARY 1 REGARDLESS OF WHEN YOU PAID IN 2018. MEMBERS WHO ARE IN THE LAST YEAR OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP WILL RECEIVE A NOTICE SOON BUT YOU CAN PAY YOUR 2019 DUES ANY TIME NOW.

REPORTS FROM THE JULY CONVENTION

The American Benedictine Academy held its biennial business meeting of its membership July 21, 2018 at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn. during its convention. Sister Julia Upton RSM, Academy president, gave a brief report on the future outlook for the organization and the need to actively work on increasing membership within monastic communities and oblate groups. The report reflects the ABA board's overall discussion of the topic. Other reports also reflected the concern regarding the diminishing number of individual monastics as well as monasteries. Board member Sister Marianne Burkhard OSB, reported that the ABA Board had discussed a few ways to increase membership, including emailing superiors to encourage their members, especially younger members.

In addition to the election of a vice-president and board members, there were a number of reports given including newsletter and website, finances, grants and awards, Kalamazoo medieval studies congress, and section reports from Visual Arts, librarians/archivists, oblate and monastic research groups.

* * * * *

At the July convention, ABA members in attendance elected the members of the board of directors. Oblate Greg Peters was elected vice-president to succeed to the presidency in 2020. Father Peters is an Anglican priest who is a professor of theology at Biola University in California.

Oblate Judith Valente, who was a nominee for the vice-presidency, has been elected for a four year term, so she will automatically remain on the board for two more years. From her home in Illinois, she is a journalist who has also written several books on monastic topics.

Since the board has been gradually moving from two year to four year terms, Sister Renée Branigan, OSB was completing her interim term and was elected for a full four year term. She is a member of Sacred Heart Monastery (Richardton, N.D.) and has been associated with the *American Benedictine Review* and *The American Monastic Newsletter* as an editorial assistant for many years.

Two new members were also elected to the board. Oblate Gergory Evans has devoted much of his

time since retiring from a career with the Federal Aviation Administration to assisting the sisters of his community, St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Va. He also chairs the visual arts section of ABA and mounts the convention art show.

The other new board member is Sister Colleen Maura McGrane, OSB, of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at Clyde, Mo., a monastic scholar currently translating Adalbert de Vogue's commentaries on the Rule.

* * * * *

2018 ABA Essay Contest

We had 6 submissions, all good to very good. Three were from sisters, two from oblates and one from a layman. The readers who judged them felt that the two best essays were equally good, so the decision was made to give two first prizes. The two essays were both from young Benedictine sisters. Sister Hannah Vanorny OSB, of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, N.D., wrote an essay entitled "Climbing Benedict's the Ladder of Humility Together: Perceptions of Age in a Monastic Community." Hannah is in her 10th year after her first profession. Sister Valery Luckey OSB, Mt. St. Benedict's Monastery, Erie, Penn., wrote "In the Way of Grace: A Young Monk's Joy." Valery is in her 2nd year after first profession.

These essays showed two aspects of monastic life. The first was a reflection on the values of its intergenerational aspects gained in living the life for some time; the other described the joyful discoveries of early community life. Both essays truly combined personal experience and careful use of sources. They were good examples of the essay genre; thus it is hoped that they will be published.

Since the ABA budget is limited, the writers each received a 2-year membership in ABA and a book, the festschrift for Michael Casey, *A Not-So Unexciting Life*, and free registration while their communities agreed to pay for the sisters' travel to the convention.

I wrote a thank you to all the participants and encouraged them to work further on their writing.

It seemed that the effort of defining the genre “essay” in the announcement bore some fruit; and it is to be hoped that this essay contest served to encourage more writing among newer ABA members.

Sister Marianne Burkhard, OSB
Essay Contest Coordinator

* * * * *

The Egregia Award this year went to Father Joel Rippinger, OSB. This award is granted to an ABA member whose contribution to the Academy’s purpose is longstanding in one or more of the following: contribution to research, public events and programs, publication, leadership in the Academy, and/or participation in creative expressions of monastic life in contemporary cultures. Father Joel has been active in all of these and is a highly respected scholar and speaker on monastic history, especially American history. Although the honoree was unable to attend the convention, Father Terrence Kardong’s heartfelt and entertaining tribute was recorded for him.

CD RECORDINGS OF PRESENTATIONS

There are recordings available of each of the 2018 convention presentations at a cost of \$7 per CD (includes shipping) or \$20 for all three.

- Kathleen Norris - Artistic Process and Benedictine Values
- Martin Erspamer, OSB - A Vision for Artisans of the Monastery
- David Paul Lange, OSB - Intersection of Faith and Architecture: Designing for a Modern Era (the Example of Saint John’s Abbey Church)

Order forms are downloadable on the website.

Please make check to “S. Judith Sutura” and send to:

Sister Judith Sutura
801 South 8th
Atchison, KS 66002

* * * * *

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are being sought for a special issue of the journal *Religions* that will look at the history, sociology, and theology of monasticism in order to formulate constructive suggestions for the future of the institution. Contributions will explore the nature of Christian monasticism in all its facets with the purpose of ressourcement: recovering for the future what can be learned from the monastic past.

The institution of Christian monasticism is, in many ways, well studied. In general, the broad outlines of its rich and variegated history are understood, its sociological underpinnings have been explored, and those Christian churches that have monastic communities can provide theological rationale(s) for their existence. Christian monastic history is understood, and the historical theological foundations are common knowledge, but what will the future of Christian monasticism look like? Will it continue along the already tried and true ways of historic monasticism? Or will it undergo a radical reformulation to connect integrally to its predecessor while looking like an institution adapted to the twenty-first century?

Will the historic vows continue to form the foundation of Christian monasticism? Will monks and nuns continue to take life-long vows? Will they continue to live as celibates? Though there has been much experimentation in monastic living over the past fifteen years many of these experiments have been criticized for being not so much monasticism per se as experiments in communal living. Thus, the following question still needs to be answered: What will the future of monasticism qua monasticism look like in the future?

Manuscripts should be submitted online at www.mdpi.com by registering and getting the submission form. Research articles, review articles as well as short communications are invited. Submitted manuscripts should not have been published previously, nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere (except conference proceedings papers). All manuscripts are thoroughly refereed through a double-blind peer-review process. Please visit the “Instructions for Authors” page before submitting a manuscript. Deadline for submissions is June 1, 2019.

GRANT REPORT

Sister Jeana Visel of Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, Indiana, was awarded a Monastic Studies Grant to attend an icon painting workshop. One of the conditions of the grant is to share her experience in a report. In excerpts from her report she writes:

“Thank you again for the monastic studies grant toward my icon workshop. From June 3 to 9, 2017, I attended the Hexaameron Six Days of Creation icon painting workshop held in Bloomfield, Conn., with my teacher, Marek Czarnecki. During this year’s workshop, I focused on painting an icon of Christ the Savior, based on the prototype mosaic in the Hagia Sophia. I am told that one’s iconographic ability should match one’s love for the subject, and so it was noted for the rest of the participants that, while I have been studying iconography fairly seriously for ten years, this was my first egg tempera icon of Christ.

My teacher provided me two different prototypes from which to work, and pointed out that while one was much heavier and less graceful than the other, both were based on a very similar foundational drawing. In other words, as long as the basic drawing is correct, it is possible to work from a less than perfect prototype, as long as one develops it more gracefully. During this project, I was struck by how related my drawing was to the Sinai Christ in the icon of St. Catherine’s Monastery. Marek pointed out that despite some small differences, these all represent the basic iconographic “word” for Christ.

During this week I also started work on an icon of Our Lady of Vladimir, based on a prototype done by contemporary Russian master Alexander Stalnov. As part of my preparation for this project, my teacher showed me examples and explained why Stalnov’s work is superior to that of some other contemporary iconographers. While their work may be charming, it fails to use canonical proportions and full inverse perspective, which are part of the “grammar of iconography” expressing the theologically-rooted vision of the canonical icon.

One other gift from this particular workshop was some time studying the Polish icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Marek explained the history of this not-so-ordinary image, and showed how it may be that the image we know was painted and repainted over a much more classical icon of the Hodigetria type. The

history of the Polish people is so embedded in the image we have come to know.

I will continue to unpack lessons learned at this workshop. At home, I am beginning a commission for two large niche icons of Sts. Peter and Paul. Moreover, this summer I am teaching a course called “The Icon East and West” at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. A couple weeks ago several students joined me on a field trip to the Orthodox church in Louisville where, after divine liturgy, a fellow icon painter and friend welcomed us and explained the icons of the church and the day chapel. The students seem to appreciate that the Eastern Church represents a whole different world within Christianity, and that our tradition is broader and deeper than they thought. It is a privilege to play a part in the Benedictines’ heritage of ecumenical dialogue with the Eastern Churches.”

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

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

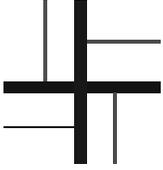
La Mirada, CA 90639

or submitted by email as a Word document to

greg.peters@biola.edu

YOUR 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 _____

MAILTO:
Robin Lynn Evans, OSB
802 E. 10th St
Ferdinand IN 47532