



# 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.*

## *Meet the New Monastics*

An important part of the recent ABA convention was the introduction of the concept of "New Monasticism," a movement that is growing among Protestants. It looks to traditional monastic practices and uses them as a model for forming intentional lay communities.

Although the exact origin is hard to trace, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was advocating such communities in the 1930s. By the 1990s, a specific vision was evolving, and the terminology of "new monasticism" was developed by Jonathan Wilson in his 1998 book, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*. He wanted to encourage "the healing of fragmentation, bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Christ." Another prominent pioneer is Shane Claiborne of The Simple Way community in Philadelphia.

In 2004, scholars and people from some of these communities gathered and came up with "12 marks" of new monasticism. They identified the essence of their lifestyle as: relocation to the "abandoned places of Empire," sharing with fellow community members and the needy, hospitality to strangers, lament for racial divisions combined with pursuit of a just reconciliation, humble submission to Christ's body the Church, intentional formation in the way of Christ and the rule of the community along the lines of the old novitiate, nurturing common life in intentional community, support for celibate singles alongside married couples and their children, geographical proximity of community members, care for the plot of God's earth given to them along with support of local economies, peacemaking and conflict resolution in the midst of violence, and commitment to a disciplined contemplative life.

Some examples are Rutba House, the community of Jonathan and Leah Wilson-Hartgrove, who was to have been the speaker on the subject at the ABA convention, and Lotus House, the community of Alden Bass, who replaced him as speaker. Their communities are typical of the attempts being made by mostly young Christians from faith traditions that have not traditionally been associated with monastic life, many in the "evangelical" tradition.

Couples and their children, along with single men and women, become a stable and generous presence in inner-city neighborhoods that have suffered violence and poverty. Regular morning and evening prayer and common meals, along with community service and times of contemplation mark their days. They hold regular jobs, many in religious or social service occupations. They share a portion of their personal assets to cover living expenses. The communities are small, with membership in the single digits or teens, and full membership requires a significant period of

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## President's Message

*Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB, of St. Scholastica's Monastery (Chicago, Ill.), has been the vice-president of the ABA for the past two years. She succeeded to the presidency at this summer's convention, which ended the term of Rev. Martin Shannon.*

It is nearly unfathomable (to me, anyway) that it has been three months since we gathered in Conception during the late July heat for "Benedictine Monasticism: The Past Receiving the Future." As I write this, the monastery backyard I see from my window is covered in leaves, and the heartiest of the summer blooms only have a few more days until the first frost takes them. Personally I have started a new ministry which has been the cause for much joy (good work done amidst fine people) and much upheaval (my commute means I miss evening prayer most nights and has left me scrambling even harder for that elusive balance). And, of course, we lost Christine.

Sister Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, long-slated to be one of the keynote speakers at this summer's convention, died on September 25 at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, Penn. People all over the country grieved her passing – her sisters, certainly, and her many family members and friends. They were joined, though, by hundreds of others, by people who admired the

courage and wisdom Christine showed in 2001 when the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life ordered her, as prioress, to prohibit Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, from speaking at a conference on women's ordination, by folks who had worked so hard alongside her at the Second Harvest Food Bank Network headquartered here in Chicago, by women and men who stood in awe of Christine's remarkable intellect and had benefitted from her teaching and scholarship. The list goes on and on.

While I had known of Christine's leadership in her own community, of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses, and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and had attended several large meetings where she was also in attendance, it was not until 2011 that I got to know her a little better. My community had discernment for the election of prioress that year; I was on the election committee, and Christine was the facilitator for the process.

Going in to our first election committee meeting with her, I was trepidatious. Her accomplishments, prominence, and demeanor all conspired to make me wonder about how this would go, if this would be a "good match." It was. In the months leading up to our communal discernment, and especially during our days together, Christine revealed herself to be prayerful, funny, realistic, and perceptive. She revered us and the movement of the Spirit among us. I was so grateful to have had that personal experience which made her more real to me, and I suspect, to much of my community.

Now I am even more grateful. As we look toward to exploring the theme of "Keep Death Daily Before Your Eyes" in 2016, let us pray to, and for, Christine. May her model of participation in the paschal mystery inspire and strengthen us. May she assist us in thinking deeply, connecting broadly, and stewarding our tradition well. May her legacy help us to arrive "altogether at everlasting life." And may her soul, and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

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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***

## CANON LAW COLUMN

### *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB)*

Recently I had the good fortune of attending the CIB symposium in Rome, which is held every four years. It was an inspiring gathering of Benedictine sisters and nuns (a canonical distinction which might be a topic for a future column) from all over the world, from many different cultures, speaking many different languages, yet all sharing the one and same call as daughters of Saints Benedict and Scholastica. It felt like a life-changing experience for me, as now I see the larger world of Benedictines in a new light, with faces I can recognize and voices I know. Before I went to Rome I knew little of what *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB) was. Since that experience, I believe it would be instructive here to write about it from the canonical point of view.

I write only briefly here. The definitive work on the history and legal development of CIB is in the process of being written as a doctoral dissertation by Sister Scholastika Häring, OSB, a *moniale* (nun) of St. Scholastika's Abbey at Burg Dinklage in Germany. I have freely borrowed from Sister Scholastika's excellent presentation at the recent CIB Symposium; however, any mistakes or inaccuracies are mine. Sister Scholastika describes the CIB history and present day as "the journey of the Benedictine women on the international level since Vatican II."

According to the statutes of the CIB, it is a "sisterly bond;" it does not constitute a juridical bond between the Benedictine women and their monasteries. In that sense, the CIB is not like a super-federation of federations and congregations of Benedictine women worldwide. Nevertheless, it provides a very important connection for Benedictine women in the universal church.

There is a Benedictine confederation of congregations of Benedictine men which was established by Pope Leo XIII in the late 1800s. The CIB website ([www.benedictines-cib.org/english/en\\_about\\_us.html](http://www.benedictines-cib.org/english/en_about_us.html)) explains: "The purpose of the Confederation was to create and consolidate international contact between the Benedictine monasteries of men with a view to furthering the common tradition of western monasticism and to prepare the monks through serious study for their service in the Church in the 20th century. There was no parallel foundation for Benedictine women."

Luke Dysinger has provided a brief and helpful general overview of the Benedictine Confederation in "The Benedictine Family Tree" ([www.saintandrewsabbey.com/category\\_s/38.htm](http://www.saintandrewsabbey.com/category_s/38.htm)), stressing that each

congregation of Benedictine men is autonomous and only loosely gathered into the confederation. In describing the diversity yet commonality of the congregations which make up the confederation, he writes: "The different congregations all have in common the Rule of St. Benedict and a large body of monastic practice and custom. Especially important to all Benedictines is the emphasis found in every monastery on the liturgy celebrated in common, on *lectio divina* (contemplative, prayerful reading of the Scriptures) and on hospitality." The same can be said of the many different bodies of Benedictine women which make up the CIB.

The CIB is related to the men's Benedictine confederation through "consociation." Another way of saying it is that the CIB is "associated with" the Benedictine confederation. There is no independent international Benedictine women's organization. Rather, the CIB is dependent on the proper law of the Benedictine confederation. Sister Scholastika points out that, "The CIB is under the auspices of the *lex propria* [of the Benedictine confederation of men], which means that it is anchored only there; beyond it, there is no other anchoring in the universal law of the Church; it is not a juridical person according to the [Code of Canon Law]."

Sister Scholastika also points out that there are several different types of monasteries of women according to the way they are organized (or not) with other monasteries. There are federations of monasteries, as in the U.S., St. Benedict, St. Gertrude and St. Scholastica federations, which are loosely organized such that each monastery is autonomous but has chosen to associate itself with the federation, headed by a president. The federation presidents have limited jurisdiction, though both prioresses and the presidents in the federations are considered "supreme moderators."

There are also congregations of women's monasteries, such as, in the U.S., the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, in which the monasteries are subject to a prioress general, and the prioresses of the individual houses are not considered supreme moderators as defined by the Code of Canon Law. There are also monasteries of women incorporated into a men's congregation. In addition, there are what are often referred to as canon 615 monasteries which are self-sufficient but subject to the special vigilance of their diocesan bishop. One can see this variety as set out in the *Catalogus*, the new edition of which is now available through CIB.

Women's monasteries were not included in the Benedictine confederation from the outset. Rather, in 1952 with a change to its proper law, the confederation embraced women's monasteries in a limited way. It

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was only in the 1970s that two Commissions of Nuns and Sisters were established by the abbot primate. They eventually moved to one Commission of Benedictine Women, from which later the CIB was born. After the 1983 Code of Canon Law was promulgated, the confederation's *lex propria* was changed in 1985. It was then that the type of relationship of the women to the confederation was described as "consociation." While the CIB was in the making for some years, the title CIB was chosen in 2001. However, the official beginning of the CIB was in 2004 with the amendment to the *lex propria*. CIB is governed by its own statutes, the most recent edition of which dates from 2009.

At the end of Sister Scholastika's presentation on the legal development of the CIB, she raised some questions about the future of the CIB. Would it be possible, she asked, for the members of the CIB to vote in the election of the abbot primate? Why doesn't the CIB meet together with the Congress of Abbots? Another question she raised was whether the CIB should have its own status independent of the Benedictine Confederation of men. The discussions that followed were most interesting. These are only matters for speculation at the present. For now, the CIB is a wonderful gathering of Benedictine women from all over the world, forming a sisterly bond and providing a big world picture for each monastery and federation and congregation.

*For more on the CIB, and for pictures and notes from the recent CIB symposium held in Rome, simply click on the link at the bottom of the CIB home page <<http://www.benedictines-cib.org/>>.*

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## NEWS

The monks of St. Andrew Abbey, Cleveland, Ohio, have elected Rev. Gary Hoover, OSB, as their abbot. The Cistercian monks of New Melleray Abbey (Peosta, Iowa) elected Abbot Mark Scott, OCSO.

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## St. Gertrude Federation Holds General Chapter

Nearly 50 Benedictine women from the United States and Canada met on June 22-27, at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho, for the triennial general chapter of the Federation of St. Gertrude. The federation consists of 12 member monasteries, each of which is represented by their prioresses and two delegates, and also includes two affiliated ecumenical monasteries.

The theme for the week was, "Behold I Am Doing Something New: Image, Create, Embrace!" In addition to business meetings on future planning, budget and support funds, and elections, there was a presentation by Sister Shawn Carruth, OSB, of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery (Crookston, Minn.), as well as field trips to sites in the historic mountain area surrounding the monastery.

Sister Joella Kidwell, Monastery Immaculate Conception (Ferdinand, Ind.), was re-elected for another three years of service as president of the federation.

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## Wyoming Monastery Closes

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have closed San Benito Monastery in Dayton. "This was a difficult decision and not one we took lightly," Prioress General Sister Dawn Annette Mills, OSB said. The congregation opted to close the Wyoming monastery due to the need for additional sisters to live and work at their other two communities in Arizona and Missouri.

"We have lost 18 sisters in the last six years," Sister Dawn Annette said. "This has had a profound impact on the daily life of all our sisters and on balancing the personnel needs of our three monasteries."

In 1983 five Benedictine Sisters were sent to Wyoming to establish a new community after an invitation by then-Bishop Joseph Hart. The sisters lived in Casper for two years before moving to Big Horn. In 1989 they purchased land in Dayton and opened San Benito Monastery. At the time of closing, four of the congregation's 75 professed members lived at the San Benito Monastery.

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## Benet Lake Merger

The monks of St. Benedict's Abbey in Benet Lake, Wisc., have voted to become a dependent priory of Conception Abbey (Conception, Mo.). Conception had founded the Wisconsin monastery in the 1940s. A number of the monks will remain in residence at Benet Lake.

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## Sisters in China

*The following was published on the website, AsiaNews.it, the news service of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, July 26, 2014.*

Two American Benedictine nuns have made a long journey to China to help some local women's religious congregations renew their lives. Religious communities in China, which flourished again in various dioceses after the Cultural Revolution, are plagued by several problems, not the least being the need to renew their life in accordance with the reforms of Vatican II, whose slow implementation in China is due to "isolation and government control imposed on the Chinese Church." ... From 12 to 18 May, Sister Mary Catherine Wenstrup from Kentucky [St. Walburg's, Covington] and Sister Stefanie Weisgram, Minnesota [St. Benedict's, Saint Joseph] were guests of Msgr. Joseph Shen Bin, at the Bishop's Residence in Haimen.

Here, they have offered biblical and spiritual courses to the nuns of two religious congregations, the Sisters of the Child Jesus in Haimen and the Presentation Sisters in Suzhou.

Between 19 and 23 May, they taught the course to nuns from the Sisters of Charity in Nanjing and the Presentation Sisters in Xuzhou, who were guests of Msgr. John Wang Renlei, bishop of Xuzhou. Finally, from 24 to 31 May, the two Benedictine nuns were in Beijing where they worked with the Sisters of St Joseph helping them draft their first charter, 142 years after their foundation in 1872. Novices and nuns who made the final vows took part in the course on drafting charters, learning about procedures, rules, structure, content, and Church documents on religious life.

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## PBS Spotlights Newark Abbey

A new documentary, *The Rule*, was aired on PBS affiliates at the end of September. The documentary by Emmy-nominated, award winning filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno features interviews with monks of Newark Abbey in New Jersey and footage of life at their St. Benedict's Prep. The nearly 150 year old school weathered the changes in the city and re-invented itself as an extraordinary prep school for inner city African-American and Latino boys, with a near 100% college acceptance rate.

The filmmakers craft the story around guiding principles at the school, and the way these principles are developed from St. Benedict's Rule, showing the potential of this ancient way for contemporary culture. More about the

film and about purchase of the DVD are on the producers' website: <[www.bongiornoproductions.com/THE\\_RULE/THE\\_RULE.html](http://www.bongiornoproductions.com/THE_RULE/THE_RULE.html)>.

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## Workshop on Liturgical Environment

"Architecture for Liturgy" is the title of next year's Liturgy Week 2015 to be held at St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kan., May 26-29. It is intended for anyone interested in the dimensions inherent in liturgy that prompt a fuller celebration, which in turn requires a more developed architectural and artistic expression. The workshop is designed for parishioners preparing to renovate or build a church or chapel, architects desiring to deepen their appreciation of the liturgical dimensions of design, diocesan directors of offices of worship or commissions that govern the building or renovation of churches, or oblates and anyone else desiring a deeper appreciation of their prayer life in its context.

The presentations will be clear and given in ordinary language for the informed person and will be richly illustrated by pictorial journeys.

The presenter will be Father Daniel McCarthy, OSB, SLD, a monk of St Benedict's Abbey who earned his doctorate in sacred liturgy (SLD) studying church architecture at the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy at Sant'Anselmo, Rome. Father Daniel is a guest professor of the Catholic University Leuven, in Belgium and is co-founder and instructor of liturgy at the Liturgy Institute at Ealing Abbey, London. He has published a series of articles on church architecture in *The Tablet* of London. He is currently amplifying his doctoral research and preparing it for publication in English.

More information and registration is at the event's website: <<http://architectureforliturgy.com/liturgy-week-2015/>>.

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## Book on Trappist Business Model Featured

*Business Secrets of the Trappist Monks: One CEO's Quest for Meaning and Authenticity*, by August Turak, (Columbia U. Press) was the subject of an article in *Forbes*. Written by Frederick E. Allen, the journal's Leadership Editor, it is at the link: <[www.forbes.com/sites/frederickallen/2013/06/27/learn-business-genius-from-trappist-monks/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/frederickallen/2013/06/27/learn-business-genius-from-trappist-monks/)>. Other reviews are on *Huffington Post* <[www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/21/trappist-monks-business-secrets\\_n\\_3617390.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/21/trappist-monks-business-secrets_n_3617390.html), and *Psychology Today* <[www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201306/what-business-leaders-can-learn-the-trappist-monks](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201306/what-business-leaders-can-learn-the-trappist-monks)>, (an interesting convergence of publications not generally focusing on monastic life).

## ABA Monastic Essay Competition

One of the goals of the American Benedictine Academy is to encourage newer monastics and newer oblates to do monastic research. Therefore we are enlarging the pool of those who are eligible to participate in the monastic essay competition. Monastics in initial formation and up to ten years after their first monastic professions, as well as oblates up to ten years after their oblation, are eligible to participate in this competition. All monasteries are asked to encourage participation in this competition as a means of promoting monastic scholarship for the future.

Encouraging monastic research at this early stage of monastic and oblate life is important because, as Benedict indicates in RB 3.3, younger/newer members may see things more clearly, or differently, because they bring both the enthusiasm of the newcomer (*fervor novicius*) and their own individual experience in the world into the monastery and, in the case of oblates, into their thinking of how to apply Benedictine values to their life in the world. Building on their specific experiences they may be able to open some new questions or new ways of looking. It is also important for the ABA to do what it can do nurture new scholars in the field of Benedictine monasticism.

### The purposes of the contest are:

- To stimulate interest in and study of monasticism and monastic history
- To acquaint newer members/oblates with the rich sources of monastic writings which are now much more easily available in print or even electronically
- To acquaint newer monastics with the history of the community, the purposes and personalities of founders, significant events, developments and challenges
- To foster use of local archives in monastic communities
- To focus on productive ways of integrating traditional monastic practices with the needs of 21st century Benedictine living, especially with the participants' own previous experience outside the monastery
- To encourage the collection of personal memoirs
- a discussion of the difficulties/possibilities of integrating tradition and current environment and possible new solutions
- a review of various adaptations of traditional practices in the past to new situations, their effectiveness in the past and possibly their significance for the current situation.

The essay is to be submitted as a double-spaced and computer-generated Word document.

Awards are given only in convention years, so the deadline is March 31st, 2016, i.e. the year of the next convention. It is to be sent to the chair of the Monastic Essay Competition:

Sister Marianne Burkhard OSB  
srmarianne@cdop.org

Winner/s will be notified by May 10, 2016. The prize for the winning essay is a 2-year membership in ABA, a waiver of registration and hospitality fees at the 2016 convention, and a book of interest to monastics/oblates.

Mentoring by ABA members will be available to those who participated in the competition in order to help them to develop their thoughts for possible publication in a scholarly journal, such as *The American Benedictine Review*.

### Project requirements

Within the theme of "the monastic tradition," the essay of 2,500-3,000 words may take a variety of forms, such as:

- the connection of a monastic topic to the writer's own monastery, or at least to the writer's own interpretation of how traditional monastic practices could be authentically and productively lived out in our time either in the monastery or in the oblate life

## Sister René Branigan Honored by ABA

The Egregia Award is the major honor conferred by the American Benedictine Academy upon individual members. It is given to longtime members whose achievement or contribution to the Academy's purpose is long-standing in one of the following: outstanding contribution to monastic studies, publication of significant research, long-term service to the Academy, and/or creative expressions of monastic life in contemporary cultures.

At this year's convention, it was given to Sister René Branigan, OSB, of Sacred Heart Monastery (Richardton, N.D.). She has been a loyal member of the Academy for many years, and active in many facets of her community and federation. Her most important contribution to the ABA has been as the managing editor of its publications for well over two decades. She produced the ABA's newsletter for several years before the inception of the *American Monastic Newsletter*. For the first twenty years of that publication, she worked with Sister Judith Sutera to do the final editing and layout, and then to manage the printing and mailing. She has also produced the books of written proceedings from each convention.

The award was presented by Father Terrence Kardong, editor of the journal *The American Benedictine Review*, with whom she has also worked in editing and distribution for many years.

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### CALL FOR PAPERS

The Tenth Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious (HWR) will be held at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara Cal., in the summer of 2016, from June 26-29. The program committee has begun to seek proposals for papers and panels that address the conference theme "Whither Women Religious: Analyzing the Past, Studying the Present, Imagining the Future."

Academics and independent scholars fields of, but not limited to, history, sociology, literature, anthropology, theology, gender studies, visual and creative arts, material culture, religious studies and communication are invited to participate in the conference. Papers should explore questions related to the history of women religious, or should analyze how studies of the past inform current debates and the planning of future endeavors.

A new feature of the 2016 Conference Program is "1000 words in a Picture." These short papers of 1000 words analyze a single image, (such as a picture, an artifact or a document). These papers will be presented in a special

plenary session during which each author will present the image in 10 minutes, followed by a 5 minute question period.

Proposals for "1000 words in a picture," individual papers or multiple paper panels should include, for each paper, a one-page abstract (title and 250 word abstract) and a one-page curriculum vitae for each author. Submissions should be made electronically by 1 June 2015 through: <http://ocs.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/HWR2016/>.

### Audio CD Recordings from Convention

The major presentations from both the recent convention and the pre-convention day for oblates are available on audio CD at a cost of \$5.00 for each (includes shipping).

#### Convention

*Joel Rippinger, OSB* - Transmitting a Common Core of Benedictine Monasticism: A Survival Kit for the Future  
*Alden Bass* - "Bringing it to Completion": American New Monastics and the Benedictine Tradition  
*Julia Upton, RSM* - Profile of Benedictine Oblates: Glorifying God by Their Lives  
*Ephrem Hollermann, OSB* - Reflections on the Conversation

#### Pre-Convention

*Laura Dunham* - Transmitting the Tradition through a School for Benedictine Spirituality  
*Kathleen Norris* - An Oblate in the Middle of Nowhere  
*Greg Peters* - The Rule of Benedict in the University and Parish  
*Judith Valente* - Business as Unusual: Monastic Wisdom and the Work World

Specify which talks you would like and send payment to:

Sister Judith Sutera  
801 South 8th  
Atchison, KS 66002

An order form may also be downloaded and printed from the ABA website.

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association and a formation process. They hold regular meetings to share their concerns, the business of living together, and their spiritual journey.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is associate minister at the historically African-American St. John's Baptist Church, and directs the School for Conversion, a non-profit organization that educates people in Christian community. He has written several books, including a contemporary paraphrase and commentary on *The Rule of St. Benedict*, and is editor of the New Monastic Library Series (Cascade Books). His wife is the daughter of Jonathan Wilson, one of the pioneers of the movement.

Rutba House, in Durham, N. C., is named after the town of Rutba, Iraq, where injured members of their Christian Peacemaker Team were given medical care in a hospital that had been bombed by U.S. forces. Before the recent opening of a third house in the neighborhood, sources indicated that the community consisted of two houses and 14 members (including children) who share a common life of daily prayer, meals, mutual support, hospitality, and active peacemaking. They live by a modified common-purse economy, working full or part time and contributing 30-40% of their income to the community. These shared resources cover all household expenses (including a car co-op) and also enable them to provide meals, housing, and other forms of hospitality to homeless or struggling friends in the neighborhood.

Alden Bass's Lotus House in North St. Louis grew out of the ACTS Campus Ministry, which brought together Christian students from several local universities. After drafting a covenant, they found an eight-bedroom house on Lotus Street and began life together in 2008. They describe themselves as "a community of disciples seeking to follow Jesus in inner-city Saint Louis. It is modeled on the Jerusalem Church described in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the Benedictine monasteries, and the New Monastic communities." Regular practices include daily morning and evening prayer and Sunday worship together with a local congregation. They eat together at least two nights a week, striving for healthy, sustainable meals, and on Friday host a community dinner open to all, especially those in need. At least once a week they do service together at an after-school program of the North City Church of Christ.

They pool a portion of their income to pay for such common needs as the mortgage, utilities, food, and house maintenance, share goods in common, and seek to hold one another accountable for the purchases they make.

These are only two of a number of similar foundations that are capturing the attention of energetic and idealistic young people who wish to proclaim by their lives the social message of Jesus and the wholehearted discipleship

of the Jerusalem community of Acts. There is a movement in the Catholic tradition as well, with such groups as the Catholic Worker houses.

It is obvious that much of the action and intent of these new monastics is the same as that of "old monastics," and many of the communities have reached out to traditional communities for inspiration and assistance. They have created rules of life based on the communities of St. Benedict, St. Augustine and St. Francis.

Many "traditional" monasteries, well established in the Roman Catholic and other older faiths, take for granted the practices and structures around them, but these new monastics are eager to adopt them, and can see how essential such practices are in creating and sustaining community. They have discovered many of the same joys of healthy community, as well as the pitfalls and challenges that are inherent in any group of individuals trying to make such community.

While some monastic individuals and communities find themselves wondering whether their way of life is dying, they are largely unaware of this growing, vibrant, sincere collection of people who are eager to model their own lives on the values they see expressed by monastics throughout history.

Other speakers and attendees at the convention also described the new models they have encountered and noted the interest of students, retreatants and other seekers. The ABA took a bold step when it elected Rev. Martin Shannon as its 2012-2014 president. A member of the ecumenical Community of Jesus, he is the first president who was not a professed member of a Roman Catholic Benedictine monastery.

In his talk at the convention, Alden Bass praised the importance of having the example of veteran monastics to guide the new monasticism. It is clear from his example that its practitioners are neither people who want to ignore the rich heritage that already exists, nor are they people who want to re-create some romantic medieval kind of monasticism.

The dialogue, as shown by the very basic dialogue begun at the meeting, has a vast potential. Many connections and offers of interaction were made. New monastics can certainly benefit from visiting, making retreat, or getting advice and spiritual direction at established monasteries. But old monastics can benefit as well from seeing men, women and children, from religions often seen as far from the liturgical faiths, who have a passion for their own contemplative growth and a desire to be that presence among God's people in need. They continue what has energized the monastic life from Benedict's Italy to unchurched nations to the American pioneer settlements that gave birth to the monasteries of today.

## ABA BOARD ELECTED

At the biennial convention of the American Benedictine Academy in Conception, the ABA membership elected a vice-president who will succeed to the presidency in 2016 and three at-large members who will serve two year terms. One of the at-large members must be an oblate.

The Academy members chose as vice-president Sister Julia Upton, RSM, a member of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and an oblate of Mount Saviour (Elmira, N.Y.). She is a theology professor at St. John's University (New York).

The members also re-elected Sister Antoinette Purcell, OSB, who was a board member eligible for another term. She is a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery (Beech Grove, Ind.), where she does retreat work and directs oblates. She will be joined by three new board members. Sister Marianne Burkhard, OSB, from St. Mary Monastery (Rock Island, Ill.), originally from Switzerland, is a canon lawyer for the Peoria Diocese, and involved in translation and research. Greg Peters, an Episcopal priest, is an oblate of St. Andrew's Abbey (Valyermo, Cal.). He is a professor of medieval and spiritual theology at Biola University in La Mirada, Cal. Judith Valente is a writer and PBS correspondent who lives in Normal, Ill. She is an oblate of Mount St. Scholastica (Atchison, Ks.).

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## ABA BUSINESS MEETING

At every convention of the American Benedictine Academy, there is a business meeting for those members in attendance. In addition to electing board members, the assembly conducts other business and hears reports on the activities of the ABA.

The meeting was held on the afternoon of July 26. After the 2012 minutes were approved, candidates for the ABA board of directors were introduced and Sister Julia Upton was elected as vice-president. In subsequent balloting later in the meeting, Sister Antoinette Purcell was re-elected and the other board members elected were Sister Marianne Burkhard, Greg Peters and Judy Valente. All four were elected on the first ballot.

Sister Elizabeth Carrillo, executive secretary, gave the financial report, which was also approved. Sister In its meeting earlier in the week, the board decided to set up an ad hoc financial committee to make recommendations about financial matters.

Board member Dennis Okholm reported on recent grants. Three recipients, Orlando Rivera, Sister Jeanna

Visel and Paul Monson have completed their work and turned in reports. In fulfillment of the conditions for the grant, reports have been submitted to the board and summaries have been published in the *American Monastic Newsletter*. A recent request from Sister Ephrem Hollermann has been granted. Another award is the Junior Essay Competition, but there were no entries this year. The board has discussed ways of expanding the parameters of the essay so that broader monastic research, beyond local archives, may be included.

Sister Judith Sutura, *American Monastic Newsletter* editor, reported that the publication has completed the transition to a digital format. Sister Judith also introduced the new ABA website, which she also manages, giving a description of its design and features, including use of the "Members Only" page. It was also reported that the board had voted to have the website optimized for handheld devices. In regards to books of convention proceedings, they will no longer be published. The promotion of the ABA to a wider audience will be better served if speakers are encouraged to have their presentations published in journals, as was done for the first time with the talks from the 2012 meeting.

Father Terrence Kardong took the opportunity to encourage this year's speakers to consider developing their talks into research paper with footnotes that could be submitted to the *American Benedictine Review*. He also announced that all 60 years of the publication are being digitized for online availability.

In the absence of Father Hugh Feiss, who coordinates sessions at the International Medieval Studies congress, Sister Colleen McGrane gave the report on the well received ABA session, and information about the 2015 Congress.

### Section Leader reports

*Archives:* Sister Hildegard Varga reported that the group discussed current practices, especially in the areas of managing backlogs, professional associations, need for safe storage and adequate workspace, homes for non-archival materials, appraisal of what to keep, and digital conversion. She provided a written summary to the secretary for the record. The section members wish to suggest to the board that there be staggered section meetings because many would like to attend more than one (e.g. archivists who are also researchers or librarians).

*Library Section:* Jack Fritts; (jfritts@ben.edu), librarian at Benedictine University in Lisle, announced the return of the ABA Library Section. He hopes to contact librarians at all monastic houses. Among objectives are to identify librarians, start conversation among them, and share materials.

*Monastic Research:* Father Terrence Kardong reported that there had been a stimulating meeting at which a number of members shared research. Of special note were Sister Marianne Burkhard's translation of the work of Sister Aquinata and Sister Colleen Maura McGrane's translation of *De Vogue*. Members discussed their experiences of the movement towards interdisciplinary studies in research. Sister Ephrem Hollermann, who edits a regular newsletter for monastic researchers 3 times a year announced that recent issues are archived on the ABA website. She is also willing to send the PDF version to non-section members who give her their email address.

*Visual Artists:* Gregory Evans expressed disappointment at the participation in the convention art show and encouraged artists in communities to produce artwork or collect artifacts and share them with the ABA. As part of the exhibit, Sister Joanna Burley demonstrated the Bristow monastery's conversion from the paper medium for liturgy of hours to Kindle Paperwhites. She described the community dynamics of implementing this approach. It has made for a more dynamic approach to liturgy, making it easy to make quick changes for events.

Several suggestions were made regarding the role of artists such as: a slide presentation with digital submissions for those who are reluctant to ship works to the convention, using the website to get and share submissions, sharing through the Monastic Newsletter, and an artists' call that ties in with the theme of each convention, along with soliciting artwork for any communications such as flyers or booklets.

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### Monastic Studies Grant Awarded

At the meeting of the American Benedictine Academy, Sister Ephrem Hollermann was awarded an ABA Monastic Studies Grant of \$1,100 on behalf of the Interfederation Committee working to preserve the historical legacy of Saint Joseph Monastery, St. Marys, Pennsylvania. Sister Ephrem is a noted scholar of the history of American Benedictine women and a member of St. Benedict's Monastery (Saint Joseph, Minn). The grant will fund a professional design and graphic rendering of the first, second and third generation monasteries founded by Saint Joseph Monastery, for which Sister Ephrem is currently doing the research. The graphic will be accompanied by a bibliography of the published histories of these monasteries.

### MONASTIC STUDIES GRANTS

All American Benedictine Academy members are invited to apply for a Monastic Studies Grant. The grant provides funds to support projects which foster the mission of the ABA, "to cultivate, support and transmit the Benedictine heritage within contemporary culture."

Grant support may be used for research, travel, or other modes of exploring and promoting the Benedictine heritage. It may also be used for travel expenses and registration fees for the purpose of presenting a scholarly paper on a monastic topic related to the Benedictine heritage at a scholarly convention. A total of \$1150 is available to fund these annual grants.

Applicants must be members of the ABA. Applications will be selected on the basis of:

- The quality of their proposal (originality, feasibility, clarity of purpose)
- Potential benefit for monastics, and
- Relevance to the purposes of the Academy.

Recipients of grant support must be willing to submit a report on the use of the grant and/or a brief summary of the topic of the scholarly paper to the ABA Board of Directors within a year from the completion of the project/presentation of the paper for which the grant was given.

Application must be received by July 1, 2015. Recipients will be chosen by the ABA Awards Committee and approved by the ABA Board of Directors.

**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 for the project, 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 on a Word document to [greg.peters@biola.edu](mailto:greg.peters@biola.edu)

Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue is now an accredited NGO within the United Nations. The organization, which facilitates conversation between Christian monastics and those of other faiths, primarily Buddhist, has been granted “Special Consultative Status” with ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Information, in English and French, about what this means can be found at <<http://csonet.org/?menu=100>>.

According to DIM/MID executive secretary William Skudlarek, OSB, the application process took about four years, with four or five deferments, but has now been granted.

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Albrecht Diem, a professor at Syracuse University, has been working on a number of projects that may be found at the website <[www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org](http://www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org)>. He says, “The bibliography is incomplete, chaotic but nevertheless useful and I would be happy to add everyone interested in early medieval monasticism to the network: <http://www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org/Network-Early-Medieval-Monasticism.html>.” Among his projects are work on the *Regula cuiusdam* and the *Regula Donati*.

The first collaborative project of the network, almost completed, is an English translation of Hildemar’s *Commentary to the Regula Benedicti*. Translating the lengthy work has become possible because a large number of collaborating translators each take a single chapter. It can be found on [www.hildemar.org](http://www.hildemar.org). Dr. Diem hopes to use this “crowd-sourcing” approach to bring about translations of important works that would be a daunting task for a single translator. The translators can assist and check each other, and form networks among scholars in different disciplines and parts of the world to bring about a new era in monastic studies.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Adalbert de Vogüé, *A Critical Study of the Rule of Benedict, Vol. 1*, translated by Colleen Maura McGrane (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2013), ISBN 978-1-56548-480-1, 284 pp., paper, \$24.95.

The massive and definitive work on the Rule of St. Benedict was produced by Adalbert de Vogüé, probably the greatest scholar on the subject, in six volumes. At last it has begun to appear in English because Sister Colleen Maura McGrane, OSB, a Benedictine of Perpetual Adoration (Clyde, Mo.) has had the courage and the ability to take on this enormous challenge. The first volume is now available and others will follow as she completes them.

The complexity of the task is evident in the detail of this first volume. It is subtitled “Volume 1: An Overview.” and it goes over the structure, sources and linguistics of the Rule with a vast array of charts, comparison parallels and manuscript analyses. Only the most serious of scholars will be able to appreciate the breadth and depth of the research here, but there is something for everyone who wants to go deeper into the text, and the volumes will be a necessity for every library of monastic studies.

Congratulations and gratitude are due to Sister Colleen for making this monumental work available.

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Timothy Wright, *No Peace Without Prayer: Encouraging Muslims and Christians to Pray Together* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), ISBN 978-0-8146-3822-4, 338 pp., paper, \$29.95.

Timothy Wright, OSB, former abbot of Ampleforth and now delegate of the Abbot Primate for Benedictine-Muslim relations, has become a prominent voice in the field. In this volume, part of the “Monastic Interreligious Dialogue” series, he gives some background and rationale, and acknowledges some of the difficulties. Yet he insists that it is possible and important, and offers some tangible context for the conversation.

The book consists of numerous short chapters that summarize a scriptural story, a value like lectio, or a spiritual writer like Merton, and their parallels/differences in the Muslim tradition. This is not a book of lesson plans or meeting outlines, with specified questions for discussion. Rather, the author gives a simple set of suggestions for starting such a dialogue with others, and offers the basics of what might be discussed, what issues might be encountered with each selection, and where the common ground might be found.

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Laura Swan, *The Wisdom of the Beguines* (Katonah, N.Y.: BlueBridge, 2014), ISBN 978-1-933346-97-7, 256 pp., hardback, \$16.95.

This very readable book by Sister Laura Swan, OSB, (St. Placid’s - Lacey, Wash.) is a wonderful introduction to the world of a medieval women’s religious movement that is not as well known as it should be. In these communities of women, who remained autonomous and outside enclosure, living a common life and serving others, are found the roots of the later forms of religious life for women.

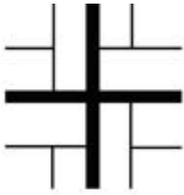
Sister Laura outlines their history, evolution, spirituality and ministry for the average reader and, amazingly for such an academic work, at a price the average library can afford.

**DON'T FORGET: ABA MEMBERSHIP IS CONCURRENT WITH THE CALENDAR YEAR.**

ALL MEMBERSHIPS, REGARDLESS OF WHAT TIME OF YEAR THEY WERE PAID,

ARE DUE FOR RENEWAL ON THE FIRST OF JANUARY.

PLEASE RENEW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO BECOME MEMBERS.



## **The American Benedictine Academy**

ABA website: [americanbenedictine.org](http://americanbenedictine.org)

### **Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred email: \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Oblate affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic/Other affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any interest or expertise to share with the Academy? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Monastic Research \_\_\_\_\_ Visual Arts \_\_\_\_\_ Archives \_\_\_\_\_ Library \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 for one year membership \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 for two years membership

**MAIL TO:**

**Elizabeth Carrillo, OSB**

**801 S. 8th St.**

**Atchison, KS 66002-2724**

email: [ecarrillo@mountosb.org](mailto:ecarrillo@mountosb.org)