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# aim usa

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## RULE OF BENEDICT



## A Benedictine Response To Fratelli Tutti

*an encyclical  
by Pope Francis*



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AIM USA staff has asked monastics around the world to reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship) looking for key elements that are also found in St. Benedict's Rule. The AIM USA staff has edited all reflections with the permission of the authors. Their responses follow.

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## Seeking Solidarity

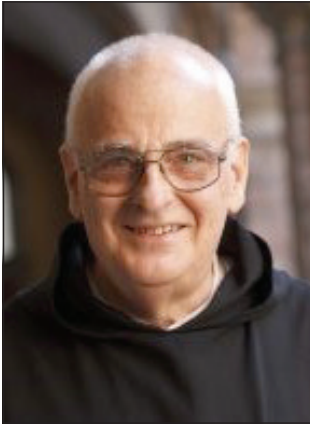


Photo credit: newmellera.org

**Michael Casey, OCSO**  
Tarrawarra Abbey, Australia  
Prolific writer on monastic life  
Retreat Director

### FAMILIAL SOLIDARITY

Pope Francis' encyclical on familial solidarity (*fraternitas*) is really no more than an extended reflection on the Second Commandment. It is incumbent on those who truly seek God that they also pledge themselves to live in ever-deepening solidarity with an ever-expanding circle of brothers and sisters: "a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance." It is not only our natural family or our everyday contacts that are included in this solidarity.

What distinguishes this attitude from mere voluntary association is that it is based less on choice than on our shared human nature. Men and women of all cultures and of all generations are bonded together by the very fact of their humanity. Their common task during their lifetimes is to allow the awareness of this solidarity to grow so that it progressively determines the choices that they make and begins to permeate their attitudes so it may be truly said of them that they live in the context of others.

When persons become part of a Benedictine community they are enrolling in a school of divine service. The kind of bonding previously experienced in their relationships with their families and friends is now applied to a very different group of people. Admittedly they all came to the community with similar goals and there they were formed in similar beliefs and values, but they remain very much the products of their own backgrounds and of the choices that they themselves have made in the course of a lifetime. This is to say that living with some of them poses a challenge.

When Saint Benedict refers to love within the community, it seems to me that he is mostly thinking about patience. The

virtue of patience involves more than the sulky endurance of hardship. It is built on a fundamental acceptance of others, without any delusional wish to change them. It is not merely tolerance, but it is also a global faith in Providence. This is the situation God's love has devised for me; there is a life-giving option for me hidden within it. Such patience is active, ready to make the most of whatever life offers. Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan to which Pope Francis keeps returning.

"Social friendship" is an important component of the Benedictine community – although sometimes I think that "friendliness" is a better and more inclusive term, since we need to be friendly even to those who are not our friends. In my experience the dynamics of community are different for men and women, but all alike are called to work toward consensus through respectful dialogue, by developing a culture of reconciliation and forgiveness, and by seeking after peace and pursuing it.

Such a love earnestly practiced in the microcosm of community becomes a seedbed from which a broader compassion emerges – a love without frontiers expressed through hospitality to the stranger and outreach to the alienated. Ultimately, as *Laudato si'* reminds us, it is also a call to love and care for our common home.

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*"Social Friendship" is an  
important component of the  
Benedictine community.*

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*Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)*

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# Seeking Dialogue

## Abess Paola Pavoletti, OCSO

Monasterio Nuestra Señora de Coromoto,  
Venezuela

The passion for universal fraternity that deeply animates the encyclical of Pope Francis touches intensely the experience of our community. For many years we have been trying to lead in our community, which is very cosmopolitan, an experience of fraternal communion through two main factors: the motherhood of the superior who educates for co-responsibility and the experience of dialogue.

Certainly, the great problems in the world that the Pope denounces, the small closed world, rivalry and power, are also present in the small monastic world in which we live, but little by little we are learning to call it by its name and to understand its distance from the evangelical climate.

We wonder if, in addition to chapter 72, which urges us to honor and understand all members, it might be interesting to take as a point of reference chapter 7 on humility. The experience of humility forms and sharpens one's capacity to listen and know how to find in the other another point of contact that favors encounter.



Photo credit: ocsso.org

*The experience of humility  
forms and sharpens one's  
capacity to listen.*

## Father Christophe Vuillaume, OSB

Mahitsy Monastery, Madagascar  
Theology and Spirituality teacher and translator



Photo credit: Mahitsy Monastery, Madagascar

*The necessary quest for true wisdom  
begins with our ability to sit down  
and listen to others.*

### COVER CREDIT

Benedict's Vision of the World - stained glass window  
in the chapel of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas

The key elements aligned in Fratelli Tutti and the Rule of Benedict are the "necessary quest for true wisdom" (FT and RB Prol.) that begins with the "ability to sit down and listen to others," (FT 48/RB 3) and first to Christ, for nothing damages more the modern world than a "desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values" (FT 275). Indeed, abilities, strength, even virtues are nothing without true charity, as our golden rule says, "prefer nothing to the Love of Christ" (RB4:21).

A vision of faith enables us to see in the poor, the pilgrims, the migrants Christ's own visitation (FT 90/RB 53, 15) and identifies ourselves with their vulnerability (FT 67). Seeing in the encounter with others an actual source of personal and common enrichment for "life exists where there is communion, fraternity" (FT88/RB72).

The monastic values that build a culture of peace and dialogue are forming a community, even when we are very different from one another. Community relationships are based on respectful dialogue, acknowledging universal/transcendental values beyond our personal and communitarian choices, and addressing the care for everyone according to his/her abilities, limits, talents, and needs.

# Seeking Healing

## Dom Geraldo Gonzalez Y Lima OSB

Saint Gerald Abbey, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
Member of AIM International Council and working  
in the Abbot Primate's Curia as Treasurer in Rome



Photo credit: Fr. Geraldo Gonzalez Y Lima OSB

*The monastic is a person in  
harmony with all.*

The document Fratelli Tutti and the Rule of Benedict were both written in times of social, political, cultural, religious, and economic crisis.

As monks, nuns and sisters we know that all of us are foreigners on the Earth. In some places around the world, we are “immigrants” as well. The monastic is a person in harmony with all because they see themselves in every person they meet (Evagrius Ponticus). The Benedictine community based on brotherhood and sisterhood is a real “belonging”. The better kind of politics in the monasteries is the opening to the poor and foreigners. We are not alone, and our desire is to arrive together into eternal life.

The Benedictine grace of welcoming “strangers” as guests includes the consequence of sharing.

Our parlors are places of welcoming, listening, and healing. Sometimes, the poorest is the one who is not listened to and our personal time is the best good and gift that we can offer.

Based on our stable communitarian life (vow of stability) we share and spread social friendship. Some of our monasteries are multicultural and international and so dialogue, culture and meeting walk together for communitarian (social) peace.

New monasteries in poor countries are seeds of development, dignity and hope and concrete signs of welcoming, protection, promotion, and integration. In some places and cultures monasteries are places of “memory” (Shoah, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, genocide in Rwanda).

## Sister Vera Lucia Parreiras Horta, OSB

Mosteiro do Salvador- Bahia Brazil  
Former abbess, delegate to CIB, President of CIMBRA  
Monastic Brazilian Conference

Three issues reflected in both the encyclical and the Rule of Benedict are the search for peace, hospitality, and the art of healing.

The search for peace in chapter 7 of the Encyclical reminds us that “in many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. The Rule of Benedict urges monks to “seek peace and pursue it.” The abbot or prioress must be attentive to “preserve peace and love...in the conduct of the monastery.” Especially in the case of “a dispute with someone,” members are encouraged to “make peace before the sun goes down.”

“Fratelli Tutti” states “Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfillment” except “in the sincere gift of self to others.” Monks following Benedict’s Rule realized that the values they sought to cultivate had to be accompanied by a readiness to move beyond themselves in openness to others. In monastic tradition, guests were always seen as a gift present in an encounter with those outside one’s own circle.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan offers the basis to “create a different culture, in which we resolve our conflicts and care for one another.” Benedict asks for the greatest of care of the sick above and before all else. He is convinced that his Rule envisions the healing of wounded people. We are to be “supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weakness of body or behavior.”



Photo credit: Mosteiro Do Salvador, Brasil

*In many parts of the  
world there is a need  
for paths of peace to  
heal wounds.*

*Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)*



# Seeking Dignity

## Abbot John Kurichianil, OSB

Saint Thomas Benedictine Monastery,  
Kappadu, Kerala, India

With regard to the title, Fratelli Tutti, one should pay attention to the creation stories that humans are a part of nature. They are to form a wider brotherhood/sisterhood not only with humanity but also with all of creation: trees, animals, and birds. Benedict says the monk is to live as part of nature, working mainly with the soil to earn a livelihood and seeing guests as brothers and sisters.

Fratelli Tutti speaks of respect for all in the world. This respect, especially for the poor, demands respect for food. It is a crime to waste food because there are millions in the world who starve. Jesus' words to the disciples after feeding the five thousand, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." Benedict's stance is the same. No one should be wasteful or a squanderer of the monastery's substance, instead one is to "look upon all the vessels and its whole property as sacred vessels of the altar."

While accepting the positive value of shared means of communication, the encyclical warns against possible dangers. Monastic communities need to take this seriously. When one manages to have in one's room all that one needs, contacts with others shrinks to the minimum. One may prefer to speak to a community member by phone rather than face to face. One may tend to communicate only with one's friends and avoid others. The constant and uncontrolled use of modern devices can undermine community life and destroy monastic values.



Photo credit: St. Thomas Benedictine Abbey, India

*Form a wider  
brotherhood/sisterhood  
with all of creation.*

## Sister Rosalina Fajardo, OSB

Missionary Benedictine Sisters, Manila, Philippines

Sub-prioress of the Manila Priory

Served as General Secretary of her Congregation in Rome



Photo credit: Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB

*To speak and listen to  
others is the  
"art of encounter."*

This call of Pope Francis for "fraternal" openness to the world is reflected in chapter 53 of the Rule of Benedict which could be summed up in, "Let all guests be received as Christ." St. Benedict believes and wants monastics to exercise good zeal, conscious that Christ is present in each human person; giving greatest care, kindness and pure love to all, showing respect to all.

Pope Francis insists that universal love and true friendship in society is only possible through dialogue and personal encounter. In chapter 3 of the Rule, St. Benedict gives every person in the community the opportunity to speak and listen to others as the "art of encounter" even amid disagreements and reservation, because each one could learn something from others, and no one is forgotten or neglected.

We have developed a culture of peace and dialogue by sustaining a center for families who live in the streets where they can wash up, eat, and learn skills for self-sufficiency. We also form small communities in rural areas where we can engage in inter-faith dialogue with farmers and indigenous people. We empower women for self-sufficiency and partner with other Benedictine schools abroad to dialogue with other cultures. Our sisters in formation are exposed to different cultures by attending an International Novitiate and a Pan-African Juniors Intensification Program. Students listen and learn life-long lessons culled from the life stories of the indigenous, fisherfolk, factory workers and homeless with whom they interact.

# Seeking Enrichment

## AIM USA Welcomes New Board Members

AIM USA welcomes three new members to the Board of Trustees: Sr. Mariana Olivo Espinoza from Pan de Vida Monastery, Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico; Sr. Nettie Gamble, OCSO from Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey, Dubuque, IA; and Sr. Susan Quaintance, OSB from St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL.

Photo credit: Sr. Mariana Olivo Espinoza, OSB



**Sister Mariana Olivo Espinoza, OSB** has her training in law, and is currently studying catholic social teaching and canon law. She is actively involved in the organization, planning and participation in Latin American Benedictine-Cistercian gatherings, and in monastic formation. Additionally, she supports families in her city dedicated to searching for their family members who have disappeared. Sr. Mariana says: "I am excited for the opportunity to participate with AIM USA. I want to know all the expressions of the monastic life of this great family that we are, and to be amazed at the way in which our Benedictine charism comes to life and enriches the world and the Church."

**Sister Nettie Gamble, OCSO** brings to the AIM USA Board her experiences as community bookkeeper/treasurer, Abbess/prioress, and secretary to the abbess. Her two years of ministry in Norway immersed in another culture and language is an added benefit. She reflects: "Our world needs monasteries just as much as or even more than ever. We exist not only for the Church but for our local communities and regions, and for all human beings. People who have no sense or awareness of God also lose the sense of meaning for their lives. Our young people are truly suffering because of this. I am happy to serve on the Board of AIM and to be a part of the mutual support and encouragement we can give to each other as we seek God."



Photo credit: Sr. Nettie Gamble, OCSO

Photo credit: Sr. Susan Quaintance, OSB



**Sister Susan Quaintance, OSB** is the director of the Center for Life and Learning, an educational outreach program for older adults. Susan is a long-time member/past president of the American Benedictine Academy. She has served her community in several positions, including 23 years of teaching. Sister Susan comments: "Serving on the AIM USA Board is an expression of gratitude for my 2004 AIM Women's Commission trip to Uganda and Kenya. The powerful witness of monastics throughout the world is both inspiration and challenge; it is a privilege to assist in the good news of that witness, however I can."

## Grants Supported by AIM USA in 2020

Thanks to your generosity, AIM USA helped to fund the following grants from November 2019 through December 2020:

### AFRICA

- **Angola** – Four sisters from Huambo traveled to class for education.
- **Chad** – A monastery in Moundou installed a satellite-phone and internet connection.
- **Eritrea** – A monastery in Asmara translated a book into their primary language.
- **Ivory Coast** - Three sisters and a monk received a scholarship to study theology.
- **Kenya** – A sister in Karen received a scholarship for the final year of her medical studies.
- **Kenya** - A monk from Tigonu received a scholarship to study at Sant' Anselmo.
- **Nigeria** – In Iwuru, a monastery purchased an oil press.
- **Nigeria** – A sister from Abakaliki received a scholarship to pursue a BA in pastoral communication.
- **Rwanda** – Ten monks received a scholarship in Huye.
- **Tanzania** – Monks in Mvimwa purchased a water supply and sanitation system.
- **Tanzania** – Sisters purchased monastic formation books in Mvimba.
- **Uganda** – A community in Arua purchased an embroidery machine for making vestments.

### ASIA

- **India** – A monastery purchased eight cows to begin a dairy farm in Kappadu.
- **India** – In Kappadu, a community repaired the roof of the church.
- **India** – Sisters purchased books and school uniforms for children in their schools.
- **Philippines** – A sister from Quezon received a scholarship to study music.
- **Philippines** – Two sisters received a scholarship to study.
- **Vietnam** – A community in Thuduc conducted three projects for sisters to study; fourteen studied at college and five studied theology.

### LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil** – One sister received a scholarship for an online course.
- **Brazil** – One sister received a scholarship for her 2nd year online course.
- **Brazil** – Sisters in Caxambu repaired their monastery and built a kitchen to serve the hungry in their area.
- **Brazil** – A monk from Fortaleza received a scholarship to study for the priesthood and obtain his Philosophy/Theology degree.
- **Brazil** – Sisters in Itapeperica purchased books and materials needed for education.
- **Brazil** – A sister from Santa Cruz received a scholarship to study the art of iconography.
- **Nicaragua** – A community improved their library.
- **Mexico** – A priest received a scholarship to study at Sant' Anselmo.
- **Peru** – A monk received a scholarship to study philosophy.

### EASTERN EUROPE

- **Poland** – A monk from Tyniec received a scholarship to study in Jerusalem.

# 2020 Monastery To Monastery Program

Monastery	City	State
Mount St. Scholastica	Atchison	KS
Marmion Abbey	Aurora	IL
Swiss-American Benedictine Cong	Aurora	IL
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove	IN
Holy Cross Monastery	Beaumont	TX
Belmont Abbey	Belmont	NC
St. Benedict's Abbey	Benet Lake	WI
Incarnation Monastery	Berkeley	CA
New Camaldoli Hermitage	Big Sur	CA
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck	ND
Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert	Blanco	NM
St. Benedict Monastery	Bristow	VA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Boerne	TX
Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey	Carlton	OR
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago	IL
Benedictine Srs. of Perpetual Adoration	Clyde	MO
Benet Hill Monastery	Colorado Springs	CO
Conception Abbey	Conception	MO
Monastery of the Holy Spirit	Conyers	GA
St. John's Abbey	Collegeville	MN
Monastery of St. Gertrude	Cottonwood	ID
St. Walburg Monastery	Covington	KY
Mt St Benedict Monastery	Crookston	MN
Our Lady of the Angels Monastery	Crozet	VA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Cullman	AL
Sacred Heart Monastery	Dickinson	ND
St. Scholastica Monastery	Duluth	MN
Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey	Dubuque	IA
St. Walburga Monastery	Elizabeth	NJ
Mt. Michael Abbey	Elkhorn	NB
Mount St. Benedict Monastery	Erie	PA
Monastery Immaculate Conception	Ferdinand	IN
St. Scholastica Monastery	Fort Smith	AR
St. Lucy's Priory	Glendora	CA
St. Emma Monastery	Greensburg	PA
Glastonbury Abbey	Hingham	MA
Clear Creek Abbey	Hulbert	OK
Our Lady of Dallas	Irving	TX
Monastery of the Ascension	Jerome	ID
Benedictine Monastery of Thien Tam	Kerens	TX
St. Martin's Abbey	Lacey	WA
St. Vincent Archabbey	Latrobe	PA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Lisle	IL
Emmanuel Monastery	Lutherville	MD
St. Anselm Abbey	Manchester	NH
Mount Tabor Monastery	Martin	KY
Holy Wisdom Monastery	Middleton	WI
Mepkin Abbey	Moncks Corner	SC
St. Mary's Abbey	Morristown	NJ
Queen of Angels Monastery	Mount Angel	OR
St. Peter's Abbey	Muenster	SK

Monastery	City	State
House of Bread	Nanaimo	BC
Newark Abbey	Newark	NJ
St. Gertrude Monastery	Newark	DE
St. Paul's Abbey	Newton	NJ
Immaculata Monastery	Norfolk	NE
Prince of Peace Abbey	Oceanside	CA
New Melleray Abbey	Peosta	IA
Abbey of the Genesee	Piffard	NY
Mount Saviour Monastery	Pine City	NY
St. Martin Monastery	Rapid City	SD
Assumption Abbey	Richardton	ND
St. Mary Monastery	Rock Island	IL
Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Peace	Rutherfordton	NC
Monastery of the Risen Christ	San Luis Obispo	CA
Christ the King Priory	Schuyler	NE
St. Benedict's Monastery	Snowmass	CO
Santa Rita Abbey	Sonoita	AZ
Benedictine Monastery	Sonoita	AZ
St. Joseph's Abbey	Spencer	MA
St. Joseph Abbey	St. Benedict	LA
St. Brigid of Kildare Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
St. Benedict's Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
Holy Name Monastery	St. Leo	FL
St Meinrad Archabbey	St. Meinrad	IN
St. Paul's Monastery	St. Paul	MN
New Subiaco Abbey	Subiaco	AR
Abbey of Gethsemani	Trappist	KY
St. Joseph's Monastery	Tulsa	OK
Our Lady of New Clairvaux Abbey	Vina	CA
St. Anselm's Abbey	Washington	DC
Queen of Heaven Monastery	Warren	OH
Mother of God Monastery	Watertown	SD
Weston Priory	Weston	VT
Redwoods Monastery	Whitethorn	CA
Transfiguration Monastery	Windsor	NY
St. Benedict's Monastery	Winnipeg	MB
Mt St Mary's Abbey	Wrentham	MA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Yankton	SD

## Mass Offerings

AIM USA sends MASS OFFERINGS to Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. These offerings are extremely important to them, especially in these times. If you wish to remember someone who has died as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or have another intention, please send it to:

**AIM USA, 345 East 9 Street, Erie PA 16503 USA**

## Staff Contacts

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## Support The Mission Of AIM USA

*Your financial support is greatly appreciated!*

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*Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)*

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## The Encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, reflected through the lens of the Rule of St. Benedict, challenges us.

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Listen! It is the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict. It is a key word identified by most of our writers. It is used by Pope Francis throughout his encyclical.

To whom do we listen? Obviously, family, friends, community members. But we need to go further.

More importantly we need to listen to strangers, the poor, the imprisoned, the migrants, outcasts, to those who have no one to listen to them, who may even be right in our midst. The greatest gift may be time.

Everyone must be included. We must encounter and dialogue with one another, respecting the voice, the wisdom of each person. This takes time and trust. It occurs one encounter at a time. It begins small and expands.

Imagine if every government, every business, every citizen really dialogued honestly, listening to one another, working

together. The world could be a different place. There may be no more wars, no more violence. The climate crisis might be resolved as scientists from around the world worked together to save the earth. It can happen!

***The Good Samaritan stopped  
and made a difference.***

***We can too!***

***Listen!***

*Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB*

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB  
Executive Director, AIM USA  
director@aim-usa.org

(For further reflection, Google *Fratelli Tutti*.)