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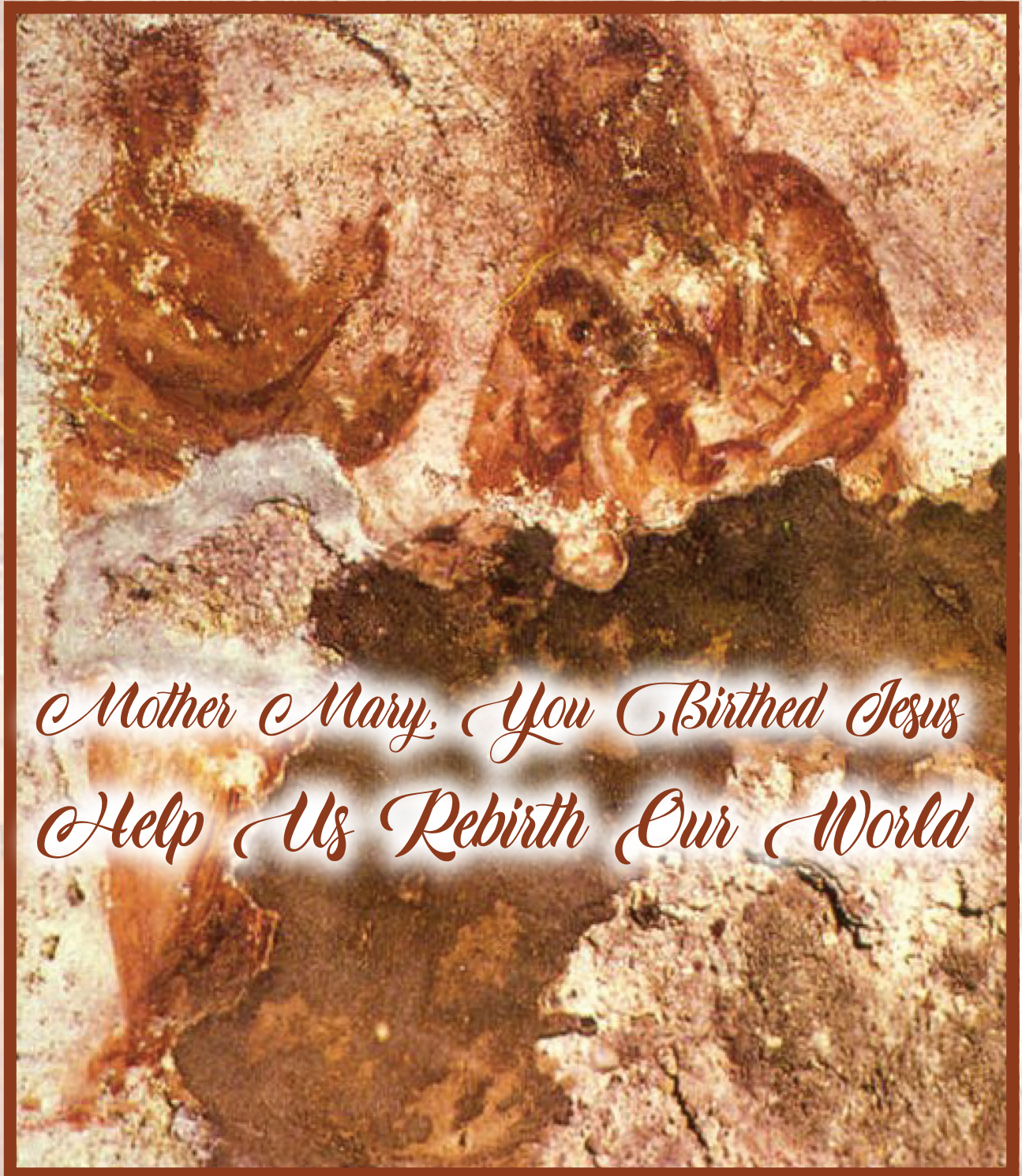
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The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

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*Mother Mary, You Birthed Jesus  
Help Us Rebirth Our World*



## Monastere Des Benedictines, Notre-Dame De Koubri, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

### Effects of Climate Change by Sr. Marie de l'Eucharistie

Intro: In the beauty of creation, the Lord reveals His goodness and love. Unfortunately, certain climatic changes negatively impact our area, a village named Koubri, not far from Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, where is situated our Benedictine monastic community, Monastère Notre Dame de Koubri.

We observe with concern the generally reduced rainfall, which is a necessity for our crop growing season, accompanied by generally increased temperatures due to global warming. The prolonged drought and heat decrease our water supply and impede crop growth. This has generally decreased food supply in the farming communities. There is increased deforestation. Our electricity supply in the country is also adversely affected.

The increased temperatures impact on the general health of the villagers and of our community members. The heat renders many easily tired and dehydrated. We have frequent cases of syncope — people passing out during Sunday Mass and other celebrations. During the great heat we are obliged to have our 'recreation time' outside in the open air, where we are again exposed to mosquitoes! Electrical energy supply in our region is often interrupted. The frequent power outage disrupts our prayers and conferences, not to mention our electrical appliances (especially the refrigerators and freezers).

To counteract the heat, we are obliged to construct air-conditioned rooms for our guests and at our infirmary for aged or sick nuns. We have recently invested in forage water supply systems where we will employ natural water purification methods to have potable water. We are planting more trees, using the forage water storing system to regularly water our

plants, thus maintaining the greenery of the environment in and around the monastery.

By our silent presence in our nation, Burkina Faso, our monastic community is part of the prophetic voices in the Church calling to hope through constant prayer and confidence in the Lord's divine providence. We reach out to the poor and hungry by offering hospitality to all who knock on our doors as we would receive Christ Himself.

We are united with all Christians whose hearts ache for unity and reconciliation with ourselves and with nature, which visibly represents God's presence amidst us. We sincerely hope for peace in every heart and in every home. May the Lord God of all nations grant peace and reconciliation among all nations and religions. We hope to see an end to the use of weapons of mass destruction which destroy our forests and pollute the land and our water sources contributing to deforestation, poor crop growth, many people migrating from their villages and many families dispersed or killed. We hope that the Lord will inspire our government and political leaders to support the weakest members of our society living in pain and suffering. We hope that children will not have to go to bed hungry, particularly those rendered orphans by terrorist attacks, who are frightened, lonely and left aside to struggle with life. Our fear is that if peoples' hearts are not appeased, if there is still insecurity, the humble farmers who are killed by terrorists or those who flee to save their lives may not participate in the crop growing season. If farm lands are not cultivated, food supply will further decrease. And with our already decreased rainfall pattern associated with increased temperatures the general health of our displaced (migrated) population will ultimately decline. But as the saying goes: **where there is life, there is always hope.**



### On the cover

The cover is a photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art.

It is a photo of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century fresco of the Madonna and Child with Balaam the Prophet found in the catacombs of Priscilla in Rome, Italy. It is the earliest recorded picture of Mary and the Child. It is embedded in the stone—the earth, just as the presence of the Mother and Child are embedded in humanity here on earth.

The Benedictine Sisters of Priscilla offer tours to pilgrims and proclaim the Madonna and Child to the world.

## New Camaldoli Hermitage, Big Sur, California, USA

### Creation Spirituality, Climate Change and Monastic Life by Fr. Thomas Matus

This brief note will offer our community's experience here at New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, where we cultivate an awareness of the connection between monastic life and a spirituality of God our Creator, imaged in the incredible beauty of the Big Sur coast. Hence we do not need to think twice about this connection: it is in our DNA. We are also concerned about the climate changes that are already taking place, close at hand and around the world; we share this concern with many persons, including those who make retreats at our Hermitage.

To have a sense of how devastating these changes will be, we need only live in or near the places where extreme climate events are happening today. Our motherhouse, the original hermitage and monastery of Camaldoli, is in the Tuscan Apennines, immersed in a gorgeous forest that — like almost all the forested lands in Europe — is a reconstructed ecosystem, having been cultivated as a wooded garden by many generations of monks. The current heat-wave (early summer 2019) encircling the Mediterranean and pushing up into central Europe is bringing record temperatures, which will also affect the Camaldolese in Italy. On July 3rd the temperature in Florence, little more than an hour's drive from our mother-house, was at or near 40°C (about 104 degrees Fahrenheit). Even greater temperature extremes are being recorded in the central United States. The monks who live in Tuscany or here in Big Sur are



aware of the imminent danger of forest fires. On the basis of past experience, whether in California or Italy, a forest fire might mean, at the very least, a temporary evacuation of our community, but it could also lead to even more tragic consequences.

Fire is a threat in Big Sur, but water has caused the greatest damage during the past two years. We have seen intense rains along the California coast, leading to repeated landslides. State Highway 1 is our only way to the south or the north, and the few roads leading inland are at a considerable distance from the Hermitage. For more than a year we were inaccessible to retreatants, whose offerings

for monastic hospitality are our major source of income. The coastal highway is fortunately a matter of national security; hence both the State of California and the United States military guarantee its maintenance, and at present guests and visitors are once again frequenting the Hermitage. Our entrance road, 3.5 km (2 miles) from the highway to the monastic enclosure, has been in constant need of repair, and now, at considerable expense to us, a construction crew has almost finished an alternative entrance route. Since I entered New Camaldoli Hermitage fifty-seven years ago, I have never seen such intense rain and so much damage to the roads. There is no room for doubt that climate change is happening even on this local level.



We monks and nuns meditate. Some of us have studied the teachings on meditation in the Eastern Christian tradition, and the two terms the Greek monks used are *theoria physike* and *theoria theologike*, which you can roughly translate as “contemplation of Nature” and “contemplation of God.” This is an important insight from the Church's monastic tradition: our focus is not just on God or Spirit; we also seek God in the environment and in our human embodiment. We have saints who have taught us how to do this. During the thousand years of uninterrupted monastic life at our Camaldolese motherhouse, the monks always saw stewardship of their forest as a spiritual task and a monastic engagement with the environment.

Today's monastics are called to contemplate Nature not only in abstract terms, but also by informing themselves about the current ecological crisis and by gaining a sense of urgency for both our prayer life and our practical engagement in this world at a time of rapid climate change. We monastics read the Bible and mystical writings, and some of us try to include an occasional climate-science article in our daily reading. Not all of these readings are consoling, whether they are from Holy Scripture or science. But for us, living in a contemplative environment, it is a great gift to have guests on retreat who are personally committed to saving our planet Earth. We thank them for the example they offer, coming here to New Camaldoli Hermitage and sharing with us their thoughts on these topics of great importance and urgency.

*Photos courtesy of Rich Veum*

# ECOLOGICAL CRISIS—A RESPONSE

**AIM USA received two papers about the ecological crisis from two St. Scholastica Academies in the Philippines. One was written by staff person, Sr. Ma. Delia Singian, OSB in Pampanga and the other was written by a student, Isabella Bettina Lorilla, in Bacolod City. We would like to share excerpts of their work.**

Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si* gave us an extensive assessment of the present state of our environment that due to the great devastation happening in our Mother Earth, Our Common Home is now greatly harmed to the breaking point.

As our response to this alarming phenomenon, St. Scholastica Academies take seriously their vision to protect the environment by strengthening their role in contributing to the preservation of the environmental community.



Photo credit: SSA-San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines

There is no way we can look at the deterioration of the earth around us... There is no way we can see the effects of humanity's repeated mistakes and feel no sadness or remorse for what we have done and what we continue to do. Collectively it is imperative for us to feel the sense of urgency to act on the signs our planet has been telling us for years. It is about time for us to make a change.

In view of the gravity of the ecological crisis, our schools have focused on the value of Benedictine Stewardship in directions set every start of the school year. We started the journey on the road to zero waste taking into account the following measures: **Segregation-at-the-Source and Segregated Collection**. Properly labelled outdoor trash bins are used for paper, plastic and bottles as well as for

compartments identified for residuals and recyclables. There is a compost pit for biodegradables and a compost heap for tree trimmings and leaves. A **Litter-Free and Eco-Friendly Canteen** boasts of the use of disposable plastics and paper to zero waste. The left-over food is used as animal feed. **Related Environmental Activities** include energy conservation with lights and appliances. St. Scholastica's Academy in Pampanga is the first school in the area to be powered by the sun. Education on environmental issues has been introduced in classes, as well as environmental tours. **Tree Planting** activities in 2018 included 60 native trees to commemorate 60 years since the founding of St. Scholastica's Academy in Bacolod City. In 2019, 600 forest trees seedlings were planted in the watershed in Talisay City. Administrators, teachers, students, alumnae and parents participated in the planting and in blessing the area.

We are grateful for the strong examples of accountability and action taken at these schools. May we preserve and protect Mother Earth wherever we live.

*That in all things may God be glorified!*



Photo credit: SSA-Bacolod, Philippines

## Support the Mission of AIM USA

*Your financial support is greatly appreciated.*

**DONATE** to AIM USA using our PayPal account ([www.aim-usa.org](http://www.aim-usa.org)) or send a check.

All the gifts of \$250 or greater are tax deductible.

Please send to: **AIM USA**  
345 East 9 Street  
Erie, PA 16503

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



# Notes Worth Quoting

Dear Sisters and Brothers of AIM USA,

For many years we have had the pleasure to know you and to maintain good relationships with you in the spirit of monastic solidarity... we are far from you on a geographical level... however, we have read your newsletters with great interest for a long time and now we regularly follow the news you communicate on your AIM USA website... we also get to know you through collaboration with the AIM International office.

We thank God for all these blessings and we pray every day for all of you and your benefactors. May God fill your heart with graces—for you and all people around you. Let God bless you and give you a joyful heart in God's service.

Sincerely yours,  
Sr. M. Jean de la Croix Pham Ghy Tac  
Abbess and all Sisters  
Tan Hoa-Bien Hoa  
Dong Nai, **Vietnam**



Dear Sister,

Peace and joy in the Lord. I hereby wish to acknowledge receipt of the books and to express our wholehearted thanks to AIM for the donation. We remain very grateful for the benefaction. May the Good Lord continue to bless your endeavors to promote monasticism in the world. Once again accept our well wishes and God's choicest blessings.

Br. Polycarp Wisungnin, OCSO  
Our Lady of Bamenda Abbey  
Mbengwi, **Cameroon**



Dear Sister,

Peace! Yesterday we had the big joy to get the box from AIM USA so full of good spiritual books.

Many, many Thanks! They will be so helpful for us. May the Lord bless you and all people who work for AIM USA each day.

With union and prayers,  
Sr. Martha Lúcia Ribeiro Teixeira, OSB  
Community of Hail Mary of Peace  
Itapecerica da Serra, **Brazil**



## *We Pray for Our Benefactors*

Dear Sister,

We are so glad about the books we received from you. They are beautiful! Thank you very much for this wonderful gift and please tell our benefactors that we shall pray for them and for their intentions. We also keep your generous task in our prayers; it makes it possible for us to obtain this spiritual food for our community.

In Jesus and Mary,  
hna Isabel, osb  
Monasterio Nuestra Senora del Parana  
Entre Rios, **Argentina**



Dear Sister Chris,

Thanks for inviting us to present mission talks for AIM USA this year. We've just completed our weekend of talks and we want to share the prayers and enthusiasm we received. It was great that the gospel reading was about Martha and Mary, as we were able to speak about the importance of prayer and service in the monasteries of AIM USA. Carl was asked to stand before the altar and the congregation extended their hands as the pastor prayed for all the monasteries of AIM, the monastics and their work and for all the oblates.

Carl & Nancy, Oblates of Benedictine  
Sisters, Erie, PA, **USA**

*Photo contributed by Monastere N.D. de Vinh-Phuoc, Tan Hoa-Bien Hoa, Dong Nai, Vietnam*

# 2019 Monastery to Monastery Members

Christ in the Desert Monastery	Abiquiu	NM	Holy Wisdom Monastery	Middleton	WI
Mount St. Scholastica Monastery	Atchison	KS	Mepkin Abbey	Moncks Corner	SC
Marmion Abbey	Aurora	IL	St. Mary's Abbey	Morristown	NJ
Assumption Abbey	Ava	MO	Queen of Angels Monastery	Mount Angel	OR
St. Benedict Monastery	Bakerstown	PA	St. Peter's Abbey	Muenster	SK
Holy Cross Monastery	Beaumont	TX	House of Bread Monastery	Nanaimo	BC
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove	IN	St. Gertrude Monastery	Newark	DE
Belmont Abbey	Belmont	NC	Newark Abbey	Newark	NJ
St. Benedict's Abbey	Benet Lake	WI	St. Paul's Abbey	Newton	NJ
Holy Cross Abbey	Berryville	VA	Immaculata Monastery	Norfolk	NE
New Camaldoli Hermitage	Big Sur	CA	New Melleray Abbey	Peosta	IA
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck	ND	St. Bede Abbey	Peru	IL
St. Scholastica Monastery	Boerne	TX	Abbey of the Genesee	Piffard	NY
St. Benedict Monastery	Bristow	VA	Mount Saviour Monastery	Pine City	NY
Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey	Carlton	OR	Woodside Priory	Portola Valley	CA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago	IL	Portsmouth Abbey	Portsmouth	RI
Benedictine Srs. of Perpetual Adoration	Clyde	MO	Valley of Our Lady Monastery	Prairie du Sac	WI
St. John's Abbey	Collegeville	MN	St. Martin Monastery	Rapid City	SD
Benet Hill Monastery	Colorado Springs	CO	Assumption Abbey	Richardton	ND
Conception Abbey	Conception	MO	Mary Mother of the Church Abbey	Richmond	VA
Monastery of the Holy Spirit	Conyers	GA	St. Mary Monastery	Rock Island	IL
Monastery of St. Gertrude	Cottonwood	ID	Monastery of the Risen Christ	San Luis Obispo	CA
St. Walburg Monastery	Covington	KY	Christ the King Priory	Schuyler	NE
Mt St Benedict Monastery	Crookston	MN	St. Benedict's Monastery	Snowmass	CO
Our Lady of the Angels Monastery	Crozet	VA	Santa Rita Abbey	Sonoita	AZ
Sacred Heart Monastery	Cullman	AL	Benedictine Monastery	Sonoita	AZ
Sacred Heart Monastery	Dickinson	ND	St. Joseph's Abbey	Spencer	MA
Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey	Dubuque	IA	St. Joseph Abbey	St. Benedict	LA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Duluth	MN	St. Benedict's Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
St. Walburga Monastery	Elizabeth	NJ	Holy Name Monastery	St. Leo	FL
Mount Michael Monastery	Elkhorn	NE	St. Louis Abbey	St. Louis	MO
Mount St. Benedict Monastery	Erie	PA	St. Meinrad Archabbey	St. Meinrad	IN
Monastery Immaculate Conception	Ferdinand	IN	St. Paul's Monastery	St. Paul	MN
St. Scholastica Monastery	Fort Smith	AR	New Subiaco Abbey	Subiaco	AR
St. Lucy's Priory	Glendora	CA	Abbey of Gethsemani	Trappist	KY
St. Emma Monastery	Greensburg	PA	St. Joseph's Monastery	Tulsa	OK
Glastonbury Abbey	Hingham	MA	Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux	Vina	CA
Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey	Hulbert	OK	Queen of Heaven Monastery	Warren	OH
Our Lady of Dallas Abbey	Irving	TX	St. Anselm's Abbey	Washington	DC
Monastery of the Ascension	Jerome	ID	Mother of God Monastery	Watertown	SD
Holy Angels Convent	Jonesboro	AR	Weston Priory	Weston	VT
St. Martin's Abbey	Lacey	WA	Redwoods Monastery	Whitethorn	CA
St. Vincent Archabbey	Latrobe	PA	Mount St Mary's Abbey	Wrentham	MA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Lisle	IL	Transfiguration Monastery	Windsor	NY
Emmanuel Monastery	Lutherville	MD	St. Benedict's Monastery	Winnipeg	MB
St. Anselm Abbey	Manchester	NH	Sacred Heart Monastery	Yankton	SD
Dwelling Place Monastery	Martin	KY			

## AIM USA Director to Travel to Spain

Sister Ann Hoffman, Director of AIM USA will travel to Leon, Spain on November 15, 2019 to participate in the AIM International Annual meeting. The AIM Council (of which Sister Ann is a member) is composed of 24 members.

The two days of meetings are intense and very full as participants discuss current issues and address serious concerns of the monasteries of AIM. We also rejoice at accomplishments made by monasteries as members complete education, formation and collaborate among themselves regionally to grow together in monasticism. We also discern the best distribution of donations in order to meet the many requests of monasteries in developing countries.

Sister Ann comments: "What is of greatest value is our interaction, our relationship, our listening to one another. From that we learn to appreciate our diversity as we live out the Rule of Benedict."

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**Website: [www.aim-usa.org](http://www.aim-usa.org)**

## Annual Meeting of AIM USA Board

AIM USA hosted the Annual Board of Trustees meeting at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA USA on 10/9/19. Board member Father Stanislaus Gumula, OCSO, of Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corner, SC joined the meeting by video link from his new ministry with the Trappistine Sisters of Our Lady of Hope Monastery, his community's "sister monastery" in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. Fr. Stan was "dismayed" that because of geographic distance he would have to leave the Board when he moved from the USA to Ecuador. Recognizing his abilities and the gifts of his Latin American presence, AIM USA worked to find a way for him to continue to participate on the Board. We utilized Zoom technology which facilitates video conferencing world-wide. Its use was a wonderful success and now AIM USA foresees its additional use for communication with our world-wide monastic family. We are grateful to Fr. Stan and the entire Board for their willingness to try this venture and for their insight, experience and direction. A challenge has become a blessing!



Board members are:

**Front Row (L-R):** Sister Mary David Hydro, OSB, Holy Name Monastery, St. Leo, FL Father Stanislaus Gumula, OCSO, Mepkin Abbey, Ecuador (on computer screen) Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB, Executive Director, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA Sister Therese Glass, OSB, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA

**Back Row (L-R):** Father Joel Macul, OSB, Christ the King Monastery, Schuyler, NE Abbot Neal Roth, OSB, St. Martin's Abbey, Lacey, WA Brother Paul Richards, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN Sister Anne Wambach, OSB, Prioress, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA Sister Michael Marie Rottinghaus, OSB, Immaculata Monastery, Norfolk, NE Sister Chris Kosin, OSB, Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA Sister Anne Shepard, OSB, Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS Sister Nancy Miller, OSB, President, Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, ND, Missing from Photo: Mother Maureen McCabe, OCSO, Mt. St. Mary's Monastery, Wrentham, MA

## 2019 Missionary Cooperative Appeals

As part of the national 2019 Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP), AIM USA was invited by the Propagation of the Faith to present appeals in 14 dioceses in the United States. The 19 speakers (4 Oblates, 7 Sisters, 1 Brother and 7 Priests) gave of their time in 23 parishes within those dioceses.

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

The speakers provided information on the needs of monastics in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the mission of AIM USA and its efforts to connect and support Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists around the world through prayer and finances.

## Grants supported by AIM USA

Thanks to your generosity, AIM USA was able to support the following grants during the last 12 months.

### AFRICA

**Namibia** Four sisters from Oshikuku participated in the Association of African Benedictines of St. Mechtildis' meetings.

**Tanzania** A sister from Our Lady Help of Christians, Ndanda, Tanzania completed her final year of medical laboratory study.

**South Africa** Two sisters from Twasana received travel expense funds to study social work and nursing in Chicago. They will return to minister in their community and local area.

**Benin** Monasteries in Parakou and Hekanme received a generator to have electricity. They hope to utilize solar energy.

### ASIA

**Taiwan/Philippines/Vietnam** Nine superiors (six from Philippines/ three from Vietnam) attended the Benedictines of East Asia and Oceania (BEAO) meeting in Taiwan.

**Madagascar** Superiors participated in the Meeting of Monastic Superiors (SIM) course.

**Vietnam** 14 students received scholarships to the Inter Congregational Institute in Ho Chi Minh Villa.

**Philippines** A sister from Manila attended the Course of Monastic Formation (CMF) in Rome.

**Philippines** Two sisters from the Philippines, Pampanga and Vigan, attended the Leadership and the Rule of Benedict (LRB) course in Rome.

### LATIN AMERICA

**ABECCA** Cistercians and Benedictines participated in the 2019 Association of Benedictines and Cistercians of the Caribbean and the Andes (ABECCA) meeting in Costa Rica.

**Mexico** A priest from Cuernavaca studied sacramental theology at Sant' Anselmo.

**Colombia** A new women's community in El Rosal remodeled an old building to have safe housing.

**Brasil** Two sisters from Bahia attended a Cistercian formation course in Rome.

**Peru** A monk from Lurin received living expenses while he studied Philosophy in Rome.

**Mexico** Provided funds for a speaker for the Union of Benedictines and Cistercians in Mexico (UBCM) summer course in Mexico.

### INTERNATIONAL

ICBE Assisted with the funding of the International Commission of Benedictine Education Meeting (ICBE)

*You are making a difference in the lives of our brother and sister monastics.*

*As we send future appeals to you, you will know the new grants we will be supporting.*





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

In my reflections on the upcoming Christmas Season, I thought of Mary's "Yes" in faith, trusting that all would be well. How difficult it was for Mary and Joseph to make the required journey to Bethlehem complying with the law simply to "register" especially as Mary was nine months pregnant. How devastated they must have been to arrive and find "no room in the inn". Did no one realize the "Son of Man" was about to be born? Their journey reminds me of that of immigrants and refugees today. Are they not children of God, like Jesus? Who welcomes these innocent ones?

Our tradition of gift-giving stems from the Magi following the star and bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the stable where there was a baby in a manger surrounded by animals to keep him warm...no image of an earthly king or anyone of importance! It was here that the shepherds, the lowest class, were the first to visit and bring their gift of presence. The Holy Family was so grateful!

What gifts do we bring today? As I look around, I see a world, a universe ALL creation that we have received as gift. At the same time throughout this precious world there are rising temperatures, extreme floods and droughts, raging fires, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, hurricanes, typhoons,

tornadoes, landslides. Many of these have been brought about by the action or inaction of humanity — us!

What gifts can we bring? We can bring gifts of reverence and respect by honoring and respecting ALL creation. We can recognize that the universe was created for ALL, not just humans. We can take steps to preserve our environment: use solar power, reduce waste, reuse.

***Yes, respect EVERYTHING!***

*Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB*

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB  
Executive Director, AIM USA  
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