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Benedictine Education



A Foundation for Life.

Benedictine Education

Saint Benedict encouraged his monks to pay attention to the young and believed “the Spirit often revealed what is better to the younger” (RB 3). We contacted the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities (ABCU) and the International Commission on Benedictine Education (ICBE) to share the ways Benedictine values are incorporated in their studies. Articles have been edited by AIM USA staff with permission of the authors.

Where Does Belonging Belong?



Long before people and institutions began prioritizing “belonging” in these recent years, Benedictine institutions have always had a priority for belonging. For monks and nuns (monastics) closely rooted in Scripture, the Savior, Jesus Christ, and our Holy Father Saint Benedict, belonging has always been at the core of our identity. From the Jewish ideal of communal salvation, to the

Body of Christ, to a monastic community, membership and belonging are our “life’s blood.”

Scholars of The Rule of Saint Benedict are quick to point out that Saint Benedict made monasticism livable. Hermits in the desert and wilderness were holy, but there were not many who could live that life. Cenobitic, or communal, monasticism carefully crafted in the Rule, is one of many contributions that Saint Benedict made to the Church and society.

One may point quickly to Chapter 53 where Saint Benedict prioritizes hospitality. But hospitality is for guests, not members. Belonging describes the experience of true members of the community. Saint Benedict gives insight into the priority of belonging, by addressing what to do when a member begins to separate from the community in Chapter 27 as he emphasizes care for the excommunicated. The excommunicated are not “kicked out” but

rather they separate from the community and do not experience belonging. The remedy is the care of a wise elder who can express love amid difficulty, guilt, shame or fear.

At our Benedictine Colleges and Universities, we don’t need to reinvent the wheel. The stability of the Rule, of our history and tradition, and our faith, along with the adaptability we have to the “signs of the times” with new “Tools for Good Works,” are precisely all we need to fulfill our mission to educate our students for successful careers and meaningful lives, and to build up the Kingdom of God with our apostolates.

In this world of shattered relationships and fractured society, “belonging” is a treasure. Our Benedictine and Catholic mission prioritizes the sacred nature of the human person and the importance of the connectedness of that person to our community. The issues that young people face today are complex. Bullying, isolation, mental illness, hatred, and fear. How can a student learn when confronted by all of that?

Once you have the foundation of belonging, there are no hurdles too high, and no obstacles too big to keep you from success in this world and eternal happiness in the next.

Paul Taylor, O.S.B., Ph.D.
Chair of the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities (ABCU)
President of Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA

On the Cover

AIM International has recently changed their name to Associatio Internationalis Monastica (International Monastic Association) with a focus on the International aspect.

For ages Benedictines have been engaged in the ministry of education. It is influenced by Our Way of Life and the Wisdom of the Rule of Benedict. Sharing the lived experience and values with students offers a foundation for the rest of their lives.

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A Foundation for Life.

Presence and Prayer: The Benedictine Way

It is an absolute blessing that I get to live one of the expressions of my Benedictine vocation in ministry at our Benedictine College. Every day I am amazed at the way our young people take hold of and make their own our Benedictine values and traditions.

In my work with the athletes at CSS (College of St. Scholastica), especially the football team, I witness firsthand the profound impact of a Benedictine education. As I pray with the team and minister to them, I observe the many ways God is revealed in their lives. This experience allows me to connect with them beyond the game, accompanying them as they learn more about who and how God dreams them to be.

One of the most meaningful ways I connect with student athletes is through special prayer services offered for each team at the start of their season. These services, typically held in the Chapel, include Scripture readings and the distribution of blessed St. Benedict medals. Through stories and reflections on the Benedictine values of community, hospitality, respect, stewardship, and love of learning, I wish to foster positive experiences in athletics and in life.

From Grace, a softball alum



Sister Lisa, your ministry created a space where faith felt both personal and shared, bringing our team closer together.

The pre-season prayer service gave us time to pause and reflect, reminding us that we were part of something bigger than the game. The medals were especially meaningful, they weren't just symbols, but daily reminders of protection, purpose, and faith. Carrying them with us brought a sense of peace and unity throughout the season.

More than anything, you showed us that faith and sport can go hand in hand, and your impact went far beyond the field.



The College of *St. Scholastica*

It is incredibly rewarding to see student athletes practicing Benedictine values both on and off the field. I am filled with pride and joy when I see a student athlete wearing their Benedictine medal around their neck, or when I learn about a new Bible study started by a team captain. I thank the Holy Spirit when I hear athletes praise God for their opportunities for athletic success.

Another purposeful way I connect with students, athletes and non-athletes alike, is by visiting the dining halls several times a week. It is important to me to remind all students that they are loved. I check in with them about their lives, families, and classes, asking what brings them happiness and always encouraging them to be good.

Ultimately, being with our college students is a profound privilege that allows me to witness a living, breathing expression of the Benedictine charism. As they embrace our values and make them their own, they assure me that the Benedictine tradition is not only preserved but it is flourishing in their hands.

Sister Lisa Maurer, OSB
College of St. Scholastica
Duluth, MN

From Donovan, a football alum

Sister Lisa provided the team with a sense of calmness and grounding during some stressful moments in our lives. She was with us at practice, games, and she even helped us to adapt to college life. It was her presence and her love and prayers that made us feel special and helped us to be a family.

Mass Offerings

AIM USA sends **MASS OFFERINGS** to Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in Asia, Africa, Latin America the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. These offerings are extremely important to them, especially in these times. If you wish to remember someone who has died or is in need of healing or have another intention, please send it to:

AIM USA
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Benedictine Education

Benedictine by Design: Building Lives of Creativity and Purpose



For an artist, work is a way of life. Yet finding a life of purpose is not incidental, and is difficult to teach. Designing an artful life requires listening, living in community, and careful vocational discernment—commitments that are hallmarks of the Catholic Benedictine tradition.

At the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, my curricular capstone section grapples with these values in relationship to design and design thinking, inviting students of all majors to consider: *how do we discover our purpose and vocation, and how does being part of a Benedictine community equip us to design such a life?* Across the semester, we learn how the Benedictine values offer a grounding that holds real-world benefits for any student working creatively, where uncertainty and vulnerability are constant companions.

The Benedictine value of listening allows creative students to recognize their developing voices as worthy of being heard. It shifts the studio environment from a site of evaluation to a place of mutual collaboration. In hands-on spaces such as the woodshop, this value encourages patience in learning new techniques, attentiveness to material, and openness to unexpected outcomes. Equally vital is

the value of stewardship, which reframes creativity as a communal responsibility rather than an exclusively individual pursuit. When art students see their talents as gifts to be shared, their work gains an expanded sense of purpose: they move from asking “what can I make?” to “why does this matter, and for whom?” Finally, the Benedictine sensibility toward labor and discernment affirms that meaningful work arises from rhythms of reflection that allow students to slow down and be present in the tasks ahead of them. As one example, art students in my department engage in a summer-wide rotation of creative professional experiences across campus, closely inspired by the intentional rotation of monastic vocation guests in discerning their own sense of belonging and purpose.

A Benedictine education is not simply a framework for intellectual development; it is the support structure onto which a full life is formed. It fosters creative lives of purpose by giving students the tools to shape a meaningful path individual to them and further enriched by community interaction. In this way, the integration of Benedictine values into the undergraduate experience equips students with a lifelong practice of creating, discerning, and becoming.

Steven Lemke
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art
College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University
Collegeville, MN

The Benedictine School Meet: Shaping Young Minds Beyond the Classroom

The Benedictine School Meet stands as more than just an inter-school gathering of competitions and performances; it is a vibrant celebration of youthful energy, discipline, and holistic growth. Rooted in the monastic values, excellence, and character formation, the Meet offered students an opportunity to step beyond the confines of textbooks and discover new friendships.

One of the most significant impacts of the Benedictine School Meet was the way it nurtured confidence among young participants. Students who may otherwise hesitate to step forward found themselves encouraged to perform, mingle, and express their ideas. This transformation is often visible even on the very next day, as shy individuals begin to carry themselves with new found assurance.

Importantly, the Meet helps students feel that they are part of a larger family. Interacting with peers from different schools under the same Benedictine tradition creates a sense of belonging that goes beyond individual institutions. Students begin to see themselves not just as members of their own school, but as part of a wider community bound by shared values and experiences. This feeling of unity fosters empathy, mutual support, and lasting friendships.

The Meet also fosters a strong sense of discipline and responsibility. Preparing for events requires commitment, teamwork, and time management. Students learn the importance of practice, persever-



ance, and adhering to rules—values that extend far beyond the event itself. Teachers and mentors observe that participants often return to their regular school routines with improved focus and a more mature approach to their responsibilities.

Another noticeable change is the development of teamwork. The Benedictine ethos emphasizes unity, and the Meet provides a perfect platform for students to experience it firsthand. Working together toward a common goal—be it winning a relay race or organizing a cultural performance—helps students understand the value of cooperation, mutual respect, and collective effort. Friendships formed during the Meet often transcend school boundaries, creating a wider sense of community among participants.

In essence, the Benedictine School Meet plays a crucial role in shaping well-rounded individuals. It instills confidence, discipline, teamwork, and resilience while nurturing a spirit of joy and unity. For many students, it becomes a defining experience—one that not only creates cherished memories but also leaves a lasting imprint on their personal growth and character.

Robin Checkathadathil, OSB
ICBE Delegate for Asia
Sylvestro-Benedictine Congregation of St. Joseph's Priory
Makkiyad, Kerala, INDIA

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

A Foundation for Life.

Taking a Seat at the Table: Benedictine Hospitality in a Time of Difference

On a recent evening during Ramadan 2026, resident scholars gathered for an Iftar meal prepared by one of our staff members. As the sun set over the lake, residents—Christian, Muslim, seekers, scholars, and writers—sat down together to break the fast. Some were familiar with the practice. Others encountered it for the first time. There was no expectation of expertise, only an invitation to be present. Conversation unfolded, and questions were asked with care and curiosity. What began as a shared meal became something more, a moment of recognition, learning, and quiet transformation.



Moments like this are not exceptional at the Collegeville Institute. They are the work.

Founded in 1967 by Kilian McDonnell, OSB, a monk of Saint John's Abbey, the Collegeville Institute was built on Benedictine traditions, with hospitality at its root. Kilian envisioned a place where people of different faith traditions could live, pray, and study side by side. His life reflected this commitment, as he engaged in ecumenical dialogue when such work was far from common.

That vision continues to guide us, even as the circle has widened.

Today, our community includes not only Christians from across denominations, but also Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and others who seek space to reflect on the life of faith in a complex and divided world. This expansion is not a departure from our roots, but a deepening of them. The Benedictine commitment to receiving guests as Christ calls us to recognize dignity, presence, and possi-

bility in each person, regardless of tradition. In this way, our life together reflects a long-standing openness within Benedictine communities to interreligious friendship and dialogue.

At the heart of our shared life is "The Collegeville Way," a set of invitations shaped by decades of lived ecumenical and interreligious encounter. We come as we are, not as representatives but as people formed by our stories. We speak

from lived experience and listen with the expectation that we might be changed. We resist the urge to resolve what is not yet ready to be resolved, allowing tension to become a place of learning rather than division. We discern not only for ourselves, but also for the communities to which we are accountable.

These practices are not abstract. They take shape in ordinary rhythms: shared meals, Friday gatherings, unhurried conversations, and walks along the lake. They are also present in more difficult moments, when beliefs, identities, and questions surface without easy answers. In those moments, hospitality becomes more than welcome; it becomes discipline. In a time marked by fragmentation, we have seen what happens when people remain at the table. What emerges is not uniformity, but a deeper, more honest communion—shaped by patience, humility, and the quiet work of staying present to one another.

Andrew McNeil
Director of Communications
Saint John's University
Collegeville, MN

Colegio Vita et Pax: Forming Lives with Purpose

At Colegio Vita et Pax, in Brazil, education is understood as much more than academic instruction. Inspired by the Benedictine values of life and peace, our mission is to foster the integral development of each student in intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions. We believe that every child and young person is unique, precious, and called to grow in wisdom, dignity, compassion, and responsibility.

The difference Vita et Pax makes in the lives of students begins with the environment we seek to build each day. Our school is a place of welcome, respect, listening and belonging. Here, students are encouraged to develop their talents, express themselves with confidence, and learn to live with others in a responsible and fraternal way. In a world often marked by hate, individualism, and restlessness, we strive to offer an educational experience rooted in peace, gentle discipline, and human formation.

Our Benedictine inspiration teaches us that education is also forming character. For this reason, we help students understand that knowledge should serve life, that freedom requires responsibility, and that true success includes respect, solidarity, and care for others.

This care also extends to nature. In our school environment, from the first months of life in the nursery through adolescence in middle school, students live in contact with green spaces and learn, in practice, the importance of preserving their surroundings and developing responsibility for life and the common good.

Another essential aspect of our mission is the strengthening of community. We believe education becomes more transformative when lived in partnership among school, family, and students. This shared journey strengthens bonds, builds trust, and offers students support not only academically, but also personally.

For 74 years, the impact of Vita et Pax in Brazil can be seen in the way students grow not only in knowledge, but in humanity. We hope they carry with them strong values, sensitivity, inner strength, and the desire to contribute positively to the world. For us, this is the true meaning of education.

Vanessa Braga
Colegio Vita et Pax
Sao Paulo, Brazil

Benedictine Education

ICBE – International Commission on Benedictine Education

History – the very beginning

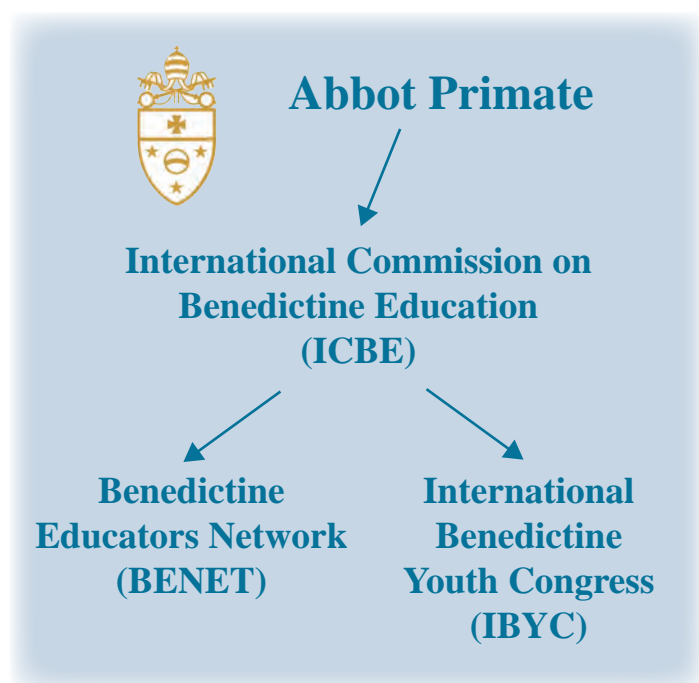
On October 24, 1989, during a conference of school principals, representatives of Benedictine and Cistercian schools in Germany, along with Father Richard, principal of the high school at the Archabbey of Pannonhalma in Hungary, met to discuss the distinctive character and spiritual philosophy of Benedictine schools.

To discuss these issues on a broader scale and share individual experiences, a first meeting of all German-speaking schools with a Benedictine tradition took place in March 1990. The fruitful exchange from that meeting continued in April 1992 in Pannonhalma, Hungary. Thanks to the special dedication of Fr. Richard (Pannonhalma) and Fr. Michael Hermes (Meschede, Germany), an invitation was extended in April 1996 for the first meeting of principals and teachers from Benedictine schools across Europe to be held in Győr, Hungary. Just a few months later, in August 1996, the first European meeting of students from schools with a Benedictine character took place in Zánka, Hungary. These two meetings in 1996 can certainly be regarded as the “cradle” of the ICBE, for the planning for a worldwide network of Benedictine schools began there and was steadily expanded in the following years.



Today, at virtually every Benedictine school around the world, there are principals, school chaplains, teachers, and students who are deeply committed to fostering Benedictine connections, organizing regional and international gatherings, and thereby imbuing their schools with a Christian-Benedictine character.

Structure of the ICBE



What We Want to Want

In a world that is changing ever more rapidly, the charism of Benedictine education is becoming increasingly significant. Technology and media both connect and isolate us. Market forces drive us back and forth; violence and war break out in various places; institutions and social structures seem to be in a state of constant flux. Beneath the surface, however, men and women continue to seek the same fundamental answers that give life meaning and purpose through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the words of our Holy Father Benedict, we too can say: “See how the Lord shows us the way of life in love” (RB Prol. 20).

National and international meetings offer an opportunity to look beyond one’s own school, to share experiences regarding the distinctive character of Benedictine schools, to get to know other schools, colleagues, and classmates, and—a point that should not be underestimated—to form friendships around the world. The Benedictine school thus becomes a living space that knows no boundaries and reveals opportunities to encounter Christ even in everyday school life. Ultimately, this is the great hope of the school of life by St. Benedict.

Fr. Julian Schaumloeffel, OSB
Gymnasium der Benediktiner
Meschede, Germany

A Foundation for Life.

Monastery to Monastery 2025

Monastery	City	State
Mt. St. Scholastica Monastery	Atchison	KS
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove	IN
Belmont Abbey	Belmont	NC
St. Benedict's Abbey	Benet Lake	WI
Holy Cross Abbey	Berryville	VA
Abbey of Regina Laudis	Bethlehem	CT
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck	ND
St. Scholastica Monastery	Boerne	TX
St. Benedict Monastery	Bristow	VA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago	IL
Monastery of the Holy Cross	Chicago	IL
Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	Clyde	MO
St. John's Abbey	Collegeville	MN
Benet Hill Monastery	Colorado Springs	CO
Conception Abbey	Conception	MO
Monastery of St. Gertrude	Cottonwood	ID
St. Walburga Monastery	Covington	KY
Mt. St. Benedict Monastery	Crookston	MN
Our Lady of the Angels Monastery	Crozet	VA
St. Bernard Abbey	Cullman	AL
Sacred Heart Monastery	Cullman	AL
Sacred Heart Monastery	Dickinson	ND
Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey	Dubuque	IA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Duluth	MN
St. Walburga Monastery	Elizabeth	NJ
Mt. St. Benedict Monastery	Erie	PA
Monastery Immaculate Conception	Ferdinand	IN
St. Scholastica Monastery	Ft. Smith	AR
St. Lucy's Priory	Glendora	CA
Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey	Hulbert	OK
Monastery of the Ascension	Jerome	ID
Holy Angels Convent	Jonesboro	AR
St. Martin's Abbey	Lacey	WA
St. Placid Priory	Lacey	WA
St. Vincent Archabbey	Latrobe	PA
Emmanuel Monastery	Lutherville	MD
St. Anselm Abbey	Manchester	NH
The Dwelling Place Monastery	Martin	KY
Mepkin Abbey	Moncks Corner	SC
Queen of Angels Monastery	Mt. Angel	OR
House of Bread	Nanaimo	BC, Canada
St. Gertrude Monastery	Newark	DE
St. Paul's Abbey	Newton	NJ
Immaculata Monastery	Norfolk	NE
Prince of Peace Abbey	Oceanside	CA

Monastery	City	State
St. Bede Abbey	Peru	IL
St. Scholastica Priory	Petersham	MA
Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery	Phoenix	AZ
Mt. Saviour Monastery	Pine City	NY
Abbey of St. Gregory the Great	Portsmouth	RI
St. Martin Monastery	Rapid City	SD
Transfiguration Monastery	Redwood Valley	CA
Assumption Abbey	Richardton	ND
Christ the King Priory	Schuyler	NE
Santa Rita Abbey	Sonoita	AZ
St. Joseph's Abbey	Spencer	MA
St. Joseph Abbey	St. Benedict	LA
St. Brigid of Kildare Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
St. Paul's Monastery	St. Paul	MN
Abbey of Gethsemani	Trappist	KY
St. Joseph Monastery	Tulsa	OK
Abbey of New Clairvaux	Vina	CA
St. Anselm's Abbey	Washington	DC
Mother of God Monastery	Watertown	SD
Holy Cross Monastery	West Park	NY
Weston Priory	Weston	VT
Redwoods Abbey	Whitethorn	CA
Transfiguration Monastery	Windsor	NY
Holy Cross Monastery	Woodville	TX
Mt. St. Mary's Abbey	Wrentham	MA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Yankton	SD

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

Light shines on the students throughout the world!

They value Benedictine education and values...

They embrace hospitality...

They treasure community...

They find purpose in life...

They experience belonging...

They listen...

***Let us support and encourage them on their life's journey
so that they, in turn, will be light for the next generation.***

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB, Executive Director, AIM USA
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This is an additional article that did not fit into Volume 35 No. 1 2026.

Benedictine Living and Learning

A few semesters ago, I took my students in the Benedictine Living & Learning Community to Evening Prayer at Saint John's Abbey for the Vigil of All Saints. The monastic community brought out all the bells and whistles—literally. The church looked beautiful. For half an hour, the students and I sang and prayed and quietly reflected.

When the service was done, I asked one of the students: "So, what did you think?!"

The young man paused, looked around, and remarked, "That was so cool! The fire stick that guy was waving made it smell like a house from the 1800s in here!"

Please allow me to translate! By "the fire stick," the student was referring to "incense" and "that guy" was the Abbot. Creative descriptions for a young person who had never been to a Catholic liturgy!

My experience with this student highlights the curiosity I see in many college students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University today. What some might lack in formal religious education they make up for in profound and honest spiritual interest. Each week in classrooms and Campus Ministry offices, I interact with students who ask deep questions about community, who take hospitality seriously, and who desire to grow in their awareness of God.

Many of the students I connect with are part of the Benedictine Living & Learning, a year-long program where students live together in intentional community and take a one-credit course on Benedictine spirituality. The program draws students from a variety of faith backgrounds. The common desire is to learn more about the Benedictine practices that shape our schools and to do so in a supportive community environment.

These students might not dress like monks or use the religious language of the sisters, but their desire to be formed in a Benedictine way of life is as present as ever. I think Saint Benedict would be excited about their unique questions and perspectives! Benedict did not write his Rule for perfect people but rather for beginners. He encouraged his monks to pay attention to the young and believed "the Spirit often revealed what is better to the younger" (RB 3). May those of us in Benedictine spaces listen well to the wisdom of the young!

Jessie Bazan

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