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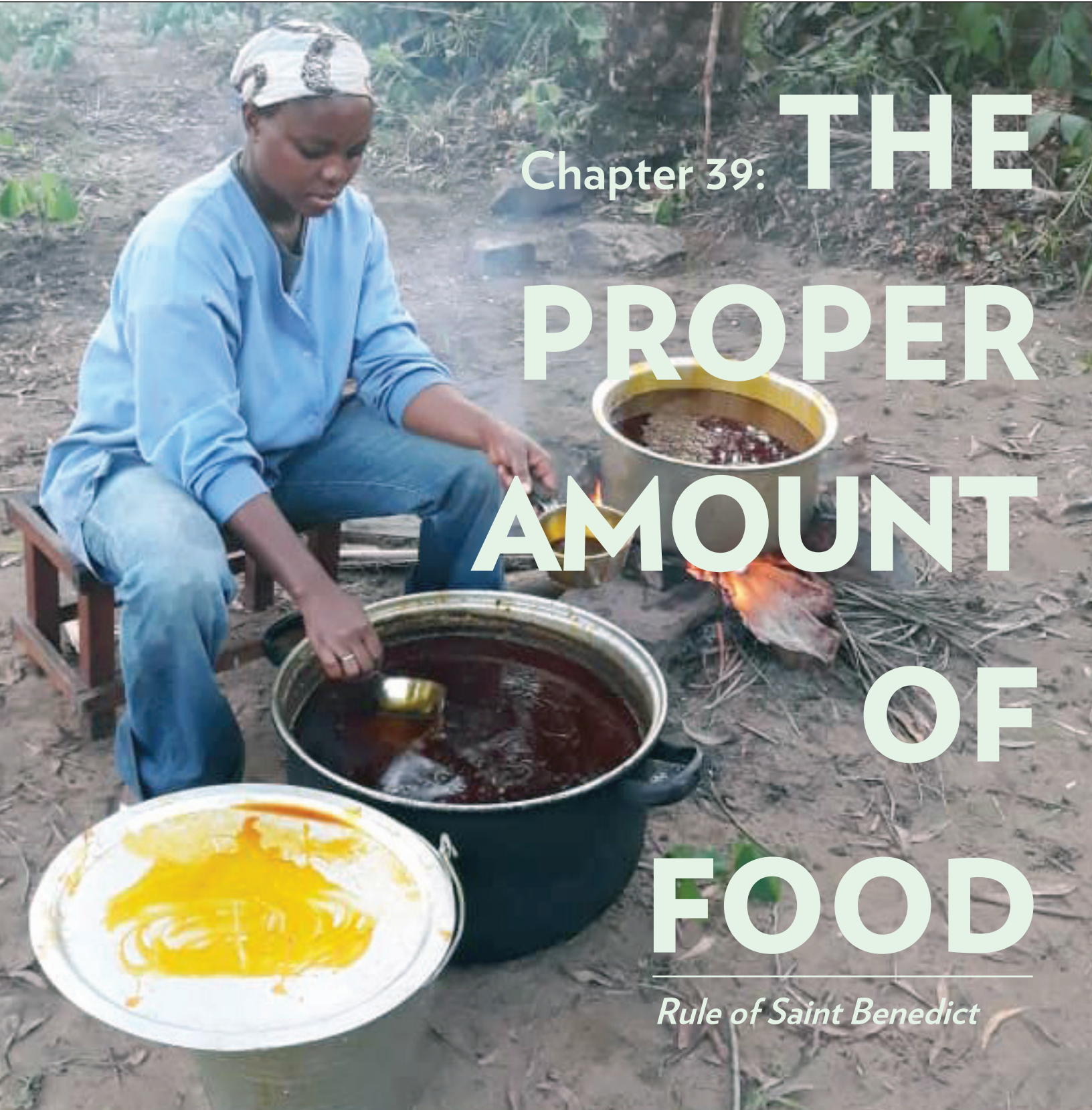
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Chapter 39:

# THE PROPER AMOUNT OF FOOD

*Rule of Saint Benedict*





# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

Saint Benedict prescribes simple meals with a little variety so that all are fed. Given today's situation we have asked monastics to share their experience of Food Insecurity.

*All articles from the monasteries have been edited by the AIM USA staff with permission from the authors.*

## From West Africa

Burkina Faso is a country in West Africa. It is landlocked and has a tropical climate, with a population of around twenty-two million. The Benedictine monastery of Notre Dame de Koubri is located in the southern center of the capital, 40 km from Ouagadougou.



Photo credit: Madame Maguerite

Burkina Faso is experiencing the effects of climate change, with rain becoming increasingly scarce, especially in the north of the country, which is becoming more and more desert-like. We have three months of rain (from June to early September), but it's unstable. Sometimes the rains stop before the crops have matured, or there are floods which cause a lot of material and sometimes human damage. In such situations, our

populations, who live mainly from agriculture and livestock breeding, suffer from famine. Insecurity aggravates the situation.

Since 2015, our country has been experiencing an unprecedented security crisis. Terrorism is on the rise. More and more people are being killed or kidnapped, and many others are forced to flee their villages to save their lives. Internally displaced people are multiplying. Farmers no longer have land on which to cultivate, and traders too can no longer move safely to supply regions where insecurity is high. This situation inevitably leads to inflation in food and fuel prices. All around us, people who garden or have orchards and rice paddies have seen their production decline.

We are currently experiencing a serious food crisis. The terrorists have surrounded us, and people are fleeing to the center of the country. In some blockaded villages, people are starving. The food trucks that the state sends to these people can take more than a week

to cover only 250 to 300 km before arriving at their destination, because the road has to be cleared of mines for the trucks to pass. In spite of this, people are dying because supplies are insufficient, and we have to wait months for them to arrive.

As for the Benedictine Monastery of Notre Dame de Koubri, as a community we do not lack the bare essentials, but we are invaded daily by displaced persons looking for food. Our monastery regularly welcomes these people. The situation is alarming when we see the children, women and elderly who are malnourished. The women are desperate to feed their children. We share with them what we



Photo credit: Madame Maguerite

have and the help we receive from our various benefactors. This is not enough to feed a large number of people over the long term. The monastery is involved in environmental protection, with the aim of mitigating the effects of climate change. But the most urgent need in our country is peace, which will enable people to return to their villages and resume their normal activities.

Mother Clementine Naganda, OSB  
Monastere Des Benedictines  
Notre-Dame De Koubri  
Burkina Faso

**Cover Photo Credit:** la communauté de l'Arbre de Vie  
Sister Evelyne is making palm oil used for cooking

# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

## From Haiti

*“Gideon threshed his wheat in the winepress.”*

(Judges 6:11)

In Haiti, as elsewhere in the world, and already for Gideon, the food crisis has only one cause: violence. I don't want to be taken for a binary mind, insensitive to the complexity of the world: the list drawn up by AIM to guide this article (“climate change... drought... inflation...”) seems fair, but secondary.

In this case, gang violence, but upstream, in time and space, the violence of politicians who have armed them, economic and social violence leaving millions of men and women in misery, the violence of vultures of all kinds who, over the centuries, have sucked the marrow from the bones...



Photo credit: Contributed Photo

300 houses burnt and 9 dead in a village closest to the monastery – over a land dispute

Blaming violence alone may seem strange, given that Haiti has recently experienced two devastating earthquakes (January 12 2010 and August 14 2020): after all, the Anthropocene is not responsible for plate tectonics! And yet, it's violence that adds its share of disease and hunger during an earthquake:

- Because of economic and cultural misery, people built poorly and cheaply: “houses of cards” incapable of withstanding earthquakes.

- And if man were not a wolf to man, mutual aid and solidarity, whether local or international, would prevent the nail of natural disaster from being joined by the abscess of hunger.

Just look at how no natural shortage can lead to hunger: all over the planet, humans are adapting to extremely difficult conditions, from the Inuits of the Far North to the Peuls of the Sahel. And, conversely, great misery can be found in areas rich in oil and minerals, such as Venezuela and the DRC. So much so, in fact, that we've heard the expression “the curse of oil”, to illustrate how this wealth can bring misery to populations deprived of the treasures of their subsoil. No need to draw a picture, it's always violence...

Since the Middle Ages,” said Father Anselm, “we have never seen

a monk or a nun die of hunger”. Whether in jest or in earnest, it's hard to say. At Le Morne St Benoît, in this crisis, we have never gone hungry, but in this respect, we have become “strict observers” of the RB and eat quite monotonously. And for lunch,” asks the brother cook, “spaghetti or spaghetti? Um... make us spaghetti instead.”

Yes, there are certainly people starving to death in the land of Haiti these days; recently, a lady reported to me the case of a child among her neighbors. Hollow bellies are sometimes skeletal, but very strong people can also be anemic. Malnutrition, single, unbalanced meals, lack and excess, can lead to overweight, feverish bodies, diabetes and high blood pressure. Infections due to dubious water... It

seems that these problems affect more than half the population of Haiti these years.

What could change? Of course, again and again, we need to live the Gospel. For this, for our effective and concrete charity, Pope Francis has mapped out a clear path with Laudato Si: it's up to Christians the world over, and therefore to

monks, to live by it and spread its leaven of peace. Everything is so much better when you can thresh your wheat in the sun.

Brother Jacques, OSB  
Morne St Benoît  
Haiti

## 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 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



# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

## From Democratic Republic of Congo

Yes, “you never get used to war”, they say! Dominique Guijarro says: “The manipulator brings war. War brings suffering. Suffering brings weakness. Weakness attracts the manipulator.”

If you study the main cause of food insecurity, war and political conflict are on the top of the list!

My monastery, Tree of Life, in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a prime example.

turbines, solar panels and electronic devices. It is this wealth in our country that stirs up greed and jealousy leading to war and conflict. Everyone wants to help themselves and believe they have a right to these resources.

We also hold the richness in our land, the savannah, making for extensive agriculture and also dense forests.

Though we are rich in minerals the DRC has been tormented by

war throughout our history. We continue to suffer within our borders from conflicts and forced migrations and deep exploitation. This country, widely plundered, does not profit from its immense resources. We are immersed in the poison of greed which sets off rebellions by many ethnic groups. These groups are within the Congo and in neighboring countries of Uganda and Rwanda.

Because of the tensions and warring of different groups there are constant interruptions in the delivery of food and medical supplies. In addition to the destruction and degradation of the infrastructure. In neighboring countries there is the displacement of populations and insecurity.

Our monastery is in an area that is landlocked, poor and without infrastructure. We have developed our land for agriculture. We have planted some forest, fruit trees and vegetables. This allows seasonal workers to be employed and support their families.

An African proverb says, “If you plan for one year, sow corn. If you plan for ten years, plant trees. If you plan for 100 years, train people.

Saint Benedict, the Father of the monks of the West, does not distance himself from this premise. He defines the monastery as a “school of service to the Lord. For him, monastic life remains a place of permanent formation, a place where instruction is put

into practice. Benedict refers to his school as a workshop.

In keeping with this spirit, we have trained our sisters in nursing, theology, financial management, agro vegetarianism, agro forestry and agro product processing techniques. We steward our land and extend our learning to our neighbors.

Sister Emerence Mbala Kitenge, OSB  
Monastère de l’Arbre de Vie  
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo



*Sister Evelyne pressing the nuts for palm oil*

The Congo, is located in Central Africa, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest country in Africa and the 7<sup>th</sup> largest in the world.

We have a rich land. Rich in mining resources which include diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt, tin, manganese, lead and zinc. We also have the energetic resources of coal, uranium and oil. South of here in Katanga, lithium is found. This crucial mineral is mined for energy transition. It is a battery component for electric vehicles and can also be used for the creation of batteries in wind

# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

## From Rwanda

### Thank you



Photo credit: Marie Immaculee

*Sister Harriet, Kigali, Rwanda*

First of all, a very big THANK YOU for the support given to Sr. Harriet, a Bernadine Sister in the Marie Immaculee Monastery, Kigali, Rwanda.

She was able to start her theology studies at the Catholic University of Lille / France.

Although Sr. Harriet arrived a week late, she was able to quickly get used to it, thanks to the presence of a Rwandan colleague, Sr. Francine, who is following the same studies.

It was a big change and a big adaptation was necessary: to study in French, having English as her primary language. (Sr. Harriet is of Ugandan origin).

She had to take courses that she did not understand at first, study Hebrew, etc...

To the positive astonishment of the Dean of the Faculty and the teachers, Sr. Harriet did well in the first term.

This is mainly due to her great commitment to study. This is promising for the second part of the academic year.

Thanks to your support, we were able to pay the registration fees for Sr. Harriet.

This is the first time that two African sisters can study theology. This is not only a personal enrichment but also effects the whole African Province.

Sr. Noëlla Ghijs  
Superior General of the Bernardine Sisters  
Oudenaarde, Belgium

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

## From Mexico

### Thank You

Dear Sister Ann

Thank you very much for this great work of supporting projects that promote the development and stability of the monasteries and to promote the scope that Benedictine culture can be brought to the whole world.

I am truly grateful for you helping our younger monks. Education and projects that give solid base and stability to the life of this Abbey is something that I hold very high and that I will never stop supporting. You are now part of our history, and this is something invaluable. You are always in our prayers, and may God grant you much more to reach all the corners that surely your dreams are imagined. Receive my blessing and I ask for your prayers for my office as pastor and father.

Fraternally  
Abbot Hildebrando  
Benedictine Abbey of Our Lady of the Angels,  
Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico



Photo credit: Abadía Benedictina de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles

*Gregorio Vega Arias, OSB (center) at the Abbey of Our Lady of the Angels with the Bishop of Cuernavaca (left) and Abbot Hildebrando (right), Mexico.*

### A Reflection on the War in Ukraine

We recently received “*A Reflection on the War in Ukraine*” by a nun from the Benedictine Abbey in Ukraine. To view the article use the following link.

<https://aim-usa.org/reflection-war-ukraine>



# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

## Missionary Cooperative Program

The **MISSIONARY COOPERATIVE PROGRAM** has been a main source of revenue and education for **AIM USA** for many years. Monastics, oblates or friends of **AIM USA** speak in parishes sharing our work and mission and request donations. We have been included in many dioceses across the United States. We are grateful for the commitment of so many speakers over the years.

Two sisters who have given appeals for decades are highlighted here.



Sister Donald Corcoran, OSB

**Sister Donald Corcoran, OSB from Transfiguration Monastery in Windsor, NY writes:**

I, myself, had the experience of a long visit in Tanzania in 1986. Our sister monastery in Mafinga, Tanzania, was feeding the poor, educating especially younger women, and radiating an extraordinary liturgical presence.

I believe the Benedictine Order is like an extended family. The Benedictine monks and sisters in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe are our sisters and brothers. We share a rich heritage, a basic way of life, and deep values. Monasteries have a local rootedness and identity because of autonomy and stability. Prayer and liturgy become inestimable resources for the broader local church. Hospitality and spiritual presence flow into serving others in educational, medical, and spiritual programs.

I have gladly volunteered to speak on behalf of AIM USA in our diocese here in Syracuse, NY. Together we do amazing work for Christ and his Gospel.

## Thank You!

*Life situations and the Spirit of God have directed our work at AIM USA these past three years.*

The entrance of COVID into the world, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, and the earthquake in Syria have severely impacted the lives of Benedictines and Cistercians in harsh ways. Death, destruction, and the lack of the basics: food, housing, and medical supplies are their daily reality. Their response in every situation was to reach out to those around them and offer whatever they had.

*The generosity of US monasteries, their oblates, families, and friends have made it possible for AIM USA to respond and support these monasteries in each situation. THANK YOU.*

*Please see the following page of monasteries that have prayed for and supported others in the world with overwhelming generosity.*

**Sister Philomena Fleck, OSB from St. Walburga Monastery in Elizabeth, NJ writes**

My first recollection of AIM USA came from a Benedictine Federation meeting. I was invited to speak on the work of AIM USA. I continued this by making appeals for almost a quarter of a century in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.



Sister Philomena Fleck, OSB

The opportunity to assist emerging communities world-wide is life giving to me. It also helps the parishioners know that the Benedictine tradition continues to enrich people's lives.

In the summer of 2008 AIM USA invited me to go and share with our Benedictine Sisters in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, a Benedictine Sister of Perpetual Adoration and I shared our lives as we gave retreats, talks, classes to junior professed and a workshop with all the Benedictines in Uganda.

The whole experience was the most life-changing of my life. The universality of our Benedictine heritage (prayer, hospitality stability), and gratitude for even the smallest things in the midst of real poverty was amazing to me. I witnessed the sisters ministering in education and health care and living the monastic life well.

The African sisters are deeply grateful and so am I.

## Support The Mission Of AIM USA

*Your financial support is greatly appreciated!*

AIM USA is a 501 (c) 3 organization. All contributions to AIM USA are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Please make checks payable to: **AIM USA.**

**Send to: 345 East 9 St. Erie, PA 16503  
or use our PayPal account**

**<https://www.aim-usa.org>**

# The Proper Amount of Food...for all

## Monastery to Monastery 2022

Monastery	City	State	Monastery	City	State
Mount St. Scholastica	Atchison	KS	Immaculata Monastery	Norfolk	NE
St. Benedict's Abbey	Atchison	KS	Missionary Srs St. Benedict	Oak Forest	IL
Marmion Abbey	Aurora	IL	New Melleray Abbey	Peosta	IA
St. Benedict Monastery	Bakerstown	PA	St. Scholastica Priory	Petersham	MA
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove	IN	Abbey of the Genesee	Piffard	NY
Belmont Abbey	Belmont	NC	Mount Saviour Monastery	Pine City	NY
St. Benedict's Abbey	Benet Lake	WI	Woodside Priory	Portola Valley	CA
Incarnation Monastery	Berkeley	CA	Abbey of St. Gregory the Great	Portsmouth	RI
Holy Cross Abbey	Berryville	VA	Benedictine Convent of St Martin	Rapid City	SD
New Camaldoli Hermitage	Big Sur	CA	Assumption Abbey	Richardton	ND
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck	ND	St. Mary Monastery	Rock Island	IL
Monastery of Our Lady of the Desert	Blanco	NM	The Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Peace	Rutherfordton	NC
St. Scholastica Monastery	Boerne	TX	Monastery of the Risen Christ	San Luis Obispo	CA
St. Benedict Monastery	Bristow	VA	Christ the King Priory	Schuyler	NE
Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey	Carlton	OR	Santa Rita Abbey	Sonoita	AZ
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago	IL	St. Joseph's Abbey	Spencer	MA
St. Andrew Abbey	Cleveland	OH	St. Joseph Abbey	St. Benedict	LA
Benedictine Monastery Perpetual Adoration	Clyde	MO	St. Benedict's Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
St. John's Abbey	Collegeville	MN	St. Brigid of Kildare Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
Benet Hill Monastery	Colorado Springs	CO	Holy Name Monastery	St. Leo	FL
Conception Abbey	Conception	MO	St. Meinrad Archabbey	St. Meinrad	IN
Monastery of St. Gertrude	Cottonwood	ID	St. Paul's Monastery	St. Paul	MN
Mt. St. Benedict Monastery	Crookston	MN	New Subiaco Abbey	Subiaco	AR
Our Lady of the Angels Monastery	Crozet	VA	Abbey of Gethsemani	Trappist	KY
Sacred Heart Monastery	Cullman	AL	St. Joseph Monastery	Tulsa	OK
St. Bernard Abbey	Cullman	AL	St. Walburg Monastery	Villa Hills	KY
Sacred Heart Monastery	Dickinson	ND	Our Lady of New Clairvaux Abbey	Vina	CA
Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey	Dubuque	IA	St. Anselm's Abbey	Washington	DC
St. Scholastica Monastery	Duluth	MN	Mother of God Monastery	Watertown	SD
St. Walburga Monastery	Elizabeth	NJ	Monastery of the Glorious Cross	West Hartford	CT
Missionary Sisters of Guadalupanas	Emporia	KS	Monastery of Immaculate Heart of Mary	Westfield	VT
Mount St. Benedict Monastery	Erie	PA	Weston Priory	Weston	VT
Monastery Immaculate Conception	Ferdinand	IN	Redwoods Monastery	Whitethorn	CA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Fort Smith	AR	Transfiguration Monastery	Windsor	NY
St. Lucy's Priory	Glendora	CA	Holy Cross Monastery	Woodville	TX
St. Emma Monastery	Greensburg	PA	Mt. St. Mary's Abbey	Wrentham	MA
Glastonbury Abbey	Hingham	MA	Sacred Heart Monastery	Yankton	SD
Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey	Hulbert	OK			
Cisterian Abbey O L of Dallas	Irving	TX			
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			
Sacred Heart Monastery	Lisle	IL			
Emmanuel Monastery	Lutherville	MD			
St. Anselm Abbey	Manchester	NH			
Mt Tabor Benedictines	Martin	KY			
Holy Wisdom Monastery	Middleton	WI			
Mepkin Abbey	Moncks Corner	SC			
Queen of Angels Monastery	Mount Angel	OR			
St. Peter's Abbey	Muenster	SK			
House of Bread Monastery	Nanaimo	BC			
St. Gertrude Monastery	Newark	DE			
St. Paul's Abbey	Newton	NJ			

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

As we began planning this newsletter our focus was on Food Insecurity. We expected it would be related to the Climate Crisis. Then we asked monasteries to write an article. We discovered it was much more.

For so many, the lack of food is a result of violence.

Violence results in destruction. It results in fear, death and starvation. Crops are damaged and destroyed – from weather changes, yes, but from destruction caused by human beings.

As I read the articles written by our monastics, I wanted to weep. How do they manage? Survive?

And have hope? Yet they do. Not only do they HAVE hope, they GIVE hope. And they give from the little they have. As Mother Clementine wrote: “The most urgent need in our country is peace that will allow the people to return to their villages and resume their normal activities.”

As I read and re-read these articles, I suddenly realized their hope comes from their prayer. Their hope comes from their belief in and their relationship with God. I realized that none of us do it

ourselves. It is only when we rely on God for strength that WE can have hope and give hope. Read the articles carefully and reflectively.

As Brother Jacques wrote: We need to live the Gospel...to live and live Benedict's call and to spread the leaven of peace.

Let us heed the call!

Blessings,

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB, Executive Director, AIM USA  
[director@aim-usa.org](mailto:director@aim-usa.org)