To our Friends at AIM USA,

The box of books has arrived! They are absolutely wonderful! We GREATLY APPRECIATE this tremendous gift, as the purchase of such great books would be almost impossible from Uganda. We wish to let all the communities who donated books and funds for this project that it is entirely worth the effort. Since we will be beginning our formation program here, such resources are essential. May God bless you all abundantly. We pray especially for vocations to your communities.

With grateful prayers, Sr. Rosann Ocken, OSB
St. Benedict Monastery, Jinja, Uganda

To our Friends at AIM USA,

... (Dialogues)

To our Friends at AIM USA,

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... (Dialogues)

To our Friends at AIM USA,

... (Dialogues)

To our Friends at AIM USA,
Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)

Our prayer must be our strength and our place of refuge. By our presence there, attentive and open to what God has to say to us, we show our brothers and sisters what is essential: As St. Benedict reminds us, ‘Nothing is to be preferred to the work of God.’ And yes, the Psalms also tell us the story of Jesus; the Psalms give us the nourishment which fostered the growth of Jesus as a young boy into an adult man, who found nourishment for his spirit, and also became a ‘living Psalm’ – giving voice to lament in his life, praise to the God of all creation, and opening his heart to the One he called Abba.

Something that I have said often in preaching retreats is this: Listening is the heartbeat of the monastic life. It is the first command of St. Benedict, with a distinctive way of listening – with the ear of the heart. Words don’t just come into our ears; but words come into our eyes and then flow down to our hearts. In the Bible, the ‘heart’ is something more than the root of our emotions. The heart is the place where our human will, our mind, our deepest convictions, and our passions come together. When we are able to listen with the ear of our heart, we listen to others as Jesus listened to them – with all that he possessed within him. His Abba has formed his heart in those times of silence and prayer to react to life in a way that showed us the meaning of the new humanity he was living through the new law of love, mercy and compassion. So let us listen with the ear of our heart, and believe that when we do, God forms, transforms, and conforms our hearts into the image of his Son, Jesus.

It is my conviction that monasteries are among the most important places in our world today. Why? Because there are so many people whose lives are significantly touched by brokenness, sadness, disappointment, failure, struggle, loss, and woundedness. What we offer is a warm welcome, whoever you are and whatever your story in life tells; we say, ‘come and be with us and find healing in the word of God that we offer you.’ The Psalms that we pray every day tell of people who lament the sadness of loss in their lives, the pain of failure in broken relationships, and the fear of enemies.

“...monasteries are among the most important places in our world today.”

For those who suffer, these words of the Psalmist tell of their life experience; and in these words, they come to see that they are not alone – and most importantly, God is with them. The Psalms also tell us of the joy and gladness that comes in knowing the Lord. How often do we hear in the Psalms, ‘Sing a new song to the Lord.’ Each day provides for us a new experience of God’s providential care and love. When we can tell the mystery of God’s working in our lives, we ‘sing a new song to the Lord,’ and our faith inspires hope in others. The Psalms also tell of the history of a people broken and enslaved, but then freed and made whole. That is the story of each of us, and each of our communities; it is the paschal mystery. We re-live the story of our lives in the Psalms and in the prayer that rises from our recitation of these holy words. Prayer is communion with God. And our prayer together with our brothers and sisters is the place where we encounter the God of our salvation, the God who listens with the divine ear of the divine heart. Without that time for prayer, we can do or accomplish nothing.
Meet a Monastery in North America

Mount Michael Benedictine Abbey

Mount Michael Benedictine Abbey is a foundation of Conception Abbey. In the 1950s Conception Abbey and Seminary, located in Missouri, were growing exponentially. The Seminary boasted 12 years of education—high school, college and theology. It was an ambitious undertaking. Because it was growing so fast, there was a need to move the high school part of the seminary to another location. After much searching, the monks found Rex Olson’s farm in Elkhorn, Nebraska, endearingly named Journey’s End.

Unlike most monastic foundations, Mount Michael did not build an abbey building at its inception. She threw herself into her primary apostolate—educating and forming young men for the priesthood. It flourished from day one. The dorms were full, and the monks had to live on the top floor of the school until the abbey was built. When the first abbey building was realized, it was a temporary building located a distance away from the school and the chapel. To this day, though the temporary abbey has been replaced, the monks walk to the chapel in the school for prayers, mass and work. Making this walk requires some endurance, especially in Nebraska snow blizzards.

In the 1960s, it was no longer in vogue to attend a minor seminary—high school. Enrollment dropped considerably. The monks didn’t miss a beat and decided to keep the main apostolate as a high school for young men. The school was always dedicated to high caliber academics. The monks changed the name of St. John’s Seminary to Mount Michael Benedictine High School, a college preparatory school. It was a success from day one. It now opens its doors to local and international students. It has three components now—7-day boarders, 5-day boarders and day students. The monks have been and continue to be vital to the school. A number of alumni of both St. John’s Seminary and Mount Michael Benedictine School have continued into the priesthood, including Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago and Creighton University president Fr. Daniel Hendrickson.

Although the main apostolate of Mount Michael Abbey is its school, there are other apostolates as well. For many years Mount Michael provided priests to help in the Archdiocese of Omaha and other dioceses as well. Another apostolate is hospitality. Although Mount Michael does not have a retreat house, it does have a restaurant. The monks preserved Rex Olson’s house and it is now St. Benedict’s Guest House. They have faithfully cared for this house and provided hospitality with food and drink in an atmosphere that is almost story-book like. When one walks into this house at Christmas time, it feels, smells and looks like something from a Christmas carol.

Mount Michael tries to emphasize five Benedictine values—Community, Hospitality, Integrity, Moderation and Service. These are etched in stone in five large arches leading into the new school building. The Benedictine cross has been laid in concrete, tying the chapel and Benedictine spirituality to the school. Mount Michael strives to instill these values in all who visit.

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

Misioneras Guadalupanas de Cristo Rey

We, the Misioneras Guadalupanas de Cristo Rey, OSB, are a Mexican Religious Congregation founded in 1930 in Mexico City. Our founder was Rev. Mother Josefinia Maria Valencia y Rodriguez, together with our co-founder Rev. Madre Maria Placida Barrios de Los Rios, who decided to establish this foundation right at the feet of Our Mother Santa Maria de Guadalupe, and that is the reason for us to have the great privilege of being very close to this Guadalupe Sanctuary.

We are confederated with the Benedictine Order, and our status is of Pontifical Right. Currently, we are 150 sisters, from which 70% are older than 70 years. We are present in four countries: two communities in the United States of America; one community in Guatemala; one community in Nicaragua, and fifteen communities in Mexico.

Our Motherhouse is located in Mexico City. Its main mission is for members to live in community as well as follow the liturgical life, to care for our older and sick sisters, and to receive guests and pilgrims by trying to live the invitation of Saint Benedict “Receive them as Christ himself…” (BR.53).

We give special devotion to the formation, attention and care of children. We help develop fundamental values in them that provide the basis for better human and Christian relations.

Our original schools are mainly devoted to boys and girls with low economic resources.

We are present in rural, peasant, and indigenous zones, and in communion with the parishes we offer services according to the needs of the Parish Community.

These services are on Christian formation; through health services with alternative medicine; working with the families by fostering healthy homes amidst much disintegration due to poverty, violence, and insecurity which also causes people to migrate to other places. As a Congregation, we look forward to creating ecological consciousness, and to caring for our Common House, as Pope Francis has invited us to do; in some of our communities we are working on growing organic orchards.

Our Motherhouse is open to all persons who request a space such as the chapel, especially our neighbors who come to celebrate their faith in Eucharist. This motherhouse is also a meeting place for education and training of our sisters and lay brothers and lay sisters who collaborate with us in our pastoral ministries.

God walks by our side showing us His loving face in the happiness of the families, in the children, in the guests, and in the pilgrims who visit us. We give thanks to God and bless Him, because we feel His love through all these people.

We give thanks to AIM USA that invites us to share part of our life in this means of communication with other Benedictine monasteries.
Oblates Listen with the Ear of their Heart

The oblate community of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana was less than ten years old when they began talking about their desire to be of service as an oblate community beyond what they were already doing for the monastic community and its corporate ministries. In 1998, I received information about the Monastery to Monastery program that A.I.M. was sponsoring and took the information to our oblates. They were excited about the possibility of making the Lenten collection that A.I.M. sponsored to assist monasteries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America an annual event that they would support. However, they did not want to simply collect funds. They expressed a sincere desire to get to know a community that they could relate to through e-mail, and perhaps actually exchange a visit with in the future.

We began by writing to the A.I.M. office in Erie, explaining our interest and asking for a list of monasteries that has oblates and at least one member who could understand English. We received a list of four communities with contact information. Four oblates chose a community to write to, explaining our desire for a relationship and asking that if they were interested in relating with us, would they please send us information about themselves. After some time, we heard back from two communities. The next task was to decide which community to choose. After much discussion, we decided to choose both because one was a foundation of the other.

That was the beginning of our ongoing relationship with Abadía Gaudium Maria in Córdoba and Monasterio Nuestra Señora Del Parana in Entre Ríos, both in Argentina. Since 1999 we have exchanged newsletters, pictures and other correspondence with these two communities. In addition, we pray for each other and special needs or intentions that are shared; and we have shared our Lenten collection with them through A.I.M. who is able to make sure the monies are transferred safely.

We have learned much about the struggles and joys of these communities and it helps us to see beyond our own little space in the world. We deeply appreciate knowing that the prayer life we share is a way we support each other in living out our commitment to Benedict’s way of life.

Antoinette Purcell, OSB, Director of Oblates
Our Lady of Grace Monastery
Beech Grove, Indiana, U.S.A.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monastery</th>
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<td>St. Martin’s Abbey</td>
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<td>Sacred Heart Monastery</td>
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Monastery to Monastery Program-2017

Below are listed the monasteries and abbeys who have joined the AIM USA Monastery to Monastery Program for 2017. Donations from these monasteries are used to fund grants for Benedictine and Cistercian communities in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

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<th>Monastery</th>
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<td>Our Lady of Dallas</td>
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Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)
Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)

Spring Grants 2017

The following grants requested by developing monasteries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America were awarded by AIM USA:

AFRICA
Nigeria— for scholarships for two Trappistine sisters to study theology and pastoral communication
Eritrea— for scholarships for four monks to study philosophy and theology
Cameroon— for funding to reconstruct part of a building after a devastating fire

ASIA
Philippines— for travel expenses for a Sister to take part in the Monastic Formation Program in Rome
India— for an irrigation system for the cardamom plantation that is a source of income for the monastery
India— for a monk to take a course in Rome on the Rule of Benedict

SOUTH AMERICA
Brazil— for the replacement of the monastery roofing severely damaged by a violent storm that caused flooding in the monastery

OTHER
Mexico— for funding for a car for Sisters in a mountainous region with little access to public transport
Rome— to make possible the Cistercian formation course

Your monetary gift to AIM USA will give hope to Benedictine and Cistercian Monasteries around the world.
Be a part of the gift giving—donate on line at www.aim.org.
Thank you for your care and concern.

2017 Missionary Cooperative Plan

Generous volunteers gave of their time and talent to present appeals at parishes across the United States. Listed below are the diocese in which they spoke, the names of the speakers with their monastery. AIM USA is most grateful to these volunteers and for the generous donations received from the parishes in which they spoke.

ALTOONA-JOHNSTOWN
Sr. Therese Glass, OSB; Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA

CAMDEN
Sr. Philomena Fleck, OSB; St. Walburga Monastery, Elizabeth, NJ

CLEVELAND
Br. Peter Ancell, OSB; St. Andrew Abbey, Cleveland, OH

ERIE
Sr. Therese Glass, OSB; Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA

MANCHESTER
Fr. John Fortin, OSB; St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH

PATERNON
Sr. Philomena Fleck, OSB; St. Walburga Monastery, Elizabeth, NJ

ST. PAUL/MINNEAPOLIS
Sr. Mary White, OSB; St. Paul Monastery, St. Paul, MN

SYRACUSE
Sr. Mary Donald Corcoran, OSB; Transfiguration Monastery, Windsor, NY

TULSA
Fr. Joachim Spexarth, OSB; St. Gregory Abbey, Shawnee, OK

Mass Stipends

AIM USA has been sending Mass stipends to Benedictine, Trappist and Cistercian monasteries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America since 1992. These stipends are extremely important to our mission monasteries. No amount is too small. They are sent to both male and female communities. The Masses are offered as soon as the stipends are received.

Visit Our WEB Page

Visit our web page at www.aim-usa.org for exciting information on AIM USA’s commitment to developing monasteries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Tell us what you think.

Staff Contacts
Executive Director: Sister Theresa Zoky, OSB
director@aim-usa.org

Coordinator Missionary Cooperative Program: Sister Therese Glass, OSB
missionary@aim-usa.org

AIM USA Phone: 814-453-4724
Visit us at: www.aim-usa.org
Dear Friends,

In Abbot Primate Gregory’s article on page 3, he says that “monasteries are among the most important places in our world today.”

Have you ever visited a monastery? Do you know the location of the monastery closest to where you live? If not, I challenge you to find out the name of the nearest monastery to where you live and schedule a visit. There may even be a male and female monastery in close proximity to each other. Visit both.

You may ask, “But, why would I do that? Why would I want to do that? What role do monastic communities play in our worldwide church, in our communities?

Monastic Communities are organized as small, local and autonomous groups of female and male monks who become stable members of a region. Monasteries are native to an area and bound to it. The gift of a well-ordered Christian life is their witness.

The praying of the psalms as part of the Divine Office that Abbot Primate Gregory talks about is central to the prayer life of the monastery. It is through this prayer that community members gain the strength and insight to see and respond to the needs of others.

What happens in the area surrounding the monasteries affects everyone as much as it does the members of the monastery. Monasteries have a great deal to do with what happens in an area in regard to the education system, the social service system, the intellectual environment, and the spiritual life of the area where it is located.

So, again, why are monasteries “among the most important places in our world today?” Visit the one nearest you and find out! Discover what programs “your” monastery has to offer; find out how you can learn and participate in its outreach ministries; consider how you can join in its prayer life. Or visit a monastery on line. See how you can join others in bringing peace to our world by “listening with the ear of your heart.”

During this blessed Christmas season:

May our greetings declare, “I honor the Christ in you.”
May our gifts be mercy and compassion.
May we birth hope into our world wrapped in beauty, peace, and love.
May Christ be born in our hearts, our world, our universe.

Christmas blessings to all,

Sister Theresa Zoky, O.S.B., Executive Director, AIM USA
director@aim-usa.org