
aim usa

The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

www.aim-usa.org

Volume 29 No. 1 2020

aim@aim-usa.org

The World Thirsts for





A Thirst for Gratitude

Latin America Asia Africa

Notes Worth Quoting

From Brazil

Photo credit: M. Roberta Peluso, OSB



Dear AIM USA,

Mother Paula rejoices at the receipt of books from AIM USA!

M. Roberta Peluso, OSB
Mosteiro da Santissima Trindade
Brazil

From the Philippines

Dear AIM USA,

We created a “Benedictine Corner” in our school library to promote Benedictine Spirituality to our students and mission partners. Books on monasticism, the Rule of Benedict, scripture, spirituality and lives of saints are very much appreciated. So are books on prayer, liturgy, and psycho-spiritual growth.

Gratefully,
Sister Maureen Cariaga, OSB
St. Scholastica Academy
Tabunok, Talisay City,
Cebu
Philippines

Photo credit: Sr. Maureen Cariaga, OSB



Sr. Maureen, students, & staff at the “Benedictine Corner.”

From Uganda

Dear Sister,

I take this opportunity to thank all our benefactors who contributed towards our fees; Sr. Albina and I were able to attend a Formation course at Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre. We say thank you so much! After 25 years in the monastery, I was able to go out and evangelize with my life. I have met, heard and spoken to Jesus. Hearing Jesus speak outside the monastery was a joy for me. To be a formator, one has to be formed first because one cannot give what he/she does not have. I came back to the monastery enriched and hope to enrich those around me.

Sr. Rose Iburabwiza, OCSO
Our Lady of Praise Monastery
Butende
Uganda



From Madagascar

Dear Sister,

We keep praying for one another with heart and hands. Just a note, to let you know, dear Sister, that your book about the Monks of Grandmont has just arrived. I still could not take it out of the Post Office because the customs do not work (Covid 19), but it should be done within one week or two. So, once more, thank you ever so much to you, your sisters and assistants, it's a beautiful cooperation, you are just wonderful in the Lord. In Him, we remain close one to another, may He bless you ever,

f. Christophe Vuillaume, OSB
Monastere Benedictin de Mahitsy
Madagascar





Africa

A Thirst for Spirituality

AIM USA staff has edited this article by Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB from St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL, USA. Some material in this essay was originally published in Global Sisters Report at www.globalsistersreport.org.

For my first five months in Namibia, I was thirsty due to the aridity of the land where I would be for the next 12 months. Soon, I realized that the earth was even thirstier than I due to a terrible three-year drought. The Benedictine community of St. Scholastica Priory in Windhoek, Namibia prayed regularly for rain and told me it used to come in abundance. This year it did not come when expected. People shared their deep concern for their families in the north of this country. Water in this area is crucial to their agricultural and cattle-based economy. Hunger has become a serious problem.

I had come to do spiritual direction with young African Benedictine Sisters in formation. As I began to meet with the sisters I realized how symbolic the aridity of this land is. My own physical thirst and the very dry earth outside my window were but a mirage compared to the thirst of these young women for new ways to grow spiritually as they were preparing for the missions

where they long to serve.

As I listened, I heard new uncertainties. The rain came and ironically brought worrisome floods. In addition, crops are threatened by locusts and something called an African worm. The winter is approaching and no rain will fall at least until November.

The spiritual seeking continues in this community of Benedictine women and my own physical thirst begins anew. Hope springs eternal for the end of this prolonged drought.



Photo credit: Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB



Africa

A Thirst for Beauty

This is an edited version of a recent article and a 2018 blog by Sister Jeana Visel, OSB from Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, USA. Sister Jeana sent these writings after she spent time with the Missionary Benedictine Sisters at Sacred Heart Priory in Nairobi, Kenya.



Sr. Jeana Visel, OSB & Sr. Scholastica with St. Benedict

Early October 2019 found me in Nairobi for the third time to teach a module **THE WAY OF BEAUTY**. This year, the month-long program was organized primarily for cloistered nuns who are formators, those responsible for sisters new to religious life. Drawing from my background with icons and sacred art we probed how attending to beauty can also help draw one toward the good and the true. We discussed different purposes of sacred art, and also addressed how making space for creative generativity

can be a helpful part of celibacy formation.

After the course I visited Our Lady Queen of Angels Monastery in Kiambu, a town about forty-five minutes outside of Nairobi. In three years this community has grown from two to fourteen members. Last year when I visited there I spent some evenings drawing sketches of some of the sisters. Sr. Lucy invited me to do a large drawing of Saint Benedict on one of the main walls so that people arriving at the monastery could see it as they travel up the driveway. The sketch led us to recall a statue of Benedict in Subiaco where he appears to be welcoming people. After a quick sketch on paper, I took a pencil to the wall completing an image of Benedict and adding an inscription, Holy Father Benedict, Pray for Us.”. They now have a drawing that could be a foundation for a more permanent painting.



A Thirst for Responsibility

Father Michel Gimbaud, Capuchin priest for the Diocese of Moundou in Chad, Africa, has shared life with the Chadian people for 62 years. Here, he provides a unique insight into his relationship with the land and its people in a time of drought.

Chad is one of the countries of the Sahel, and therefore part of the African desert. But in reality, our country comprises, from north to south, a distance of 1,500 km, with very different climatic conditions.



Photo credit: Sister Christine Contrath, OSB

The northern regions of Chad are desert-like and its inhabitants are mainly pastoralists. In contrast, the south is called “wooded savannah”, where rains are more abundant and allow the majority of the inhabitants to live from the cultivation of millet, corn, rice, peanuts.

When we talk about drought, it’s more appropriate to talk about the consequences for crops. These consequences can come from several causes which are not necessarily the lack of rains.

In 1985, there was a great famine in Chad, due to the rain stopping on September 8, 1984 - more than a month before normal. The crops dried on the ground, with the famine being partially offset by food imported from other countries. Children and the elderly were particularly affected by this situation.

On the other hand, in 2019, the rains extended into mid-November - a month longer than normal. The consequences of this were immediate on the hoped-for crops of millet and maize. This did not extend to 2020. The food provided by the crops will certainly be insufficient.

Another consequence, which we experience every year in the south, is that the herds come from the north and enter the fields to eat the crops. In several places each year, this produces clashes between

farmers and herders, and some deaths occur. Some cultivators try to protect their fields by surrounding them with thorns or other obstacles. The Benedictine Sisters who live in the south are in the process of building a wall around their fields in order to prevent the invasion by the herds.

Because the electricity supplied by the city is very irregular and usually non-existent during the day, it excludes the use of electricity for cooking. Also, the use of gas cylinders is too expensive for everyone, and can only be used by a few.

As a result, charcoal is typically used to cook food, especially in cities like ours in Moundou. The inhabitants of the villages use wood more easily, but increasingly charcoal is used. To obtain charcoal it is necessary to cut trees. Whatever process is used, wood is essential, in the countryside as well as in the city. To meet this need on an ongoing basis it is necessary to reforest. Regrettably, the majority of those who cut trees do not protect the future by reforestation, thus become actors in the progression of the drought.





North America

A Thirst for Reflection

This is a slightly edited version of an article by Father Hugh Feiss, OSB from Monastery of the Ascension, Jerome, ID, USA. He offers his insight on the relationship of land and water resources in his area.

If someone traveled the USA at night by satellite westward across southern Idaho they would see a string of lights stretching from western Wyoming to the Oregon border. Those lights mark the location of most of the larger towns and cities of Idaho: Idaho Falls, Burley, Twin Falls, Mountain Home, Boise, Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell, and Lewiston. These towns are strung along the Snake River. In its 1000 mile journey, the river drains over 100,000 square miles. The river does not travel alone; it is accompanied by a large slow moving aquifer (water bearing rock). The cities' lights use electricity produced by dams near the cities. Irrigation water from the river turns the sagebrush desert of the Snake River Plain into rich farmland that produces potatoes and wheat, corn and hay for dairy and beef cattle, and other commodities in regions named Treasure Valley and the Magic Valley.

The magic and the treasure have not been cheaply bought. Before the dams, the river was home to millions of salmon, which could swim from the ocean up the river and spawn as far as Shoshone Falls near Twin Falls. Now dams in the Snake River Canyon block the salmon from access to the river upstream. The river itself is polluted by waste from confined animal operations, pesticides, fertilizers, and road runoff. The water of the river and aquifer have been over-allocated, so that the level of the water in the aquifer has been falling. The Idaho National Laboratory, located above the aquifer, has massive amounts of radioactive waste to contain and render harmless, sits above the aquifer. Farms are becoming industrial corporations: instead of 100 cows, thousands; instead of 320 acres, thousands.

What the poet Juan Carlos Galeano, cited by Pope Francis in *Querida Amazonia*, writes applies to our river as well as the Amazon: "those who thought that the river was only a piece of rope, / a plaything,



were mistaken. / The river is a thin vein on the face of the earth. / The river is a cord enclosing animals and trees. / If pulled too tight, the river could burst. / It could burst and spatter our face with water and blood."

The Holy Spirit broods over river and desert land that we treat as exploitable economic resources for farming and subdivisions. We, too, need to brood over this living landscape like a mother bird, not lord over it; come to know it intimately, so that it is not alien, but part of us and we of it; love it, until it is new again, rather than consume it to death. Go into the desert, brood over a sagebrush, ponder its frugality, the ways it thrives under the hot sun. Brood until it bursts into flame, and we realize that this is sacred ground. Then bless God for the waters and for the web of life they sustain, the mystery of which God grants us to be a part.



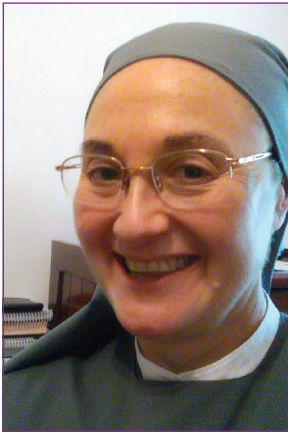


A Thirst for Hope

Latin America

The effects of climate change are being felt globally. In this article, Silvia Bell, OSB from Abadia Guadium Mariae, Cordoba, Argentina, shares the effects of climate change in Latin America and some of the ways her and other monastic communities are responding.

Photo credit: Sr. Silvia Bell, OSB



Sister Silvia Bell OSB

All our monastic communities who live the Rule of Benedict are aware of our responsibility for the gift God has given us: a common home to be shared by all humanity.

Each community has its way of responding, and modifying behaviors to reverse situations harmful to the environment. All communities separate waste, reuse organic waste and recycle paper. We also reverence the protection of local flora and fauna, ensuring native plant species are reintroduced when they have disappeared by deforestation. Some communities reuse sanitation water for irrigation.

We are well aware of the damage of carbon monoxide emissions to the atmosphere and the use of fossil fuels. Unfortunately, the material poverty here often enslaves us and binds us to the use of these fuels – fuels that have a very high cost, and often mortgage day to day life in our communities.

In Argentina, the rates of electricity, gas, fuel for vehicles, etc. are so high that many times they absorb all of the income from our jobs and guesthouse. We save in summer to pay for winter heating, but even that saving is not enough. Often, we have minimal heating for the first two months of winter, and the third we turn off the heating. We do not incur debts. What cannot be paid is not bought.

Our monastery is in an area that is very rich in SUN. It is subtropical by Mediterranean location, 800 meters above sea level and has clear celestial skies with a lot of radiation (solar energy). For the last ten years,

thanks to benefactors from abroad (including AIM), we have been able to use solar energy to heat our sanitation water equipment, and kitchen and laundry areas! A marvel! A huge gift from God!

Our desire is to one day be able to provide our electric supply through solar energy collectors. But that equipment is terribly expensive in our countries, especially for our monastic economies. It is part of my job to keep trying to develop this project, asking for professional advice and quotes, and then I will have to contact benefactors. This whole project is based on trust in God, though. If this dream is God's dream, it will come true.

As far as possible, our communities have stopped using disposable tableware, and have replaced them with reusable plastic dishes or biodegradable cardboard. But the latter has a really prohibitive cost. Why? Because our governments are not interested and do not promote their production.

Hopefully you will now know us a bit better. And to you or to those who wish to visit us so we will know each other better and take advantage of each other's values, please, come and see!



Photo credit: Sr. Silvia Bell, OSB

On the roofs of the Monastery: solar energy collector equipment for sanitary water, laundry, kitchen and hostelry. Clean, light blue skies.



A Thirst for Connection

North America

AIM USA Mission

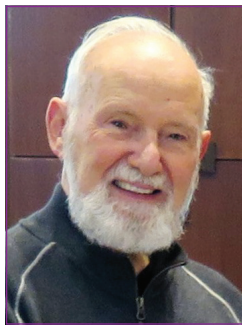
AIM USA connects monastic communities of men and women in the United States and Canada who follow the Rule of St. Benedict with over 450 Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America.

AIM USA provides spiritual, educational and financial assistance to monasteries in developing countries to enable them to be centers of life for others.

Monasteries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America enrich their brothers and sisters in the USA and Canada with global vision, fresh insights into monastic life, cultural diversity and gospel witness of service to the poor.

Thank You and Best Wishes

Photo credit: Sr. Charlotte Anne Zalot, OSB



We are grateful to Abbot Neal Roth, OSB for his service and commitment to AIM USA and to the Benedictine world. After serving 27 years as Abbot of St. Martin's Abbey in Lacey, WA., Abbot Neal announced his resignation, effective May 2020. With that he also resigned from the

AIM USA Board. For many years he served as a Board member including time as the Board president. He has long been friend and supporter of AIM USA. We wish him well and expect the friendship to continue.

Staff Contacts

Executive Director:

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB
director@aim-usa.org

Cultural Services Coordinator:

Sister Therese Glass, OSB
missionary@aim-usa.org

Coordinator Missionary Cooperative Plan/ Office Manager:

Sister Christine Kosin, OSB
aim@aim-usa.org

AIM USA Phone: 814-453-4724
Website: www.aim-usa.org

A Message from the CIB Moderator

Sr. Lynn McKenzie, OSB writes:

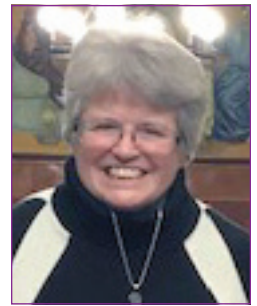


Photo credit: Sr. Ann Hoffman, OSB

"I am in awe of the communion we share despite vast geographical expanse and different time zones, as well as languages and cultures. What draws us into communion is the one call we have received to follow Christ in the school of the Lord's service – the school of our monastic community where we seek to live more deeply into God's desire for us."

Sr. Lynn is moderator of Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB), an international association of Benedictine women's communities, and she is a member of the AIM International Board.

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
(www.aim-usa.org)

Mass Offerings

AIM-USA sends MASS OFFERINGS to Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. These offerings are extremely important to them. 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.**



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A Thirst for Unity

North America



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

This issue of the **AIM USA** Newsletter focuses on “The World Thirsts For...”. We are maintaining this focus even with the global pandemic so much on our minds since in many ways they are interrelated. Each article, each page calls us to action, calls us to unity.

The pandemic itself challenges us to unity on all levels – global, national, local, and communal to help find solutions to survive it and be transformed by it. We become more aware of the thirst. We are uniting.

In the Christian tradition, we just celebrated Easter, the rising to new life. As Easter people, we receive gifts of hope, courage and joy. With those gifts, comes the responsibility both to see and quench the thirst of the world.

And so, we strive to ease the thirst: the longing that exists to be in right relationship, to again see beauty, to be people of hope and gratitude, and then to save our planet.

We see this happening. With a change in behavior during the pandemic, we can see skies clear of pollution in China, France and Italy. As we are told “wash your hands”, we become aware of our precious resource, water, needed to sustain life and health. From our newsletter writers we learn of the many life giving sources in Chad, Namibia, and the United States that have been or are being destroyed by pollution or dried up by climate change. As one, we can change that path. We can help provide means of securing safe water production and reduce our own pollution of streams, rivers, lakes and oceans.

Our thirst now must be for life.

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB

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