
aim usa

The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

www.aim-usa.org

Volume 33 No. 2 2024

aim@aim-usa.org



Gift Received

Through the generosity of our readers, we have gifted Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries around the globe. We asked the monks and sisters to tell us the significance of the gift they have received. All articles have been edited by AIM USA staff with the permission of the authors.

A Gift of Light



*Standing: Sister Alejandra, Sister Michele, Sister Rafaela, Sister Mariana.
Seated: Sister Maricarmen, Sister Patricia*



It's Christmas time again. We will be celebrating in the Liturgy, in Community, with family and friends, and in our service to others. Our festivities often include treasured ancient traditions, along with the cultural stamp of our geographic region. For example, in Mexico, we can't miss the posadas! The exchange of gifts is an almost universal custom, that in our monasteries we tend to practice in some small way without falling victims to consumer society.

Let us remember again, that the greatest Christmas gift is God's gift of Jesús to us¹. When we open our hearts and lives to Jesus' light, we, in turn, become a gift to others.

At Christmas, God's story becomes our story. We see the Divine Presence among the shepherds, the poor and marginalized of their society and we still find that luminance among the rejected and marginalized in today's world. This precious gift is immersed in the darkness of our world. But, the darker the night, the brighter the stars.

AIM USA is one of those stars in our darkness, receiving Christ and sharing his brilliance with others. AIM USA brings light to many monasteries and to the broader communities that we serve. It shines forth when people are given the opportunity to study, to

plant, to connect and communicate, to become self-supporting, and so much more.

And Jesus' light not only brightens the lives of those of us who receive God's gifts through AIM USA, it increases, as we are able to gift others with what we have received. It also and especially is a blessing for those who give. We all mutually benefit when we spread the light.

The Sheperd of Hermas, an important Christian text from the mid-second century says it simply: When they who have material resources assist those in need cheerfully and without hesitation they trust in God's blessing. And those in need, intercede and give thanks to God for the ones who have gifted them. Both are partners in God's work.

During this Christmas Season we renew our partnership, our "alliance" to give cheerfully of the fruits we have received in order to spread the light of Christ. We, in turn, intercede for those who have blessed us with their gifts, as well as to thank and praise God for THE GIFT we have received in Christ, our Light.

Sister Patricia Henry, OSB
Pan de Vida Monastery
Torreon, Mexico

¹See Pope Francis, General Audience, 12/27/17.



ON THE COVER

Photograph of Mexican Posada Celebration (a Christmas party where people reenact the nativity story from the bible) used with permission of the Poblanertas.

A Gift of Learning Report on Junior Workshop

Introduction

This report outlines the success and impact of the recent workshop held for junior professed members at the Benedictine of Annunciation, Gihindamuyaka, Rwanda. The workshop brought together 50 participants from eight Benedictine communities across Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. This gathering was aimed at empowering young members of the Benedictine communities through spiritual and leadership development, supported by generous funding that enabled this initiative.

Funding: The financial support received was crucial in facilitating the logistics, materials, and accommodation.

Key Topics Covered

1. Introduction to Canon Law

This session provided an understanding of Canon Law, helping participants appreciate the legal framework governing religious life and how it applies to their community roles and responsibilities.

2. Liturgy

Participants delved into the meaning and structure of liturgical practices, fostering a deeper appreciation of worship and communal prayer as a vital part of Benedictine life.

3. Team Building

Through various team-building exercises, members strengthened their bonds, learned the importance of collaboration, and developed skills in communication and mutual support.

4. Benedictine Spirituality

This session focused on the values and principles of Benedictine spirituality, encouraging young members to deepen their commitment to the Rule of St. Benedict and to find personal meaning in the community's shared practices.

5. Visit to Sovu Monastery

The visit to Sovu Monastery allowed participants to observe and learn from another Benedictine community, creating opportunities for cross-community connection, inspiration, and the sharing of challenges and best practices.

Workshop Outcomes and Impact

1. Enhanced Spiritual Growth and Leadership Skills

The sessions were carefully structured to foster both spiritual and personal growth, with a focus on leadership development. Participants expressed a newfound desire to take on

leadership roles in their communities, feeling more prepared and motivated to contribute actively.

2. Strengthened Inter-Community Relationships

With participants from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, the



workshop fostered a strong sense of unity and camaraderie. These connections are essential for future collaboration and support among young Benedictine members across regions.

3. Empowerment Through Learning and Sharing

The sharing of experiences, challenges, and aspirations among participants was highlighted as a key benefit, providing a pathway to spiritual growth and personal transformation. The opportunity to learn from each other helped participants realize the shared nature of their journey, building resilience and confidence.

4. Increased Interest in Further Formation and Growth

The workshop inspired junior members to continue their formation journey with renewed enthusiasm, seeking more knowledge and support to deepen their faith and strengthen their communities.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

The junior workshop at the Benedictine of Annunciation was a resounding success, fulfilling its purpose of empowering young members for leadership, fostering unity across communities, and supporting spiritual growth. Moving forward, we plan to build on this momentum by organizing similar workshops and activities, further supporting the development of the junior professed. We are grateful for the support that made this event possible and look forward to future opportunities to enrich our community.

Sr. Lusina Ng'Eny, OSB
BECUEA Secretary (Benedictine and Cisterian
Union of East Africa)
Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing
Nairobi Priory

Gift Received

A Gift of Healing



St. Scholastica's Hospital is a seven-year old, Level 1 hospital, owned by the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing. It is located in one of the economically disadvantaged regions of the Philippines and the only one in the district. Traveling from the main city to reach the hospital is a seven-hour trip over approximately 285 kilometers of intermittent paved and very challenging rugged roads.

The rural setting and the distance from the city are setbacks for attracting doctors to stay for a long period in the hospital.

Luckily, two specialist doctors residing in the city have committed themselves to rendering service in our hospital. But the cost of fetching and taking them home is quite challenging for our secondhand donated vehicle. It has to traverse eight times within a month along vehicle unfriendly roads. Most of the time, the vehicle travels at night to accommodate the schedule of the doctors. Traveling at night along unlighted and unpaved roads is not easy for both the vehicle and the driver. Another vehicle to alternate with the present one assures us of extended years of service for our vehicles and diminished repair costs. Having a new, sturdy vehicle is a blessing to our drivers who do not need to worry anymore about their safety.

Our new vehicle is multi-purpose: It is used to transport medicine from the shipping port which is a two-hour drive, and other emergency

needs, and for the patients who need to go to charitable agencies for funding of their hospitalization.

Sister Ruth Bartonico, OSB
St. Scholastica's Hospital
Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing
Pambujan Community
Northern Samar, Philippines

A Gift of Connections

Wisdom Connections-Timeless Traditions-Technological Times is a media resource established by multiple monasteries in the US. It maintains a digital library of 380 videos offered by 41 Benedictine Presenters. It is a modern day resource to learn from Benedictine scholars and is accessible to monasteries around the globe.



WISDOM CONNECTIONS:
Timeless Tradition ↔ Technological Times

The Formators and Formandeas of St. Scholastica's Formation House in Manila subscribe to Wisdom Connections. The presentations and courses have made a significant impact on our formation journey. As we strive to fully embrace and commit to the Benedictine Way of Life, Wisdom Connections leads us to a deeper faith and stronger connections with other Benedictines.

Sister Mary Paul Baul, OSB
St. Scholastica's Formation House
Manila Priory
Philippines

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

Gift Shared

A Gift of Empowerment

The AIM-USA grant has transformed our monastery's Val-lombrosan Buffalo farm. With this support, we now produce our own high-quality buffalo milk greatly improving our cheese production. No longer relying on expensive lower quality milk from outside, we are moving towards true self-sufficiency.



Our monks have fully embraced the farm, seeing it as an important part of both their work and spiritual life. It has brought our community closer together through shared labor and prayer.

The project has also had a positive social impact. We have provided jobs to nine young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These jobs have given them not only an income but also a sense of dignity and hope for a better future and strengthening our ties to the local community.

Looking ahead we plan to grow the farm from 10 buffaloes to 50.

This expansion will help us to become fully self-sufficient and allow us to offer even more jobs and support to those in need. By increasing our farm's capacity, we aim to create a lasting positive impact on both our monastery and the community.

The project is about more than financial independence—it is about building a stronger, more resilient future for everyone involved.

Father Michael Kannala, OSB
Saint Benedict Ashram
Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India

A Gift of Renewal

The Monastic Formation Course in Rome For Religious

Upon receiving the scholarship for Monastic Formation, aimed at religious communities, we understand the need and the gain to increase knowledge to higher levels based on the teacher's knowledge presenting sources from various disciplines in the historical construction of monasticism.

In addition, we experienced the benefits of reflective presentations on spiritual, personal and psychological-relational growth with others while exploring and developing various faculties that make up and integrate the human person. We also had the opportunity to live communally with other religious communities, with different languages and cultural realities. This is where we observed the routines and disciplines in the common life of the monastic environment. With all the knowledge acquired and the experience gained during the two-month course, one each year, we felt a new fervor for spiritual and personal renewal to live and share with our community. We shared what we have received and learned for the ongoing formation of the nuns, trainees and secular oblates. We applied the learnings in catechesis, spiritual direction and care for our guests and those who seek advice from us.

The acquired knowledge was only possible thanks to the



Mosteiro Sao Joao Brazil/St. John Monastery Brazil

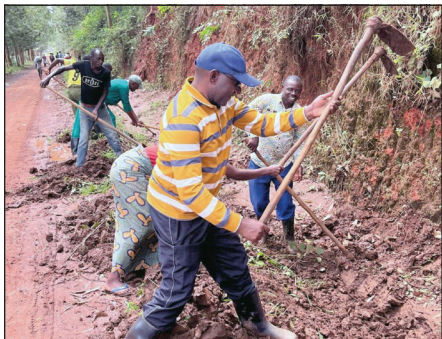
scholarships we received which made it possible to invest ourselves in the comprehensive Formation Workshop and to grow with the selected participants from various communities across the world. We will disseminate this expanded knowledge in the areas of formation to help the Church respond to the needs of the present time as a mission and evangelization of the Body of Christ.

Irma Maria Paula Leite, OSB
Mosteiro Sao Joao
Campos do Jordao, Brasil

Gift Received

A Gift of Understanding

Receiving this grant has had a significant impact on our community. As a monastery deeply engaged in education, spiritual guidance, and pastoral care, advanced studies are crucial to our mission. The grant has enabled us to enhance the quality of education in our schools of 6,500 students, serve our parish of over 15,000 Christians, and continue our work as a spiritual center for many seeking peace and reconciliation.



The studies have broadened our brothers' understanding and skills, allowing them to take on leadership roles in our schools and parish. It has given them the tools to address the educational and spiritual needs of both our

students and the wider community, preparing future generations with a solid foundation of knowledge and faith.

Personally, the grant has reinforced the value of education in my own life, challenging me to grow and share what I have learned with others. For our community, this gift has brought a deeper sense of responsibility, knowing that our education can uplift not only ourselves but also our neighbors and those we serve.



The ripple effect of this grant is felt throughout our schools, parish, and spiritual center, as we work to build a more educated and spiritually vibrant community.

Père Jean Pierre Bakurirehe
Prieur, Monastère de Gihindamuyaga
Gihindamuyaga, Rwanda

A Gift of Self Sufficiency



The main purpose of our poultry project is to serve and save vulnerable people in the local community including the youth and the elderly. The youth have engaged in drugs and crime and the elderly are hungry and infirmed from HIV/AIDS infections and other diseases.

The sisters supply chickens and eggs to families to enable them

to have good health, hope and live a long life. The project offers young people capital (chickens) to generate income and thus are employed. This has decreased incidents of crime in the area. This project has allowed the sisters to increase pastoral visits as they visit the aged and the ill and other vulnerable people. The project has given young pregnant girls an opportunity to engage in selling eggs and helping with the farm. We have bought an incubator machine for producing chickens and therefore the project goes on to benefit more vulnerable people.

Sister Leonsia Mwinuka, OSB
St. Benadette Convent
Peramiho, Tanzania



Staff Contacts

Executive Director:

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

Missionary Cooperative Coordinator/Assistant Manager:

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

Cultural Services Staff:

Debbie Tincer, missionary@aim-usa.org

Mass Stipend Ministry:

Sister Dianne Sabol, OSB, aim@aim-usa.org

AIM USA

345 East 9th Street, Erie PA 16503 USA

Phone: 814-453-4724

Website: www.aim-usa.org

Gift Shared

A Gift of Service



Serving on the AIM USA board was such a privilege! Having spent the first 19 years of my life in the cosmopolitan metropolis of Washington, DC when traveling together on public busses, attending schools together, praying with one another in our parish church and playing on the streets, I have always felt at home with people from many countries. We have so much to learn and share from our international brothers and sisters. My spirituality deepens

when I experience how others celebrate as well as struggle for survival.

We Benedictines know that we are answering the gospel call to act justly when we join AIM initiatives in supporting monasteries from all corners of the world. For example, we raise awareness and funds to help rural monasteries buy cows (our Kansas monastic community understood this as a priority!), to pay tuition at colleges, universities and seminaries, to train monastics in formation and spirituality programs, to build clinics and support medical initiatives in countries where healing personnel are scarce, to build barns, etc.

While serving on the AIM USA board with men and women from different, Benedictine monastic communities in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, we learned from one another, especially in the break times and in the evenings, about our first-hand experiences in supporting people throughout the world in our own international missions.

Pope Francis has reminded us repeatedly about how we are global citizens in a global Church. Serving as a leader on the AIM USA board strengthened my commitment to live the gospel mandate of inclusion and action in ways I had never imagined. My support for the efforts of AIM USA will be ongoing, that's a promise.

Anne Shepard, OSB
Mount Saint Scholastica Monastery
Atchison, Kansas

A Gift of Gratitude

Thank you, Anne. We are most grateful.

You have truly been a gift to AIM USA recently completing two three-year terms on the Board. Your gift of leadership supported and shaped our conversations and decisions in your role as President of the Board. You shared your wisdom with the director on many phone calls prior to our annual meeting and affirmed the vision and work of the staff.

A Gift of the Board Gathering



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.

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

- ✚ *God in abundant love gave us the gift of Jesus.*
- ✚ *God in abundant love gave us the gift of Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica who centered their lives on Jesus.*
- ✚ *This Benedictine tradition is the gift we share as Benedictines.*
- ✚ *The gift given has a responsibility. The responsibility is to pass it on to each other and to the world.*

In these turbulent times let us ponder the gift of monastic life with its meaning and values and how we can impart it to others.

Thank you to all who have shared the meaning of gift in the written word. You nourish our souls.

Christmas Peace,

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB

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