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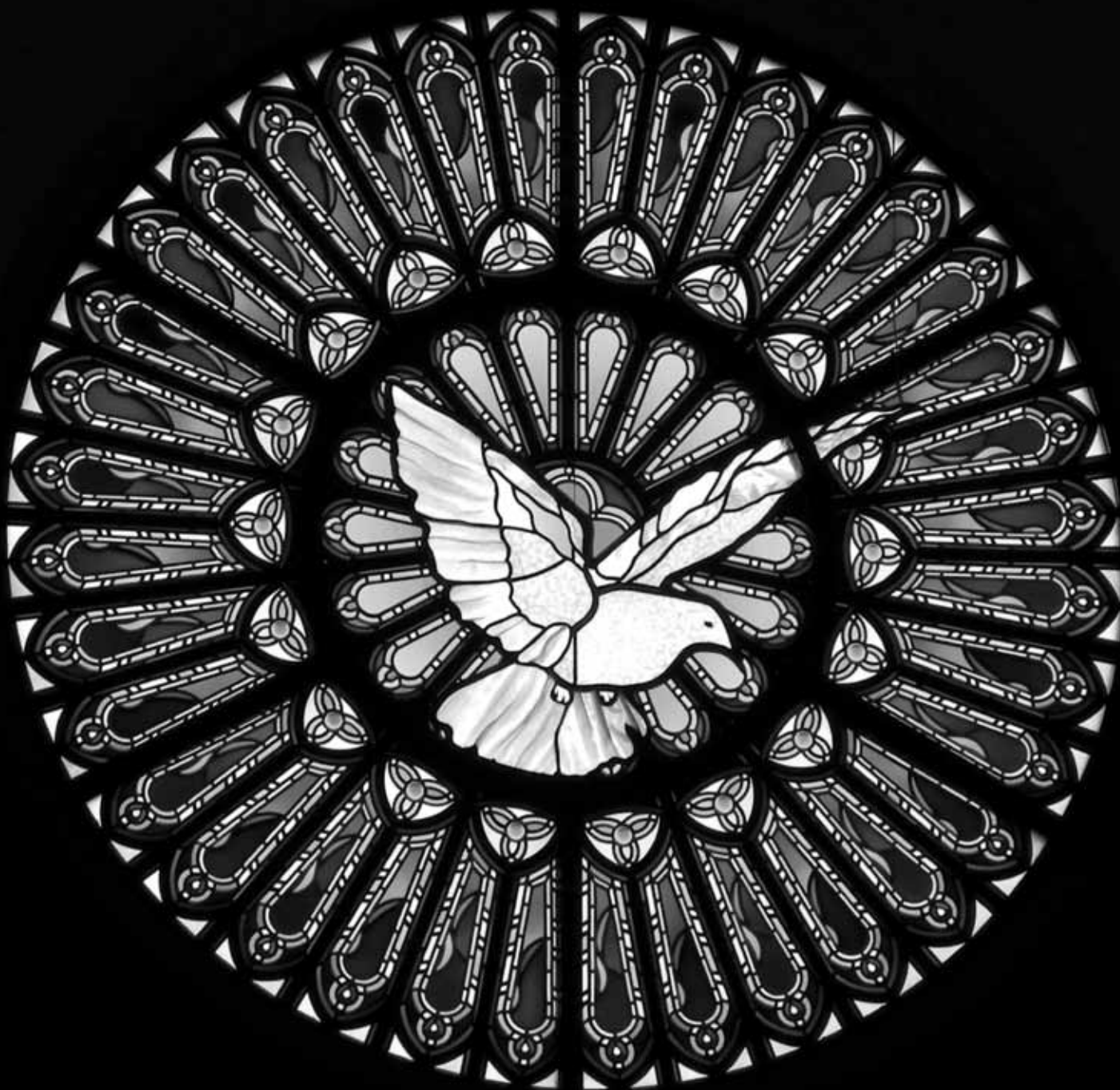
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The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

[www.aim-usa.org](http://www.aim-usa.org)

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*May God open us to the newness that transforms.*

Pope Francis – Easter Homily

# AIM NEWS

## Propagation of the Faith Mission Appeals

Each year dioceses from across the United States invite AIM USA to give POF Mission Appeals. These appeals are a primary source of funding for requests received from the mission monasteries. AIM USA is dependent upon volunteers with a Benedictine spirit who live as near as possible to the assigned parishes to make the appeals.

*We thank the following women and men who presented the talks in 2012.*

<b>Arlington, VA</b>	Sr. Patricia Driscoll, OSB
<b>Beaumont, TX</b>	Fr. Peter Funk, OSB
<b>Chicago, IL</b>	Sr. Virginia Jung, OSB
	Sr. Susan Quaintance, OSB
<b>Cleveland, OH</b>	Sr. Cecilia Sullivan, OSB
<b>Erie, PA</b>	Sr. Audrey Berdis, OSB
	Janice Etchison, Oblate
	Sr. Rose Ann Kolbas, OSB
	Sr. Audrey Steff, OSB
<b>Fort Wayne/ South Bend, IN</b>	Sr. Benita Coffey, OSB
<b>Kansas City, MO</b>	Rev. Joseph Matt, OSB
	Rev. Robert Stewart, OSB
<b>Lake Charles, LA</b>	Fr. Peter Funk, OSB
<b>Little Rock, AR</b>	Fr. Elijah Owens, OSB
<b>Manchester, NH</b>	Fr. Bennett Phillips, OSB
	Fr. Anselm Smedile, OSB

**Metuchen, NJ**  
**Philadelphia, PA**

**Portland, OR**  
**Saint Louis, MO**

**San Francisco, CA**  
**Seattle, WA**  
**Sioux Falls, SD**  
**Syracuse, NY**

**Tulsa, OK**

Abbot Joel Macul, OSB  
Elaine Mshomba  
Sr. Stephanie Schmidt, OSB  
Sr. Josephine Fennimore, OSB  
Fr. Ambrose Bennett, OSB  
Fr. Dominick Lenk, OSB  
Fr. Augustine Wetta, OSB  
Bob McMullin  
Sr. Monika Ellis, OSB  
Fr. Thomas Hillebrand, OSB  
Sr. Mary Donald Corcoran, OSB Cam  
Sr. Sheila Long, OSB Cam  
Fr. Joachim Spexarth, OSB

Volunteers are needed for the 2013 presentations. Please consider this as a way you can help promote awareness of the needs of our mission monasteries. Sample talks and other materials about AIM USA can be provided to anyone willing and able to present a POF mission appeal. If interested, please contact AIM USA at (814)453-4724 or [aim@aim-usa.org](mailto:aim@aim-usa.org)

## LENTEN APPEAL 2013

### LATIN AMERICA

#### Benedictine sisters in Brazil

—tuition funds for sisters to study English—

### ASIA

#### Benedictine sisters in the Philippines

—funds for computers and a printer—

#### Cistercian sisters in Vietnam

—tuition funds for study—

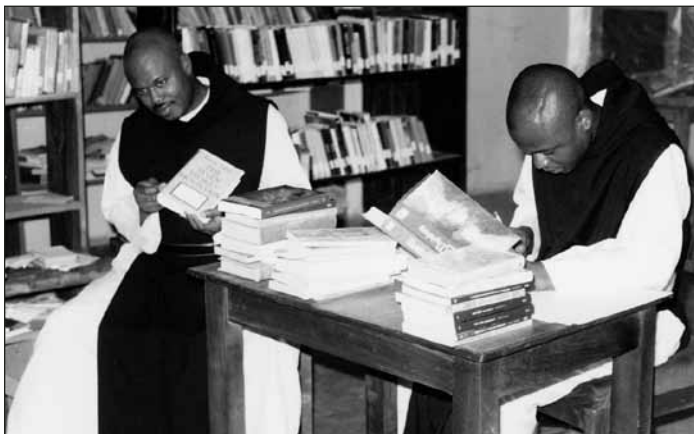
#### Benedictine monks in Vietnam

—computers, copy machine, printer—

### AFRICA

#### Cistercian monks in Nigeria

—tuition funds for study—



## Abbot Primate Re-elected



In 2012, in accord with the *Lex Propria* of the Benedictine Confederation of Monastic Congregations, 235 members of the Congress of Abbots re-elected Abbot Primate Dr. Notker Wolf, OSB, 72, for a term of four years. Abbot Notker, a prolific author and talented musician, had been Archabbot of St. Ottilien Archabbey, Bavaria, at the time of his election as primate in 2000. The Congress first re-elected him in 2008. There is no term limit for an abbot primate.

## NOVEMBER 2012 GRANTS

—funded by the AIM USA Secretariat—

**Benedictine sisters and monks in Madagascar**

—formation classes—

**Benedictine sisters in Togo**

—travel to France for 2 sisters  
to participate in formation program—

**Benedictine monks in Peru**

—tuition for philosophy studies for 2 monks—

**Benedictine sisters in Argentina**

—publication of a monastic journal—



## **Our Lady Star of Hope** **Macau—a Special Administrative District** **of the People's Republic of China**

**The Trappistine Monastery of Our Lady Star of Hope in Macau is a foundation of the Monastery of Gedono, Indonesia.**

At the Regular Visitation in August 2007, the community of Gedono was encouraged to be open to the call of the Spirit to make a foundation. Looking for an orientation as to the place, and thinking of continuing in the direction of China, Gedono asked the advice of the Abbot of Lantau monastery in Hong Kong. He suggested the possibility of Macau and contacted the bishop who warmly invited us to come. These were the first of many signs that the Lord was asking us to go there.

Macau is a Special Administrative District of China which was under Portugal until 1999, in a similar situation to Hong Kong and situated to the southwest of Hong Kong. The Church is free and we can have missionary visas. There is no monastery in the diocese and there is a strong desire to have a contemplative community. After several visits of the abbess of Gedono to Macau, the community continued its discernment process and finally voted unanimously to begin the process of preparing a possible foundation there.

Macau is rich in Church history. It was the seat of the first diocese in all of Asia (1580) and at that moment included all of China, Japan, Korea and south Asia. It was the place St. Francis Xavier was heading for when he died on an island about 100 km away. It continued to be the center of missionary activity in China for centuries. Even today many congregations are present because it is a foothold at the doorstep of continental China.

Macau is very small with a population of less than a million. It has become the gambling capital of the world, surpassing even Las Vegas. It seems to be the place where the worst of communism and capitalism have joined forces. This hedonism has caused moral decadence in the local population. The Church is not very strong; there is a lack of priestly vocations. Though there may not be many local vocations, candidates from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and other Chinese-speaking areas could get visas to come to Macau.

The bishop introduced us to the Catholic woman who is presently second in command in the Macau government. She has given us great support and we requested a property suggested by her and the bishop on a small island which the government

wants to maintain as a green area. With the help of an architect, we made a plan for the monastery showing how we would use about one hectare of land on a small hill near the coast. It has a natural enclosure as it is surrounded on the south side by a diocesan retreat house, on the east side by the one road on the



island and on the other two sides by protected park areas.

Bureaucratic inaction and some opposition have made the process of obtaining the necessary documents for the concession of the piece of land very long—over three years. We hope that this New Year will bring us the grace of the land concession and the beginning of the construction of the new monastery. For this we ask your prayers.

The bishop pushed us to begin much more quickly than

we had imagined. Therefore, a community process of discernment as to who would participate in the founding group, led to the naming of six sisters, with the understanding that they would not all be going at the same time. Three sisters left to begin the pre-foundation in June of 2009 and a fourth joined them in May of 2010. The two other sisters have joined definitively in August 2011 and in April 2012.

Our foundation was approved by the General Chapter in September 2011 and we officially began regular life as a canonical foundation dedicated to Mary, Star of Hope, on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 2012.

We are well integrated in the local Church and we are learning Mandarin and Cantonese. The fact we were given the former bishop's residence and the adjacent historic church as a place to stay until the monastery is built shows how much our presence is desired by the bishop and the diocese. Many local people and tourists come to visit and pray in our Church. The historic site where we live is no longer just a museum but a living place of prayer.

Our daily work consists in the care and cleaning of the historic house and Church where we live and a small cookie industry we started in August. We are also involved in the ministry of hospitality as more and more guests are coming to pray with us.



# *Habemus Papam!*

On March 13, 2013, the College of Cardinals elected Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Argentinian cardinal from Buenos Aires, to become the 266<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome. This election begins a new chapter in church history. Pope Francis is the first Jesuit pope. Also, he is the first Pope from Latin

America and the southern hemisphere and the first pope in a millennium to be from outside Europe.

Below is an abridged version of Pope Francis' homily at his inauguration mass on March 19, 2013.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**I THANK THE LORD THAT** I can celebrate this Holy Mass for the inauguration of my Petrine ministry on the solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the patron of the universal Church.

In the Gospel we heard that “Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife” (Mt 1:24). These words already point to the mission which God entrusts to Joseph: he is to be the *custos*, the protector. The protector of whom? Of Mary and Jesus; but this protection is then extended to the Church.

How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own. Joseph is a “protector” because he is able to hear God's voice and be guided by his will; and for this reason he is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to his safekeeping. He can look at things realistically, he is in touch with his surroundings, he can make truly wise decisions. In him, dear friends, we learn how to respond to God's call, readily and willingly, but we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!

**Let us be  
“protectors”  
of creation,  
protectors  
of God's plan  
inscribed  
in nature,  
protectors  
of one another  
and of the  
environment.**

The vocation of being a “protector”, however, is not just something involving Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last

we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It



means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts!

Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are “Herods” who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women.

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be “protectors” of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world! But to be “protectors”, we also have to keep watch over ourselves! Let us not forget that hatred, envy and pride defile our lives! Being protectors, then, also means keeping watch over our emotions, over our hearts, because they are the seat of good and evil intentions: intentions that build up and tear down! We must not be afraid of goodness or even tenderness!

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



Here I would add one more thing: caring, protecting, demands goodness, it calls for a certain tenderness. In the Gospels, Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness!

Today, together with the feast of Saint Joseph, we are celebrating the beginning of the ministry of the new Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, which also involves a certain power. Certainly, Jesus Christ conferred power upon Peter, but what sort of power was it? Jesus’ three questions to Peter about love are followed by three commands: feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God’s people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Only those who serve with love are able to protect!

In the second reading, Saint Paul speaks of Abraham, who, “hoping against hope, believed” (Rom 4:18). Hoping against hope! Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope! For believers, for us Christians, like Abraham, like Saint Joseph, the hope that we bring is set against the horizon of God, which has opened up before us in Christ. It is a hope built on the rock which is God.

To protect Jesus with Mary, to protect the whole of creation, to protect each person, especially the poorest, to protect ourselves: this is a service that the Bishop of Rome is called to carry out, yet one to which all of us are called, so that the star of hope will shine brightly. Let us protect with love all that God has given us!

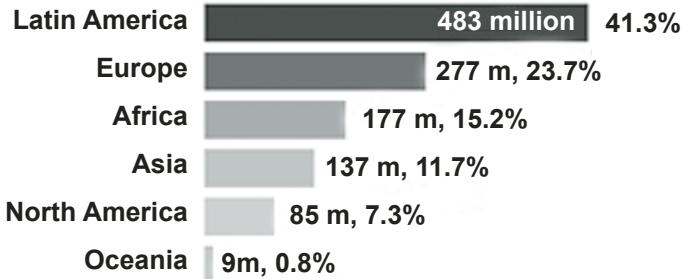
I implore the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Francis, that the Holy Spirit may accompany my ministry, and I ask all of you to pray for me! Amen.

**Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others.**

**To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope!**

**CATHOLICS IN THE WORLD — % of Catholic population**

Source: World Christian Database



More than 40% of the world’s Catholics live in Latin America.



## Meet a North American Monastery

### St. Gregory's Abbey Shawnee, Oklahoma

Benedictine monks arrived in what is today Oklahoma in October 1875, becoming the first permanent presence of Catholic clergy in the region. Father Isidore Robot, O.S.B., and Brother Dominic Lambert, O.S.B., monks of Notre Dame de la Pierre-qui-Vire in France, entered Indian Territory at the request of Church authorities. By June 1876 they accepted land from the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and founded their new monastery as Sacred Heart Abbey. Additional monks soon arrived from Europe and life at Sacred Heart was known for its strict observance, generous hospitality, model farming, and beautiful gardens. The pioneer monks established the first Catholic schools in the region, serving Native Americans, freed African American slaves and newly-arrived white settlers. They also founded over 40 parishes and missions throughout the Oklahoma and Indian Territories and the first two Apostolic Vicars were Benedictines. The Church in Oklahoma is built on a foundation laid by Benedictines.

Disaster struck in January 1901 when fire destroyed



Sacred Heart Abbey in its original location in the 1870s.

almost the entire complex at Sacred Heart: the monastery, boarding schools for both boys and girls, the convent of the Sisters of Mercy, and the Abbey Church. Miraculously there was no loss of life. Determined to succeed, the monks rebuilt their monastery and school complex at Sacred Heart.

As they were rebuilding Sacred Heart, the monks accepted an invitation from civic leaders to establish a university in the city of Shawnee, thirty miles to the north. Incorporated as "Catholic University of Oklahoma," the new foundation opened in 1915 as "St. Gregory's High School and College." With activity increasingly centered at the new location the entire monastery transferred from Sacred Heart to Shawnee in 1929 and adopted the name "St. Gregory's Abbey." The monks also broke their ties with France and joined the American-Cassinense Congregation of monasteries.

Since then the monks have maintained their monastic observance in Shawnee while engaging in several active ministries. Their mission of Catholic education has developed into St. Gregory's University which offers

undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Shawnee and Tulsa, OK, and Little Rock, AR. Monks serve on the administration, staff, faculty and governing board of the university. The monks also own the Mabey-Gerrard Museum of Art, one of Oklahoma's premier collections of antiquities, fine art and cultural artifacts. Begun in



1900, the museum hosts visitors from around the globe and provides arts education to over 10,500 school children annually. The monks remain engaged in pastoral ministry through full-time parish assignments, weekend assistance, prison ministry, and comprehensive programs for persons with developmental delays. Manual labor provides monastic balance including auto maintenance, groundskeeping, woodworking, gardening, poultry care, cultivation of orchids and roses, and production of honey, jam, soap and candles. Finally, the monks host hundreds of guests each year for conferences and retreats.

Most of the monks of Shawnee reside at St. Gregory's monastery. They range in age from 28 years to 90 years. Through contemplative prayer, daily Liturgy of the Hours and Mass, and life in common all of their activity is a day-to-day witness to God's Kingdom.



Monastic Profession at St. Gregory's Abbey

# Thank You Notes—Worth Noting...Worth Quoting

## FROM VIETNAM

God bless you!

We just received the 36 books you sent. Thank you very much for strengthening our monastic life through these precious books.

At present English makes up 50% of the curriculum of our monastery. As a result most of our junior brothers can read English texts of intermediate level. I also translate some of them for the benefit of all the monks of our monastery.

We hope to receive more books from you. Thank you again! Be assured of our prayers for you and all the benefactors of AIM-USA.

Sincerely yours,  
Jerome Cai Viet Toan OSB  
Secretary to Abbot  
of Thien An, Vietnam

## FROM SOUTH AFRICA

I would like to thank you most sincerely for the parcel with books and a variety of rosaries! It was a lovely surprise and highly appreciated by our librarian. We are in the process of building up a library and therefore we are all the more delighted to get such a big collection of books.

Wishing you blessings, I remain, Yours gratefully,  
Godfrey Sieber OSB  
Abbot of Inkamana Abbey, Natal, South Africa



Novices from Inkamana Abbey

Dear members of AIM USA,

Yesterday a special coincidence happened which I think is worth sharing with you. ... Last year we started to share at one of our community evenings in Lent about our Lenten reading. As it was a good enriching experience for us we scheduled this again for yesterday evening. Now yesterday morning I drove to the post office—not expecting much, as the post was partly on strike for the last four weeks—and found a parcel from AIM USA full of wonderful books. We can only again say “Thank you very much” or “Deo gratias” (for your efforts and that the parcel did not get lost during the strike). When I opened the parcel I found so many new and interesting books. ...

With this letter we greet you all from rural South Africa and wish you a blessed and happy Easter.

Sr. Edith Reischert OSB, Prioress  
Mpumalanga, South Africa

## SPECIAL THANKS TO BOOK DONORS

AIM USA is grateful to the monasteries and private donors who generously contribute used theology and spirituality books. The on-going support of so many makes it possible for AIM to send quality books to mission monasteries.



Special thanks to (left to right) Barbara Redmond, Cheryl Bough, and Jane Eggleston for the exceptional contribution of new books in recent months. Many Bibles were donated as well as books on other spiritual topics. Cheryl, who lives in California, has coordinated the collection of books for AIM for many years.

## FROM NIGERIA

We express our profound gratitude for the box of books we received from AIM. The books which are all in English are quite beneficial to our community. We have already started using the catechetical books to teach young converts. We are also grateful for the books on Scripture and Benedictinism which aid our spiritual life and ongoing formation.

We are forever grateful to AIM for these books to our community. Be assured of our continued prayers

Sincerely in Christ,  
Sr. Maria Ozioma Offor, OSB  
Nativity Monastery,  
Umuahia Abia State, Nigeria

## FROM KENYA

Greetings from our community in Kakamega!

We want to express our gratitude for the concern you have for our community. We remain grateful for the books sent to us and for the communications about the works of AIM. The books not only serve the sisters but also the clergy and friends of our religious community. We are indeed thankful to the donors. It is our prayer that their reward be great.

Sincere greetings from our sisters,  
Sr. Irma Habeche, OSB, Kakamega, Kenya

## FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Pax Christi!

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of a box filled with spiritual books from your kind office. They are all very useful for our monastic formation.

Kindly extend to the Benedictine and Cistercian Communities and lay friends in the USA and Canada our most sincere thanks. Rest assured of our unceasing prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

With much gratitude and prayers,  
Mother Mary Geraldine Villaseñor, OSB, Pampanga, Philippines

Peace and blessings !

The books you sent are like treasures coming from heaven. They enrich, strengthen and deepen our quest and quench our thirst to grow stronger in our faith and commitment as monastic sisters in today's world. The community is truly grateful. AIM is a precious gift of God to our community. ...God bless you!

Ever grateful,  
Sr. Mary Philip Campomanes, OSB  
St. Benedict Priory, Davao City, Philippines





Benedictine Sisters  
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Erie, PA 16503-1107

United States Secretariat—Alliance for International Monasticism

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## Single Point of Light

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

“Let us keep our hearts open and our feet nimble so we can keep pace with the new beat calling us to a dance of inclusivity, compassion, welcome, and reconciliation. The Spirit is inviting us to return to the Pentecostal dance of discipleship and move boldly into the future.”

When I ended our last newsletter with the above words, I had no idea of what would transpire in our Church in the following months. First came the surprising announcement of Pope Benedict’s resignation, followed by the almost immediate barrage of analysts offering varying scenarios of conclave outcomes and leadership shifts. Finally, the new pope appeared on the balcony and shocked us all as he humbly bowed and asked for the blessing of the people.

This was the first of many actions that would begin to reveal a new style of leadership in the Church’s top office. The new Pope’s choice of the name Francis, that of a saint known for his simplicity and devotion to the poor, goes beyond a symbolic gesture. Saint Francis taught by living example; Pope Francis is doing the same. In his first weeks in office, Pope Francis’ actions have shown that he is committed to stripping away the pomp and trappings of the Vatican culture and restoring the simplicity of the gospel. He rides buses, wears old shoes and lives with others in simple lodgings. On Holy Thursday he washed the feet of young people in prison, including those of women and a Muslim.

Research into his past paints a picture of a man who has long held a special preference for the poor and those who live on the margins of a consumer society. He is a pastor with a vision and a desire to promote a missionary church, one that moves out to the streets to meet people where they are, a church that embraces all of humanity. What

a welcome change from a church that in recent years has been caught up in scandal, corruption, clericalism and self-preservation! Francis’ emphasis on servant leadership reminds all of us of the radical message of Jesus: authentic power is found in loving service.

In his inaugural homily (see p. 4-5), Francis issued an appeal for the loving protection of all God’s creation: the weak, the poor, the vulnerable, as well as the environment.

It has been refreshing to see the positive welcome this new leader of 1.2 billion Catholics has received from the media and the world community. This humble disciple of Jesus has disarmed the cynics and skeptics, at least for the moment.

Pentecost is the feast that reminds us the Spirit is always moving among us, creating and recreating anew. The election of a new pope brings with it hope, a fresh beginning full of possibilities. How will the Spirit lead us in the coming months and years? Let us be open to new calls and challenges, especially as AIM, to ways of responding to our brothers and sisters in the developing world.

Let us pray for Pope Francis that faithful to his role as Pontiff and pastor, he might truly build bridges and reconcile a divided world. And like his namesake, Francis of Assisi, may he continue to have the courage to follow God’s call to “rebuild my Church.”

With hope and gratitude,

*Stephanie Schmidt, OSB*

Stephanie Schmidt, OSB  
Executive Director, AIM USA  
director@aim-usa.org

