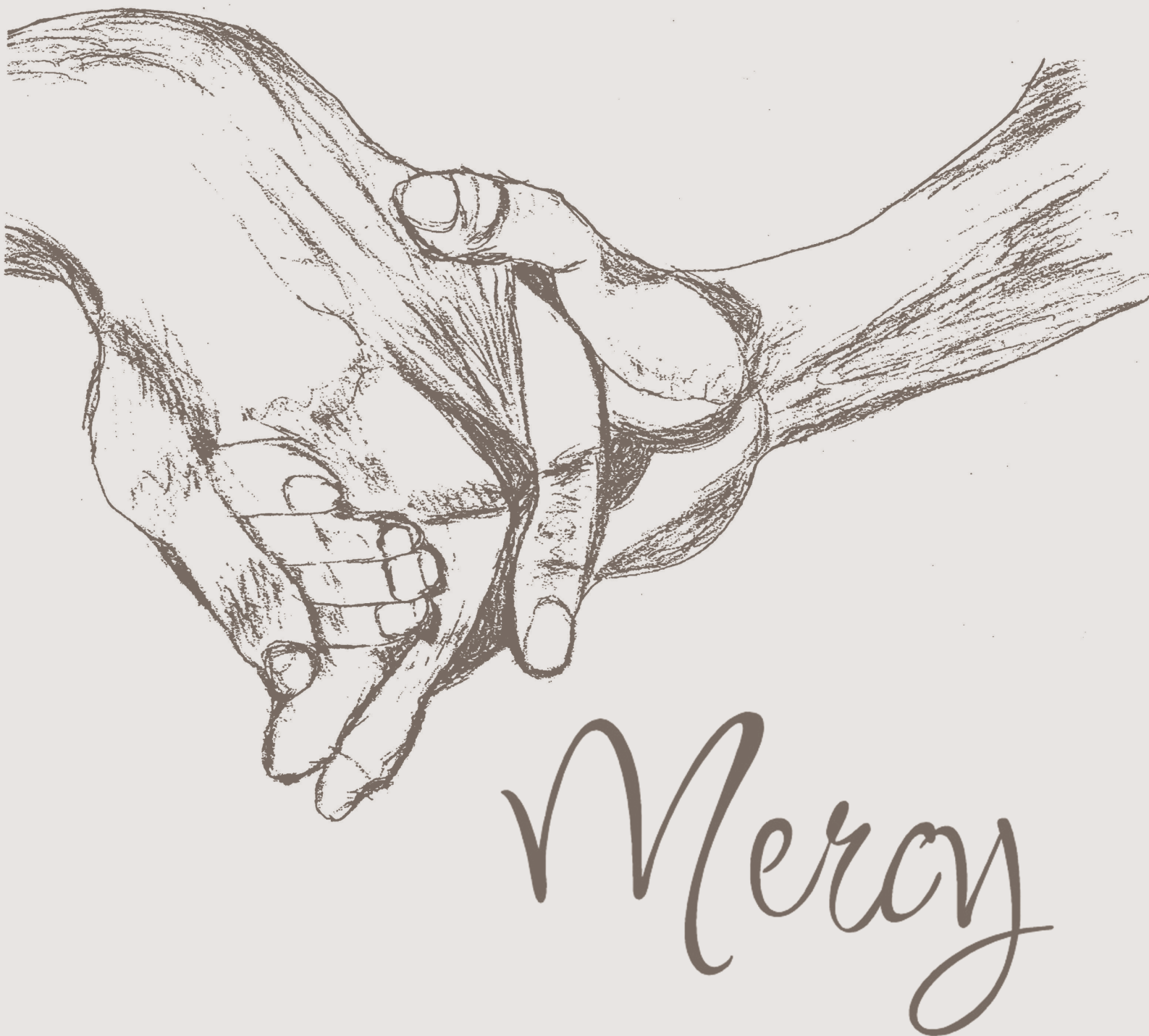

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Welcome to New Board Member



Sister Nancy Miller, OSB Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, ND

Sister Nancy Miller is the prioress of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck, ND. She has served as prioress since 2008. She was born and raised in Harvey, ND to Joyce and Paul Miller and she is the fifth of eight children.

In 1987, Sister Nancy earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and in 1998 she received a Master of Management at the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND. As a student, she became acquainted with the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery and recognized God's call in her own life. Sister Nancy joined Annunciation Monastery in 1991. In addition to having served as bookkeeper in the monastery business office and administrative assistant at the monastery, she has held various positions at the University of Mary. She has served as assistant manager, manager of the U-Mary Bookstore and as director of Campus Ministry.

Sister Nancy provides leadership in the Sisters' sponsored institutions: CHI (Catholic Health Initiatives) St. Alexius Health and the University of Mary. She serves on CHI St. Alexius Health board of directors and is president of the board at the University of Mary.

AIM USA welcomes Nancy as our newest Board Member.

Monasteries in Brazil, Philippines, Vietnam, India, Nigeria, Uganda, and the Congo will benefit from the 2016 AIM USA Lenten Appeal.

AFRICA

- for a Benedictine community of Sisters in Nigeria to construct a poultry house to help support themselves
- for a Benedictine community of nuns in Uganda to buy breviaries
- for a Benedictine monk from the Congo to study to be an infirmarian

ASIA

- for monks and nuns of the Philippines to attend a joint Benedictine and Cistercian Conference
- for a scholarship to enable seven Cistercian Sisters from Vietnam to study
- for a scholarship to enable a Benedictine monk from India to study Counseling/ Psychology

SOUTH AMERICA

- for a monk from Brazil to participate in the Cistercian monastic formation course in Rome
- to enable a Benedictine sister from Brazil to study and purchase materials of iconography

INTERNATIONAL

- to enable Cistercian sisters and monks to participate in ongoing formation in Rome

Front cover sketch

by Ann Hoffman, OSB, based on "Hand of Dante Holding that of Love"

Best Wishes — Welcome

December is a time to end the year and look forward to new beginnings. The AIM USA staff experienced just that this past December. Sheila McLaughlin, obl, after serving as Office Manager for AIM USA for 11 years, retired December 30, 2015.

President of the AIM USA Board, Sister Mary White, OSB from St. Paul Monastery, MN, wrote to Sheila: *"Those of us who have served with you recall with gratitude the value you have been to AIM USA and your years of generous service to our board. Your presence, your skill and your dedication have been key in making AIM USA what it is today."*



Sr. Ann Hoffman, OSB

the Erie Community.

As Sheila was retiring, AIM USA welcomed Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB. Since 1981, Sister Ann Hoffman has been a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, PA. Ann's social work and counseling background led her to minister to the abused and neglected in child welfare; to the poor through the welfare to work program operated by the Community, and to the elderly through Benetwood Apartments, the HUD subsidized housing program operated by

Ann has had a love of missions for years – including living and working at the Erie Diocesan Mission of Friendship in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico, for 18 months.

Ann also serves as co-director of the Erie Benedictine Oblates.

Ann exclaims, "I am excited about ministering at AIM USA. I am eager to establish relationships with Benedictines worldwide and to help facilitate those connections with others. We are indeed a very small world. Everything we do impacts others."

Annual Board Meeting

The AIM USA Board of Trustees held their annual meeting in October at Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA. Gratitude was expressed to Susan Hutchens, OSB, President of the Federation of St. Benedict, and Sheila McLaughlin, obl, Office Manager, for their years of service to AIM USA.



Sitting: (L-R): Abbot Francis Michael Stiteler, OCSO, (Conyers, GA), Sister Anne Wambach, OSB, (Erie, PA), Abbot John Klassen, OSB, (Collegeville, MN), Sister Mary White, OSB, President, (St. Paul, MN), Sister Theresa Zoky, OSB, Executive Director, (Erie, PA)

Standing: (L-R): Sheila McLaughlin, obl, (Erie, PA), Sister Susan Hutchins, OSB, (Rock Island, IL), Mother Maureen McCabe, OCSO, (Wrentham, MA), Sister Karen Joseph, OSB, (Ferdinand, IN), Sister Pia Portmann, OSB, (Norfolk, NE), Sister Mary David Hydro, OSB, (St. Leo, FL), Abbot John Brahill, OSB, Vice President, (Aurora, IL), Sister Therese Glass, OSB, (Secretary, Erie, PA).

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

The following reflections were written and presented by Sister Pat Lupo, OSB at the Vigil for the Third Sunday of Lent at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA.

Pope Francis' focus on mercy, a central teaching and cornerstone of his faith; Sister Joan Chittister's focus on mercy in her Lenten reflections this year; the conversation of Andrea Tornielli with Francis in his book: *The Name of God is Mercy*; and the many commentaries and articles on line – these are the words, the ideas that you will hear strung together tonight. They are the core of my reflection this evening. They are woven in a tapestry with the words of Luke 15:11-32.

From Francis: The mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which God reveals love as that of a mother or father, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

Mercy is the first attribute of God. The name of God is mercy. There are no situations we cannot get out of, we are not condemned to sink into quicksand. Mercy is the Divine attribute that embraces, it is God's self giving that welcomes, that leans down to forgive.

The message of Jesus in the parable of the Prodigal Son is forgiveness and reconciliation – actions that are shrouded in mercy. God is always there ready, waiting, if only we take the step toward God or if we even desire to take the step. God awaits us with open arms – we only need to take the step toward God like the prodigal child.

The prodigal son had the desire to take the step, even though there were overwhelming misgivings and uncertainty, the turning toward goodness was worth the risk. And like the prodigal child if we take the step toward the God who is goodness and mercy, we will be welcomed, enveloped in forgiveness with a caress of love – a great light of love and tenderness.

In the parables devoted to mercy – the lost sheep, the lost coin, and today's parable, the father with two sons – Jesus reveals God as a parent who never gives up until the lost is found, the wrong is forgiven and rejection is overcome with compassion and mercy.

In these three parables, God is always presented as full of joy. You know the feeling – the upliftedness, the light heart, the heavy weight that disappears once you embrace. Forgiveness restores the balance in your relationship with the other.

According to Francis, in these parables, we find the core of the Gospel of our faith because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon. We are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offenses is the clearest expression of merciful love.

Yes, at times it is so hard to forgive – yet pardon is the instrument placed in our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart: letting go of anger, wrath, violence and revenge are the necessary conditions to living joyfully.

This, I believe is the message for the elder son, the one who stayed and worked in the fields; the one who struggled every day to do his share.

Then the wayward child returns and the elder son is expected to endure the celebration – the celebration for the prodigal son. Impossible, he refuses to enter the house.

Serenity of heart will elude any of us trapped by anger, revenge, or violence unless we can accept or offer pardon – accept or offer pardon in our fragile hands. Then we too will attain serenity of heart.

Mercy is the force that awakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

Our streets are filled with prodigal children and their siblings. Like the prodigal parent we must embrace the repentant and the not so repentant and express joy of having them with us. We must never tire of going out to the child who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, explaining that judgment is severe, unjust and meaningless in light of our boundless mercy.

Our churches must be churches that go forth – we, all of us gathered together, are the church. The church is not a solid structure but a mobile group that goes out to the people...goes out to care for people – the wounded, the marginal, those in need of an attentive ear, of understanding, of forgiveness, of love.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was moved by human wretchedness, by our need, by our suffering, by the poverty of the world. Jesus was filled with compassion. This is the compassion we need to exhibit today if we are going to conquer the globalization of indifference.

This is the compassion that must fill our being when we find ourselves face to face with the poor, the outcast or the degradation of the earth.

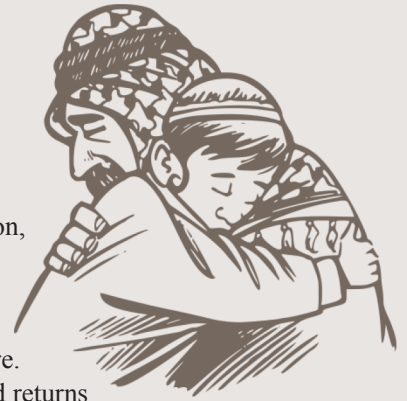
Yes, the Earth is also part of this equation – in order to survive on this earth we must have compassion for its sacredness and the interconnections that bind us together.

If we turn away from the dire issues threatening the earth, we are turning away from life.

Mercy is the force that awakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

So let us all be a sign of the primacy of mercy – a sign of mercy always, everywhere and in every situation no matter what!

Let us all love recklessly and be that sign of mercy to the world!



St. Justina's Monastery, OCSO Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, West Africa

St. Justina's Monastery was founded 1st May 1982. While studying in Ireland Rev. Sr. Justina Anigbo, a Holy Rosary sister from Eke town in Udi Local Government Area in Enugu state came in contact with the monks of Mt. Mellary Abbey, a Cistercian Monastery in Cappoquin. She learned that there was a female branch of the Cistercian life. Sister Justina contacted the sisters at Glencairn, later joined them, and made her simple profession with them on 26th of April 1973.



After her profession a number of Nigerian bishops, including Archbishop Arinze of Onitsha, visited Glencairn and expressed a desire to take Cistercian Life to Nigeria. In November 1975, Sr. Justina visited home and found some girls who were interested in monastic life. She took the girls to Our Lady of Grandselve, Obout in Cameroon for their formation. The foundation was approved by the General Chapter of 1981. Sr. Justina became sick and on the 3rd of October 1981, she died in a hospital in London.

After her death, Mother Margaret Hanron was appointed by the Community of Glencairn to bring the group back to Nigeria. Mother Margaret visited Nigeria and the sisters at Cameroon toward the end of January 1982. The 7 Nigerian sisters returned to Nigeria on 1st May 1982 with Mother Margaret and two other Irish sisters – Srs. Anthony and Malachy. Sr. Justina had asked two monks to come and be chaplains. They were Fr. Andrew from Melifont Abbey, Ireland who was already in the Bishop's house and supervising the work on the building, and Fr. Anthony Delisi a monk from the monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, U.S.A. The group arrived at Abakaliki on the 1st of May 1982. There were no basic necessities. The sisters slept on the floor. They attended Mass in the would-be refectory. After Mass, they ate breakfast standing, because there were no seats.

After the first night, they stayed at the Bishop's House. They went to the monastery each day for 3 weeks before being able to stay permanently at the site. Five sisters shared a room.

Sr. Justina had wanted the monastery to be called "Loreto Abbey" but after her death, Bishop McGettrick suggested it be called St. Justina's Cistercian Monastery. The monastery

was officially opened on the 6th of April 1983. That year the sisters started farming and managing a poultry farm . . . living by the labor of their hands.

Many young girls started coming to join. On the 12th of May 1987 Sr. Juliana, a postulant, died after a brief illness. On the 17th of May 1987, Mother Chinwe Otito Kelechukwu made her final profession and that same year the church was dedicated on the 15th of August. The sisters continued to live out their Cistercian charism.

In 2003, the community had the joy of celebrating Mother Margaret's 75th birthday and of electing Mother Chinwe as first Nigerian Prioress. We thank God for such gifts.

In 2007, the community celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its foundation. In October 2008, Sr. Coronata died. She was Novice Mistress for years. Also in 2008, Mother Regina was elected as a second African member of the Abbot General's Council at our Generalate in Rome. She was re-elected after 3 years for another 6 years. In 2009 the present superior, Mother Maureen Ndubuisi was elected the prioress of the community and she was re-elected in 2012 when we became a Major priory. Mother Margaret Hanron (Ezinne) in 2013 celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of her monastic profession. Presently, the community numbers 43 sisters.



Through the help of AIM, 2 sisters are now studying at CIWA. Through the help of the Commission of Aid, the monastic property was also walled.

As contemplatives, the sisters give themselves faithfully to liturgy, prayers, vigils, sacred readings, fasting, solitude, and silence according to the Rule of St. Benedict and the Constitutions of the Order. There is a good and vibrant spirit in the community.

The community lives by the labor of its hands. The main source of income is the making of Altar Bread. This is supplemented by a large yam and rice farm and garden, palm and fruit tree plantations and some candle making. The sisters generously share with the poor of the area and pilgrims who are never lacking. The community also maintains a spirit of generosity, care of the sick and hospitality.

St. Anselm Abbey Manchester, New Hampshire, United States

During 2016, as Saint Anselm Abbey celebrates the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, it's a safe bet attention will be focused on the mercy that is at the heart of the monastery's primary worship space. The abbey church, which marks its 50th anniversary this year, has served monks, students, faculty, staff, neighbors and visitors from throughout New England and beyond, and is located in Goffstown, NH, just outside Manchester, the Granite State's largest city.

Most members of the wider Saint Anselm community know that it is to the abbey church that the Benedictine monks repair each day for the Divine Office and the celebration of

the Eucharist. But the abbey church also opens its wide embrace to the families of deceased alumni and faculty members, welcomes couples renewing their nuptial vows from throughout the state, receives students back from a 140-mile charity walk from Maine, provides

a safe, silent haven for students in distress, glows in the candlelight of services to remember the dead and pray for those diagnosed with cancer and celebrates the arrival of Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays with hundreds of food baskets and vibrates with applause during honors convocation. When disasters, tragedies and losses hit individuals, the campus community or the nation as a whole, it is to the abbey church that one can see students streaming for prayer, Mass or reflection.

On a campus busy with the academic life of young people, the abbey church rises up as an enduring and inspiring example of God's mercy each and every day. As with every monastic community, the monks of Saint Anselm see their church as the centerpiece of their world and the anchor of their day.

They conduct Saint Anselm College, a nationally ranked liberal arts college for nearly 2,000 undergraduates. The abbey church, with its striking round contemporary shape and its soaring stainless steel spire, is the first major building first-time visitors find. It wasn't always that way.

Designed by the late Manchester architect Nicholas Isaak, AIA, the abbey church responds to the brick architecture of the campus and echoes the old New England mill environment of the Manchester community. Its soaring arches, brilliant non-



figurative stained glass, and wood and stone features balance light and darkness and focus attention on the brilliant white marble altar.

Abbot Mark A. Cooper, O.S.B., fifth abbot of Saint Anselm, and his nearly 30 monks have three major apostolates: a college, a parish and a preparatory school in California. At present, the abbey has one novice, two juniors and one solemnly professed monk preparing for priestly ordination.

Saint Anselm College, founded in 1889, the year after the Benedictines first arrived in New Hampshire from Saint Mary's Abbey in Newark, NJ, provides all students with "Conversatio," a strong year-long program in the humanities, as well as a strong core curriculum. A total of 42 majors and 22 minors are available to students. The college also is home to the New Hampshire Institute for Politics and the Institute for Saint Anselm Studies, a center dedicated to researching and promoting the thought of the college's patron Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Apart from prayer and regular financial support for AIM, the community frequently supports the education at Saint Anselm of monks from communities in the developing world.

Saint Raphael Parish, founded in 1888, is the first Benedictine foundation in New England. More than 500 families and 2,500 individuals comprise the parish, located in West Manchester, less than two miles "down the hill" from the abbey. Saint Benedict Academy, on the parish campus, operates on a pre-K through Grade 6 model with about 140 students.

The monastic community also operates Woodside Priory School in Portola Valley, CA. The West Coast effort began in 1975 with a pilot year of affiliation. In 1976 Saint Anselm Abbey assumed responsibility for the California monastery and school founded in 1957 by members of the Hungarian Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict, who sought to escape communism at home. Woodside has 350 students in Grades 6 to 12.

When the monks of Saint Anselm assemble at the altar, they gather around Christ, the fullest expression of the mercy of the Eternal Father. But they also bear within themselves Christ and individually help make up the Mystical Body. Together, under the Rule of Saint Benedict and their abbot, they strive each day to seek God, encountering him in prayer and work so "that in all things God may be glorified." (1 Pet 4:11; RB 57:9)

Sharing the Benedictine Charism . . .

St. Scholastica's Academy-San Fernando Convent City of San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines



Sr. Mary Peter Mackay, OSB and Sr. Angela Bingan, OSB with some Alumnae and students during the Medical Mission.



Sr. Consuelo dela Paz, OSB assisting in the distribution of relief packages to typhoon victims.

Swakopmund, Namibia, SW Africa



Benedictine Sisters on holiday with others.

Monastery to Monastery 2015 Update

St. Benedict Abbey	Atchison, KS
Holy Cross Monastery	Beaumont, TX
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove, IN
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck, ND
St. Benedict Monastery	Bristow, VA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago, IL
Our Lady of the Mississippi	Dubuque, IA
Holy Angels Convent	Jonesboro, AR
St. Procopius Abbey	Lisle, IL
Newark Abbey	Newark, NJ
Prince of Peace Abbey	Oceanside, CA
Portsmouth Abbey	Portsmouth, RI
St. Gregory's Abbey	Shawnee, OK
St. Paul's Monastery	St. Paul, MN
Queen of Heaven Monastery	Warren, OH
St. Anselm's Abbey	Washington, DC
St. Benedict's Monastery	Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Briefs

Oblates

AIM USA has been blessed with the interest and dedication of faithful Oblate groups throughout the years. Oblates have joined their monasteries in the Lenten Appeal and with their prayers for the developing monasteries with which AIM USA works. Recent communications have been received from St. Benedict Monastery, Bristow, VA, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, SK. Canada, Queen of Heaven Monastery, Warren, OH, and Mount St. Benedict, Erie, PA. Thank you.

Mass stipends are always needed by our mission monasteries. No amount is too small.

Please consider naming AIM USA as a beneficiary in your **will or trust**.

Visit Our WEB Page

AIM USA's web page has a new look! Our sincere gratitude to Sylvia Ann Szpak for volunteering her time, talent, and services to redesign the AIM USA web page. Visit us at: www.aim-usa.org

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NotesWorth Quoting



Dear Brothers and Sisters—

Enclosed are the few books and pamphlets I hope you can share with those who need them. Thanking you for your sharing them with our friends in need. Each Newsletter you send reminds me of goodness and kindness of the brothers and sisters around the world!

May God bless you this year as you share Christ's love with others.

JoAnn Riley
Santee, SC

+++

Dear Sisters,

We Sisters in St. Scholastica Community in Mtwara, Tanzania want to thank you wholeheartedly for sending us a wonderful parcel with books some time ago.

Being German myself and seeing the African oral culture, I know how much we have to work on our sisters to get them into the habit to love and read books. We continue to use the English language so that they do not have so many problems with reading. Our table reading is almost always in the English language. Our Divine Office is sung in Swahili and the Sisters prepare well for it.

We have several apostolates here: a very busy small clinic with maternity and X-ray departments, a Montessori Nursery with English as medium, a primary school under construction, a hostel for 200 female students of the University....

The majority of the people in Mtwara Region are Muslims. About 10% Catholic only. We always have a peaceful relationship. Only nowadays, we see the increasing influence of fundamentalism.

Sister Raphaela Haendler, OSB
Mtwara/Tanzania

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To AIM USA,

Reading the news from other monasteries throughout the world we feel more connected with the worldwide monastic Benedictine family and it encourages us to continue our monastic life joyfully.

Fr. Mikael Santana, OCSO
Indonesia

+++

Dear Sister,

Our community is very much thankful to AIMUSA for your continual support by sending us books that are very useful to the studies of our students and for our spiritual growth.

Respectfully yours,
Fr. Devasia Varavunkal, OSB
Corte Carmen, Cebu, Philippines

Dear Sister,

Peace of our Lord be with you. This is Father Joseph, OSB of Vanashram Benedictine Monastery acknowledging the receipt of the complete series of Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. We thank you sincerely for this generous donation of books. It helps us greatly since we have 12 students of Theology residing in our Monastery and three Priest monks who will also benefit from this.

Fr. Joseph Orlando, OSB
Vanashram, Bangalore, India

+++

Dear Sister,

Greetings of love and peace!

Thank you ever so much for the books we received last August. Sorry again for the late response. We were informed by the personnel of the Postal Office to fetch at once the package, because the outer box was already wet; yet when we opened the box, the books were in good condition since they were wrapped in plastic. Thank you for your generosity in sending us books for our use. We keep on praying for the donors of the books and the Staff and personnel of the AIM. Many thanks and may God reward you all.

Sister Mechtilde Holgado, OSB
Philippines

+++

Dear Sister,

I'm sorry for the long time that I took before writing to you. I'm coming back after a few days in Lebanon, and ... THANKS! I got the box of books from AIM! Thanks so much, all the books are home now! The general situation is very bad here. Of course, you know that the fundamentalists are growing day after day... We have to pray a lot... You saw Iraq!! And here it is not better... in lots of places. But we continue, like the people,... Living and with hope.... Sorry, but the energy of my laptop is finishing: we don't use the generator because there is no petrol for energy... So, thanks, and thanks because we know you are still praying for us and Syria. Pray for us! God bless you and your community.

Sister Marta
Trappistine Nuns
Syria

+++

Dear Sisters

We sincerely thank you for all the books you sent. By Good Grace we hope that we will do our best to put them to good use.

Benedictine Sisters
Mbouda-Babete, Cameroon



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

Mercy, have mercy,... have mercy on me, O God...

***Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.
Consider my affliction and my trouble
and forgive all my sins.***

Psalm 25 v. 16-18

Remembering one of my first trips to our diocesan mission in Mexico, I recall the incident for which I beg mercy.

It was hot, so very hot, and humid, to the point of not being able to breathe very well, and I was tired. The mission coordinators invited me to accompany them to move a family of 8, a mother and 7 children ages 3 to 15 to the mission's shelter for abused women. The family was in need of shelter away from an abusive spouse and father. I declined. After all, it was hot and I was tired. In my mind I thought, "What a job! How long will this take? It's late in the afternoon, it's hot, I'm tired, I'll sit this one out."

One last invitation from the coordinators as they were going out the door was made. Reluctantly, I gave in and joined them

in the mission pick-up, all the while thinking, "How long will this take? How many trips are we going to have to make?"

Arriving about 15 minutes later at their house, we encountered the family joyfully waiting for us. The children were full of excitement. The mother had a bucket with a squawking chicken in it, and each of the children stood there holding a small plastic bag. Before I could even leave the vehicle, the kids were climbing into the back of the truck and helping their mother into it. I offered to go back into the house and help with the other items they were planning to take with them. "No, no," they said, "There isn't anything else."

Mercy, Oh, God, have mercy...

***Do not, O God, withhold
your mercy from me;
May your steadfast love and your faithfulness
keep me safe forever.***

Psalm 40 v. 11

Theresa Zoky, OSB

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