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The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

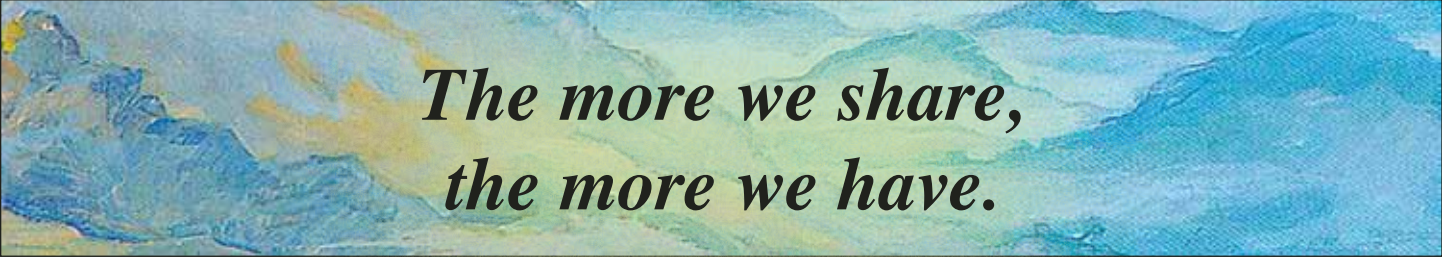
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[www.aim-usa.org](http://www.aim-usa.org)

Volume 20 No. 2 Summer 2011 (electronic)

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*The more we share,  
the more we have.*



*The miracle of abundance!*

# AIM USA

## June 2011 AIM International Grants Sponsored by the USA Secretariat

Benedictine monks,  
Saint Thomas Monastery, Kappadu, **INDIA**  
Publication of a book on the Rule of Benedict

Cistercian monks,  
Abbey of Notre Dame, Phuoc-Ly, **VIETNAM**  
Formation studies for 23 monks

Benedictine sisters,  
Notre-Dame Monastery, Koubri, Burkina Faso, **AFRICA**  
Hospitality for participants in the CIB international meeting

Benedictine sisters,  
Gaudium Mariae Abbey, San Antonio de Arredondo, **ARGENTINA**  
Solar energy heating system for the monastery

Benedictine sisters,  
Saint Martin Monastery, Nassau, **BAHAMAS**  
Repairing the roof of the monastery



Sister Marcellina and child at Westgrove School

### COVER ART—

“Jesus Multiplies the Loaves” VIE DE JESUS MAFA, 78000 Versailles



### DVD AVAILABLE

Our 16-minute DVD on the works of AIM, especially the USA Secretariat, is available at no cost, to groups and individuals. Just ask: email, phone or write. We appreciate your help in promoting the mission of AIM.



Monks of Phuoc-Ly, Vietnam at prayer

### HEARTFELT THANKS

Thank you to the monasteries and oblates for your generous response to our Lenten appeal.

There was a noticeable increase in oblate participation this year and for this we are most grateful.

More than \$25,000 was received and sent on to help our brothers and sisters in monasteries in South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Ecuador, Brazil and Angola.

### Stewardship of the Earth

Benedictines have always been committed to stewardship of the earth.

One of the new ways that we are trying to be responsible stewards of our resources is by moving to an online newsletter. We thank you for taking the time to connect to this link on our website and read the news.

We know that it takes a little extra time and energy on your part but this move will reduce the increasing costs of printing and postage. We are concerned about losing readers who do not have access to the Internet so this is an experimental phase and we will be evaluating the cost effectiveness. Although there is no envelope available online, we hope you will continue to remember the missions and mail your donations to AIM-USA.

The winter and spring newsletters will still be printed and mailed in 2012.

## From Our Mission Monasteries

### Cistercian Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, Lurin, Peru

by Hermana Maria Jesús de Bidegáin, OCist

To speak of this monastery, established in the Lurin Valley on the Pacific coast of Peru, we must start at the beginning.

It was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, May 27, 1580, when Doña Lucrecia de Sanzoles and her daughter, Mencía de Vargas, founded a Beguine convent in the city of Lima, which they simply called “monastery.” In June 1584, Pope Gregory XIII issued a Papal Bull, which resulted in the official formation of the Cistercian Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, recognized by Rome as the first monastery of the OCist Order existing outside of Europe.

In spite of having conferred on them their Cistercian character, Pope Gregory XIII made them independent of the Order, dependent directly on the pope and the local bishop. That exemption was not unusual for those times as King Philip II was very zealous about the independence of Spanish monasteries with respect to foreign monastic houses or organizations—in this case, the Mother House of Citeaux.

This monastery began with 11 nuns but by 1650 it housed one hundred choir nuns, two hundred converts, novices and servants for a total of three hundred women.

In 1694, they published the *Life of St. Luitgarde*, the Cistercian mystic of Belgium, and the “*Definitions and Constitutions*,” that were to be followed by the abbess and nuns of the Cistercian Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity. This had a second edition in Lima in 1759, which is now housed, in the National Library in Madrid, Spain.

The monastery as such ceased to exist in 1966 but at the end of 1992, the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Evangelization of the Americas, the then Archbishop of Lima, insistently invited the nuns from Spain to reopen the monastery. Three nuns from the Cistercian Monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos, Spain came to the monastery to join the four Cistercian sisters still living there with the Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Mary, an apostolic order.

The Vatican issued a mandate making the sisters “continuers of the ancient Cistercian Monastery of Lima from the colonial era, which was never extinguished.” Because of this, our presence in Peru may genuinely be called a Re-foundation. Everything had to be begun once

again from zero, with much faith and abandon. The Lord, as in the case of Abraham, was always very present to us, making use of our weakness to better manifest his power.

We did not return to the original building, now occupied by the Franciscan Sisters.

We began a new building, which is now completely finished. The Mother House in Spain is mostly responsible for this building but quite a bit of economic help was received locally. The result is a very functional and bright monastery. We live the monastic life there in the love, peace and joy that constant praise puts in our hearts.

Our relationship with the diocesan Church is optimal and they provide Mass for us.

We have a small guesthouse with 15 individual rooms. The guests appreciate very much the welcome and environment provided there. In addition, we bake and sell bread, cookies, *panettone* and marmalade. We also make liturgical and ornamental candles.

Our doors and hearts are wide open. You would be received with much love.



The Community of the Most Holy Trinity, Lurin, Peru



Sisters work among the 12 acres of land planted in fruit trees.

## St. Walburg Monastery Covington, Kentucky

In 1859 a group of five sisters traveled down the Ohio River to Covington, Kentucky and joined the distinguished lineage of American monasteries of women from St. Walburg Abbey, Eichstätt, Germany.

The group came to Covington at the request of Bishop George A. Carrell to teach in a German parish staffed by the Benedictine Fathers of Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Sister Alexia Lechner, then 32 years old, was the first superior of the new St. Walburg Monastery.

The community grew and prospered with sisters engaging in teaching, healthcare, social work, parish and administrative ministries. In 1903 the sisters bought land ten miles from the city for an academy named Villa Madonna Academy and in 1937 dedicated the new motherhouse at that same location, now known as Villa Hills.

In 2009 St. Walburg Monastery celebrated 150 years of work and prayer in Northern Kentucky. As part of the celebration the sisters partnered with Housing Opportunities of Northern Kentucky to build “House of Blessing,” a house for a working poor family, about four blocks from the original monastery. The community decided that this was a practical and tangible way of expressing the Benedictine value of hospitality and the community’s gratitude for the support and friendship of the people of Covington.



The monastery’s German traditions of order and quiet steadiness, its Midwestern values of practicality and efficiency, and its Southern expression of openness and hospitality are hallmarks of the St. Walburg community. The sisters share their property overlooking the Ohio River with local civic and religious communities by leasing ball fields to the city, offering an area for family picnics, welcoming joggers, walkers, dog walkers and nature lovers, and allowing visitors to enjoy the peace and beauty of the grounds.

# *Journey* into Interfaith Dialogue – 1939-2011

Lucy Brydon OSB

Reprinted with permission from “DILATATO CORDE” Vol. 1, No. 2

Had Allah so willed He would surely have made you  
one single community.

Instead (He gave each of you a Law and a way of life)  
in order to test you by what He gave you.

Vie, then, with one another in good works.

Unto Allah is the return of all of you;  
and He will then make you understand the truth  
concerning the matters on which you disagreed.

(Holy Qur’an 5:48)

If God is infinite, nothing can be separate.

(Sir John Marks Templeton)

## *When I look back over my life,*

I realise that I belonged to a “minority religion”. I was part of a fervent Roman Catholic family in a largely Protestant neighbourhood where ecumenism had hardly been heard of. My childhood was an experience of learning good neighbourliness and friendship with people of “other religions”, Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists. It was an excellent preparation for the REAL interfaith dialogue that would take place in later years. Even though in those days we were not allowed to enter another church building, much less take part in “the services or prayers of a false religion” (Penny Catechism), yet we did relate to each other, play with each other, help each other out, and pray for each other—at least, we Catholics prayed for those not of the True Faith! We went to separate schools and churches, but somehow this did not matter so much when playing cowboys and Indians; or keeping house. I don’t remember fighting about religion, or even discussing it, but when we engaged in playful snow fights, it was “Cathy Cats” versus “Proddy Dogs”—all fairly good-natured.

For more information on Monastic Interreligious Dialogue,  
visit [www.dimmid.org](http://www.dimmid.org)

[Article continues at end of newsletter, p. 7](#)

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

# Letters—Worth Noting...Worth Quoting

## *Gratitude for Books*

The parcel of books which you sent arrived in very good condition. As always, it is a good assortment of traditional and contemporary books, books to read for information and books to read for inspiration. Please convey our gratitude to the donors.

Abbot Yesudas Thelliyil, OCSO  
Kurisumala Ashram, India

The box of books was gratefully received by the community. The spiritual books you sent us are of great value to us in our spiritual life. We especially appreciate the biblical commentaries, books on monasticism and theology. We would be happy if you could send us more of these.

Sr. Tobenna Anyadike, OSB  
Nativity Monastery, Nigeria

We received a beautiful parcel from AIM of spiritual reading books. We share them with our other convents and with our sisters who come from the Priory House to our house for vacation or days of rest.

Sr. Andrea Polt, OSB  
Mtwara, Tanzania

St. Scholastica's College-Westgrove is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year: 2001-2011. Our school population now stands at 634: 303 from kindergarten to Grade 6 and 331 Grade 7-10. We have an outreach to public schools and poor areas where our students have interaction with and give in-kind donations.

The children's books you sent us were distributed in two public elementary schools. What a gift to their libraries. Our teachers and pupils also teach catechism in the day care center that is run by our school.

Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB  
Ayala Westgrove, Cavite, Philippines

I was so happy as I looked through the box of books you sent us. They are a great help in our reading during meals and in our library. The sisters were very excited to find new books in our library. Monastic and spirituality books are hard to obtain here in the Philippines.

Mo. Waldetrudia Cartalla, OSB  
Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King  
Quezon City, Philippines

Every time we receive books from you we rejoice because it had a huge impact on our spiritual life—reading is one of the most important parts of our monastic life. The more books you send us, the better formation we can get and give.

Abba Woldetensae Balewold, OCist  
Hosanna, Ethiopia

Loving greetings from Benedict Bhavan Mandla and gratitude for sending us such valuable books. We are happy for these enriching books.

S. Stella Varappilli, OSB  
St. Benedict Bhavan, Madhya Pradesh, India

**SPECIAL THANKS** to all our book donors and used-book scavengers. As you can see in this sampling of thank you notes, our mission monasteries still need and depend on “real” books for education and formation of their new members. Not everyone shares easy access to the world wide web.

Purchasing books is impossible for most mission monasteries because in the few instances when a book store is available, the money is not. **Please remember AIM and the mission monasteries if you find you are divesting yourself of theology and spirituality books.**

## *Mass Stipends Helpful*

Thank you for the mass stipends for our foundation of La Soledad in Mexico. They offer the Masses and use the money to pay for a young monk who is studying at the Franciscan Seminary in Queretaro, Mexico. He will soon finish his philosophy degree and begin his studies in theology.

Abbot Philip Lawrence, OSB  
Monastery of Christ in the Desert, Abiquiu, New Mexico

We are very grateful for the check you sent to us for mass stipends. Monks from nearby Asirvanam Monastery come and say daily Mass in our chapel. Our community consists of 15 finally professed sisters, 4 junior and 3 novices. The money will help us in our work with the aged and our farm.

Sr. Virginia Sehaetic, OSB  
Sneha Jyothi, Bangalore, India

Here in Erie, a city where cold winters and rainy springs seem to drag on and on, summer is a very welcome guest. The freedom to be outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine brings with it a sense of friendliness and openness. Everyone seems a bit more neighborly, a bit more relaxed. The longer days give the illusion of extra time and free us to enjoy life a little more than we usually do.

A walk along the beach, a family picnic, an evening concert, a baseball game—all these are simple pleasures that come with the season.

Summer surrounds us with a sweet sense of the goodness of life.

Our cover picture for this issue reminds me of a summer scene: friends gathered together just as we would gather for an outdoor concert. These crowds on the lawn have come out to see what the much-talked-about preacher has to say and, as the day goes on, they grow hungry. Jesus, filled with compassion for the crowd, feeds them all by blessing a young boy's lunch and multiplying a few loaves and fishes. The disciples pass the food around and then in amazement gather up the leftovers. *The miracle of abundance! And a striking lesson for us: the more we share, the more we have.*

For years, scholars and scientists have told us that there

is enough food on this planet for everyone to eat. We do not lack the resources to end hunger, we lack the personal and political will. Hunger will be eradicated when we learn to consume less and share our abundance.

As I write this letter, more than 10 million of our brothers and sisters in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya are at risk of dying from starvation. They are suffering from some of the worst droughts and famines in their history. Women, children, and the elderly are the first to succumb to disease and starvation. The evening news brings pictures of this harsh reality into our living rooms.

Are we moved with compassion, like Jesus on the hillside, to share our abundance? Now it is our turn to feed the crowds. Jesus reminds us “freely you have received, so freely give.”

As we enjoy these summer days may we open our hearts to the poor and find new ways to share our abundant blessings.

*Stephanie Schmidt, OSB*

Stephanie Schmidt, OSB  
Executive Director, AIM USA



**aim usa**

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Later, while still young, I remember being shocked to learn that some Christians actually blamed Jews for the death of Jesus. From my earliest days I had known that Jesus was a Jew and that we (sinners) were the ones who caused his suffering and death through our unfaithfulness to Him. My parents, though uneducated, must have had a very open and expansive understanding of who Jesus was for us.

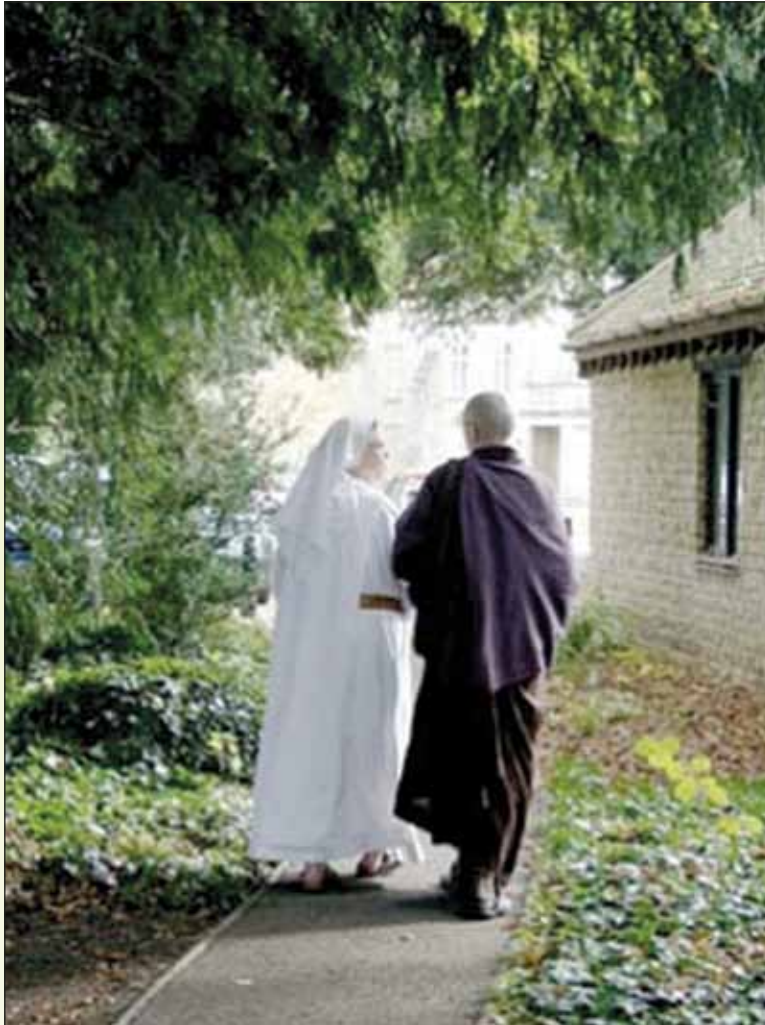
After my primary school years, where I did have contacts at home with other Christians, I then attended a Roman Catholic direct grant Grammar School run by sisters. It had a boarding house for people like me who came from remote areas. From this time onwards, I had little contact with people of other Christian denominations, and none at all with people of other religions. After school I joined the religious community which had educated me, went to university as a young sister, and taught for many years in the same Roman Catholic school during its transformation from direct grant Grammar School to Comprehensive School. There were some ecumenical contacts with other staff members and some parents, but I do not remember ever meeting anyone of another religion.

During the latter part of this time, Vatican II burst upon us and it was thrilling to learn about ecumenism, to say nothing of the mind-boggling idea that we could relate to people of what had been called “pagan” religions because God and Truth could be found in them, too. It was an exhilarating time, as we younger sisters devoured everything printed that came from Rome, especially the non-official accounts of what went on in the Council.

But though Vatican II changed many aspects of my life, it was not until I went to Kenya at the end of the 1970s that I came into personal contact with people of another religion. I had opted for Comparative Religion for a Cambridge Religious Studies Diploma towards the end of the 1970s and did a course on Islam. This was my first experience of a truly expansive vision of God’s way with humankind. Although it was all theoretical, I think the borders of my

mind were becoming more flexible. As I look back now, I see that even before I actually had personal contact with real, live Muslims, God was moving me in the direction He wanted me to go.

When I arrived in Kenya and became immersed in teaching in a secondary school, it was as though my journey into interfaith dialogue really began. All that had gone before was something like preparing for a journey: packing, discarding things, deciding what to take, etc. I found that the school, although founded for Catholic Kenyan girls (mainly Maasai), had a significant number of local Muslim girls on the roll. There was a large Muslim community in our small township, and as we sisters were going in to our early morning prayers, we could hear the Muslim call to prayer ringing across the little valley between us. I had learned about this call to prayer in the Cambridge Diploma course, and we had a few jokes about “Prayer is better than sleep” at 6.30 in the morning. But it was another opening of the heart: the realisation that we were praising God in this place, and across the valley, Muslim men were also engaged in the same activity to the same God.



As I got to know the families of our students, I sometimes would tell the parents how I was united with them in spirit every morning and evening when we heard their call to prayer. They were invariably pleased. For me it was another lifting of the heart. The Muslim community shared their feasts with us by bringing us cakes and sweetmeats on all their major festivals and inviting us to their family weddings. It was delightful and colourful “Dialogue of Life” experience.

There were many ways in which our friendship with the Muslims of our township was a real means of enlarging my heart in gratitude to God and openness to other faith practices. When Ramadan arrived, I found myself “conspiring” with the Sheikh of the little mosque, so that the older students would not collapse during their exams. We agreed together that during their exams the girls would be excused the full rigour of the fast. It was very hard to convince them to obey the Sheikh. I found myself again deeply moved and impressed by their faith and loyalty to their religious practices.

One incident above all continues to stand out for me as an experience of grace. One day, while visiting a Muslim family to speak to the parents of one of our students, I found myself alone in a room with the old grandmother as I waited for the mother of the girl to arrive. The old lady did not attempt to speak to me or welcome me. I do not think she was aware of my presence at all. She was completely immersed in an intense state of prayer, with the Holy Qur'an open on her knee. I will never forget the serene, recollected expression on her face. I had an awed feeling that I should take off my shoes, for I was standing on holy ground. The intensity of her contemplation made that small room into a mosque or, for me, an oratory. I prayed silently too, and I felt we were somehow united. This experience of graced insight was broken by the bustling arrival of the mother, and we went on to talk school business, the old lady remaining wrapped in silent prayer. It was a small event which had then, and still has, an eternal significance for me.

My contact with Hindus in Kenya was less profound, but it taught me a different lesson. I dealt with them mainly as a customer in their place of business in Nairobi, but their warm and open-hearted welcome each time I appeared had to do with the fact that we were both people of faith and prayer—as well as the fact that I was a good customer. One manager in particular always wanted to talk about his faith and prayer (even while queues of customers were mounting up!) and we always took leave of each other with “God bless you”. This was something I had not expected from people of another colour, culture and faith, and it warmed my heart. They always invited us sisters to visit them, and had we lived nearer, we would have been welcomed into their homes and their lives.

By the time I left Kenya in 1988, perhaps the most precious thing that I was sorry to leave behind, (apart from the beauty of Kenya) was the contact with people of another religion, which had made me appreciate my own faith and begin to have a new insight into the nature of the “God of a thousand Names” and a desire to go further along this path of knowledge. I did not think it would be possible for this to happen, because I was moving into the relatively “enclosed” life of a monastery of Benedictine women. God knew better, and the time in Kenya somehow led naturally to a further stage of the journey into interfaith dialogue.

I found that I had joined a community which took ecumenism in its widest form very seriously as part of its own special charism. Dom Constantine Bosschaerts, a Belgian monk who established the Vita et Pax Foundation, from which Turvey Abbey eventually came, wanted people of every denomination or faith (or none) to feel at home in the monasteries of his foundation. I found this a thrilling ideal. I soon discovered that Turvey had a living and active ministry to people of every Christian denomination, many of whom describe it as their “second home.” Working in the retreat and guest departments, I was part of this ministry. Then one of those ‘Damascus Road’ events happened for me.

In 1993 the nearby Theravadan Buddhist monastery of Amaravati was organising a large conference called “Faith in Awakening”. Turvey was sending two sisters and two brothers to represent our communities, and to my delight, I was one of them. When we arrived I found to my amazement that there were people from more than thirty different groups; they represented every mainline denomination, the main world religions, and several “fringe” groups. The monk organising it told us later that he had sent information and invitations to several hundred people, expecting about a quarter to reply. All of them accepted the invitation, and the large turn-out must have made for a logistical nightmare! One of our brothers had already established good contacts with the Buddhists, but it was my first personal experience of meeting Buddhist monks and nuns. The conference offered a variety of experiences: discussion groups, teaching sessions by leaders of the various faith groups, silent periods, informal



chats, and meals together in a vast marquee. Each night all the residential members assembled for a meditation session.

Though the discussion groups and informal contacts were helpful and friendly, and had possibilities (I was already thinking: “Christian-Buddhist Retreats”), I found that often there was a mismatch of understanding. We were using the same words at times to mean very different things. To give just one very obvious example: suffering. There was also, of course, the troublesome word “God,” which evoked enormous differences of understanding, attitude and response even among the Christians present. I found myself challenged by the talks and discussions, with much to ponder, and some important insights that continued to open my heart (the meaning of suffering and the causes and ‘solution’ as seen by Buddhists; God as the Unborn, the Undying, the Unconditioned, the only REAL). Thinking back to this conference, I recognise that Buddhism (through the

monks and nuns I met and through the realisation that we share so much in the monastic dimension of our lives) had a much more powerful influence on me than any of the other religions or groups.

But it was when we came to the morning and evening meditation and “devotions” sessions that I experienced a genuine expansion of the heart, soul, mind that continues to this day. Each religious group took turns in offering a “devotion”; for us it was the singing of Compline one evening, with a simple guitar accompaniment. To my amazement, everyone joined in when it was our turn; and the atmosphere was intensely prayerful and respectful. I had expected some people to opt out. Certain devotional practices of other groups were outside our ability to join in, being conducted in other languages (e.g. Pali). In those cases, we listened respectfully to each other and (in my case) silently praised God for the variety of His people.

After the devotional practice, which was emotionally very moving, we moved into silence together. In the morning the group was larger because it involved the day-time participants. The evening session was for the residents, and we were a large group, making for a tight fit when we met in the meditation hall. We simply sat in silence. It was not my first experience of meditation. I had personally “discovered” meditation or centering prayer in my early years as a sister and had been practising it for years. But that was largely an individual experience. This was something else. We may all have been “doing” something different beneath the surface of the silence, but it felt that here we were totally one body. There was a live, “electric” quality to the intense silence of this vast group. The only thing I could compare it to, from my own experience, was sitting in silence together, after praising God in tongues, at a large charismatic conference gathering. It seemed to me that the presence and the power of God’s Spirit were alive and active in that interfaith group in an unmistakable way.

On the first night and also on another evening something rather disconcerting happened. A youngish man, obviously familiar with Christian charismatic prayer groups, “prophesied” in the accepted charismatic way, speaking in the name of God (“My people. I am here with you. . . .”) It struck me as out of place and rather embarrassing in such a gathering where many people would not be “believers” in the God worshipped by Christians and addressed in charismatic prayer groups. Then the most beautiful thing happened. The totally intense silence continued, and even deepened. No one attempted to speak to the young man, but there was absolutely no sense of rejection or disagreement either. I had a deep realisation of his being “held” in the love and compassion of the group. He only spoke once on each occasion. I do not know what other people thought of it. It seemed to me that the powerful love and compassion of the group was truly an experience of the nature of God-with-us. It is nearly twenty years ago and still a living memory.

Following this experience of “Faith in Awakening” the path to interfaith dialogue opened out still further for me.

We began to offer Christian-Buddhist retreats on “meditation and mindfulness” with Buddhist nuns and/or monks teaching with me in the setting of our monastery (Turvey Abbey). I was also invited to give two Buddhist-Christian retreats at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery. These occasions have all been means of enlarging my heart, my mind, my experience of God. Growing and deepening friendships with the Buddhist nuns who taught with me have also contributed. We are all on the path to enlightenment. It surely cannot be an accident or coincidence that the words used in John’s Gospel to describe who Christ is, are also the words in which Buddhists speak of their own journey to Enlightenment: Way, Truth, Light, Life.

One way in which this growing experience of interfaith dialogue has touched me is the realisation that it is a way of allowing many people who have left the Christian churches because of bad experiences there or in their homes to experience the love of God. We meet in that active silence and compassion. My first experience of co-leading a retreat in a Buddhist monastery in the early 1990s showed this to me very clearly. Of the fifty participants, only one was a born Buddhist. Most of the others were former Christians of different denominations. Some addressed quite hostile questions and pain-filled comments to me in the question and answer periods, especially about the Roman Catholic Church. Since there was no priest present on Sunday, I announced that to commemorate the Lord’s Day, I would be holding a small “Agapé” service, explaining what it meant. We would remember Jesus and his death and resurrection, using bread and wine in an informal way. I emphasised that I was not a priest, and this was not the Mass or the formal Eucharist, but rather a simple thanksgiving (eucharist) for Jesus. I prepared an ordinary slice of bread, a glass of wine, and a glass of grape juice for Buddhists. I thought a few Buddhists and Christians might join me. Forty-eight retreatants came, in addition to several members of the Buddhist community. We all sat together, with a low table in the middle. From my place I commented in simple words on the symbolism of bread and wine (many grains, ground fine into one bread; many grapes crushed into one wine; the comparison with our own lives—joys and sorrows making one life). I read the account in 1 Corinthians (using a New Testament offered by one of the Buddhist nuns). We passed the plate of bread and then the cups of wine and grape juice from person to person, waiting respectfully as each one reflected silently on the meaning of the bread and wine in his or her own life. I then suggested that if anyone wanted to, they could go and break off a piece of bread and eat it as a thanksgiving, or offer it for someone they loved, and do the same with the wine or juice. While this was happening (almost everyone took part) we played a Taizé chant (Nada te turbe, “Let nothing disturb you,” the prayer of Saint Teresa of Avila). The silence was intense and completely reverent, only broken by the small sounds of some people weeping quietly. We ended in silence, and people got up to leave when they were ready.

Afterwards one participant who was a practising Roman Catholic came to me and commented: “That is what the

Eucharist is meant to be like”. Another said how moving it was to offer the bread and wine to the next person, and for them to receive it. One or two others said it had brought them a sense of healing and they felt they might perhaps go back to their parish church. I do not know of any long-term effects of it –except on myself. It was one of the most moving and Christocentric experiences of my life.

The enlarging of the heart for me has been mainly through Buddhism, although it began through meeting

Muslims. I now look forward to growing in this area, as God allows me to encounter people of other faiths at a deeper level, and to meet Him in their experiences of listening to His Word spoken in their lives. For “the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must (all) give account” (Hebrews 4:11-14, NKJV).

– Sr. Lucy Brydon is a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Turvey Abbey, UK. –

