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*We ask  
the risen Jesus,  
who turns death  
into life,  
to change hatred  
to love,  
vengeance  
into forgiveness,  
war  
into peace.*

Pope Francis,  
*Urbi et Orbi* Message  
March 31, 2013

# AIM NEWS

*"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace..."*

## New Director Named



Sister Theresa Zoky, OSB, left, newly named executive director of the AIM USA Secretariat and Sister Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, outgoing director. (Photo by Therese Glass, OSB)

*"Where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy..."*

## LENTEN APPEAL 2014

### AFRICA

**Benedictine Sisters in Uganda**

–funds for their candle shop project

**Benedictine and Cistercian Sisters and Monks  
in Madagascar**

–funds to participate in a collaborative inter-monastery  
formation program

### ASIA

**Benedictine Monks in India**

–funds to drill a bore well for new water supply

**Trappistine Sisters in China**

–funds for two Sisters to study in the Philippines

### LATIN AMERICA

**Benedictine Sisters in Uruguay**

–funds to provide a vehicle to transport their elderly  
sisters to medical appointments

## AIM USA Welcomes New Board Member

We are happy to welcome Father Dominic Tran Thiet Hung, O Cist, to the AIM USA Board. Fr. Dominic graciously accepted membership as Abbot Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO (Vina, CA) completed his term.

Fr. Dominic, prior of Our Lady of Son Sacramento community, was born in Vietnam. In 1997 his abbot sent him to Paris to study for a degree in theology and spirituality. While there he attended the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Cistercians in Citeaux, France, and met Abbot Thomas Davis of the Cistercian Abbey



Fr. Dominic

of New Clairvaux, Vina, CA. After visiting New Clairvaux, Fr. Dominic came to the realization that the Vietnamese people who had settled in the US “needed a place to fill up with the presence of God, just as they did in our monastery in Vietnam.” Thus was born the adjunct community of Our Lady of Son Sacramento. Now nine monks live in a cloistered, contemplative community in Walnut Grove, CA where they help provide the presence of God. Fr. Dominic’s education and experience will bring new insights to AIM USA.

*"...for it is in giving  
that we receive..."*

AIM USA is grateful for all those who support us in our efforts to respond to the needs of monasteries throughout the world. Every gift is a blessing and important to us — no matter how large or small — and we in turn hold you in prayer.

Please remember AIM USA in your will.

*Thank you*

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

*"...where there is doubt, faith..."*

Loving Greetings from Benedict Bhavan, Mandla.

Hope you are fine and everything goes well with you. We Sisters are involved in teaching ministry and thanks a lot for your prayerful wishes and blessings for our ministries. The books that you sent for us arrived in good condition and we are extremely happy to receive them. They are suitable for our community for our spiritual nourishment as well as to give reflections in prayer meetings in the Parish and in families. Language is not too tough. Thank you so much for your zealous and thoughtful action and we do remember and pray for you and all the friends who generously contributed to it.

With loving regards and prayerful wishes,  
Sr. Shiby OSB and Sisters  
Benedict Bhavan  
Mandla, India

We just received a big box filled with new books. We are very sorry that only a few of us understand English. But the books are valuable for us as you say because we don't have a good access to Benedictine spirituality in Japan. We appreciate your kindness. Many blessings on you and AIM USA.

Peace,  
Martha Ueda and the Japanese Benedictines



Clearing a space for the building of a new poultry house at St. Scholastica Benedictine Abbey

We just received a carton full of books from your office. Indeed, we are highly appreciative and very happy for this great assistance you are giving us. The books are very helpful to us and we pray that the good Lord reward you and all those who have made it possible for us to have the books. Once more, we say thank you as we wish you abundant blessings from God our Father.

M. Margaret Mary Ngobidi, OSB  
St. Scholastica Benedictine Abbey  
Nigeria, Africa



Lunch break at Benedict Bhavan, Mandla

Greetings from the sisters at Bangalore, India.

I am happy to inform you that the book, the *American Benedictine Review*, you sent recently has arrived. Thank you very much, we already started to read. It is a great help to all of us for our spiritual reading. We are very grateful to all of you at AIM. Wishing you all a prosperous New Year 2014. Once again our sincere thanks and gratitude.

Yours in Christ,  
Sister Emily  
Our Lady of Light  
Bangalore, S. India

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of our Father Saint Benedict.

I am very grateful with AIM USA; I received a box of 22 books in English about the Bible and Christian Spirituality... These books are going to be very useful for us especially for our monks in formation. This is a great gift for our peace and happiness in the monastic life. I am yours fraternally in Christ,

Hno. Mario Sosa Amay, OSB  
Monasterio de La Encarnación  
Lima, Peru



The Way of the Cross on Good Friday at the Monastery in Lima

This letter is to acknowledge receipt of the materials/books sent to us by AIM USA through you. Many thanks for the donors and we keep them in our prayers. The books arrived sometime last month [October]. Yes, books are very valuable and we are so grateful that our community was included among the beneficiaries. Books are useful to us especially for us in the cloistered life, where we have time to read books from our library. Our incomes are so meager that we seldom buy books for our use.

God reward and bless you. Let us be one in prayer.  
Sister Mechtild, OSB  
Holgado, Philippines

## St. Scholastica Priory ✝ Missionary Benedictine Sisters

### BEGINNINGS

Tension was mounting. The new missionaries redeemed about 50 slaves and welcomed them to make their home at the Pugu mission. Certain Arabs looked on suspiciously; warnings of imminent danger for the new missionaries rumbled like angry drums. The people of the area took to the forests for safety.

On the morning of January 13, 1889, all seemed calm. The monks and the sisters put their trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and continued their Sunday schedule as usual. By midday, however, the peace was shattered with gunfire from insurgent rebels. Br. Petrus

Michl, Br. Benedict Kantweg and Sr. Martha Wansing were shot dead along with two little children, Josef and Andreas, who were stabbed to death. Other missionaries and employees were taken captive.

Other attacks and murders followed in 1905 with the Maji-Maji Uprising. News of the deaths by violence or by malaria and other tropical diseases sharpened the desire of new missionaries to come to Africa and give their life for Christ. The life-giving power of God prevailed and a strong Missionary Benedictine presence eventually developed in Tanzania. Four abbeys were founded and two priories of sisters.

### ST. SCHOLASTICA PRIORY

Because of the limited space of this article, we turn our attention now to one of these missions, St. Scholastica Priory in Peramiho. Today the sisters in the priory number 53. However, there is a shift from a predominance of European sisters to a majority of the sisters coming from Tanzania.

Monastic life is well established.

How delighted we are to have Divine Office books in Kiswahili with adapted Gregorian Chant.

Education of our own members to carry on our life and major responsibilities in our ministries remains

a big challenge in the community. We are so grateful that AIM USA has made a significant impact on the availability of quality spiritual resources for our library.

Widespread corruption has crippled the development of Tanzania. Proper health care and education continue to be crying needs. The impact of HIV-AIDS and death by malaria continue



Orphan children at mealtime

to plague the people. The responsibility for orphaned children is dismissed by the government and left to the charity of non-government organizations and extended families. We are grateful that, with the help of our generous benefactors, we are able to serve the people to the best of our ability.

- We care for approximately 100 orphans in three centers.

- Our sisters educate 310 girls in our secondary boarding school

- We teach in St. Joseph Hospital Nursing School and work in the hospital

- The sisters teach young women in two Vocational Training Centers

- Our St. Anna's Health Center meets the physical needs of the people in rural village of Uwemba and surrounding villages.

- We operate a hostel for girls attending a local government school

- We opened a Montessori kindergarten for 150 children

- The community continues resident care to 40 elderly lepers and extended care to lepers in another leper village

- The sisters are involved in pastoral outreach in the local parishes, participation in Small Christian Communities.



Leper doing shoe repair



Peramiho sisters during the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the destruction of the Pugu Mission

There is much that can be said. But for now, perhaps it is best to conclude with the passage from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 3:20-21, "To him whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine—to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end. Amen."

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

## St. Joseph Abbey ✝

In December, 1889, at the invitation of Archbishop Francis Janssens who requested monks to establish a seminary for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Father Luke Greuwe and three Brothers from Saint Meinrad Abbey in Indiana, settled on a tract of land near Ponchatoula, Louisiana which they named Gessen. Thus began Saint Joseph Abbey, now celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an abiding spiritual presence in the New Orleans area. However, because of conditions there conducive to malaria, the monks decided that their venture could only succeed with a new beginning in another place. They bought property near Covington, Louisiana in 1901, and built their monastery there. In 1903, the foundation was granted independence, with Prior Paul Schaeuble appointed the first Abbot.

When Father James H. Blenk succeeded Archbishop Louis Chapelle, a Frenchman who had withdrawn his support of this German-run seminary, the seminary again gained official archdiocesan recognition. But the community's peace was short-lived. In the early hours of November 7, 1907, a fire broke out which consumed the entire plant and left one frater dead.

The community decided to remain in Louisiana and with financial help from outside sources, among them Andrew Carnegie, who donated steel, they rebuilt the three-story edifice which still houses the monastery. In 1909, the seminary, housed temporarily in New Orleans, was able to return.

The community holds a long and illustrious career in missionary work in the area. From the beginning, the monks have been involved in founding parishes, building churches and schools and caring for the spiritual needs of people in the north lake area, which in the early days demanded much sacrifice in time and travel, remote as much of the area still was.

The present abbey church was dedicated in January, 1932, and Columban Thusis of Saint Meinrad's Abbey became abbot. During his term, Abbot Columban initiated an enhancement of the church and monastic refectory, commissioning Fr. Gregory DeWit, a Dutch monk, to execute a series of original murals and paintings which still draw praise from critics and visitors. Combined with this was



*Christ at the Last Judgment* by Fr. Gregory DeWit over the doors at the western end of the church

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



First Monastery at Gessen

greater emphasis on improving the recitation of the office and the celebration of the conventual Mass, establishing the abbey's reputation for its musical and liturgical appreciation.



Good Friday in the Abbey church

reputation for its musical and liturgical appreciation.

In 1958, three monks left to establish a monastery in Esquipulas, Guatemala. This foundation became independent and was raised to the rank of abbey in 1982. It continues its care of the shrine of El Cristo Negro, its thousands of pilgrims, and the people in the area.

By 1960, the present seminary campus was dedicated, and, in cooperation with the Knights of Columbus, a youth camp was built, serving the youth of the archdiocese until 2009. A

small retreat program begun in the 1950's evolved into a full time ministry with the opening of the Christian Life Center in 1965, offering retreats by the monks and providing facilities for clergy and lay groups.

The monks began a program, "Pennies for Bread and the Abbey," in 1990, baking and distributing a few thousand loaves of bread each week to charities that feed the needy. They also established Abbey Woodworks, making simple caskets for sale, and expanded the Abbey Gift Shop, now the area's prominent religious article store.



Bread baking in the Abbey bakery



## INSIGHTS from our “present Francis”

“**TO LOVE GOD** and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: it means seeing in every person the face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, in the face of Jesus.”

**Pope Francis, Address during Visit at the Homeless Shelter “Dona Di Maria,” 5/21/13**

*“God always has patience.”*

“**WHEN WE ARE GENEROUS** in welcoming people and sharing something with them—some food, a place in our homes, our time—not only do we no longer remain poor: we are enriched, I am well aware that when someone needing food knocks at your door, you always find a way of sharing food, as the proverb says, one can always ‘add more water to the beans’! Is it possible to add more water to the beans?...Always?...And you do so with love, demonstrating that true riches consist not in material things, but in the heart!”

**Pope Francis, Address during Visit to the Community at Varginha, 7/25/13**

“**WE MUST RESTORE HOPE** to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.”

“**AMONG OUR TASKS** as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor.”

**Pope Francis, Address to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 6/14/13**



*“Life is a journey.  
When we stop,  
things don’t go right.”*

“**FROM MY POINT OF VIEW,** God is the light that illuminates the darkness, even if it does not dissolve it, and a spark of divine light is within each of us.”



*“...true riches consist not  
in material things,  
but in the heart!”*

*“A little bit of mercy  
makes the world  
less cold and more just.”*

“**INSTEAD OF BEING JUST A CHURCH** that welcomes and receives by keeping the doors open, let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself and go to those who do not attend Mass, to those who have quit or are indifferent.”



“**EACH OF US HAS A VISION** of good and evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is good...Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.”

## In Adoration of the FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT, July 11<sup>th</sup> from a Franciscan

*On this his feast day, let us take heed  
and bend our ear to the heart of  
Christ as St. Benedict prescribes.*

### From the Prologue of Saint Benedict's Rule:

“Let us then rise at length, since the Scripture arouseth us, saying: *It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep* (Rom 13:11); and having opened our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with awestruck ears what the divine voice, crying out daily, doth admonish us, saying: *Today, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* (Ps 94 [95]:8) And again: *He that hath ears to hear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.* (Rev 2:7) And what doth He say?—*Come, children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord* (Ps 33[34]:12). *Run whilst you have the light of life, that the darkness of death overtake you not.* (Jn 12:35)



St. Benedict

Franciscans have a deep love and appreciation for Benedict. After Francis' conversion and rebuilding of the little church at San Damiano he went on to the little church of St. Mary of the Angels at the Portiuncula that belonged to Benedictine monks of Subiaco. As Francis began to develop a following of brothers they needed a place to stay and worship. Soon the abbot of the Benedictine monastery gave them in perpetuity their beloved Portiuncula chapel and the ground on which it stood. Francis would accept only the use of the property. The spirit of holy poverty must govern their order, if they were to be disciples of Him who had nowhere to lay His head. In token of this arrangement, the friars sent to the Benedictines every year as rent a basket of fish caught in a neighboring river. In return the monks gave the friars a barrel of oil. This annual exchange of gifts still goes on between the Benedictines of St. Peter's in Assisi and the Franciscans of the Portiuncula. On the ground around the chapel the friars quickly built themselves some huts of wood and clay, enclosing them by a hedge. This was the first Franciscan monastery.

This portrait of St. Francis is located in Subiaco, Italy, in a Benedictine Monastery called "Sacro Speco". It is believed to be the true portrait of St. Francis, painted when he was still alive, because of the inscription, which is: Fr. Francesco (not St. Francis), and because there is no halo around St. Francis's head. Also, St. Francis does not have the stigmata, so the date of this painting should be before 1224, when he received this precious gift. The Sacro Speco is a shrine, built in the site of the hermitage of St. Benedict, who spent three years in a cave in solitude, on the mountains of Umbria. It is built into the side of a spectacular cliff, and comprises two churches, the upper and the lower one, richly ornate by frescoes. The portrait of St. Francis stands in a lateral room named St. Gregory Chapel.

**Posted by Father David Nybakke, osf on his blogspot "The Four Mass'keteers"**




Benedictine medals above arches on a Franciscan monastery in Assisi (Photo by Theresa Zoky, OSB)



Saint Francis (Fr. Francesco) of Assisi (1182-1226) —fresco at Sacro Speco.



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## Single Point of Light

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

Blessings during this Easter Season! Isn't the Feast of the Resurrection just a grand feast? New life is all around and always welcome. Aren't we blessed with so many Resurrections, great and small in our lives!

In this newsletter, we bring together St. Benedict and St. Francis and some thoughts and actions from Pope Francis. What do these men have in common? Both Saints brought new life to the faithful who followed them. Each attracted followers who saw and met the needs of their times, challenging the societies in which they lived, bringing to life what the Church needed then. What lessons can be learned by heeding their messages today?

Recall that St. Benedict laid out a new way of bringing life to a society in ruin. Benedict attracted strangers who chose to live together. They formed communities who agreed to live lives of simplicity, mutual respect, acceptance of all members, whether they came from the aristocracy or the poor. Together they praised God and shared God's love and peace with the world.

Our "new" Pope Francis, (though he has been in office over a year now) continues to show signs of bringing new life to the Church. There are many examples, both in word and in action, that we find in the News of his passion for

simplicity and his compassion for the poor. True to the spirit of St. Francis who set out to "rebuild" the church, who recognized the plight of the poor, who saw a need to become poor in order that dignity for all be recognized, Pope Francis, by his actions and statements, calls us to follow his lead.

Following the examples of these saints and of Pope Francis, may we see the needs of our times and respond accordingly.

May the gifts that St. Benedict and St. Francis shared with us and the thoughts and actions of present-day Pope Francis be life-giving and challenging to you, to us as Church, and to our world.

May we take these gifts to heart and revel in all our Resurrections each day!

*Blessings during this Easter Season!*

*Theresa Zoky, OSB*

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