



CIB Handbook

4th edition

*Communio Internationalis
Benedictinarum*

CIB LOGO

The design elements are set within and extend from a central, large circle which symbolises God without beginning or end who encompasses and gives life to all that exists. As Benedictines the life-long seeking of God is the core of our lives. The circular design element is also symbolic of the planet Earth of which we Benedictines are an integral part.

Flowing through the circle are two curved lines forming a flame and/or rising incense symbolic of the centrality of prayer in our lives and also symbolic of the Spirit within. Our prayer flows out of who we are and forms who we are. The lines also form a path on which there have been important junctures throughout our history as Benedictine women. The path is open at the top because our journey as Benedictine women is on-going as we follow the Spirit's call into the unknown future of the next millennium and beyond.

The Benedictine cross is done in circular format, which flows out of the large circle and back into it depicting our dynamic relationship with God and the earth.

One of the curved lines divides the circle into a stylised yin/yang symbolic of both the feminine and the masculine within each person and also the need for balance, harmony and integration within our lives.

Other feminine elements are the use of flowing, curved lines and the open womb-like shape in which the cross is placed.



*(Design: Sr. Mary Kay Panowicz OSB
Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, South Dakota, USA, 1998)*

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WHAT IS THE *COMMUNIO INTERNATIONALIS BENEDICTINARUM* (CIB)?

In November 2001, after a consultation process with all monasteries of Benedictine Women around the world, it was decided to use the name *COMMUNIO INTERNATIONALIS BENEDICTINARUM* (CIB) to designate all communities of Benedictine women recognised by the Abbot Primate as such and enlisted in the *Catalogus Monasteriorum OSB*. This was the culmination of a development since the Second Vatican Council as well as the beginning of a new era for Benedictine Women.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CIB

- THE BENEDICTINE CONFEDERATION

Between 1886 and 1893, Pope Leo XIII took steps towards the setting up of the Benedictine Confederation, the structure for networking between the congregations of Benedictine men existing at that time, with the Abbot Primate as a unifying figure at the head of the community at Sant'Anselmo in Rome. The purpose of the Confederation was to create and consolidate international contact between the Benedictine monasteries of men with a view to furthering the common tradition of western monasticism and to prepare the monks through serious study for their service in the Church in the 20th century. There was no parallel foundation for Benedictine women. Gradually women's monasteries and congregations were admitted by association into the Benedictine Confederation, but without full membership. Their status in the Confederation gave them no opportunity to support each other through regular meetings and international contact.

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS NETWORKING BETWEEN BENEDICTINE WOMEN

- AFTER VATICAN II (1968 - 1988)

In Paragraph 23 of the Decree "*Perfectae Caritatis*", that Council document concerning the renewal of religious life, conferences and councils of major superiors are expressly encouraged as a means of bringing small communities out of isolation and of sharing potential. Since 1893, the Abbots' Congress had been such a conference of major superiors including all the monasteries of Benedictine men. From around 1965 on, it was becoming clear that something must be done to create a similar possibility for Benedictine Women.

TIMELINE

1968

The Synod of Abbot Presidents under Abbot Primate Rembert Weakland voted "that the Abbot Primate should form a Commission for nuns and sisters and that this commission should be divided into two sections, one for nuns and one for sisters, but both under the same secretary. It was also decided that these two consultative bodies should be formed from an equal number of men and women." (Circular letter of the Abbot Primate to Benedictine women dated October 28, 1968.) These two Commissions met separately with the Abbot Primate a number of times during the next few years.

1972

At the Synod of Presidents it was decided to invite the Commission of Nuns and several Prioresses General of the Benedictine Sisters to the Congress of Abbots as observers.

1980

The Confederation organised a Centenary Symposium to celebrate the 1500 anniversary of the birth of St. Benedict. As representatives of the women 55 abbesses/prioresses were invited. This was the first time that Benedictine Abbesses and Prioresses, *Moniales* and *Sorores*, from different traditions and different parts of the world met together in Rome - as yet only as guests of the Abbots' Congress.

1984

The two commissions met for the first time together to discuss possibilities of a joint meeting of nuns and sisters.

1987

The Benedictine Sisters invited 16 nuns to join 40 sisters at an assembly on the theme: "Implications of the Benedictine Rule for the life of Benedictine Women," in Casa Santo Spirito, the Generalate of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in Rome in October. This first Symposium organised by the sisters broke new ground for co-operation between nuns and sisters.

There is a very great variety of Benedictine women's communities, not just in terms of cultural differences. In addition - as a consequence of historical and canonical factors - their way of life developed in different directions each with a different emphasis, becoming communities of either nuns or sisters. There is no central government for them all. They are each autonomous.

However, as the network around our globe has become increasingly closer spun, Benedictine women have come to realise that it was necessary to find new ways of working together. A process ensued, thanks to the courage and confidence of many individual women. Each of them, supported by the Abbot Primate of their time, knew that, if we are willing to accept the challenge as well as the enrichment inherent in a true meeting with each other, the Kingdom of God would indeed win ground amongst us. This was the road that the Benedictine women 1987 chose.

1988

The two Commissions under Abbot Primate Victor Dammertz merged. Membership was to be delegated to women representing 18 regions (later 19 regions) throughout the world, as well a Prioress General of an international congregation with its Motherhouse in Rome and a representative of the organisation AIM. An Executive Committee was to organise a next joint Symposium. The Executive Committee drafted the first statutes of the Commission with the help of Abbot Primate Viktor.

1993

The 2nd international Symposium took place from September 14 - 23, for the first time a meeting of women in Sant'Anselmo/Rome. The theme was monastic profession inculturated. Each of the papers given, covering the monastic vows and the evangelical councils, were accompanied by two responses: e.g. the paper on poverty, given by a sister from Brazil, was accompanied by two responses, one from Germany and one from South Africa, and the paper on obedience by a German was accompanied by responses from USA and Korea. Through this way of sharing, the perspective became broader, making a deeper understanding possible. God taught us through the reality we experienced. As the American, Joan Chittister OSB, said in a closing word: "Nothing of what we do can change the past, but everything we do can change the future." God leads us into the future and together we move forward into that future.

1997

The delegates from the 19 regions were called to Rome to discuss their questions with the Abbot Primate. They made the first steps towards giving their circle a structure and a mandate by approving draft statutes and electing a moderator for four years.

1998

The 120 participants of this 3rd international Symposium from September 5 - 12, came to Rome from 36 different countries from Australia to Vietnam. The theme

this time was "The experience of God and the Benedictine approach to prayer." Both terms: "experience of God" and "prayer" express a deep desire which characterises people of today. The Benedictine approach to the "indescribable land of the experience of God" - that became apparent - is more a road of mundane steps in faith rather than a path into the exceptional. This spiritual tradition puts the emphasis on *Lectio Divina*, Liturgy, alternation of work and prayer, belief in the presence and guidance of God. It is important to put these steps into practise, to live with full awareness and to share one's experiences in whatever way the context allows.

After the Symposium, the delegates from the 19 regions held a meeting at which they decided to meet every year.

1999

The first annual meeting of the delegates from the 19 regions took place outside Rome. The invitation to meet in USA - a step involving an unusually long trip for European sisters and which needed some courage to take up - proved to be an overwhelming experience of generous hospitality in the spirit of St. Benedict in a context of moving liturgies and open sharing. Experiencing at first hand the deep Benedictine spirituality of the American sisters helped to break down many misunderstandings from the past and enhanced respect towards one another.

2000

Colloquium from August 28th - 30th to celebrate the millennium. 50 nuns and sisters met at Sant'Anselmo/Rome and braced the controversial subject of enclosure. Despite the diversity of interpretation and forms of life, the comparatively small group was able to practise sharing and listening to each other. They recognised common values in the differences as well as learning from each other. At this meeting it became clear that, to strengthen the common identity, a name for all Benedictine women was needed.

2001

Annual meeting of the delegates of the 19 regions in Nairobi, Kenya. In the setting of a thriving African community with overflowing novitiate the name for the international network of Benedictine women *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* was born. Remembering the importance of the cultural experience in North America in 1999, a special effort was made to put across some aspects of African culture. For example, the young sisters did a pantomime showing ways of conflict resolution in their tribal tradition, a tradition of listening and mediating, and they shared their culture of song and dance.

2002

The 4th international Symposium took place from September 4 - 11 and was the 1st Symposium organised by the CIB - as the worldwide network was now known. M. Máire Hickey OSB Dinklage, who had been the elected moderator of the group of delegates since 1998, chaired the meeting. Abbot Primate Notker Wolf OSB Rome welcomed not only 80 delegates and a team of 10 organisers and translators, but also for the first time 19 young sisters representing the 19 regions. The theme of the meeting was Chapter 72 of the Rule of St. Benedict: "Good Zeal." Presentations from West Africa, USA, Australia, the Philippines, Germany and England offered matter for reflection and sharing, highlighting characteristics and processes of renewal. In addition, contributions from all 19 regions reflecting areas of dynamic spiritual heritage in each region helped to concretise points being made.

2003

Annual meeting of the "Conference of delegates" in Sydney, Australia, was hosted by the Good Samaritan Sisters. One question on the agenda, how to spread consciousness for the aims of the CIB at grass roots, suddenly found an immediate answer - hosting the Conference was having an immediate effect on the hosts. The Region was profiting. The idea arose to develop this chance of sharing with communities of the different regions when planning future meetings.

2004

The Annual meeting of the Conference of delegates was held in Assisi – city of dialogue. The theme for the conference was reconciliation. Abbess Giacinta Soverino offered a room in the monastery Sant'Giuseppe for use by the CIB as a secretariat.

In Rome on 27 September 2004 the Congress of Abbots approved the updating of the 1985 text of the *Normae de Consociatione cum Confoederatione* (Norms of the *Lex Propia*) to recognise the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB) and its relationship to the Benedictine Confederation. The CIB now officially represents one body of Benedictine women's communities consociated with the Benedictine Confederation (those listed in the *Catalogus Monasteriorum*, OSB, Edition One 2000), whether nuns or sisters.

2005

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place in Warsaw, Poland, at the same time as the annual meeting of all Polish Benedictine women superiors. The host communities made great efforts to share information about themselves

and their historical and cultural situation. The great variety of monasteries, congregations and federations in Poland were documented in a very stimulating way both through an exhibition with texts and photos as well as through a film made by a Benedictine oblate, giving witness of excellent co-operation on the national level. The Polish hosts, delighted by the colourful variety of Benedictine women from all continents, called this a "Pentecost experience", and for the Delegates, many of whom experienced Eastern Europe for the first time, a new understanding emerged.

2006

The 5th international Symposium of the CIB took place at Sant'Anselmo in Rome September 7-14 under the theme: Wisdom leadership: *"...so that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak have nothing to run from..."* (RB 64,19). The meetings in Australia (2003) and Poland (2005) led to gifted people being invited from these Regions to contribute to the Symposium through their musical, liturgical and facilitating abilities. Cross-cultural sharing took more space and efforts were made to encourage a prayerful atmosphere along with an exchange of personal experiences. The 100 participants - including 19 newly professed, one from each Region - made a pilgrimage to Norcia and renewed their monastic profession in the church of St. Scholastica, a site remembered as the country house of Ss. Benedict and Scholastica's family.

CIB Conference Meeting: Abbess Máire Hickey of Dinklage, Germany announced that she would no longer be available for the office of Moderator. She was greatly thanked for her nine years of leadership and for her work in establishing the CIB during her term. During the annual meeting of the CIB Conference after the Symposium, Sister Judith Ann Heble of Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, USA, was elected Moderator.

2007

After the CIB Administrative Council meeting in January, a new instrument of communication was introduced - the CIB News Bulletin, giving an update of the latest information to all Delegates to be distributed as needed in the Regions.

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place September 5-7 in Tagaytay, a Conference centre of the Tutzing Missionary Benedictines not far from Manila, Philippines. M. Angela Leviste gave a comprehensive talk on the profile of Benedictines in the Region and M. Mary John Mananzan spoke on the profile of the Church in the Philippines. These talks were supplemented by an excellently prepared program of visits in the area that demonstrated the gap between rich and

poor and the corresponding challenges to the Benedictine women as well as to the Philippine Church with its diverse history, from the Spanish colonisation in the 16th century to the American and Japanese occupation in World War II and the peaceful revolution against the dictator Marco at the end of the 20th century. In this context the delegates worked on the question: "What word to the world do we Benedictines have to give in our time?" Resulting from this, the theme for the next Symposium was formulated: "Benedictine Women - Witnesses of Hope."

2008

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place in September in Rome immediately preceding the Abbots' Congress in Sant'Anselmo, to which the delegates were invited. All 24 members of the Conference were able to be present. The meeting took place at Sant'Antonio, the home of the Camaldoli Benedictine Sisters on the Aventine, who also offered to house the CIB secretariat, which is invaluable to have present in Rome. To be hosted by Benedictine women in Rome was a new and valuable experience. The host community gave a profile of the Camaldoli Benedictines and there was sharing on the different expression of the Benedictine charisma and the ways we can support each other's hope for the future.

2009

The CIB Administrative Council met in January in Roriz, Portugal where they did planning for the 2010 Symposium, continued work on the revision of the CIB Statutes, and reviewed work on the CIB website and recently proposed CIB Electronic Reference Library (CERL). A member of the Roriz community gave an overview of the history of Benedictine life in Portugal. Despite the government's banishing and dispersing all religious orders twice in the past two centuries, the Benedictines have continued to return to the country and grow. The Council also visited the community of Benedictine nuns in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place September 4-9 in Zadar, Croatia hosted by the community of M. Anastazija Čizmin and the other Benedictine monasteries of Region 8. Presentations were given by Prior Jozo Milanović from Čokovac and Sister Benedicta Halilović from Pag, Croatia on the profile of the Church and Benedictine life in Croatia. The attendees found the Croatian Benedictines and people to be real models of hope. They have endured two wars in the past 70 years, along with the Communist regime, and have emerged to rebuild their monasteries and become their own nation. During the Conference the delegates reviewed and gave final approval of the proposed revisions to the CIB Statutes. The new Statutes were then ratified by Abbot Primate Notker Wolf.

2010

From one symposium to the next, the bond that has been created among the participants from around the world is becoming quite noticeable, and even more so during the Sixth International Symposium entitled, “Benedictine Women: Witnesses of Hope,” September 8-15, 2010, at Sant’Anselmo in Rome. The Taizé antiphon, *Bonum est confidere in Domino, bonum sperare in Dominum*, summed up the symposium experience. All of the pieces of the symposium were carefully fitted together in one united reflection on and plea for HOPE. The presenters were full of passion and hope for the future of Benedictine life. Newer members from each Region were also present at this symposium. The rich diversity of the one hundred participants from all parts of the world could be seen and heard as they engaged one another in examining the meaning of hope for monastic life today and tomorrow. All could resonate with St. Benedict’s desire for *communio*, “... and may he bring us *all together* to everlasting life.” (RB 72:12)

At the meeting of the CIB Conference on September 16, 2010, Sister Judith Ann Heble was re-elected as Moderator of the CIB for another four-year term.

2011

Responding to the invitation of Region 17, the annual meetings of the CIB were held in West Africa. The Administrative Council met in Burkina Faso and the CIB Conference was hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Dzobégan, Sadori (Togo) and Toffo (Benin). Several prioresses of West Africa (Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Cameroon) joined the Conference and gave a presentation on how the communities of West Africa live solidarity, authenticity and respect, the three goals of the CIB. The Delegates had the opportunity to experience the culture and life of the country. Long hours of travel were an opportunity to forge ties among the CIB Delegates. Noticeable was the youthful vitality of the communities and the beauty of the liturgies to the rhythm of the kora.

2012

The CIB Administrative Council held its meeting from January 10-17 at Benedictines De Notre Dame Du Calvaire at Mont des Oliviers, Jerusalem, Israel. The Council had the opportunity to make pilgrimages in and around Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Abu Gosh and Nazareth which deepened understanding of the roots and beginnings of Christianity. The visits to the Benedictine monasteries of women in these places provided insights into the complexity of the present Israeli-Palestinian situation and how this affects the lives of these monastic women.

The CIB Conference held its September 12-14, 2012 meeting in the mountains of Valledacqua, Italy. The frustrations of travel from very diverse countries quickly

evaporated as the Delegates settled into what was a truly magnificent location. Our 'home' for the duration of the meeting, Hotel Ristorante Monastero, was set in beautiful surroundings. The nuns of the small Camoldolese community of San Benedetto with assistance from those of Sant'Antonio in Rome made it possible for the liturgies to be beautifully celebrated in their lovely church. The serenity experienced was most appropriate for the annual meeting and aided in the discussions on the theme of "listening" in preparation for the 2014 Symposium. On September 15th, on the way to Rome, the CIB Delegates stopped for Mass and pranzo hosted by the community at Monastero di San Marco in Offida, Italy.

From September 17-25, 2012, the CIB Delegates were invited by the Abbot Primate to participate in the Abbots' Congress held at Sant'Anselmo in Rome. In addition to a number of business reports and smaller group sessions on a variety of topics, two keynote addresses were given: "Benedictines Between Continuity and Change", by Dr. Michael Hochschild and "Autonomy", by Rev. Michael Casey, OCSO. Abbot Primate Notker Wolf was re-elected to another four year term as Abbot Primate.

2013

The CIB Administrative Council held its meeting at Turvey Abbey in Bedford, England, January 16-18, 2013. Some of the Council members also visited the Benedictine Sisters at Tyburn in London and the Cathedral and Abbey Church of Saint Alban. During the week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Council visited Mucknell Abbey in Worcestershire, an Anglican Benedictine Monastery of monks and sisters. The Council also visited St. Benedict's Generalate, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Grace and Compassion in Brighton.

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place September 4-16, 2013, hosted by Region 11, Brazil. In addition to the regular meetings, the CIB Delegates had the opportunity to visit a number of monasteries of both women and men in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife and Olinda. On September 5th, approximately twenty abbesses and prioresses from Brazil joined the CIB Delegates at Santa Maria Abbey, São Paulo for Eucharist, dinner, and a presentation on the social situation of Brazil. While meeting together, the participants also had the opportunity to do shared *lecto* and to spend time introducing their communities to one other, using pictures each one brought. Among many cultural experiences, the visit to the national Marian shrine in Rio de Janeiro – Our Lady of Aparecida, patroness of Brazil – can be highlighted, with the tour given by the principle artist of the shrine, Claudio Pastro.

2014

From September 10-17, 2014, the Seventh International Symposium for Benedictine women was held at Sant'Anselmo in Rome. One hundred eleven (111) participants from the 19 regions, made a grand entrance to the symposium hall while singing "Obsculta, Obsculta me inclina aurem cordis tui". The theme of the Symposium was "Listen...with the ear of your heart" as found in the Scriptures, in the Rule of St. Benedict and in the signs of the times. The participants were truly engaged and experienced the joy of listening...with the ear of the heart. This was manifested in the lively discussions and participation in various activities.

Sister Scholastika Häring, Abbey of St. Scholastica, Dinklage, Germany, gave a presentation on the development of the CIB and the implications of Canon Law. This work she has been doing for her dissertation for a Canon Law degree. It will be a most valuable resource for many years to come.

There were a number of concerns expressed by the Benedictine *moniales* and *sorores* regarding the April 29, 2014, letter and questionnaire that some communities of *moniales* had received from the Vatican regarding enclosure. The participants at the Symposium took the time to deal with the issues inherent in the subject and what would be the most effective way Benedictine women should respond to the questionnaire while respecting the different expressions of enclosure. Three *moniales* and one from the *sorores* went to the Vatican and met with a representative of the Sacred Congregation to express their concerns and to offer the necessary clarifications regarding Benedictine enclosure as distinct from that lived by members of other contemplative Orders.

On September 18, 2014, the CIB Conference unanimously agreed to send a statement on behalf of the CIB to the Congregation outlining the clarifications of who we are as Benedictine women, both *moniales* and *sorores* and recommending that the Congregation consider sponsoring some type of forum so that all of the major orders could provide input on and clarification of their respective charisms before legislation is updated and put into effect for all. The Abbot Primate gave his approval to the statement.

After the Symposium, the Conference of the CIB re-elected Sister Judith Ann Heble as Moderator for the next four years.

2015

The Administrative Council met from January 8th to 10th at Monastère Notre-Dame D'Hurtebise in Belgium, enjoying the hospitality of the community. One of the main topics discussed during these days was the planning of the CIB

Conference in France, September 2015. A meeting with a group of lay partners of the hosting community was an encouragement for all. The members of the CIB Administrative Council used the occasion to make a visit to the nearby Abbaye Paix Notre-Dame in Liège, praying together Vespers and sharing experiences as Benedictine women today.

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place September 2015, hosted by Region 3, France. We had many opportunities for exchange with one another and praying together. The community of Jouarre hosted the Administrative Council and the CIB Conference. The Conference Delegates visited different communities: Solesmes, Le Bec Hellouin, Poitiers, Ligugé, Vanves, Bouzy-la-Forêt and Fleury. Several abbesses and prioresses of France came to meet the Delegates. Presentations were given about the church in France, the specificity of monasticism in France, the connection between monasteries in France and monasteries all over the world, and the work of AIM.

The Administrative Council arranged for Abbot Richard Yeo to meet with them regarding the follow-up to the Symposium question, as to whether or not the CIB should pursue becoming a canonical entity. Sister Scholastika Häring and Sister Lynn McKenzie, both canonists, were present for this session and gave a report of this meeting to the CIB Conference. Simply stated, Abbot Richard advised us to wait. This raised another issue in which both Abbot Primate Notker Wolf and Abbot Richard urged us to communicate to our regions the importance of communities to begin planning to form congregations.

2016

The Administrative Council of the CIB held its meeting at Monestir de Sant Benet, Montserrat, Spain, January 20-22, 2016. Meeting in Spain enabled us to be in touch with the issues and struggles of our Benedictine family there. The Council had occasion to meet with some of the local Abbesses as they seek ways to come together and form Congregations. A visit to the neighboring Abbey of Santa Maria de Montserrat for Vespers was enlivened with the singing of the *Salve Regina* by their excellent boys' choir with the monks.

The Council finalized the proposed qualities of the next Abbot Primate, the challenges facing him and ways that we will support him from the point of view of Benedictine Women. This was put forward to us by the Preparatory Committee of the Abbots' Congress. This was a step forward towards Benedictine men collaborating with Benedictine women. The Council also took the time to develop some of the plans for the 2018 Symposium. The Administrative Council felt that it was timely to prepare an evaluative questionnaire to be sent to all the Delegates

recalling the purpose of the CIB: “to promote mutual support and exchange of ideas and experience among Benedictine Women on an international level and to foster the development of women’s monasticism.” (CIB Handbook, IB1)

From September 1-5, 2016, the CIB Conference held its annual meeting at SanGiuseppe Monastery in Assisi, Italy and enjoyed the hospitality of the community there. Having arrived just a few weeks after the 2016 earthquake that hit Central Italy, it was urgent for the Delegates to determine a way to stay in prayerful solidarity with those Benedictine communities affected by the earthquake. Some regions have also used the CIB account to transfer financial contributions for those eight monasteries affected by the earthquake.

Vultum Dei Quarere, the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Francis on Women’s Contemplative Life was promulgated on June 29, 2016 and published on July 22, 2016, the newly established Feast of St. Mary Magdalene. Since the content was very much in the minds of the Delegates, the CIB Conference devoted time discussing the implications of this Apostolic Constitution. Sister Scholastika Häring of Dinklage, Germany and Sister Lynn McKenzie of the USA, both canonists, spent time with the CIB Conference discussing questions and concerns for both *moniales* and *sorores* that the document seemed to pose. On September 8, 2016, Sisters Scholastika and Lynn met with Rev. Hank Lemoncelli, OMI, of the Vatican Congregation for the Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to apprise him of some of the issues the CIB raised regarding the document.

On September 2, 2016, a number of Italian abbesses, prioresses and presidents met with the CIB Delegates and together did shared *lectio* and heard the challenges they each face as monastic communities in their Regions. The Delegates also had occasion to visit the nuns and share wonderful meals at both Monastero delle Benedettine di S. Anna in Bastia Umbra and those at Monastero S. Maria delle Grazie in Orte, Italy.

September 6-16, 2016, was the occasion of the Congress of Abbots held at Sant’Anselmo in Rome. The hospitality the women received from the Abbots at this particular Congress was greatly appreciated. Three of the women were asked to give presentations for breakout sessions during the Congress. A notable event was the meeting of the CIB Delegates with the Synod of Presidents on September 10, 2016. Hopefully a follow-up plan for future collaboration will be developed.

On September 8, 2016, the Abbots and the CIB Delegates had the privilege of a private audience with Pope Francis. Quoting extensively from *Vultum Dei*

Quarere, Pope Francis said that, though he offers this Apostolic Constitution to nuns, it is by extension to all monks. He urged all of us to live as people of mercy in our communities as we proclaim evangelical fraternity from all of our monasteries. The Holy Father greeting each person personally.

On September 10, 2016, Abbot Gregory J. Polan of Conception Abbey, Conception, MO, USA, was elected the next Abbot Primate.

2017

The CIB Administrative Council held its meeting January 11-13, 2017 at Kauno Seserų Benediktinių Vienuolynas in Kaunas, Lithuania. The CIB has had a long acquaintance with M. Juozapa Strakšytė. She has attended the last three symposia with Sister Celina Galinytė. Their interest in and support of the CIB over the years has led them and the Ukraine to join Region 7 – Poland. The Administrative Council had occasion to meet with the Prioress and her Council to discuss a number of questions and challenges. The CIB Administrative Council also met with the community and shared information on the CIB along with a PowerPoint on each of our communities. The generous hospitality of the community in Kaunas included taking the CIB Administrative Council on a small pilgrimage to Vilnius where we visited an Orthodox Church dedicated to the first martyrs. We were privileged to attend Mass at the Shrine of Divine Mercy which has the original image of Divine Mercy painted according to the vision of St. Faustina Kowalska. The Council then enjoyed dinner with the small community at Šv. Kotrynos Abatiją in Vilnius.

On January 13th, the Administrative Council had occasion to meet with Abbot President Christian Meyer, from Engelberg Abbey in Switzerland to follow-up on the topic of collaboration between the Synod of Presidents and the CIB. This was initiated during the Congress of Abbots in September, 2016. The Permanent Commission of the Synod of Presidents offered to invite the Moderator of the CIB to the sessions of the Synod as well as to invite local Abbots, Abbesses, Priors and Prioresses who live in the region where the Synod is being held to attend a half-day session of the Synod. They were asked to give a presentation of Benedictine life in the region. The first of these collaborative sessions will take place in September, 2017 at St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana, USA.

On January 14th, we had occasion to celebrate Mass with the monks of the Solesmes Congregation at Svento Benedikto Vienuolynas in Palendriai, Lithuania. We were able to share with them some thoughts about the CIB as well as some photos of our respective communities. On our return back to Kaunas, we made a pilgrimage to the Hill of Crosses in northern Lithuania. Over the years, the place

has come to signify the peaceful endurance of Lithuanian Catholicism despite the threats it has faced throughout history. After that special experience, we were welcomed by the Franciscans in a nearby monastery for a brief tour and refreshments.

The annual meeting of the CIB Conference took place from 8-19 September 2017 in South Korea. After two years of preparation for this visit and despite the very tense political situation at the time, the Delegates made the effort to encounter our Korean sisters with courage and love. The Tutzing Missionary Benedictine communities of St. Benedict Priory in Daegu and St. Gertrude Priory in Seoul as well as the Congregation of Olivetan Benedictine Sisters in Busan showed their gratitude and joy through an inexpressible hospitality. On several but well balanced trips we had the chance to visit different houses of our Benedictine sisters and brothers throughout the beautiful country. We heard talks about the beginnings of the Korean Catholic Church and their martyrs - their faith is still alive in the midst of the people – and about the history of the Benedictine Order in Korea. We were deeply touched by it all.

Besides visiting the Benedictines in the country we had four working days.

There were many different topics to be discussed, for instance: the integration of Lithuania and Ukraine into Region 7 (Poland); the preparation of the next Symposium in 2018; updating on the topic of collaboration with the Benedictine monks, together with suggestions put forward by Abbot Primate and the Synod of Presidents; and finally we listened carefully to every Delegate about significant developments in each Region. We heard about much suffering caused by the political situation in several countries as well as about the difficulties of aging and fragile communities around the world. At the same time we also shared joyful experiences of a living faith. On our departure it was good to have confidence that God would bring us together again in Rome, 2018.

STATUTES

Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum

September 4, 2009

PREAMBLE

I. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CIB

- A. The Nature of the CIB
- B. The Purpose of the CIB
- C. The Means by which the CIB Achieves Its Purpose

II. THE STRUCTURES OF THE CIB

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PREAMBLE

The one common charism, embraced by those who have lived according to the Rule of St. Benedict for 15 centuries, has been implanted and inculcated in all parts of the world to this day. This revered and ancient tradition continues to flourish and be a source of vitality in the church.

The *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* respects and fosters the unique and faithful expression of this charism in each of its monasteries.

I. THE NATURE AND THE PURPOSE OF THE CIB

A. The Nature of the CIB

The *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB), respecting the autonomy of each monastery, congregation and federation, brings together in a sisterly bond all women's communities consociated with the Benedictine Confederation, and functions under the aegis of the *Ius Proprium* of the Confederation.¹

B. The Purpose of the CIB

The purpose of the CIB is:

1. To promote mutual support and exchange of ideas and experience among Benedictine women on an international level and to foster the development of monasticism for women.
2. To continue to develop the *consociatio*² between the women's communities and the Benedictine Confederation.
3. To bring significant concerns of Benedictine women to the attention of the Confederation, the Synod of Presidents and the Congress of Abbots.

¹ *Ius Proprium*, n. 14,15; *Normae de consociatione cum Confoederatione, praesertim n. 7-9*. The '*Catalogus Monasteriorum O.S.B. Sororum et Monialium*' lists all communities belonging to (consociated with) the Confederation.

² The Latin word *consociatio* is a combination of two words, *socius*, meaning "ally" or "colleague", and *cum*, meaning "with". It indicates a collaborative relationship between equals. (R. Yeo).

4. To advise the Abbot Primate and submit proposals and suggestions to him with regard to matters which affect Benedictine women.

C. The Means by which the CIB Achieves its Purpose

The principal means by which the CIB achieves its purpose are:

1. The meetings of the Conference, under the leadership of the Moderator and the Administrative Council;
2. The holding of a Symposium at least once every four years, in order to enhance a worldwide network among Benedictine women through liturgy, prayer, ritual and reflection upon an agreed theme.

II. STRUCTURES OF THE CIB

A. The Conference of the CIB

1. The Nature of the Conference

The Conference of the CIB is a representative body of all Benedictine women throughout the world and provides a liaison between the communities belonging to the CIB. Under the leadership of the Moderator and Administrative Council, the Conference promotes the purpose of the CIB. The Conference is the decision-making body of the CIB.

The tasks of the Conference are:

- to discuss, develop and promote goals and projects relevant to the purpose of the CIB
- to facilitate the exchange of ideas and advice among the Regions.
- to elect the Moderator, the Assistant Moderator and the Administrative Council.
- to vote on Amendments to the Statutes.

2. The Members of the Conference

a. Regions and Delegates

The Conference of the CIB is formed of Delegates from Regions determined by the Administrative Council on the basis of geographical location, regional structures and statistical information provided by the *Catalogus* of the communities of Benedictine Women.

The list of Regions and Delegates is to be regularly reviewed and revised according to changing circumstances and developments. The list of the Regions is given in the CIB Memorandum. A current listing of the Delegates and Substitutes for each Region will be presented to the members of the Conference at the annual meeting.

Each Region is represented on the CIB Conference by an elected Delegate. An elected Substitute will represent the Region if the Delegate is impeded and will replace her if she ceases to be a Delegate.

b. The Election of the Delegates and Substitutes

- i. A Delegate and a Substitute are to be elected by the Major Superiors³ of the Region.
- ii. The Delegates and Substitutes must be or have been Major Superiors. Should the Benedictine Women Superiors of a Region choose to elect a former Superior no longer in office, ratification by the Administrative Council is required.
- iii. A Delegate or Substitute who ceases to be a Major Superior remains a Delegate or Substitute until the Region holds new elections, or she chooses to resign.
- iv. The Superiors of a Region determine the guidelines for holding an election in their Region.
- v. Immediately upon election, the name of the Delegate and Substitute should be communicated in writing to the Moderator.

³ “Major Superior” means Abbess, Conventual Prioress (Moniales and Sorores), Prioress General, President of a Federation (Sorores) or Provincial of a Congregation (Sorores).

- vi. If an election is not possible in a given Region, the Moderator will designate a Delegate and a Substitute after having consulted with the Administrative Council.
- vii. The term of office of the Delegate and Substitute are determined by the Region. A Delegate and Substitute may be re-elected indefinitely.
- viii. A Region should hold elections at least every six years.

c. Exceptional Norm

Exceptions to the rules given in 2b require the approval of the Administrative Council.

d. Co-opted Delegates and Substitutes of the CIB

The Administrative Council may co-opt⁴ extra Delegates to the Conference to ensure adequate representation of groups and Regions (especially in developing regions) and international Congregations. The decision to co-opt extra Delegates must be confirmed by the Conference. Co-opted Delegates will have active and passive voting rights.

The co-opted Delegate names a Substitute who is then approved by the Administrative Council. The term of office for a co-opted Delegate and Substitute is the term for which they were elected as Superiors of their Congregation(s).

If a co-opted Delegate or Substitute is not representing an international Congregation, she serves until the next election of Administrative Council members.

e. AIM Representation at the Conference

The Administrative Council may invite an A.I.M. representative to attend a meeting of the Conference as an observer without voting rights.⁵

⁴ Co-opt means "to elect into a body by the votes of its existing members." (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).

⁵ AIM means *Alliance for International Monasticism*.

3. Meetings of the Conference

The Conference of the CIB meets on the occasion of the Symposia of the whole CIB, the Abbots' Congress, and whenever it is deemed appropriate by the Administrative Council. Normally the Conference will meet annually.

One-half of the Delegates to the Conference shall constitute a quorum. An absolute majority⁶ of those Delegates present and voting is necessary for the Conference to make a decision.

Expenses incurred by membership of the Conference are normally met at the regional level.

4. The Elections Held at the Conference

a. The Election of the Moderator and Assistant Moderator

A person eligible for the position of Moderator or Assistant Moderator must currently be a major superior or have had experience as a major superior during the last seven years. She must presently be a delegate or a substitute in the CIB Conference or have had experience in one of those positions within the last seven years.

i. Term of Office

The term of office of the Moderator and the Assistant Moderator is four years with the possibility of re-election.

Should the Moderator cease to be a Major Superior she may remain in office as Moderator. When the Moderator is unable for any reason to complete her term of office, the Assistant Moderator assumes the role of Moderator until the next election. The remaining members of the Council may appoint a replacement for the Assistant Moderator.

Upon election the Moderator ceases to be the Delegate of her Region. The Region elects a new Delegate. The Moderator, however, is a member of the Conference with voting rights.

⁶ Absolute Majority means more than half of the Conference Delegates present and voting (See can.119).

ii. Discernment Process

The election of a Moderator and Assistant Moderator is preceded by a process of spiritual discernment approved by the Administrative Council. A facilitator may be appointed by the Administrative Council to direct and implement the process of discernment and election. This process includes the following:

- Identifying immediate and future needs and goals of the Conference of the CIB
- Surfacing desirable leadership qualities.
- Recognizing and listing of potential leaders for Moderator and Assistant Moderator.

iii. Election Process

The Conference nominates a number of candidates for the offices of Moderator and Assistant Moderator. Each person nominated informs the Conference of her decision to accept or decline the nomination.

Those who accept nomination then engage in an exchange of views with the Conference with regard to its future development and the role of the Moderator and Assistant Moderator.

The Moderator and Assistant Moderator are elected in separate secret ballots by an absolute majority⁶ of the Conference Delegates present and voting. If no one receives an absolute majority in the first two ballots, a third ballot is cast containing only the names of the two leading candidates. After a third ballot, if a tie remains, the one who is the senior in age is considered elected.

b. The Election of the Members of the Administrative Council

i. Term of Office

The term of office of the members of the Administrative Council is four years with the possibility of re-election.

An Administrative Council Member who ceases to be a Major Superior or Delegate may complete her term of office on the Administrative Council even if the Region elects a new Delegate. She or her replacement has one vote.

When a member of the Administrative Council is unable to complete her term of office, the remaining members of the Administrative Council may appoint a replacement.

ii. Election Process

Two members of the Conference are elected to the Administrative Council. The Conference nominates a number of candidates for the Administrative Council. Each member nominated informs the Conference of her decision to accept or decline the nomination.

Those who accept nomination then engage in an exchange of views with the Conference with regard to its future development and their role as an Administrative Council Member.

Each Administrative Council Member is elected in separate secret ballots by an absolute majority⁶ of the Conference Delegates present and voting. If no one receives an absolute majority in the first two ballots, a third ballot is cast containing only the names of the two leading candidates. After a third ballot, if a tie remains, the one who is the senior in age is considered elected.

iii. Appointment of Administrative Council Members

Within one month of the election, the Administrative Council may appoint one or two further Conference members to the Administrative Council. The members of the Administrative Council should be, as far as possible, representative of the various forms of monastic life.

A member of the Administrative Council appointed as a replacement during a term serves until the next election of members to the Administrative Council.

A. The Administrative Council

1. The Functions of the Administrative Council

The Administrative Council under the leadership of the Moderator, prepares the Agenda for the meetings of the Administrative Council and the Conference, plans the Symposia and communicates with the Abbot Primate on matters relating to Benedictine women.

Expenses incurred by the Administrative Council are normally covered through the Solidarity Fund.

2. The Leadership of the Administrative Council

a. Moderator: A Moderator, elected by the Conference, is the coordinator of all of the activity of the CIB. The Moderator summons and presides over Conference and Administrative Council meetings and directs the work of the Secretariat. The Moderator is the liaison with the CIB Conference, the Abbot Primate and the *Confederatio Benedictina*.

b. Assistant Moderator: An Assistant Moderator is elected to the Administrative Council by the Conference. When the Moderator is unable for any reason to complete her term of office, the Assistant Moderator assumes the role of Moderator until the next election.

3. The Support Staff of the Administrative Council

a. Secretary: A Secretary, appointed by the Administrative Council, communicates with all the members of the CIB Conference, takes the minutes of the Conference and Administrative Council meetings, ensures the circulation of minutes, documents and information, supervises the archives and performs other tasks determined by the Moderator.

b. Treasurer: A Treasurer, and, if needed, up to two assistants appointed by the Administrative Council, administer the funds, raise money as directed by the Administrative Council, present the accounts to the Administrative Council annually, and whenever requested, perform other tasks determined by the Moderator.

III. THE ROLE OF THE ABBOT PRIMATE IN THE CIB

As a symbol of unity for all Benedictines, the Abbot Primate fosters collaboration between the communities of the CIB and the communities of monks of the Confederation, and he promotes unity between the CIB and the Confederation.

The Conference and the Administrative Council will invite suggestions from the Abbot Primate for the agenda, ask him to attend their meetings and keep him informed of developments within the CIB

The Abbot Primate ratifies amendments to the Statutes.

IV. AMENDMENTS TO THE STATUTES

Proposals for amendments to these Statutes may be made by the Administrative Council, the Conference or the Abbot Primate.

Amendments require the consent of the Conference by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting and ratification by the Abbot Primate.

MEMORANDUM

Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum

1. The task of a Conference Delegate is:

- to attend the meetings of the Conference and participate in discussions and decision-making including voting. Should a Region elect another Delegate while one continues to serve on the CIB Administrative Council, the Region has only one vote at meetings of the Conference. The Solidarity Fund may cover the costs of only one of the Delegates from the Region.
- to ensure that the Region is represented at meetings of the Conference,
- to be in contact with the monasteries in her Region at least by letter,
- to pass on information and/or reports about the work of the Conference and the International Symposia to the monasteries in her Region,
- to facilitate communication within the Region and on the international level,
- to attend the Congress of Abbots at the invitation of the Abbot Primate.
- to collect the annual subscription fee for the CIB from the communities of her Region.

2. The task of a Substitute is:

- to assist the Conference Delegate and replace her if necessary. A Substitute has voting rights only when she is taking the place of the Delegate.
- to replace the Conference Delegate in the interim before a new election/appointment, if the Delegate goes out of office as a Delegate before her term is completed.
- to serve on the Administrative Council if elected. The Region has one vote.
- to attend meetings of the Conference in her own right if she wishes and if the circumstances allow. The ensuing costs will not be covered by the Solidarity Fund.

3. The task of the Administrative Council is to assist the Moderator:

- in preparing the agenda for the meetings of the Conference,
- in planning for the CIB Symposia every four years,
- in initiating and providing oversight of all the projects of the CIB Conference.

4. The task of the Moderator is:

- to co-ordinate the work of the CIB Conference,
- to summon the meetings of the Conference and the Council,
- to moderate the meetings of the Administrative Council and Conference,
- to be the liaison with the CIB Conference, the Abbot Primate and the *Confederatio Benedictina*,
- to plan for the CIB Symposia every four years,
- to encourage the flow of communication within the CIB

5. The task of the Secretary is:

- to work closely with the Moderator,
- to coordinate the flow of information among persons working on various CIB projects,
- to keep an updated list of Conference Delegates to distribute at the annual meeting,
- to write the minutes of the meetings of the Conference and the Council, and to send these to the participants of the meetings and the Abbot Primate,
- to coordinate the logistics of the Conference meetings together with the host Region,
- to coordinate the logistics of the Administrative Council meetings,
- to keep the CIB Handbook updated,
- to maintain a listing of available translators,
- to maintain the CIB archives documenting:
 - the CIB Symposia
 - Administrative Council meetings
 - Conference meetings
 - information about the Regions
 - any other matters that are relevant to the CIB
- to do any other secretarial tasks under the direction of the Moderator.

6. The task of the Treasurer is:

- to administer the financial affairs of the CIB and to collaborate with the Finance Committee regarding:
 - the development of an annual budget for the approval of the Administrative Council,
 - the development of an annual financial report to the Administrative Council and Conference,
 - the monitoring of investments,
 - the distributions from the Solidarity Fund,
 - the correspondence with the Delegates of each Region about contributions to the Solidarity Fund,
 - the recommendation of a bookkeeper, if needed, to the Administrative Council.

7. The task of the Finance Committee is:

- to approve the annual budget and present it to the Administrative Council for approval,
- to present the annual financial reports to the Administrative Council and Conference,
- to monitor the investment of funds,
- to determine the distributions from the Solidarity Fund according to the policy of the Administrative Council,
- to provide direction for fundraising.

8. Language

The official languages of the Conference are currently English and French. All official documents of the Conference will be provided in these two languages.

9. The CIB Solidarity Fund

The operating costs of the CIB are covered by the Solidarity Fund. Delegates will be notified of their Regional annual contribution at least once a year. The contribution needed from each Region is calculated by dividing the total projected operating costs by nineteen (the number of Regions). There are Regions that are able to contribute this sum plus additional monies to build up the Solidarity Fund. There are other Regions that are able to contribute some portion of the sum, and still other Regions that are able to make only a minimal contribution. Regional contributions are to be made to the Treasurer each year, preferably before the month of July.

NORMAE DE CONSOCIATIONE TEXT

APPROVED BY THE ABBOTS' CONGRESS 2004

NORMS CONCERNING ASSOCIATION WITH THE CONFEDERATION

Chapter 1

Consociation in General

1. The Benedictine Confederation was founded and continues for this purpose: under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the leadership of the Church to foster monastic life according to the gospel and the Rule of our holy father Benedict, and according to the sound traditions of each congregation or monastery adapted to the conditions of time and place; and to encourage fraternal help in every way among the congregations, whether it be in persons, goods or works, (*Lex propria*, n.16).
2. To further this end, monasteries, federations and institutes of women of the Order of Saint Benedict are consociated with the Confederation, as well as other institutes of consecrated life, whether of men or women, whose members seek to cultivate the Benedictine monastic spirit.
3. Monasteries, Federations and institutes consociated with the Confederation enjoy all the spiritual blessings and privileges of the Confederation, and can make use of the rescripts and indulgences granted to the whole Confederation. But this consociation does not infringe the autonomy of any monastery, Federation or institute or affect the rights of the proper ordinary (*Lex propria*, n.15,b).
4. Fraternal collaboration is further advanced by the bond of consociation:
 - A. between monasteries, federations and institutes of Benedictine women among themselves;
 - B. between, on the one hand, the Benedictine Confederation and congregations of monks, and on the other hand between the monasteries, federations and institutes of Benedictine women and other consociated institutes.

Chapter 2

Conditions for Consociation

5. A monastery of women which professes the Rule of Saint Benedict, if it is incorporated or united to any congregation or monastery of the confederation, is consociated with the Confederation through that congregation or monastery. A new monastery founded by a consociated monastery is considered to be automatically consociated with the Confederation.
6. Monasteries, federations and institutes which wish to be consociated with the Confederation in the future must petition the Abbot Primate according to the following norms:
 - A. They must send their constitutions to the Abbot Primate who will assess:
 - i. whether the spirit of the life is based on and inspired by the rule of Saint Benedict;
 - ii. whether they truly lead the common life;
 - iii. whether the work of God is an essential part of the life of the community.
 - B. It is highly appropriate that the monastery, federation or institute which seeks consociation with the Confederation should seek to forge spiritual links with some monastery of the Confederation.
 - C. Moreover, agreement is needed:
 - i. for a monastery of women: by two-thirds of the votes in chapter;
 - ii. for a Federation of women: by two-thirds of the votes in chapter in each monastery of the Federation and in the Council of the Federation
 - iii. for another institute of the consecrated life, whether of men or of women: by two thirds of the votes in General Chapter.
 - D. A petition in writing is to be sent to the Abbot Primate who is to decide the matter after taking advice according to the following principles:
 - i. if it concerns a monastery, federation or institute of women, he is to consult the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum*, whose responsibility it is to offer advice to the Abbot Primate;
 - ii. if it concerns a monastery, federation or institute of men which the Abbot Primate does not know much about, he is to seek letters of recommendation from a superior of a monastery or institute belonging to the Confederation.
 - E. When these conditions have been fulfilled, the Abbot Primate may grant a decree of consociation.

Chapter 3:
Collaboration between
Benedictine Women

7. In order that fraternal collaboration may be better fostered among the monasteries, federations and institutes of Benedictine women, the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* is being established under the aegis of the Confederation. This *Communio* is governed according to proper statutes which however need the approval of the Abbot Primate.
8. Monasteries, federations and institutes of Benedictine women which are consociated with the Confederation are automatically members of the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum*.
9. The *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* advises the Abbot Primate in the affairs of Benedictine women as occasion arises.

Chapter 4
Mutual help between the Confederation and
Consociated Monasteries and Institutes.

10. The Confederation and the monasteries, Federations and institutes consociated with it offer each other mutual help, especially in spiritual matters (*Lex propria*, n.15,a).
11. Monasteries of monks, if requested, will do what they can to give to consociated monasteries, Federations and institutes spiritual help.
12. The whole Confederation provides help, especially through the office of the Abbot Primate whose task it is to represent the Confederation and to foster collaboration with all vigour between the confederated monasteries and between consociated monasteries, Federations and institutes (*Lex propria*, n.17,c). However, monasteries of women which are under a regular superior, and especially those which are incorporated into a congregation or a monastery of monks, should in the first place look for help from them.
13. It is appropriate that monasteries, Federations and Institutes which receive help make a suitable offering in accordance with their means. The *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* will, if asked, indicate an appropriate sum.
14. Representatives chosen by the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* are normally invited to take part in the Congress of Abbots, to represent all the consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes of women.
15. The Abbot Primate may, without prejudice to the rights of regular Superiors and Procurators General:
 - A. act on behalf of consociated monasteries, Institutes and Federations with the Holy See, if it seems opportune to him;
 - B. commend their petitions to the Holy See, if he believes it opportune;
 - C. make proposals to the Holy See for the appointment of Apostolic Visitors, if he is asked.
16. The Abbot Primate:
 - A. gives and receives information, and establishes a centre where information is gathered and distributed throughout the whole Confederation;

- B. transmits to consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes documents regarding the monastic life;
 - C. looks after co-operation between the monasteries of monks and the consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes, and he may establish mixed commissions to deal with matters of common interest.
17. The Abbot Primate:
- A. can give advice and help to meetings of nuns and of sisters gathered together according to region or language;
 - B. can give advice to Federations of nuns when they are proposing to the Holy See a priest to be appointed as Religious Assistant;
 - C. can help monasteries which wish to establish a Federation or to join an already existing Federation;
 - D. consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes which, in the opinion of the Holy See, do not give a solid hope of flourishing in the future may ask the Abbot Primate for advice.
18. The Abbot Primate may from time to time visit consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes, and in accordance with the *Lex propria* he has the faculty of hearing the confessions of the members and of entering into the enclosure of nuns.
19. The Abbot Primate may approach the relevant authorities if the ordinary canonical visitation of a consociated monastery, Federation or Institute has not been carried out for two periods.
20. The Abbot Primate, without prejudice to the rights of regular superiors, may do what he can to resolve disagreements between monasteries, Federations and Institutes, if the superiors approach him.
21. When the Abbot Primate dies, whether in office or after his time of office has terminated, the Eucharistic sacrifice is to be celebrated for him in all the consociated monasteries, Federations and Institutes.

List of Regions sending Delegates to the Conference of the CIB

1. Italy and Malta
2. Spain and Portugal
3. France and Israel
4. Great Britain and Ireland
5. Benelux
6. GASS – Germany / Austria / Switzerland / Scandinavia
7. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania
8. Croatia
9. USA, Canada (with three delegates)
10. ABECCA (Benedictine and Cistercian Association of the Caribbean and the Andes)(Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bahamas, Cuba, Martinique, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, Bolivia, Venezuela)
11. Brazil
12. Cono-Sur (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)
13. Korea / Japan / Taiwan / Vietnam
14. Philippines
15. Oceania
16. East Africa
17. Central and West Africa and Madagascar
18. South Africa, Namibia
19. India, Sri Lanka



They must pick up the opening to take on responsibility for their own affairs. They now have the opportunity to draft their own vision for the future.

If their vision includes a great esteem for the very different authentic expressions of the Benedictine charism in the different traditions, they may succeed in creating a common identity, all the more valuable because of the great differences. Then the main obstacle to effective collaboration – their diversity – might become their strength.

Agatha Rothert osb

www.benedictines-cib.org

ENGLISH VERSION
September 2018