

Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum

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Editorial

There has not been a newsletter since 2000. But there have been many voices asking for another newsletter saying that this has been a very helpful instrument for passing on information.

In the meantime the structures for networking Benedictine women's monasteries have become clearer: a name has been found which we can use when speaking about them all - CIB - and they voice their opinions and wishes through the Representatives of the 19 regions at the Conference meetings. The Conference of Representatives of the CIB have asked me to edit this newsletter and to send it out to all the Representatives so that they can use it in passing on information of developments to their regions. That is how this newsletter has come into being.

It includes a number of articles giving basic information, since the development of the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB) is still so very young. It brings various articles covering the recent meeting of the Conference of Representatives of the CIB in Sydney 2003, as well as some news items and information from the regions. There is no attempt to balance out the choice of material. This is basically a collection at random of what was available as a form of documentary for those passing on information to the communities of each region. Hopefully it will fulfil its modest purpose. Many thanks to Mary Robinson, the indomitable secretary of Sr. Sonia Wagner, for the layout of this newsletter and for all the work she did for the meeting.

Monica Lewis OSB

Meeting of the CIB Conference in Sydney

by Irmgard Poroto OSB

Prioress General of the Benedictines of Oshikuku, Namibia

How wonderful it is, when sisters and brothers live in peace with one another. "That is how the world will tell that you are my disciples." It has become a tradition of the CIB Conference to meet in the different continents of the different delegates. This 2003 gathering of the CIB Conference was honoured to meet in Sydney, Australia, 13 - 20 September 2003, through the invitation of Sr Sonia Wagner SGS, the Prioress General of our Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict.

The Conference was initiated by the meeting of the Administrative Council of the CIB on the morning of September 12th at Mount St Benedict Centre where the whole Conference of Representatives of the CIB was to meet.

On September 13th the CIB Conference members were privileged to meet with the Australian and New Zealand Benedictine Union (ANZBU), and together with them on the next day we listened to the inspiring talks of two monastics from Australia, Sister Margaret Malone SGS and Father Michael Casey OCSO, on *Issues of Monastic Spirituality*.

The following days the Conference spent time discussing issues concerning the

development of the CIB: the report on the progress of the development and the implementation of the decisions and suggestions of the previous Conference meeting in Rome 2002; some changes in the *Ius Proprium* concerning updating the references to Benedictine Women; discussing the possibility of making a CIB foundation and ways of getting legal status in civil law; and finally the report on the progress in building up the financial structure by the finance committee and well as a few other concerns of the CIB.

The warm Benedictine hospitality which our Benedictine sisters of the Good Samaritan showed us, made every moment of our stay in Sydney, Australia, very pleasant and enjoyable. The two chapters in the Holy Rule of our holy Father Benedict about "hospitality" and "good zeal" were very much in the foreground during these days. It was very clearly expressed both in hospitality and in the liturgy. The liturgy was very much incorporated with the daily life where every day's uniqueness was celebrated. It was just wonderful and inspiring.

As most of us came for the first time to Australia, time was also set apart for visiting the Benedictine community in Jamberoo and for sight-seeing. We were taken to see some beautiful places in Sydney and the nearby countryside.

Liturgy, the life of our monasteries *Comments on the Liturgy during the meeting in Sydney*

“Every detail was put into the form of celebration, not only the Hours and the Eucharist, but also every significant moment of our gathering. It gave us a prayerful climate all the week long.”

The liturgy of the week had been carefully prepared by the Good Samaritan Liturgy Committee, who were all present during the meeting.

Because the community at Pennant Hills was too small to lead a group of 24 foreigners who did not know the music, quite a number of Good Samaritan sisters came especially for the week just for the sake of supporting a worthy celebration of the liturgy. Extra pamphlets were made for each time of prayer and an effort was made to help those who did not have English as their mother-tongue to feel included. One of the ways this was done was to invite everyone in a discreet and personal way some time during the week to take over a part, if only a very small and silent part in the ceremonies, readings and prayers. For the welcoming ceremony all were invited to gather in front of the house. There Sr. Sonia said: “I want to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Daruk people, as I greet you today.” In this way she introduced the visitors to a spirituality full of respect for creation. All were then led in procession into the hall where the welcome speeches were given. After these speeches a processional cross decorated with coloured ribbons was carried into the church, after it the book of the Gospels and then everyone in procession behind moving prayerfully through the cloisters into the church. At the entrance to the church incense was put into the thurible and the cross was greeted with the incense. The opening hymn of the first Vespers of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was a song of praise of the wisdom of God choosing the cross to thwart the worldly wise. A deep sense of joy and gratitude for the work of

salvation ran through all present. The ceremony used had succeeded in expressing deep conviction of the mysteries of our faith.

The daily liturgy of the hours was carefully prepared and sung with simple and beautiful psalm tones which were quickly learnt by all. There were also special prayers prepared for the planting of a memorial tree, for praying at the tomb of the founder, John Bede Polding, and for saying farewell. This all helped to make the week a prayerful experience. Abbess Vera Lucia Parreiras Horta of Salvador Bahia, Brazil, wrote after the meeting:

“I deeply appreciated the way the sisters of the Good Samaritan prepared the liturgy of these days. Every detail was put into the form of celebration, not only the Hours and the Eucharist, but also every significant moment of our gathering. It gave us a prayerful climate all the week long. Certainly a highlight was the Welcome Ceremony together with members of the ANZBU. The way we were led into the room, beautifully decorated, the way we processed to the Church led by the cross, a cross that stood then in the church for the rest of the week. I appreciated the quality of the music, the simplicity of how the office was done, the silence, the inclusion of gestures. It was also beautiful how we were invited to join and do parts of the liturgy, either to read, to proclaim the intercessory prayers, to prepare the altar or to stand together round it. It was a deep experience of being one heart and one mind, praising the Lord who brought us all together in one tradition all over the world. Thank you very much.”

Issues in Monastic Spirituality *Presentations by Margaret Malone SGS and Michael Casey OCSO*

Michael Casey OCSO of Tarrawarra Abbey, Victoria, chose as his theme: “A Benedictine Decalogue: Ten words from St. Benedict.” Margaret Malone SGS chose as her theme: “Seek peace and pursue it.” Slowly an awareness grew amongst participants that the renewal movements in Australia in the

field of monastic studies has already contributed in a silent but fruitful way to the renewal of spiritual life in our monasteries. The full text of these talks can be found at the website of the Good Samaritans: www.goodsams.org.au in the section “What’s New” .

History of the CIB

Extract from the welcoming address of M Máire Hickey, Moderator of the CIB

The CIB, as a young and developing organisation, is not yet widely known, even within the Benedictine family. So it is probably not superfluous if I give our Australian hosts a brief outline of who and what this group is, and what we are here for. To understand and appreciate the history, a little detail is necessary. I hope you will bear with me.

The Benedictine Confederation is, as you know, now over a hundred years old. When it was about 70 years old, i.e. during the years after the 2nd Vatican Council, it was apparent to all concerned with the self-assessment and the process of reflection that was then taking place in religious orders, that the Benedictine Confederation had established and proved itself as an effective instrument for facilitating the development of Benedictine monasticism and its mission in the Church in the first half of the 20th century. But in the same process of reflection on the part of some women living according to the Rule of St. Benedict, it was becoming equally apparent that the women's monasteries, congregations and federations, although associated with the Confederation, did not and could not enjoy the benefits of membership of the Confederation that the men's communities could avail of. Many women's monasteries were almost totally isolated from the rest of the Benedictine world. We had no access to the study, social and cultural facilities of San Anselmo in Rome. We were not full members of the Confederation as the 24 men's congregations were, hence we were not invited along with the Benedictine abbots to take part in the Abbots' Congress and to elect the Abbot Primate. Many Benedictine sisters and nuns were becoming aware, too, that we had issues of our own, issues that women in the Church to-day can be passionately concerned about. We had no forum comparable to the Abbots' Congress where we could share with each other about our issues, trying to clarify and shape our identity as Benedictine sisters and nuns in the new era that had begun with the Vatican Council. And we had no structures whatever that would enable us to work for change in this order of things.

Starting in the 1970s, a core group of Benedictine Abbesses, Prioresses and Prioresses General, supported and encouraged by 5 Abbots Primate in a row, up to and including our present Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, set about the task of building up a network of communication among the women's communities. The aim was, at first, simply to overcome barriers of isolation from and even ignorance about each other. This led soon to a desire to get a process going which would clarify the needs and wishes of the Benedictine women. Did we want and need an instrument for facilitating the development of Benedictine monasticism for women, and its mission in the Church and the world for the future, similar to the Confederation, but tailored to the different situation of the women's communities? How could we go about creating such an instrument?

According to the *Lex Propria* of the Benedictine Confederation of 1985, the women's communities living according to the Rule were or could become CONSOCIATED with the Confederation. This meant not full membership of the Confederation, but a status affirming their authenticity as monastics and as Benedictines, and binding them separately from each

other in a perpendicular dimension to the Confederation and the Abbot Primate. Round about 1987, through small international meetings of Benedictine nuns and sisters, horizontal connections between the CONSOCIATED monasteries, congregations and federations started to develop. Significant in this process as it went on, was that it was changing radically the relationship of diffuse dependence between many Benedictines women's communities and the Benedictine Confederation. The nuns and sisters, each monastery retaining its own character, autonomy, canonical structure, and its already existing network of relationships with other monasteries, were starting to unite to take on responsibility for their future development.

Out of this process of networking there has grown the Conference of Representatives of the CIB. At the moment, there are 23 representatives to the Conference. In 2001 the group, after consultation at grass-roots level, voted the name *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* to apply to the body of women's monasteries, congregations and federations all around the world CONSOCIATED with the Benedictine Confederation.

In 2002 the Conference gave its vote approving the Statutes of the CIB that they had been working on for a few years, and these were approved by Abbot Primate. An Administrative Council, consisting at the present time of 4 Conference representatives, led by a moderator and helped in its work by a secretary and a treasurer, plans and co-ordinates and shares out the work involved.

To cut a long story short: The group that the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St. Benedict are hosting here in Sydney, and to which Sr. Sonia Wagner and Fr. Bernard McGrath (Arcadia) have kindly addressed their words of welcome, is the 2nd annual meeting of the Conference of Representatives of the CIB.

Over the past 16 years, much of the energy invested has been used simply to set up this network and to encourage communication. But that is of course not our primary aim. Much of what we have been doing up to now is only the necessary precondition for fulfilling the primary aims that are mentioned in our statutes (mutual support, promotion of Benedictine women's monasticism all around the world), and are becoming more concrete from year to year. At all our meetings there are presentations and exchanges about the Rule and matters of Benedictine spirituality in its encounter with everyday life in the different cultures of the 21st century. The *raison d'être* of a Benedictine community has not changed. Each of our communities exists, as the communities through our 1500 years have existed, to proclaim and praise the primacy of God in the world in which we are living out our vocation. Our first task is to be listening for the signs which will tell us how we should be shaping a way of life, a style of life, in which we can be tending towards the fulfilling of our God-given aim. Some of these signs come across as a light whisper in the heart of individual monks or nuns, or in the heart of a community. But many of the signs that characterise our era are global. Some people call them apocalyptic. To recognise them, interpret them, find the response to them, we need absolutely to be in communication with each other.

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CIB and the Benedictine Confederation

Some basic information

In September 2002 the Statutes of the C.I.B., defining its aims and the way it is run, were voted and ratified by the Abbot Primate. This brought with it the necessity to have the *Ius Proprium* of the Confoederatio Benedictina of 1985 brought up to date. The *Ius Proprium* refers to consociatio as the form of membership granted to the women's communities, but not to any union among the consociated monasteries. It also refers to Commissions of nuns and of sisters that no longer exist. It falls to the women themselves to take the initiative and to prepare an application to be made to the Abbots' Congress 2004.

The canonical advisor of the CIB, Abbot Richard Yeo, had worked on the suggestions put forward by the Administrative Council. His draft was presented by Abbess Joanna Jamieson and discussed. Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, who attended the meeting and who has been encouraging the women in these developments ever since his election in 2000, took the suggestions of the Conference to the meeting of the Synod of Presidents which met in the last week of September in Canada.

The content of the short introductory talk given by M. Máire Hickey OSB, Dinklage Germany, Moderator of the C.I.B., should help readers of the Newsletter to understand the background to the application being made to the Abbots' Congress. She gave the following definitions:

1. Definition of the Benedictine Confederation: The Union of the (now) 23 Congregations of Benedictine monks formed in 1893. It is headed by the Abbot Primate who is elected every 4 years by the Abbots of the member Congregations. Centre of the Confederation is the Abbey of S.Anselmo

2. Definition of the Ius Proprium: the title of a booklet which gathers together 4 legal documents, 1. *Lex Propria*, 2. *Ordo celebrandi Congressum Abbatum* 3. *Normae de Consociatione*

cum Confederatione 4. Regulations for the Secretariat of AIM.

3. Definition of the Lex Propria: the name for the Constitutions of the Benedictine Confederation approved by Rome in 1985. Changes in the *Lex Propria*, just like changes in the Constitutions of most communities, have to be approved by the Congregation for Religious at the Vatican.

4. There are three kinds of membership of the Confederation as laid out in the *Lex Propria*:

- Ordinary (or regular) membership i.e. that of the 24 men's congregations
- Special (or extraordinary) membership i.e. that of a few men's monasteries not in congregations
- Consociation

5. Definition of "Consociation": the word used for the membership autonomous monasteries, institutes and federations living according to the Rule of St. Benedict that are recognised as Benedictine and want to be joined with the Benedictine Confederation. All women's communities recognised as Benedictine are in this category.

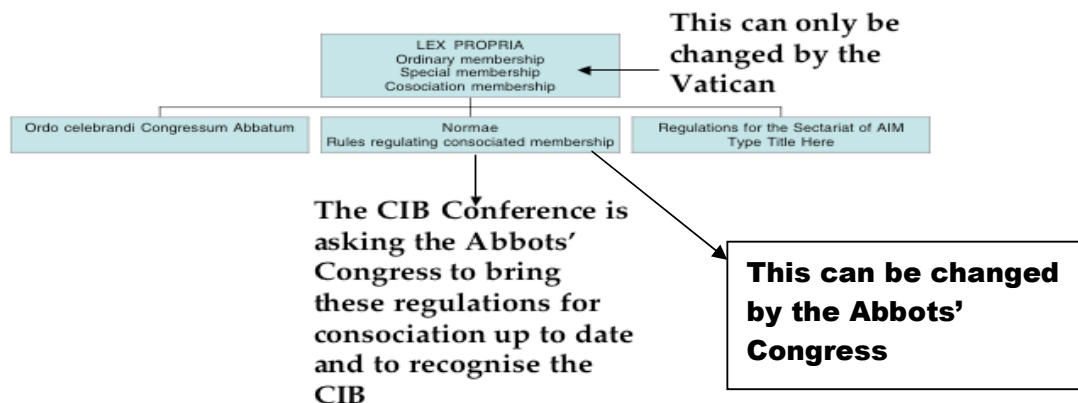
6. What are the "Normae de Consociatione cum Confederatione"?

This is the document in the *Ius Proprium* that spells out what kind of membership consociation is. This document consists of 21 short articles. This part of the *Ius Proprium* can be changed by the Abbot's Congress.

7. Why do the "Normae" need to be updated?

Prior to today the women were consociated as individual institutes to the Confederation. There was no form of association that would network the various women's houses. The development of the CIB and its Conference of Representatives is an attempt to rectify this situation. The Statutes "define the CIB, its aims and the way it is run. With this in place, the time has come to bring this into the *Normae de Consociatione cum Confederatione*.

IUS PROPRIUM



Education for Benedictine Women of prime importance

One of the themes of the meeting

The question of education for Benedictine Women, and more specifically of formation, has always been a central theme whenever Benedictine women met together, right from the early days of the Commissions set up by the Abbot Primate in the 1970s. The discussion on this theme at the meeting in Nairobi in November 2001 inspired the members of the Conference to make enquiries about possibilities of setting up a foundation to support the education of Benedictine

women. At the meeting in Sydney two sisters of the Good Samaritan, , Sister Lorraine Victorsen and Sister Laire Dwyer and Mary McDonald gave excellent presentations from their experience of setting up a foundation in Australia. Sr. Mary McDonald, who has great expertise as facilitator, helped the meeting to formulate the questions they themselves had in this area. There is still much basic research work necessary. Discussion on the question of a foundation will remain on the agenda for quite some time in the future.

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AIM Report

Representing AIM at the meeting in Sydney were Sr. Gisela Happ and Fr. Mark Butlin. Sr. Gisela Happ is the new secretary general of AIM and lives in Vanves and works at the Paris office of AIM. Fr. Mark Butlin, Ampleforth, England, is secretary for the areas Asia, Africa and Oceania, which means that he must travel a lot, visiting the communities and becoming sensitive to their needs.

Fr. Mark gave a short report on the work of AIM which was very informative and helpful. He made it very clear that he hopes for good co-operation with the CIB and offered to put all their own experience and expertise at the service of the CIB Conference.

An important part of Fr. Mark's report was his recognition of the contribution of Australia to AIM and to monastic formation courses being offered. Both teachers and students from Australia have been taking

part in the *formation for formators* course. Because of the great distances that need to be covered in this great continent, the Australians have developed distance learning and much of their expertise is being collected in order to make it available for Benedictines all over the world. Keep your eyes open for future references to this. One address that Fr. Mark was able to pass on:
Centre for Christian Spirituality
PO Box 125 Wahroonga NSW Australia
email address:
ccs_info@brokenbay.catholic.org.au
website: www.ccs.catholic.edu.au
 The CCS is a work of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay.

Courses specifically on Benedictine spirituality have been developed by the Good Samaritan Sisters over the past 20 years. They have been asked to make these available for a wider circle. Sr. Margaret

"AIM hopes for good co-operation with the CIB and offered to put all their own experience and expertise at the service of the CIB Conference."

AIM Report (continued)

Malone SGS hopes to offer again a course on the Rule using the edition published 1996 by Kardong. In this course all participants are given partners who are also doing the course with whom they exchange their reflections on the material in question. Communication is done by fax. This linking up with another Benedictine helps to personalise the work and deepen commitment and has the side-effect of bonding across great distances. **The website of the Good Sams is: www.goodsams.org.au** The course on Monastic Spirituality that has been worked out by P. Brésard, Citeaux, and which can be found on the internet under the **website of the Abbey of Scourmont** in English and French, is being published again with the extra directions for teachers and the many helpful charts. This course has been highly recommended. Fr. Mark is collecting further information on distance learning and will be making it available.

The *formation for formators* course, which is now running each summer in Rome, has been very successful. Fr. Mark

pointed out that this is not an AIM project although he himself has been very much involved. It had been initiated by Abbot Primate Marcel Rooney and remained a project of the Abbot Primate. Applications for the 2005 course are to be sent to Dom Brendan Thomas of Belmont Abbey, England: dombrendan@aol.com

Sr. Gisela Happ has worked especially on the finances of AIM and gave information about how to apply for grants from AIM funds. Twice a year there is a meeting at which it is decided which applications for financial help should be granted. Applications can be handed in by May 1st for the first meeting and by November 1st for the second meeting. She made it very clear that applications which arrive late cannot be considered. Those communities that have special contact with Fr. Jacques Coté (secretary for South America) or Fr. Mark Butlin are asked to send correspondence concerning grants of money to the Paris address of AIM. As Fr. Mark and Fr. Jacques are often away, requests sent to their home address are often opened too late.

Report from the Philippines (Region 14)

By M Angelica Leviste, OSB

"The young people who enter our monasteries today bring with them a world of values, beliefs and aspirations shaped by the present-day culture."

"The Philippines has been going through a raging storm of destabilising forces, of which the *coup d'etat* that was staged at the end of July of this year is an example. At the centre of this storm is a well organised and well funded effort by certain forces aimed at bringing down democracy through massive misinformation and political agitation.

Graft and corruption has penetrated all levels of our society, including the highest ranks of military and civil officers of the country. There is a marked decline in the religious and moral fibre of the people.... Poverty and crime are on the rise. Hence there is a growing restlessness and discontent among our people.

In the midst of this unrest and caught in the cross-currents of post-modern culture, we, the monastic communities in the Philippines feel the need for a radical conversion and an authentic living of our monastic calling. Renewal in our communities will enable us to become a LEAVEN OF JUSTICE AND PEACE in our world for the sake of the Kingdom."

M. Angelica lists the courses and programs of her own congregation, the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of Tutzing, and the other

Benedictine congregation represented in her country, the Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King, in order to further renewal.

She goes on to say that "the women Benedictines in the Philippines have formed an association. The core group of the association come together at least twice a year in order to plan the ongoing formation of our members." This ongoing formation seems to be a big priority in the Philippines. So it is fitting that the meeting of the BENEDICTINES OF EAST ASIA AND OCEANIA (BEAO) under the theme: "*The E-Generation and the future of Monasticism*" should be hosted by the community in Manila in December 2003. M. Angelica writes: "The young people who enter our monasteries today bring with them a world of values, beliefs and aspirations shaped by the present-day culture. We need to address some vital questions: How can we effectively communicate monastic life to the E-Generation? How can we live our monastic vocation in the context of post-modern culture in such a manner that we uphold the non-negotiable of the monastic life?" Among the speakers are Brother Douglas Mullin OSB from Collegetown and Abbot Primate Notker Wolf.

Regional CIB Meeting in Namibia (Region 18)

By M Irmgard Poroto OSB

The Union of Benedictine Women in Namibia and South Africa is called BECOSA. They held a meeting in February 2003. It was a good occasion to explain the developments of the CIB and report on the Symposium held in Rome, September 2002 on the theme of "Good Zeal". One of the participants of the first *formation for formators* course in Rome passed on her experiences and M.Theodora spoke on sharing about the problems.

The BECOSA meeting was also very practical in its input on the question of the motivation of young sisters wanting to enter monastic life and criteria used for discernment of a vocation. BECOSA has set up a finance committee to explore ways of supporting the work of the CIB Conference, even if only in a small way.

Financing the meetings

After Sr. Colleen Haggerty, President of St. Benedict Federation, Minesota / USA, had informed M. Máire Hickey that she could not carry on as treasurer of the CIB Conference, Johanna Domek OSB, prioress of the Benedictine Monastery in Cologne, Germany, was asked to take her place. With her on the Finance Committee are Lucia Wagner OSB (Munich, Germany) and Erica Van de Cauter OSB (Schotenhof, Belgium). The financial report they presented showed that structures for administration are getting into place. The representatives from all the 19 regions have been asked to try and contribute something to

the running costs of the Conference, which at the present time cover the secretarial costs, the annual meetings and the Symposium, held every four years. Because of financial difficulties in many areas, this is not easy. Also the networking between monasteries in some regions is still very new and awareness of the value of international exchange and mutual support is still developing. Nevertheless the work already being done to create awareness and to finance the meetings is taking shape.

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Ageing communities

Abbot Primate Notker Wolf commended the fact that there had been a commission set up by the VBD (Union of German-speaking Benedictine superiors) and the SÄK (Conference of German-speaking abbots) under the leadership of Abbess Luidgardis Hecker to explore the problems of ageing communities. As this is not just a problem of the German speaking communities, he

recommended similar commissions being set up elsewhere. He stated that he did not feel it was his task to address the problems of individual communities. Instead the communities of a region should be getting together to support and advise each other and create structures that can address the problems of the member communities.

Encouraging Vocations

On the question of encouraging vocations to the monastic life, Abbot Primate Notker Wolf pointed out that there was a great thirst for spiritual values amongst young people today. This is apparent in the new religious movements of our time. Benedictine communities should be reaching out to these people, who are looking for ways of structuring their spiritual life. It is a question of flexibility in the expression of the charisma while remaining faithful to the wisdom of

St. Benedict. He made a special plea that the maturity of all members of a community should be fostered, no matter how secluded their lives may be. Maturity in human development is a prerequisite for authenticity in the expression of spiritual values. This alone evokes the respect of young people searching for God in today's world.

“Benedictine communities should be reaching out to these people, who are looking for ways of structuring their spiritual life. It is a question of flexibility in the expression of the charisma while remaining faithful to the wisdom of St. Benedict.”

Monastery of Our Lady of Calvary in Jerusalem *Maintaining a Benedictine Presence in the Holy Land*

“ Religious seeking an opportunity to share life and prayer with a monastic community in “the Land of the Word” are invited to the Mount of Olives for a year’s formation in Biblical Studies combined with Iconography.”

The President of the French Congregation of our Lady of Calvary, Mère M. Claire Ducruit, has asked us to appeal through the network of the CIB for solidarity with the nuns of the Monastery on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, in their efforts to continue their service there in our very troubled times.

The Congregation of Our Lady of Calvary was founded in Poitiers, France, in 1617. The foundress was inspired by a profound desire to have a community of Benedictines living as disciples of Jesus in the place where he gave his final, total witness to love through his death, resurrection and ascension, but this wish could not be realised, because the holy places were at that time in the hands of the Turks. The community in Poitiers lived an apostolate of prayer for the recovery of the holy places for the Christian Church, with the intention of moving to Jerusalem as soon as it became possible.

Not until 1896, after several further foundations of the Congregation had been made in France, did it become possible to fulfil the plan conceived 300 years before. In 1892 the Vicar General of the Greek-Melkite Patriarchate of Jerusalem paid a visit to the monastery of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Calvary in Angers, and asked the Congregation to make a foundation in Jerusalem. The necessary permissions were obtained with much difficulty, and in 1897 the foundation was made. A condition was that the nuns should run a small orphanage for Greek girls. By 1903, after many apparently insurmountable problems had been overcome, the monastery with its orphanage was fully established.

The community, along with its charge of Palestinian Christian orphans, survived the vicissitudes of life in the Holy Land in the 20th century. In 1914 the community had to be evacuated to France. Returning to Jerusalem in 1919, the nuns experienced at first hand the growing tensions between Jews and Arabs under British dominion, and lived through the war that began after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The 60s were for them, as for all religious houses, the years of *Aggiornamento*. Their place in the Church of

Jerusalem and their situation on the Mount of Olives drew them into the new ecumenical relationships developing in the Holy City, and they opened their doors for renewal in liturgy and in monastic observance. In 1979 they were compelled through developments in the requirements set by the Israeli state education department to close the orphanage. They continue to finance the education of a number of Palestinian Christian children, but have moved the focus of their work to an apostolate of iconography and hospitality. In the Icon department of the monastery, most of the community is involved in preparing and writing the icons that are sold all over the world.

In 1997, as part of the celebration of the centenary of their foundation, the community launched a new project: Religious seeking an opportunity to share life and prayer with a monastic community in “the Land of the Word”, are invited to the Mount of Olives for a year’s formation in Bible Studies combined with Iconography.

Life for Christians and Christian communities in Israel is becoming more and more precarious from year to year. Fewer visitors come from abroad, and the danger of isolation is growing. Those called to remain in the city are in need of our prayers. The service rendered to the Christian people by this community of maintaining in the Holy City a Benedictine presence devoted to Christian contemplative life deserves support and solidarity from us all.

Sisters who are planning a Sabbath time would be doing a very valuable service of solidarity, if they would enquire about the programme offered by the nuns on the Mount of Olives, and spend some time sharing their life and prayer in Jerusalem.

**Address:
Mère Prieure Christine Nicole Devillon OSB
Monastère des Bénédictines du Mont des Oliviers
POB 19338 - Jérusalem-Est - Israel**

CIB Conference through Good Samaritan Eyes

By Margaret Malone, OSB

For Good Samaritans until now, contact with other non-Australian women Benedictines has meant a long journey across the world. We have been warmly welcomed in many communities. Now we, here in Australia, have had the opportunity to welcome our sisters from so many communities during this CIB Conference meeting, and to take them into our homes and our hearts. That has been an extraordinary grace for us. We have been enriched by meeting so many wonderful Benedictine women, and this has helped us to feel part of the many communities which they represent.

There have been times when Good Samaritans, isolated in Australia, have felt very different from our sisters elsewhere. However, this experience has strengthened bonds and emphasised our common way of life as Benedictines. We may all look different, but we share the same life and very easily join together in liturgy and common understandings.

There had been previous connections with many individuals and communities, and that helped us all to feel at home, but in the future, the bonds created here at this Meeting of the Conference will develop even further.

It is difficult to understand something fully until one has experienced it, and that is so true of our understanding of the role of the Conference of Representatives of the CIB. So many Good Samaritans have been part of the various events - the preparation on so many levels, the hospitality, the liturgy, the lectures, the visits, the excursions, that there has grown up a wonderful understanding of the role of this very important group. No more will it be a mystery what our superior does when she takes part in the meetings. A great sense of the wonderful presence of Benedictine sisters world-wide has come about.

The delegates may feel that their visit to Australia was a wonderful experience, but the Good Samaritans can truly say they have received a great gift during these days of the meeting.

*"We may all look different,
but we share the same life
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understandings."*

The Benedictine Union of Australia and New Zealand

It was a great enrichment for the meeting to have the opportunity to share with the ANZBU, the Benedictine Union of Australia and New Zealand. Here are some details about this Union. ANZBU is an association of religious institutes following the Rule of St. Benedict. In the pamphlet setting out the membership of this union they write: "In accordance with the directives of Perfectae Caritatis nn 22-23, the Union was inaugurated at a meeting of Benedictine superiors in April 1969. This followed a proposal formulated at the first Asian Monastic Meeting, sponsored by the Inter-Monastic Aid organisation (AIM) and held in Bangkok in December 1968."

The institutes represented in the Union are:
St. Benedict's Monastery, Arcadia, NSW, founded 1949 (men)
St. Mark's Priory Camperdown, founded 1975 (Anglican, men and women)
Good Samaritan Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict, founded 1857 (women)
The Benedictine Abbey of Jamberoo, founded 1857 (women)
Benedictine Community of Christ the King, Warangatta, founded 1993, (Anglican, women)
Benedictine Missionary Sisters, Kalumburu, founded 1885, (women)
Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, New Zealand, Cistercian, founded 1954 (men)

Tamby monastery, founded 1978 (women)
Holy Trinity Abbey, New Norcia, founded 1846 (men)
Tyburn Priory, Riverstone, founded 1956 (women)
Tyburn monastery, Bombay, New Zealand, founded 1996 (women)
Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen Cistercian, founded 1954 (men)

The co-ordinator of ANZBU is Bernard McGrath OSB of Arcadia and the secretary is Cecily Pullen SGS, a member of the Good Samaritan Benedictines.

The ANZBU has been responsible for the publication of the monastic journal **TJURUNGA** which has brought publications not only of monastic themes from Europe and USA but also well researched articles from Australian authors. The editor, Michael Casey OCSO, is well known in Australia and beyond for his books, and Margaret Malone SGS, Pam Pullen SGS and Terence Kavenagh OSB who are on the editorial board, have all contributed to the renewal of monastic spirituality in the region.

*"The Benedictine Union
of Australia and New
Zealand (ANZBU) is an
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Secretariat

Abbot Primate Notker Wolf has offered the CIB one of the new offices to be build near the Portineria in S. Anselmo to be used as a permanent secretariat. At the moment there are no plans of having someone there on a permanent basis, but there is a great need to build up archives on all matters concerning Benedictine women, information about monasteries and regions as well as materials needed for the meetings. It is hoped that this office will be ready for use after October 1st, 2004.

Catalogus of Benedictine Women

The Catalogus which came out in 2000 for the first time documenting all Benedictine women's monasteries will need to be kept up to date. The first revision of the women's Catalogus is planned for 2006. There has been an offer of help for this from the monastery in Eibingen, but more help may be needed. Anyone able to give a hand, preferably someone from Germany, even if only for 6 months, should contact

Sr. Monica Lewis,
Abtei St. Scholastika, D - 49413 Dinklage,
Fax +49 4443 513-118, abtei@abteiburgdinklage.de

New delegates on the Conference of the CIB

There has been an election of the delegate for Region 3, France and Israel, in April 2003. The new delegate is M. Véronique Dussud OSB, Prioress General of the Benedictines of Christ Crucified in Brou sur Chantereine.

In Region 10, ABECCA, M. Inés Sánchez Rendón has gone out of office as Prioress General of the Misioneras Guadalupanas de Christo Rey in Mexico and has resigned as delegate for the Region on the Conference. There has not yet been a new election.

CIB Website

At the meeting in Sydney Sr. Johanna Domek, prioress of the Benedictine monastery in Cologne, Germany, agreed to prepare a website for the CIB. She will be working with Sr. Ruth Schönenberger of the Tutzing Congregation, who will take over the technical side of the project. Sr. Johanna asks that suggestions for Benedictine links, which could be included on the website, should be sent to her by November 15th, 2003. With time it will be possible for each region to publicise its activities through this site.

Johanna Domek OSB, Benediktinerinnen, Brühler
Str. 74, D-50968 Köln-Raderberg, Germany
Fax: +49 221 93 70 679
johanna.domek@benediktinerinnen-koeln.de

A Vision will come true – Benedictine women and men

Under this title the English version of a book by Agatha Rohtert OSB (original German title "Werdendes Gleichgewicht") is now available. Agatha Rohtert explores the situation of women's monasteries in Germany and USA in the 19th century in regard to their relationship to the structures created at that time for Benedictine men's communities and explores the reasons for the developments in the 20th century. Her study lights up flaws in thinking which resulted from the social context of the 19th century. Order forms are available from Sr. Monica Lewis, Abtei St. Scholastika, D - 49413 Dinklage, Fax +49 4443 513-118, abtei@abteiburgdinklage.de

Secretary for the Abbot Primate

Abbot Primate Notker Wolf has been looking for a secretary to replace Fr. Placid Berger, who had hoped to retire in 2000. After a long search he has been able to win Sr. Maria Laura Natali of Citerna for one year, but will need a successor after that year. An essential requirement is good Italian.

Conference of Benedictine Prioresses CBP

The Conference of Benedictine Prioresses CBP is the new name for the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses CABP.

Deepening Monastic roots:

A renewal experience

Deepening monastic roots: a renewal experience for English-speaking Benedictine Women, sponsored by the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses,

June 10 - July 13, 2004. There are scholarships going for this renewal program. Please contact Sister Marcia, mziska@mountosb.org

Some historical facts about Australia

by Sonia Wagner

We are all pilgrims who have travelled. Many of you are still weary from the journey. Coping with distance is an essential factor of living in this region of the world which we call Oceania. Sometimes we talk about the tyranny of distance.

Geographically Oceania comprises many islands, large and small, separated and also connected by water. The continent of Australia is the largest island - and we acknowledge today the neighbouring islands of New Zealand.

The original inhabitants of this land have been here, we understand now, for some 50,000 years. White settlement began relatively recently.

On the Feast of Pentecost 1606, De Quiros a Spaniard, saluted from afar what appeared to be the great southern continent for which he was searching. He gave it the name of 'The Southern Land of the Holy Spirit'.

In the 17th century the Dutch explored Western Australia and gave it the name New Holland. They were not impressed by the dry looking coast and so did not continue.

The British in the 18th century after the loss of the North American area known today as the USA were on the look out for new land. Especially they needed somewhere to send the convicts - mostly Irish. It was then that this land became known as Australia. Hence white settlement began in Sydney on 26 Jan 1788. Controversially this day has become known as Australia Day.

"Coping with distance is an essential factor of living in this region of the world which we call Oceania."

Visit to Polding Villa

On the grounds of Toxteth House, the central house of the Good Samaritans not far from the centre of Sydney, stands the round, inviting building of Polding Villa. This is the home of many of the elder sisters of the Good Samaritan. There at daily Mass and in communal and private prayer they fulfill their mission of prayer for the works of the community and for the church of Australia. So it was very important for them to meet the members of the CIB Conference, for whom they have been praying for a long time, and

important for us to meet these delightful women, who can look back on a long and fruitful ministry, and who now with characteristic selflessness and openness of heart follow the concerns and the needs of those who are younger. They greeted us with graciousness and interest and assured us, that the concerns of the CIB will remain in their prayers. With gratitude we look on this communio in the heart of the Church.

"They greeted us with graciousness and interest and assured us, that the concerns of the CIB will remain in their prayers."

John Bede Polding OSB

by Sonia Wagner

“John Bede Polding, a Benedictine monk of Downside Abbey, England, came to Australia in 1835. He became the first Catholic archbishop of Australia and played a major role in the life of the new colony.”

John Bede Polding, a Benedictine monk of Downside Abbey, England, came to Australia in 1835. He became the first Catholic archbishop of Australia and played a major role in the life of the new colony. He clearly loved Australia, the land of his adoption. Many a time he said, "When I came here I was determined to consider myself an Australian."

Polding, leaving Australia for England in search of money and missionaries in November 1840, said that he left 'with the feelings of an Australian and that he went to England to show that country the picture of a genuine Australian'. (Cited in Australasian Chronicle, 17 November 1840.)

At the time of Polding's death, his successor as Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan, wrote: "The people feel that he is identified with their own times and the earliest history of the colony."

The ability to identify with people was the source of Polding's compassion and zeal for justice. In one of his replies

to the 1845 Parliamentary Committee on the condition of the Aborigines, he said: "... I am making myself a black, putting myself in that position, and taking away all that I know except that this is my country, that my father lived by pursuing the emu and the kangaroo, that I am driven away from my hunting grounds, that my children and tribe are subjected to the grossest barbarities."

In his Lenten Pastoral of 1856 Polding called for unity in diversity in this new Australia. "Before everything else we are Catholic and next, by a name swallowing up all distinctions of origin, we are Australians; from whatsoever land we or our parents have come from, be it from Ireland, France, England, from Scotland, from Germany ... we are no longer Irish, French, English and Scots but Australians."

Archbishop Polding was the mainstay of the Catholic Church in Australia, and especially of the Good Samaritan Sisters which he founded in 1857, giving them the Rule of St. Benedict. He died in 1877 and his tomb is in the crypt of St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

Next meeting of the Conference of the CIB

The next meeting of the Conference of the CIB, 16 - 20 September 2004, will be before the Abbots' Congress, 20 - 29 September 2004, to which all members of the Conference are invited. Presence at the Congress is a sign of the importance we are giving to collaboration with our brothers. The community in Assisi has invited the Conference to meet there before going to Rome for the Congress. Further information about this meeting will be going out to the Conference members later in the year.