

CIB MODERATOR'S REPORT
Symposium, September 8, 2010
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It has been a busy and productive four years. I have learned that being the Moderator is an awesome responsibility. I have been enjoying the opportunity and challenge that it provides to me personally. I am privileged to be engaged in this ministry in the world of Benedictine women. I thank you for the trust you have placed in me.

To those of you who may be new to the CIB, I would like to give a brief explanation of the internal workings of the CIB. The CIB brings together in a sisterly bond all women's communities consociated with the Benedictine Confederation. As of the 2006 *Catalogus*, we number some 16,000 Nuns and Sisters. We have the world divided into nineteen regions. Each Region elects a Delegate to the Conference of the CIB. Region 9, given its size, has three Delegates. In addition to these twenty-one Delegates, we have two more co-opted Delegates who represent international Congregations. Therefore, counting the Moderator, there are a total of twenty-four Delegates to the Conference of the CIB. This Conference of twenty-four meets once a year, usually in the Fall.

The Conference of the CIB met yesterday to set goals for the next four years. We will meet again after the Symposium to elect a Moderator, Assistant Moderator and two Council Members.

An Administrative Council of no more than six members meets twice a year under the leadership of the Moderator. The Council met on Monday to review the details of this Symposium. The newly elected Council will meet after the Symposium, on September 16th, to recommend the appointment of another two Council Members and to set dates for their future meetings.

Every other year, the Conference meets here in Rome, in conjunction with the meeting of the Congress of Abbots and in the year of the Symposium. In the alternating years, we try to meet in one of the nineteen Regions to gain a deeper appreciation of the richness and varied expression of women's monastic life. We have already met in six Regions: USA – Region 9; Kenya – Region 16; Australia – Region 15; Poland – Region 7; Philippines – Region 14; Croatia – Region 8. Communities have been most gracious in offering the hospitality of their Region as the site of a meeting.

At this time four years ago, the CIB Conference set four goals for the years, 2006-2010. The Administrative Council and Conference of the CIB have been processing these goals at each of our meetings, using them as the direction for our activities.

At this time, I would like to report to you on what has been accomplished under each of these goals over the past four years.

Goal 1. Develop a profile for the 21st century.

March, 2007

When I was yet a new Moderator of the CIB, it was my privilege to go to France, March 3-5, 2007, to the Abbaye de Pradines, which was hosting the Abbesses and Prioresses of Region 3, at the invitation of Mère Scholastique Piaget. It seemed very much like a mini-symposium, as reports on the 2006 Symposium were given by the participants, not only from France, but also by Mother Lucia Wagner from Germany, who was there as their presenter, and Mother Thérèse-Marie Dupagne from Belgium, and myself. I also gave the previous four-year report of the CIB and shared with them the goals and plans for the years 2006-2010. I was able to hear what was happening in each of the communities of Region 3, their concerns and hopes. At that meeting, they were engaged in the process of developing their own profile.

An interesting experience I had was that I was the one who needed a translator for everything that was said. Sister Marie-Claire van der Elst from Belgium was my personal translator. It gave me a better appreciation for those of you who need translations. I now understand the patience required to listen intently in order to learn of what is being said.

September, 2007

The meeting of the Conference in September, 2007, was held in the Philippines. Mother Mary John Mananzan, Prioress, and Sister Angelica Leviste, President of St. Scholastica College, presented the Profile of the Church and Benedictine life in the Philippines. Prior to this meeting, Delegates were asked to prepare for the meeting by holding a process in their respective Regions to discuss with their communities the profile of their Region: "Who do we say we are in our Region?" "Who do others say we are in our Region?" Many Regions came with their profile to share, and what a rich sharing it was.

The Missionary Benedictines also arranged for the other communities of Nuns and Sisters in the Philippines to come to their Priory in Manila to meet the CIB Delegates and to share with us about their communities.

It was at this meeting in Manila, that the CIB Conference determined the direction for this Symposium. At the end of the 2006 Symposium, all Symposium participants had the occasion to suggest a theme or focus for the 2010 Symposium. At the Administrative Council meeting in January, 2008, the Council entitled this Symposium, "Benedictine Women: Witnesses of Hope". You will have the opportunity at the end of this Symposium to offer suggestions as to the direction of the 2014 Symposium.

September, 2008

Since 1980, some Nuns and Sisters have been invited by the Abbot Primate as guests of the Congress of Abbots. On September 27, 2004, the Congress of Abbots recognized the CIB as officially representing the body of Benedictine Women's communities consociated with the Benedictine Confederation. It is important that the CIB Delegates attend the Congress of Abbots to learn of the workings of the Congress, to participate in the various sessions on pre-selected topics, and more informally, when at meals and breaks, to learn of the hopes and dreams of our brother abbots and priors from around the world.

The 2008 meeting of the CIB Conference was held for two days prior to the meeting of the Congress of Abbots. We held our CIB meeting of the Conference at Sant'Antonio, home of the Camaldolese Nuns, at the gracious offer of Mother Michaela Porcellato. A member of the community, Sister Anna Niculescu, shared with us the profile of the Camaldolese Nuns. Delegates processed Sister Anna's presentation with a view to the topic of the 2010 Symposium: HOPE. We had the opportunity to share similarities and differences with our own profiles, along with signs of hope as well as hopelessness in our Regions. We further processed where there is a need and cry for hope in our own hearts, in our communities, in the church, and in the world. Specifically, we discussed how each of us is a witness of hope.

January, 2009

Through the kind invitation of Prioress General Teresa Paula Dias Perdigão, the Administrative Council met at Mosteiro de Santa Escolástica in Roriz, Portugal in January of 2009. A member of the community, Sister Maria do Carmo, presented a profile of Benedictine life in Portugal. We were also hosted by the monks of Mosteiro de Singeverga in Portugal. At the invitation of Abbess Blanca Blanco Coiradas, we had the opportunity to visit the community at Monasterio de San Pelayo, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Though we shall never forget how cold it can be in

January in Portugal and Spain, it was a good experience to spend time with the two groups of Nuns of Region 2, and to be warmed by their gracious hospitality.

September, 2009

Last September, at the kind invitation of Abbess Anastazija Čismin, the CIB Conference journeyed to Region 8, to the beautiful country of Croatia. Sister Benedikta Halilović, President of the Federation, and Prior Jozo Milanović of Čokovac each prepared a presentation on the Profile of the Church and Benedictine Life in Croatia. The Delegates had the opportunity to process the presentations and how that information resonated with the story from each one's Region, citing similarities and differences. A DVD was given to each one on the history of the development of Benedictine life on the islands of Croatia. A highlight of the experience was to go to two of the islands to celebrate the Eucharist and visit and share a meal with the other communities of Nuns in the Federation. It was most meaningful to frequently celebrate Liturgies and meals with the home community, in order to become better acquainted with them and their life in Zadar.

The CIB is more than a three-day business meeting once a year. That could easily be done by e-mail. We have found the experience of visiting one another's Region to be a wonderful exchange on the life and development of Benedictines in the different parts of the world. The more we know of each other, the better we are able to understand and appreciate the gifts each brings to the world of Benedictine women. It has been most enriching to be introduced to the peoples of the area and to acquire an appreciation for the surrounding culture.

Goal 2. Question ourselves whether we, as Benedictine Women, have a word for the world.

This second goal was integrally connected with the first goal in the processing that we did each time that the Conference met. When it was first developed, it looked like this:

In processing this goal, we asked ourselves, **What do you want to say to the world?**

- **Looking at the world**
we have something to say about living together in a process of peace.
- **Looking at the world**
we have something to say about rejoicing in diversity.
- **Looking at the world**
we have something to say about a world view centred on Christ.
- **Looking at a world full of change**
we have something to say about stability.
- **Looking at the world**
we have something to say about honouring and respecting everyone, being inclusive, showing hospitality.

Each time that the Conference met, the Administrative Council developed a process to use to examine this goal. The first time we met about this in Manila, we developed statements on each of these key words and shared them with one another. Regions were then encouraged to use the same process and to share the results with the Conference when the Delegates met. Once "hope" was identified as the focus of the Symposium, then our sharing revolved around the word "hope" as we learned of the profile of the Church and Benedictine life in the different Regions.

It has been an exciting process. It is not only a word for the world, but a life that speaks louder than words. It becomes a type of *examen*: what if we were truly witnesses of hope in our Region? In our communities? In our Church? I am sure that this Symposium will have us unpack much of that as these days progress.

Goal 3. Search for better ways of disseminating monastic material between and among Benedictines of the different regions.

Because of the internet, it has been much easier for us to disseminate information to the Benedictine women of all of the Regions. What did we ever do before the internet?

Our new CIB Secretary, Sister Mary Rardin, of Atchison, KS along with Sister Benedict Brown of Turvey Abbey in England, have created a new CIB Website. It is now an attractive and up-to-date means of communication for all Regions. Sister Mary Rardin oversees the material that Sister Benedict puts on the website. I urge you to regularly visit the CIB Website if you have not already done so.

We published five CIB News Bulletins after the biannual meetings of the Administrative Council and sent out that information to all of the Delegates. In this way, Delegates are able to keep abreast of what is going on in the CIB and to know what will take place at future meetings of the Conference.

We published two CIB Newsletters after the meetings of the CIB Conference in Manila and in Croatia. These newsletters have included some beautiful photos that tell a story in themselves, as well as the touching stories Delegates submitted of personal experiences in the communities of these countries.

We also developed and collated the regional information on each Region that you received in your packet. Though it has not been translated into the various languages, we know that you will want to find someone from that Region and ask her to share with you pertinent information about her Region.

The key to this goal is not only the communication that the Moderator and the Administrative Council share with all of the Regions, but even more importantly, the communication that goes on among communities in a given Region. Some Regions have built up a real network among their communities for mutual support and exchange of ideas and experiences, by meeting together at least once a year. I urge all Regional Delegates to examine ways to improve on this goal in your Region. Why not take the processes we will be using here these days and share them with the communities of your Region? This can enable everyone to connect with our Symposium theme, "Benedictine Women: Witnesses of Hope".

Goal 4. Review the structures of the CIB within the next four years.

The CIB was born in November, 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. As the CIB continued to grow and mature over the last eight years, and, as we had become more comfortable in relating to one another, we found that our structures had not kept up with our experience.

We have spent three of the last four years in the process of revising the Statutes of the CIB. After surfacing suggestions for revision from all of the Regions, the Delegates met to process the suggested changes we wished to pursue. Sister Monica Lewis and I spent much time drafting and re-drafting our Statutes. We also solicited the input of those who were directly involved in the composition of the earlier version which was in effect for a number of years: Mother Máire Hickey, Mother Joanna Jamieson, and our canonical advisor, Abbot Richard Yeo. The Delegates had the opportunity to review the proposed changes in their respective Regions and to offer further suggestions for revision. Finally, on September 4, 2009, the Delegates of the CIB Conference voted unanimously to approve the revised Statutes. On that same date, Abbot Primate Notker Wolf ratified the Statutes of the CIB.

In your packet, you have received a booklet containing the new Statutes of the CIB, some historical background information of the CIB, and the first steps that were taken towards forming a network of

Benedictine Women. The booklet also contains the Norms concerning consociation with the Confederation. We hope that you will find this a handy resource in matters pertaining to the CIB.

The Administrative Council also updated the CIB Memorandum, which is a type of job description to accompany the Statutes. It presents in more detail the different roles people have in the CIB. You will find a copy of the CIB Memorandum in your packet.

OTHER

CIB Secretariat

For the past several years, through the gracious hospitality of the Nuns in Assisi, the CIB Secretariat has been housed at Monastero San Giuseppe in Assisi. Through the kindness of Mother Michaela Porcellato, we have moved the Secretariat of the CIB to Sant'Antonio. Having everything at Sant'Antonio will make it more convenient for us when we hold our meetings and symposia here in Rome. Thank you, Mother Michaela, for offering us this space. Special thanks to Sister Monica Lewis who arranged for everything to be moved from Assisi to Rome. Sister Monica came to Rome to organize the material in our new Secretariat.

New Communities of Women in the Benedictine Confederation

There are two Benedictine women's communities that have become members of the CIB in the last four years. One of the things you will discover in the CIB Handbook are the norms concerning consociation with the Benedictine Confederation. Chapter 2 specifically outlines how a community of Benedictine women, who are not already incorporated or united to any congregation or monastery of the Confederation, becomes consociated with the Benedictine Confederation. The community petitions the Abbot Primate who, in turn, consults with the CIB. The Abbot Primate may then grant a decree of consociation with the Benedictine Confederation. When a community is consociated with the Confederation, they are automatically members of the CIB.

On February 10, 2008, a small community in Kerala, India, Region 19, Nava Jyothi, Benedictine Monastery, was formally consociated with the Benedictine Confederation by the Abbot Primate. With that decree, they have become members of the CIB.

If a monastery of women which professes the Rule of Saint Benedict is incorporated or united to any congregation or monastery already in the Confederation, that monastery of women is considered to be automatically consociated with the Confederation.

In September, 2008, the men's community at Abbaye Sainte-Madeleine, Le Barroux, France, was accepted into the Benedictine Confederation. This decision also brought the women's community in Le Barroux, Abbaye Notre-Dame de L'Annonciation into the Confederation and thus into the CIB.

We welcome these communities and hope that they will find mutual support from their association and collaboration with us.

Boards

As the CIB Moderator, I have been invited to membership of the Board of AIM International. I attended two of the meetings thus far: one in Rome and the other in the USA. Sister Gisela Happ, of the AIM Secretariat, is an official Observer at meetings of the CIB Conference. AIM has supported many of the projects of our communities. Specifically, AIM has been most generous to the CIB, supporting meetings of the CIB Conference as well as making it possible for those in need to be able to attend the Symposium.

I am an Honorary Board Member of the Beit Benedict Foundation in the USA. Beit Benedict is an effort on the part of the monks of Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, to build an Interfaith Peace Academy on Mt. Zion. This Peace Academy would bring together Palestinians and Israelis in dialogue with one another through cultural, religious and educational endeavors. Beit Benedict is to be a locus for initiatives promoting peace and charity in the Holy Land. Mother Isabelle Thouin and her community have become involved in the effort by sponsoring a foundation in Canada for Beit Benedict.

A year ago, I was asked to be a member of The Saint Benedict Education Foundation Board, which provides the means for Sant'Anselmo to continue the educational mission of St. Benedict. The Foundation seeks to renew and strengthen the academic programs of the pontifical Athenaeum of Sant'Anselmo and to extend the range of its instruction to include as many students as possible, especially those who have been under-represented in the past. One of the initiatives of the Foundation is the St. Scholastica Scholarship Fund for Benedictine Sisters and other women studying at Sant'Anselmo. Several of your communities may have had occasion to be supported by this St. Scholastica Scholarship Fund.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would say that over the thirteen years that I have been involved in the international gatherings of Benedictine women, there has been a wonderful development in the support and exchange of ideas and experiences among the Nuns and Sisters. There is a growing appreciation for the different expressions of the one common charism we all share. Not only do we come together for a meeting, but there is a deep and abiding concern and love that has been exhibited among us. Together we hold our concerns about the present and our anxieties about the future of religious life, the Church, the world, and the earth.

These exchanges among our Benedictine communities worldwide have been opportunities for us to join in the struggles within our diverse cultures. We sense the accompaniment of the Spirit within and among us no matter where we are on the globe. Integrally connected to one another, our lives are intertwined with hope, determination and passion.

We have discovered that we share a common life, a common charism, a common vision. The CIB truly exhibits that strangers can come together as friends.

Thank you for your kind attention.