



The Abbot President's Circular Letter

April 2017

HAPPY EASTER! FELICES PASCUAS! FROHE OSTERN! BUONA PASQUA!

Website: The Congregation webmasters, Br. Francis McCarty and Ben Larson (Manchester) have been hard at work with the development and update to the Congregation's website. Some of the new features include a necrology, which allows the viewer to search by name, or monastery, or year. A vocations page has been added with the email addresses of all the vocation directors of the Congregation. Those discerning a monastic vocation will also find a reading list of selected titles in *Benedictina*. An apostolates page has also been added with a roster of the ten colleges and universities and twelve secondary schools sponsored by the houses of our Congregation. It should be noted that our monastic congregation has more schools than any of the other monastic congregation of men or women. Those marking silver or golden jubilees of profession or ordination are also posted on the website...*ad multos annos!* Soon there will be a login/password only section to the site, in which members will have access to congregation documents on various topics (see mutual assistance below).

Finances: The financial advisors of the Congregation met with the congregation council at St. Procopius Abbey on October 24-29, 2017, to review the certified audits of all our houses, colleges and schools. This year all the audits arrived on time. Many thanks to all those working in the finance offices throughout the Congregation for their attention to this important task. At this meeting Father Maurice Haepling, O.S.B. (Atchison) and Father David Brown, O.S.B. (Belmont) concluded their service to the congregation as financial advisors after decades of dedicated and generous service. Heartfelt gratitude to them and their monastic communities for sharing them with us for so many years! At this meeting, we also welcomed three new financial advisors: Fathers Martin Bartel, O.S.B. (Latrobe), Isaiah Frederick, O.S.B. (Collegeville), and Michel Tidd, O.S.B. (Morristown). We extend our thanks to their abbots and communities for sharing their expertise with the houses of our Congregation.

Roman Updates: November 23-15, 2016: Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. attended the 88th Assembly of the Union of Superiors General at the Salesianum in Rome, Italy. Also present were Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B., abbot presidents of other monastic congregations, and circa 150 superiors general of various religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. The main theme of the gathering was "The Fruitfulness of the Prophetic in Religious Life." Fr. Bruno Cadoré O.P., Fr. Michael Perry, O.F.M., and Fr. Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm. gave conferences. on religious prophecy "ad intra" and "ad extra." Fr. Antonio Perina, S.V.D. and Fr. Pascual Chavez, S.D.B. spoke on religious life and the young. The morning of Friday, the 25th was entirely taken up with a meeting with Pope Francis in the Synod Hall, Vatican City. The meeting took the form of an open dialogue with the Holy Father, who was asked a number of questions by the superiors general about prophesy in consecrated life. Copies of these addresses were distributed to the abbots of the Congregation.

November 25-27, 2016: Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. and Procurator General Geraldo Gonzalez y Lima, O.S.B., attended the second international symposium sponsored by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life entitled, "Rethinking the Use and Management of Our Goods in Light of Our Charism." The symposium has held at the Antonianum in Rome with some 800 participants. Following the first symposium in 2014, the dicastery published a booklet outlining the guidelines for the use and management of goods of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. One excerpt reads: "Formation in economic matters according to one's charism is of fundamental importance in order to make innovative and prophetic choices for the mission." The three-day symposium was dedicated to reflection, sharing and discussions. The aim is to provide a response to the needs of a changing world and to Pope Francis' exhortation: "I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and ministries adjusted to new needs" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life).

New Norms: The 52nd General Chapter of the Congregation approved ten new norms for our proper law. Following review by the Congregation's civil and canonical advisors, Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. promulgates that the ten norms approved by the 52nd general chapter be inserted into the proper law of the Congregation on December 30, 2016. These new norms cover a wide range of diverse topics, including governance, admission policies, fasting and abstinence, child protection policies, and formation in chaste celibacy. Members can find an updated version of the *Constitutions and Directory* on the Congregation website. In addition, abbots, members of the president's council and the canon lawyers of the Congregation were given a copy of this new edition of our proper law.

Mutual Assistance: The 52nd General Chapter also established a mutual assistance committee to explore and study ways in which the monasteries of the Congregation can share resources and personnel. Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. appointed the following members to this committee: Father Luke Edelen, O.S.B. (Newark), Father Boniface Hicks, O.S.B. (Latrobe), Father John Mary Lugemwa, O.S.B. (Richmond), Brother Paul Richards, O.S.B. (Collegeville), Father Jude Salus, O.S.B. (Morristown), and Brother Damian Whalen, O.S.B. (Shawnee). The committee had its first meeting at St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, NJ, January 28, 2017. The committee has decided to move forward with two initiatives: The first is the creation of standing committees on communications, development, liturgy, monastic life, safe environment and vocations. Monks of the Congregation will be invited to assist in these working committees in order to collect and share resources. These will be posted on the Congregation website in a login/password protected area for members only. The second is a formation convocation to be held this summer at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA (see below). This will be a meeting of all the novice masters and/or formators for this important initial stage of monastic formation. The purpose is to develop a common curriculum so that houses can collaborate and share formation resources. Another recommendation from the committee is for monks to visit other houses in order to better understand and appreciate both the common and diverse qualities of monastic life throughout the Congregation. One practical way to do this is to make the annual retreat with another monastery, with the permission of the respective abbots. To this end, the Abbot President has collected and circulated to the abbots the dates of the annual retreats in the houses of the Congregation. The work of this committee will be presented to the general chapter in June 2019.

Annual Abbots' Workshop: February 17-21, 2017, Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA, hosted the abbots and conventual priors with houses in the U.S.A., from our congregation, the Swiss American Congregation, English Congregation, Olivetan Congregation, Annunciation Congregation, Silvestrine Congregation and St. Ottilien Congregation. Abbot Primate Georgy Polan, O.S.B. was present and gave a report on the Confederation and on Sant'Anselmo. The keynote speakers were Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. and Father Daniel Ward, O.S.B. (Collegeville) with "Case Studies in Monastic Life: Responding to the Bruised Reed," and also Father Thomas Gaunt, S.J., from C.A.R.A., Georgetown University, on trends in vocation discernment. Additionally, Father Benoit Alloggia, O.S.B. (Latrobe) gave a report on the St. Benedict Education Fund, which provides scholarship to Sant'Anselmo. Abbot Joel Macul, O.S.B. (Schuyler) gave a pitch for the Benedictine Development Conference, hosting this summer at Schuyler (see below). Abbot Joel was also elected the delegate of those abbots who do not belong to either of the two American Congregation, so that at the annual meeting of Benedictine Presidents, men and women, these houses have a voice. Among the highlights of the event was the fraternal exchange among the abbots. Several of the abbots also took the opportunity to visit the USS Midway in San Diego.

Visitations: One of the important services of the Congregation is the cycle of canonical visitations. Some of those who have offered to serve as visitators are no longer able to do so due to age and/or infirmity. It has been the custom for the visitation team to consist of an abbot and a monk, and two of each the larger houses. It has also been the practice that one member of the Congregation council is present for visitations, whenever possible. To continue this important service, the Congregation council has approved and planned a workshop for new visitators, which will take place at St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, NJ from August 6-10, 2017. At the recent annual meeting of abbots in Oceanside, CA, the Abbot President asked the assembled abbots for nominations of new visitators. Invitations have gone out to those so designated.

Pastoral Visits: In addition to the canonical visitation of houses of the Congregation, the Abbot President has made a number of pastoral visits to the following monastic communities: Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA (October 15-17, 2016); Mary Help of Christians Abbey, Belmont NC (October 17-20, 2016); St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle IL (October 25-26, 2016); St. Bede Abbey, Peru IL (October 26-27, 2016); St. Gregory Abbey, Shawnee, OK (October 31-November 2, 2016); Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA (December 10-14, 2016); St. John's Abbey, Collegeville MN (January 31-February 3, 2017); Newark Abbey, Newark, NJ (February 7, 2017); St. Martin's Abbey, Lacey WA (February 21-23, 2017); St. Leo's Abbey, St. Leo FL (March 20-24, 2017); St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL (April 2-6, 2017); Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA (April 7-10, 2017).

Mark your Calendars:

1. **Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities:** 25th Anniversary Symposium at St. John's University, Collegeville MN from June 1-4, 2017. The theme is *Educating in a Benedictine Context: What does it Mean? Why does it Matter?* For more information, contact, Patty Epsky. Email: PEpsky@CSBSJU.EDU
2. **International Juniorate Conference:** quadrennial gathering of monks in simple vows throughout the Benedictine Confederation at Collegio Sant'Anselmo, Rome Italy, June 22-July 6, 2017.
Link: http://www.anselmianum.com/programmi/2017/junior_conference/_index.php
3. **Benedictine Youth Congress:** triennial meeting of students in our Benedictine secondary schools at St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, KS, July 16-18, 2017.
Link: <https://www.benetna.org/meetings>
4. **Monastic Worship Forum:** at Subiaco Abbey from July 17-21, 2017 with Father J. Michael Jonas as the keynote presenter. Link: <http://monasticworshipforum.org/index.php/upcoming-conferences/>
5. **Formation Convocation:** for novice master and/or formators in each of our houses at Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe PA, July 19-22, 2017. For more information, contact the Abbot President: president@amcass.org
6. **Benedictine Development Conference:** for monks and lay staff engaged in development activities in our houses at Christ the King Priory, Schuyler NE, July 24-28, 2017.
Link: <http://www.benedictinedevelopment.com/>
7. **Visitation Workshop:** for current and future visitators at St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, NJ, August 6-10, 2017. For more information, contact the Abbot President: president@amcass.org

Save the Date:

- ✓ **National Juniorate Conference** at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH from June 11-23, 2018.
- ✓ **53rd General Chapter** also at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH from June 16-21, 2019.