



# The Abbot President's Circular Letter

May 2018

**Union of Superiors General:** The 90<sup>th</sup> biannual meeting of the heads of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life was held on May 23-25, 2018 at Casa del Divin Maestro in Ariccia, Rome. Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. joined Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B., other Abbots President and Superiors General to discuss the upcoming Synod on *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*. The participants heard from a wide range of voices: the two Special Secretaries of the Synod (for the first time, both religious), as well as a Brother from Taizé, religious who work with young people in the peripheries of Syria and Brazil, young religious from the Philippines, Croatia and Colombia, and young people themselves who have started a vocational journey after coming into contact with a religious family. During the Assembly, 10 Superiors General were elected to represent this Assembly at the Vatican Synod in October.

**Union of American Benedictine Presidents:** The Presidents of the Congregations and Federations of Benedictine men and women in the U.S.A. met on May 1-2, 2018 at St. Anselm Abbey, Washington, DC. The meeting focused on a variety of common interests and initiatives, including presentations by Sr. Sharon Euart, RSM and Dr. Mark Chopko on the suppression of the governance of a monastery, as approved by the 52<sup>nd</sup> general chapter of our own monastic congregation. Other topics included a collaborative project on archives, canonical norms on debt for monasteries and schools, and the annual allocation of proceeds from *RB1980* for scholarly work. This year, our Congregation received a grant for the Spanish translation of An American Abbot: Boniface Wimmer 1809-1887 by Jerome Oetgen.

**Benedictine Confederation:** Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B., welcomed abbots, abbesses, monks, nuns, oblates, teachers and students to Rome for the 125th anniversary celebration of the foundation of the Benedictine Confederation by Pope Leo XIII with his brief *Summum semper* (July 12, 1893). The late Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B. (Latrobe), first American abbot and founder of our monastic congregation, was among those first abbots to support this new initiative to unite the various monastic congregations into a single Confederation on the Aventine Hill. This jubilee celebration included a private papal audience on April 19, 2018 in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace. The following day, Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B. (Mt. Angel) gave a paper on sapiential theology in the Benedictine tradition. The festivities concluded with a solemn Pontifical Mass, presided by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, at the Basilica S. Anselmo on the Aventine Hill, for the solemnity of St. Anselm, April 21, 2018. Among the invited dignitaries were Ambassadors to the Holy See, Superiors General and several Abbots President of the Benedictine Confederation, including our own Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. In his role as President of the International Commission on Benedictine Education, Abbot Elias led a small delegation of twenty teachers and students from our secondary schools in Chile, England, Germany, USA and South Africa to join the jubilee activities. Further highlights for these teachers and students included pilgrimages to Subiaco and Montecassino, and visits to the papal basilicas and catacombs of Rome.

**Annual Abbots' Workshop:** Once again the abbots of our monastic congregation met with the abbots and conventual priors of the Swiss American Congregation, the Annunciation Congregation, the Olivetan Congregation, the Silvestrine Congregation, and the St. Ottilian Congregation with houses in the U.S.A. The workshop was held at St. Joseph Abbey, St. Benedict, LA from February 2-6, 2018. Brother John Mark Falkenhain, O.S.B. (St. Meinrad) spoke about developing cultures in our monasteries that both attract and sustain monastic vocations. Also present were Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B and Prior Mauritius Wilde, O.S.B. who addressed the Confederation and the Collegio Saint'Anselmo, respectively.

**ORDO App:** Monks of our monastic congregation can now download the 2018 Ordo to their personal calendars from the Congregation website: [www.amcass.org](http://www.amcass.org). The instructions are simple: 1) Go to Menu Bar→”Documents”; 2) Click “Ordo”; 3) Click “Subscribe to Ordo.” You will find the 2018 Congregation Ordo on your personal calendar. Enjoy easy access to the liturgical calendar!

**Praesidium Board:** Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B and Father Roman Paur, O.S.B. (Collegeville) attended the biannual meeting of Praesidium Religious Services in Arlington, TX on January 25-26, 2018. The Abbot President reported on the various efforts of our mutual assistance safe environment committee to achieve accreditation for all the houses of our monastic congregation.

**Mutual Assistance Committee** The third meeting of this committee established by the last general chapter met at Saint Gregory’s Abbey on January 17, 2018. The committee developed a questionnaire to be distributed to the abbots at the upcoming workshop in Louisiana. In addition to the standing committees on formation, monastic life, safe environment and vocations, a new committee was established on canonical affairs. The following monks serve on that committee: Father Jonathan DeFelice, O.S.B. (Manchester), Brother David Kelly, O.S.B. (Latrobe), Father Jonathan Licari, O.S.B. (Collegeville), Father Daniel Ward, O.S.B. and Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. This committee will study the proposal from the Union of Superiors General that lay members be able to serve as major superiors (abbots). The committee will also study the possibility of a norm on sabbaticals for abbots.

**Congregation Collaboration:** Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. met with Abbot President Christopher Jamison, O.S.B and the abbots of the English Congregation at Ealing Abbey, London on January 4-8, 2018. Among the topics of shared interest was the safe environment of our monasteries and schools.

**Canonical Visitation:** Abbot Mark Cooper, O.S.B. (Manchester), Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B. (Belmont) and Father Jonathan Licari, O.S.B. (Collegeville) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation of the monastic community at St. Mary’s Abbey, Morristown, NJ from February 18-23, 2018. Abbot James Albers, O.S.B. (Atchison), Father Michael Peterson, O.S.B. (Collegeville) and Father James Flint, O.S.B. (Lisle) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation of the monastic community at St. Gregory’s Abbey, Shawnee, OK from May 13-18, 2018.

**Fraternal Visits:** Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. made visits to the following monastic communities: Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA: December 6-11, 2017; St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL: December 27, 2017-January 2, 2018; St. Gregory’s Abbey, Shawnee, OK: January 15-19, 2018; St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA: February 26-March 6, 2018 and April 7-10, 2018; Marcy Mother of the Church, Richmond, VA: May 4-8, 2018.

***Upcoming Events: Mark Your Calendars!***

**Juniorate Conference:** June 14-23, 2018 at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH

**Benedictine Leadership Institute:** for lay educational leaders in secondary schools: June 25-29, 2018 at St. Procopius Abbey and Benedictine University, Lisle, IL.

**Vocation Convocation:** July 5-9, 2018 at St. Mary’s Abbey, Morristown, NJ.

**Benedictine Formation Workshop:** July 18-21, 2018 at St. Mary’s Abbey, Morristown, NJ.

**53<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter:** June 16-21, 2019 at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH.