



# The Abbot President's Circular Letter

May 2019

**Union of Superiors General:** The 92<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the Union of Superiors General (USG) was held on May 24-26, 2019 at the Pauline conference center in Ariccia on the outskirts of Rome, Italy. Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B. (Sant'Anselmo) and Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. were among the more than 100 participants. Members of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and representatives from the USG/UISG Joint Commission on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation gave a series of presentation on the encyclical *Laudatio si* and in preparation for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the Amazon in Rome (October 6-127, 2019). The Superiors General elected 15 religious from their respective institutes to attend the Synod at the invitation of Pope Francis. Four Superiors General also gave presentations on their participation at the Vatican summit on sexual abuse in the Church: Father Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R., Brother Ernesto Sanchez, F.M.S., Sister Carmen Sammut, M.S.O.L.A., and Sister Veronica Openibo, S.H.C.J. At the final business meeting, the Superiors General expressed a desire to work on more joint committees and initiative with the women religious superiors, including safeguarding.

**Mutual Assistance:** Members of the Congregation's mutual assistance committee met at St. Andrew Abbey on April 30, 2019 to prepare their report on the activities of the committee and their respective subcommittees on formation, vocation, monastic life, safeguarding and canonical affairs for the General Chapter at St. Anselm Abbey in June 2019. The committee members include Father Luke Edelen, O.S.B. (Newark), Father Boniface Hicks, O.S.B. (Latrobe), Father Bede Kotlinski, O.S.B. (Cleveland), Brother Paul Richards, O.S.B. (Collegeville), Brother Damian Whalen, O.S.B. (Shawnee) and the Abbot President.

**President's Council:** The Abbot President's council met at St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL on February 22-23, 2019. In addition to the regular business of the Congregation, the council approved two special projects. The first is on writing the history of the Congregation by Jerome Oetgen. The second is on the Congregation's Archives, housed at St. Vincent Archabbey, as well as a program of formation for archivists by Malachy McCarthy. In addition, the council finalized plans and budget for the upcoming General Chapter during which time the current members of the council will complete their respective three-year terms. The General Chapter is charged in the proper law of the Congregation to elect two current abbots and two monks to serve on the Abbot President's council, as well as an executive secretary. Sincere gratitude to those who have served on the council to date: *1<sup>st</sup> Councilor* Abbot Mark Cooper, O.S.B. (Manchester), *2<sup>nd</sup> Councilor* Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, O.S.B., (Latrobe) *3<sup>rd</sup> Councilor* Father Edward Mazich, O.S.B. (Latrobe), *4<sup>th</sup> Councilor* Father James Flint, O.S.B. (Lisle), and Prior Michael Calhoun, O.S.B. (Peru), who serves as executive secretary.

**Annual Workshop:** St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman, AL hosted the quadrennial meeting of Benedictine Abbots and Prioresses on February 22-25, 2019. More than 75 monastic superiors representing more than 2,700 Benedictine men and women in the Americas attended the meeting. The Benedictine Prioresses stayed with the Sisters at Sacred Heart Monastery also in Cullman and the Benedictine Abbots stayed at the Abbey Retreat House. The keynote speakers included Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B. (Sant'Anselmo, Rome) and Sister Susan Hutchens, O.S.B. (Rock Island, IL). The topic of their presentations was on the virtue and practice of hope, entitled, "As We Wait in Joyful Hope." In addition, reports were given on The Alliance for International Monasticism (A.I.M.), The American Benedictine Review, (A.B.R.), The Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (C.I.B.), The International Commission on Benedictine Education (I.C.B.E.), Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (D.I.M.M.I.D.) as well as The Benedictine Development Forum and the Monastic Worship Forum. At the business meeting of the Abbots the new schema from Sant'Anselmo on the subsidium and solidarity funds was presented.

**Praesidium:** Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. and Father Roman Paur, O.S.B. (Collegetown) attended the biannual meeting of the Praesidium board on January 10-11, 2019 at their national offices in Arlington, TX. The Conference of Major Superiors of Men has engaged religious institutes of men and societies of apostolic life to adopt these policies and to achieve independent third-party accreditation by Praesidium. Many of the houses of our Congregation have been engaged in the accreditation process and others are currently in the process of completing this accreditation. A report will be made at the General Chapter in June 2019.

**General Chapter Update:** Next month, the 53<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter of the Congregation will be held at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH on June 16-21, 2019. The agenda includes a discussion of the apostolic exhortation, *Christus vivit*, on youth, faith and vocational discernment. The abbots and delegates will be drafting a “Benedictine Response” to that important magisterial teaching for use in the parishes, school, colleges and universities sponsored by the monasteries of our Congregation. Dr. Elizabeth Drescher of Santa Clara University and Mr. Curtis Martin, founder of FOCUS, will be the keynote speakers. In addition, a panel of junior professed will address the General Chapter from their perspectives as ‘millennials’ in the Church. The canonical affairs commission of the Congregation will also present two proposals for consideration: 1) the possibility of non-ordained abbots and 2) sabbaticals for abbots. The mutual assistance committee will present report on their deliberations and projects over the past three-years. Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for all involved in this General Chapter.

**Canonical Visitations:** Abbot Austin Murphy, O.S.B. (Lisle) and Father Meinrad Miller, O.S.B. (Atchison) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation at St. Bernard Abbey on December 10-14, 2018. Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B. (Collegetown), Abbot James Albers, O.S.B., (Atchison), Father Elias Correa-Torres, O.S.B. (Belmont) and Father Michael Tidd O.S.B. (Morristown) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation at St. Vincent Archabbey Abbey, Latrobe, PA on January 27-February 2, 2019. Abbot Isaac Camacho, O.S.B., (St. Leo) and Brother Aelred Senna, O.S.B. (Collegetown) conducted the quinquennial visitation at Abadía de San Antonio Abad, Humacao, PR on February 26-March 2, 2019. The Abbot President was present for these three visitations. Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B., Father Edward Mazich, O.S.B. (Latrobe) and Brother David Kelly, O.S.B. (Latrobe) conducted the quinquennial visitation at St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, IL on March 29-April 3, 2019. Finally, at the request of Abbot President Christopher Jamison, O.S.B., Abbot President Elias Lorenzo conducted the canonical visitation at Portsmouth Abbey, RI on April 4-9, 2019.

**Pastoral Visits:** The Abbot President made the following pastoral visits: Collegio Sant’Anselmo, Rome on May 20-25, 2019; St. Andrew Abbey, Cleveland, OH on April 25-May 2, 2019; Mosteiro São José, Mineiros, Goiás, Brazil together with Abbot James Albers, O.S.B. (Atchison) on March 7-15, 2019; St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL on February 20-26, 2019; Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond, VA on January 12-18, 2019; Abadía del Tepeyac, Izcalli, Mexico on December 1-7, 2018.

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

- ***Juniorate Formation Program*** at St. Joseph’s Abbey, St. Benedict, LA from June 10-20, 2019.
- ***53<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter*** at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, NH from June 16-21, 2019.
- ***Benedictine Leadership Institute*** at St. John’s Abbey and University from June 24-28, 2019. [www.benetna.org](http://www.benetna.org)
- ***North American Association of Benedictine Oblates***, at Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, NE from July 5-10, 2019. [www.naabod.org/naabod-mtg.html](http://www.naabod.org/naabod-mtg.html)
- ***Benedictine Development Symposium*** at Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, NE from July 22-26, 2019. [www.benedictinedevelopment.com](http://www.benedictinedevelopment.com)
- ***BENet2019: Benedictine Wisdom under the Southern Cross***, at St. Scholastica’s College, Sydney, Australia from September 30-October 4, 2019. [www.benet2019.org](http://www.benet2019.org)