



# The Abbot President's Circular Letter

May 2020

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**Richmond Update:** Following the canonical visitation last fall, the monastic community at Mary Mother of the Church Abbey in Richmond, VA have been working on new governance structures for both the school and the monastery. Father Daniel Ward, O.S.B. (Collegetown) and Father John Fortin, O.S.B. (Manchester) are working as consultants on these new structures. To assist in their implementation, Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B., after hearing his council, has appointed Father Jonathan Licari, O.S.B. (Collegetown) as residential canonical administrator of the monastery, effective December 30, 2019. Father Jonathan has served as prior of his monastery and as headmaster of St. John's Preparatory. He is a distinguished canonist and member of the Congregation's canonical affairs commission. Thank you to Father Jonathan and to Abbot John Klassen and community in Collegetown for this generous response to our monks in Richmond!

**Abbot's Workshop:** The annual meeting of the North American Benedictine Abbots took place at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA on February 18-24, 2020. Theologian Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson, gave a series of presentations, entitled: "The Rule of Benedict and the Practices of Ancient Moral Philosophy: Witness of Monasticism in the Post-Modern Age." Abbot Primate Gregory Polan also gave an update on Saint Anselmo and the Benedictine Confederation. The Abbots were hosted by Bishop Kevin Vann and Msgr. Christopher Smith for a tour, Mass and supper at Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove, CA.

**President's Council:** The Abbot President's council met together at Benedictine Priory in Savannah, GA. In addition to the ordinary affairs of the houses of the Congregation, the council took up the succession plan for the President of the Congregation in light of the appointment of Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Newark. The council includes *1<sup>st</sup> councilor* Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B. (Collegetown), *2<sup>nd</sup> councilor* Abbot Mark Cooper, O.S.B. (Manchester), *3<sup>rd</sup> councilor* Father Edward Mazich, O.S.B. (Latrobe), *4<sup>th</sup> councilor* Father Elias Correa-Torres, O.S.B. (Belmont) and Father Bede Kotlinksi, O.S.B. (Cleveland) the executive secretary.

**Canonical Visitations:** Abbot Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. conducted a special visitation at Christ in the Desert Monastery in Abiquiu, MN on February 18-24, 2020. Abbot Peter Novacosky, O.S.B. (Muenster), Abbot Philip Davey, O.S.B. (Peru), Father Edward Seton Fittin, O.S.B. (Morristown) and Father Edward Mazich, O.S.B. (Latrobe) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation at Saint John's Abbey in Collegetown, MN on March 8-14, 2020. Abbot Mark Cooper, O.S.B. (Manchester) and Father Jonathan Licari, O.S.B. (Collegetown) conducted the quinquennial canonical visitation at Belmont Abbey in North Carolina on March 15-20, 2020.

**Pastoral Visits:** The Abbot President made the following pastoral visits: Mary Mother of the Church Abbey in Richmond on December 5-15, 2019; Saint Leo Abbey in Florida from December 30, 2019 – January 4, 2020; Mary Mother of the Church Abbey in Richmond on January 27-February 2, 2020.

**Abbatial Elections:** Please pray for the following monastic communities who are preparing for abbatial election: Saint Vincent Archabbey on May June 22 - 26, 2020; Saint Peter's Abbey had to postpone the election because of an international travel ban and awaits rescheduling, and Saint Martin's Abbey in Lacey, WA on June 8-12, 2020. On behalf of all in the Congregation, many thanks and sincere appreciation to Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, O.S.B., Abbot Peter Novacosky, O.S.B and Abbot Neal Roth, O.S.B. for their

many years of dedicated and generous leadership and service. Please pray that we are able to move forward with elections.

**Praesidium:** Abbot President Elias Lorenzo, O.S.B. and Father Roman Paur, O.S.B. (Collegeville) attended the biannual meeting of the Praesidium advisory board on January 23-24, 2020 at their national offices in Arlington, TX. Among the topics on the agenda, was the 2020 revision of the Standards for Accreditation in light of the new *motu proprio, Vos estis lux mundi*. In accordance with the proper law of the Congregation, all the houses are to have a policy on child protection in accordance with the norms of the Church. The Conference of Major Superiors of Men has engaged Praesidium in the development of these policies.

**Extraordinary General Chapter:** In accordance with the proper law of the Congregation and with the unanimous consent of his council, Abbot President Elias R. Lorenzo, O.S.B. has announced the convocation of an Extraordinary General Chapter on July 27-29, 2020 at St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas for the sole purpose to elect a new President to complete his term of office until the next Ordinary General Chapter in June 2022. The apostolic nuncio has approved a new ordination date - **June 30, 2020**. However, the ordination liturgy will be restricted to immediate family and chancery officials. Regretfully, Bishop-elect Elias will not be able to invite the abbots of the congregation or friends as previously planned. But for our safety, this is a wise plan forward. The ordination liturgy will be live-streamed on the archdiocesan website at 2:00 PM ET.

**President Resigns:** With the recommendation of his Council, on April 15 Bishop-elect Elias R. Lorenzo, O.S.B. submitted his resignation as Abbot President of the American Cassinese Congregation. In accordance with the proper law of the Congregation, the leadership of our Congregation passes to the first councilor, Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B. of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, until the Extraordinary General Chapter on July 26-28, 2020 when the abbots and delegates of the Congregation will convene at St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas specifically to elect a new President.

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

- **June 16-19, 2020 Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities** at St. Martin's Abbey & University, Lacey, MA ([www.abcu.info](http://www.abcu.info)) This meeting was canceled by ABCU's Executive Committee.

However, at the ABCU Meeting in Washington, DC, in February, many of the presidents articulated a need to better understand evolving sponsorship structures within the Church and have a discussion with monastic superiors about the future. This is more critical for some institutions than others, but as you certainly understand, it is a concern for all members.

Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, a Vincentian priest, former president of DePaul University and the new president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, has spent much time researching this topic and has agreed to facilitate a discussion with monastic superiors and presidents, via the Zoom videoconferencing system, on June 17. In addition, with the COVID-19 crisis looming, the ABCU executive committee asked Fr. Dennis to lead a conversation with the presidents and monastic superiors about immediate needs our campuses have, including the possibility of support from sponsoring communities or other entities in the medium and long term.

**Thus, ABCU has scheduled a Zoom meeting for ABCU presidents and monastic superiors at 1:30 p.m. CDT (2:30 p.m. EDT), on June 17, which will be facilitated by Fr. Dennis Holtschneider.** The hope is for the meeting to last two hours, but it may take longer. More information will be coming from Trisa Schaeffer, ABCU administrative coordinator at Saint John's University, as we get closer to the date.

- **June 13-23, 2020 Juniorate Formation Program** at Mary Help of Christians Abbey, Belmont, NC For more information, contact Fr. Elias Correa-Torres, O.S.B. ([eliasosb@bac.edu](mailto:eliasosb@bac.edu)). This formation program has been postponed, with tentative dates of June 12-22, 2021.
- **June 28-July 3, 2020 Benedictine Vocation Directors' Convocation** at St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, KS. For more information contact Brother Leven Harton, O.S.B. ([levenharton@gmail.com](mailto:levenharton@gmail.com)) This convocation has been postponed, with possible dates of June 27-July 2, 2021.
- **July 27-29, 2020 Extraordinary General Chapter** at St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, KS. For information, contact Mr. Paul Cocco ([assistant@amcass.org](mailto:assistant@amcass.org))
- **November 5-8, 2020 Benedictine Priors' Conference** at St. Benedict's Priory, Benet Lake, WI. For more information contact: Brother Anselm Broom, O.S.B. [prior@conception.edu](mailto:prior@conception.edu)
- **February 5-8, 2021 Annual Abbots' Workshop** at St. Joseph's Abbey, St. Benedict, LA. For information and registration, contact Christian Life Center [clc@sjasc.edu](mailto:clc@sjasc.edu)
- **September 5-15, 2021 International Congress of Abbots.** Orientation for new abbots on September 6-7, 2021, with arrival on September 5, 2021; Congress proper on September 8-14, 2020, with arrival on September 7 and departure on September 15, 2021. Though this is a long way's off, more information on registration, accommodations, etc: [www.congressusosb.com](http://www.congressusosb.com)
- **June 19-24, 2022 54th Ordinary General Chapter** at St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, KS