

Alliance Inter-Monastères

Newsletter, 2019 - N° 2



Following the recent AIM International Council at León Monastery (Spain), here are some highlights of the activities of AIM and the life of the communities of our Benedictine family.

SECRETARIAT OF AIM

Sister Mary-Placid Dolores will leave the AIM Secretariat in January 2020 to go to the Philippines as she has been elected President of the new congregation of the Eucharistic King Nuns.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Sister Placid for the fifteen years she has spent at AIM. She put all her energy and all her heart into it. But there will be several opportunities to meet her again and collaborate.



AIM COUNCIL

The November meeting in León took place in the setting of the beautifully renovated guesthouse of this monastery which hosts many pilgrims from all over the world on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

In addition to a wide exchange on news and the life of our monasteries around the world, we have deepened the question of formation in our monasteries at all levels: initial formation, juniors, formators, superiors, but also on-going formation : an inventory has been presented of what exists on the different continents pointing out what is missing today and what it would be good to develop or adapt.

We came back to the issue of sexual abuse in the communities. It was the occasion of a wide and useful sharing.

On the second day, a number of Spanish Superiors joined us. We spoke about the future of our communities with the presentation of some situations of renewal here and there: in the Netherlands, in Switzerland, including a greater communion with lay people, and a re-reading in community of the reasons for the existence of our monastic life; in India, the Philippines and other places.



INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Sister Anna Brennan, a member of the International Team, was elected Abbess of Stanbrook Abbey, her convent in England. She will no longer be a full member of this team but will remain available for certain missions. We thank her for her work.

INTERNATIONAL OR REGIONAL MEETINGS

■ CIB

The Council of the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB) met in Mexico at the same time as the Synod of Abbots Presidents of the Confederation. This joint meeting of the two structures was held for the first time. There was much talk of sexual abuse, the Roman synod on young people, and also the implementation of *Cor orans*.



■ Latin America – EMLA

The meeting of EMLA for all the monastic superiors of Latin America took place at the beginning of October in Córdoba, Argentina under the chairmanship of Fr. Enrique Contreras, abbot emeritus of Los Toldos (Argentina). The theme of the meeting was the Eucharist and the monastic life.



There were several conferences given by representatives of the different regions of Latin America: For the SURCO (Southern Cone of Latin America), Father José Luis de Las Condes (Chile) presented the Eucharist and primitive monasticism; for CIMBRA, Fr. Gabriel, OCSO Prior of Novo Mundo (Brazil) spoke of the relationship between the Word of God and the Eucharist; for ABECCA, Fr. Humberto Rincón, Abbot of Guatapé (Colombia) presented the relationship between Eucharist and service, and finally Fr Abraham Esquivel Armenta, of San Benito, Mexico, presented the questions concerning the priesthood in the monastic life. These conferences were followed by forums with different reactions and rich discussions in workshops. The presence of the Manquehue Movement (Chile) and another movement of laity, the Barca (in relations with the Los Toldos abbey, Argentina) should be mentioned in the assembly. It was also an opportunity to present the news of AIM. In addition, there was a festive evening with traditional music from Argentina and a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Fr. Brochero, a famous missionary in the mountains above Córdoba whose beatification process is underway.

This meeting was particularly rich and the theme allowed for very open discussions on the situation of monastic life in Latin America.

■ Africa

A meeting was held this year in Tigoni (Nairobi) for the organisation of the pan-African meeting (ABE: African Benedictine Encounter): there will be a new preparatory meeting in 2020 in Ndanda (Tanzania). The Pan-African Assembly is scheduled for 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya, or Tanzania. The objectives are: to promote Benedictine spirituality, to create an African vision of Benedictine life and mission, to foster inculturation.

■ Asia – ISBF

Mark Butlin was present at the ISBF meeting in Makkiyad with Father Makzymilian Nawara, President of the Annunciation Congregation who represented both the Abbots Presidents' synod and AIM.



■ Europe and North America

The 9th centenary of the Charter of Charity has been widely celebrated throughout this past year. An echo will be given in the next Bulletin.

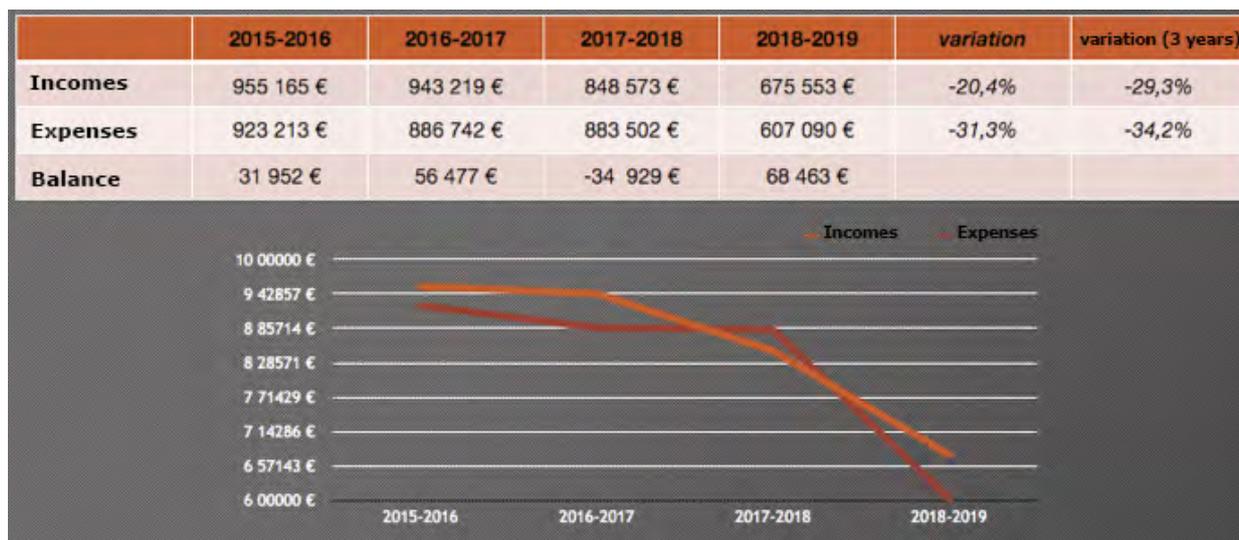
The AMTM (Association of Friends of Monasteries Across the World), secular support in France of AIM, has just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in Paris and would like to rely on this initiative to find

new members (cf aimintl.org). It was a very successful evening at the House of Bishops, in Paris, with the participation of Fr. Anselm Grün and several young witnesses, present in Europe for their studies, their Congregation, as well as members of the International Team of AIM, from Asia, Africa and Latin America. A sale of monastic products from foreign monasteries was also organised during this event which brought together a large audience.



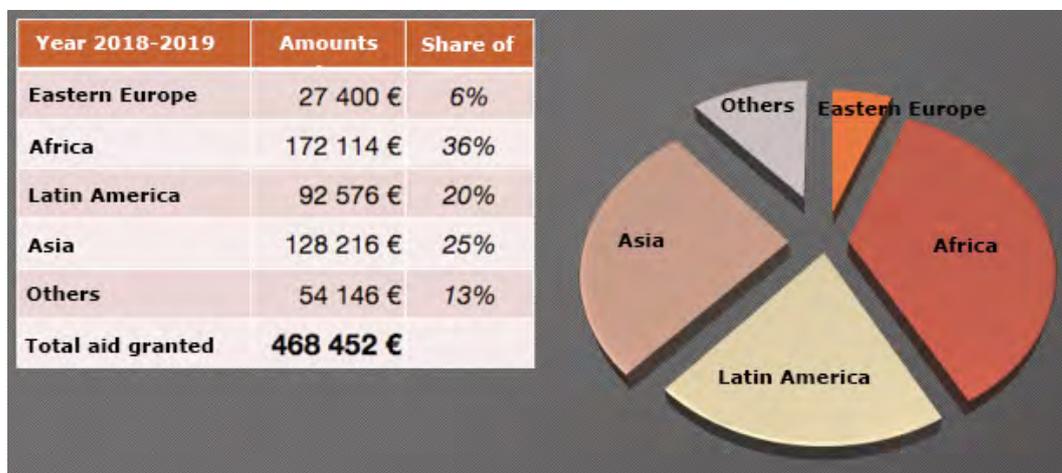
THE ACCOUNTS OF AIM

Synthesis account:



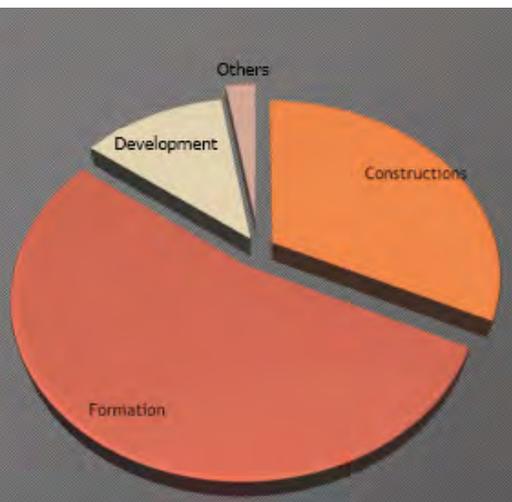
The analysis concerning the aid granted shows that, for the year 2018-2019, those for training exceeded those for constructions. This is the first time such a phenomenon has occurred, although AIM has always given priority to formation. But, moreover, the requests for help have been fewer. There is also a drop in donations.

Geographical distribution



Breakdown by categories:

Year 2018-2019	Amounts	Share of
Constructions	150 376 €	32%
Formation	249 420 €	53%
Development	56 507 €	12%
Others	12 149 €	3%
Total aid granted	468 452 €	



THE BULLETIN OF THE AIM

The Portuguese edition has just been relaunched and will be published in December.

PUBLICATIONS

AIM continues the revised and expanded reissue of the “Witnesses of Christ” collection, now called “The Manna of the Fathers”.

Three new volumes have appeared this year:

n° 17 - Cyprian of Carthage, *The unity of the Church*

n° 18 - Irenaeus of Lyon, *Combat against the false knowledge, The glory of God, is the living man*

n° 19 - Leo the Great, *God became man, Christmas, Epiphany.*

SOME EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

■ The Benedictine Sisters of Twasana (South Africa): purchase of a tractor

At the request of Bishop Thomas Spreiter (osb), Apostolic Vicar of Es-howe, the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of Tutzing began recruiting local candidates to establish a local community of sisters under the rule of St. Benedict. The first candidates were accepted on December 29, 1929. The Congregation *Propaganda Fide* officially recognised the newly founded Benedictine community of African sisters in its text of December 5, 1933, which included the authorisation to open a novitiate. On January 3, 1985, they elected the first superior, Sister Johanna Ntuli, from amongst their own members. The parent community, Twasana, is 80 km from Vryheid (Kwa-Zulu Natal) in Zulu territory. Next door is a high school (and boarding school) for girls held by the sisters. The sisters have six other mission houses.



Many sisters have apostolates in parishes, schools. They have a farm that allows them to support themselves, but also to help the local population with cheap labour or food.

The tractor used for the sisters’ farm is no longer usable, the expenses for its repairs becoming more and more expensive. The sisters have an urgent need to acquire a new tractor to continue the work on the farm and continue to help the local population.

Requested amount: 15,000 euros.

■ The Benedictine nuns of Lolo (Chad): renewal of a fence

At the request of the Bishops' Conference of Chad, the St. Agatha Monastery was founded in 2004 by the Congolese Benedictines of Lubumbashi, DRC (Congregation Queen of the Apostles). It is the first foundation of a monastic community in this country. They first benefited from a house belonging to the diocese 20 km from Moundou, then a monastery was built in the village of Lolo on land offered to the Bishop by the Muslim leader of the village.

This village has some 6,000 inhabitants, practically on the sidelines of modernity: there is neither drinking water, nor complete school, nor health centre, nor large trade. The population has no alternative but to stock up in Moundou, the second largest industrial city in the country 30 km from the village.

The sisters cultivate sesame, peanut, millet, yam and start growing cotton (a sister studied agronomy). The sisters founded a small school where they taught for a long time. Today, there are outside teachers.

Beef herds that are used to come down from the north after harvest are causing more and more damage to the sisters' crops: they come down earlier because of the drought that has increased in recent years as crops are not yet harvested. It is imperative for the sisters to build a stronger fence to protect the plantations.

Requested amount: 15,000 euros.



■ St. Scholastica Spirituality Centre (Philippines): Training Session on BR

The St Scholastica Spirituality Centre was opened in 1991 in Tagatay and belongs to the Congregation of the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of Tutzing. Every year, a seminar on the Rule of St. Benedict is offered to the monasteries of Africa, Asia and Oceania; it is animated by different sisters and brothers of the Benedictine confederation. The seminar lasts fifteen days and this year concerns about forty brothers and sisters.

Funding is generally supported by the Congregation and other Benedictine communities with the help of AIM.

Requested amount: 15,000 euros.



■ Vinh Phuoc Monastery: Formation of Vietnamese Cistercian Sisters

In Vietnam, a first monastery of Cistercian monks was founded in 1918 by Father Henri Denis Benoit Thuen, on Mount Phuoc Son. He is at the origin of the Cistercian congregation of the Holy Family (Vietnam). A community of nuns, although long prepared in the Cistercian congregation of the Holy Family of Vietnam, was founded only in 1972, and since then two other communities have been founded: Phuoc Tien and Phuoc Hai.

The community of Vinh Phuoc includes forty sisters permanently engaged, ten sisters of temporary vows, seven novices, thirteen postulants and fifteen aspirants.

In 1992, for the first time, theology courses for nuns were organised in Ho Chi Minh City thanks to the efforts of Bishop Paul Nguyen van Binh (Archdiocese of Ho Chi Minh City). The sisters bought a small house in Saigon to house the sisters of the three Cistercian communities who were studying.

Each year, communities send sisters to be trained at the Inter-Congregational Institute of Theology (Ho Chi Minh City). Twenty-eight sisters are studying this year, including ten new students. Financial help is needed to help with the sisters' multiple expenses.

Requested amount: 7,000 euros.



CONCLUSION

The monasteries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are now in a phase of consolidation with new questions related to developments in the economy and social life in the world. In addition, the foundations are fewer in number than in the past. The funding dimension of projects, even if it remains on the program, will probably be less strong than in the past, and support in the form of fraternal visits, various expertise, links of cultural solidarity, support in structural difficulties or community, will certainly be much more important. Financial resources remain necessary for all this and we thank all of you who participate in this concern.

Let us open our hearts wide to welcome the dynamism of the Spirit in the service of the development of our communities in view of a proclamation of the ever- new Gospel.

Good Advent to all and happy Christmas!

Fr. Jean-Pierre Longeat

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