

Alliance Inter-Monastères

Newsletter, 2020 - N° 1



Dear brothers, dear sisters, dear friends,

In the middle of the year, here are some echoes of the activities of the AIM.

COVID-19

These last months have been marked by the challenge of the pandemic Covid-19. It has impacted on monasteries no less than the rest of society. Some have experienced serious forms of the illness, and there have been deaths in our communities. The numerous communications we have received show that each community has reacted to this challenge in a spirit of faith and unity. This human solidarity has worked miracles. Now our task is to confront future challenges, for we have entered a period inevitably conditioned by the danger of infection. Certain countries were already in such a situation, without the rest of the world taking much notice. It is worth remembering that the epidemic at Ebola brought deaths of 70% of those affected, while for Covid-19 it has been only 2%, which is already too much.

Many regional, national and international meetings have been cancelled to avoid the risks of contamination. Solidarity between our monasteries will be all the more important in the future. AIM hopes to play its part.

In view of the fact that AIM is not everywhere well known, especially to new superiors, it has seemed important to us to dedicate this newsletter to a short presentation of the way this structure can be of service to monastic communities.

ALLIANCE INTER-MONASTÈRES

What is the purpose of AIM?

This question is frequently asked, and here are some elements of an answer :

AIM was founded in 1961, and each year receives about a hundred requests for help toward projects put forward by the monasteries founded in the second half of the 20th or in the 21st century in Asia, Africa, Latin America or eastern Europe.

Such projects concern:

- Formation of younger members of the community, their formators and superiors. This help is often long-lasting and sometimes professional.
- Construction or renovation of buildings
- Job
- Development (agriculture, education, health, ecological)
- Communication

Priority in help provided is oriented primarily towards formation, in which the requests are very numerous.



Help in construction of a building to receive refugees (Babete, Cameroon)



Session on the Rule of St Benedict requested by CIMBRA JOVEM in 2017

In the course of the last sixty years AIM has assisted the birth of several continent-wide structures of monastic solidarity. Most of the regions of the world are now provided with organisations which allow Benedictine, Cistercian and Trappist monasteries to work together.

Latin America:

- ABECCA: Association of Benedictines and Cistercians of the Caribbean and the Andes.
- CIMBRA: Brazilian Conference for Monastic Interchange.
- SURCO: Conference of Monastic communities of the Southern Cone.
- EMLA: Monastic Meeting of Latin America which brings together all Latin American superiors every four years.

Africa :

- Francophone Monasteries of West Africa.
- MAC: Monasteries of Central Africa (Central Africa, Congo, DRC, Rwanda, Burundi).
- BECOSA: Benedictine Communities of Southern Africa (South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique).
- BUT: Benedictine Union Tanzania.
- BECIAKU: Benedictine and Cistercian Association of Kenya and Uganda.
- BECAN: Benedictine and Cistercian Association of Nigeria.
- Conference of monasteries of the Indian Ocean for Madagascar.



Meeting of EMLA (2019)



Session proposed by MAC (2016)

Asia:

- ISBF: The Indo Sri-Lankan Benedictine Federation.
- BEAO: Benedictines of East Asia and Oceania.

There is also a commission for the monitoring of monasticism in China.

These organisations take initiatives in formation-sessions and various meetings to assist the development of monasticism in the relevant regions. They do not, of course, replace the essential function of the Congregations and Orders, but provide a very necessary local complement. From the very beginning AIM has engendered, accompanied and supported this work of co-operation and solidarity.



Links between monasteries

AIM has also received from the Abbot Primate and the Abbots General of the Cistercians the role of ‘observer’ of the evolution of monastic life in the world. Numerous contacts and help in the projects of monasteries as well as fraternal visits make possible the evaluation of developments. In addition AIM suggests and evaluates basic reflection on issues in monastic life and its operation. Booklets such as ‘The Mirror of Monastic Life’ (which may be downloaded from the AIM website) make their contribution to the evolution of a monasticism well grounded but always new.

Functioning of the AIM

■ General Secretariat

To co-ordinate the working of the AIM there is a General Secretariat located at Vanves, hosted by the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Bathilde. The team consists of :

- The President, currently Dom Jean-Pierre Longeat, formerly Abbot of St Martin at Liguge.
- Secretariat : currently Sr Christine Conrath holds the position of permanent secretary and Sr Isabelle is charged with everything connected with information technology, illustration and production of the Bulletin. Until the last few months there was also Sr Placid of the monastery of Cogon in the Philippines. She left last January because she had been elected President of her Congregation.

■ International Team

Six or seven members of an international team keep the AIM in direct contact with the communities. The members of this team visit the communities for meetings or in connection with preaching retreats or animation of sessions, or simply more spontaneously at the news of some problem or initiative. The team meets two or three times a year to share the fruit of these visits and projects submitted to it and to decide the order of their priority.



■ Executive Committee

Twice a year (in May and November) an executive committee composed of a German Benedictine, a Philippino Benedictine and a Belgian Trappist, with two or three experts of the International Team examines requests for help and decides the allocation of funds.



■ Council

An international council comprises the Abbot Primate, the Abbots General of the Trappists and Cistercians, the President of the CIB, several Presidents of Benedictine Congregations, representatives of the continents of Asia and Africa and some other experts, for example, in finance. It includes also three members of the International Team as advisers. It meets once each year to review the work done in the

previous year, to examine current situations and to determine aims for future work. These meetings take place in Rome or in a Benedictine, Cistercian or Trappist monastery, normally in Europe.

■ Bulletin and Newsletter

Twice a year (May/June and October/November) a bulletin of some hundred pages is published on various themes according to different headings: liturgy, economy, art, significant witnesses to monastic life, as well as news of monasteries. It is published in seven languages, French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and partially in Italian and Dutch.

If you are not receiving this Bulletin, please let us know, for it is an important means of communication. There is no fixed subscription, but each recipient is free to contribute any sum to help towards the production of the Bulletin.

A numbered Newsletter is also sent round twice a year, in August and December. It gives varied information and helps to link monasteries together in an increasingly fraternal relationship.

■ Website

The website is well maintained. It gives news of the Benedictine Confederation and the Cistercian Orders, information on all the listed communities. For a multitude of headings the Bulletin and the Newsletters may also be consulted.

Collaborations

■ AIM-USA

There is also an American Secretariat of AIM. It was originally founded to gather funds in North America for the international AIM. However, at present it is developing several of its own initiatives such as Lenten collections in dioceses, provision of books for monasteries and support for particular communities, especially in Latin America. The links between AIM-USA and the international AIM remain very strong, and the financial support received from the United States is highly significant.

■ AMTM

The offices of the International AIM also include a lay association which finances several projects each year. It is called 'Amis des Monastères à Travers le Monde' (Friends of Monasteries across the World). Its President and the secretary of the AIM take part in the meetings of the administrative council of the AMTM in fraternal collaboration.

Assistance most recently given (January to June 2020)

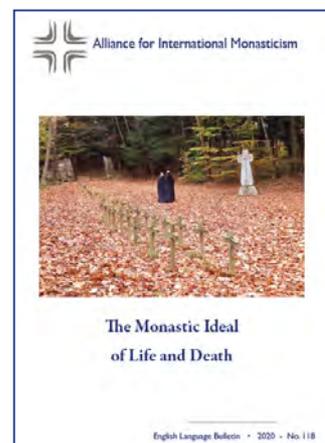
Construction: €81,475 (52%)

Formation: €54,274 (35%)

Job (Machinery/Equipment): €17,000 (11%)

Other: €4,330

Council meeting at León (Spain, 2019)



The following page presents three examples of projects financed by AIM.

Please do not hesitate to communicate with us if you have any information to give.

We thank for their generosity all those who are able to support us financially. At present the resources of International AIM come mostly from abbeys, but also from some organisations, such as the Foundation for Monasteries, several religious Congregations and private donations. We thank you for all your contributions, great or small.

With fraternal greetings,

Fr Jean-Pierre Longeat

President of AIM

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EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY AIM

Purchase of a Sewing-Machine

Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Trinity (Arua, Uganda)

The monastery of Arua was founded in 1960 by the first local bishop, Mgr Angelo Tarantino, and Mother Anastasia Fumagalli. The community comprises nineteen professed sisters and six still in formation.

The sisters receive orders for liturgical vestments from their own diocese, but also from the neighbouring countries of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The vestments are all hand-made, which requires a great deal of time. To improve their products and the economic advantages of the work they plan to acquire a computerized sewing-machine with four heads, each with twelve threads. The sisters will buy the computer which will guide this machine. They must also pay a fee to the trainer who will teach them how to operate this highly technical machine.



Construction of a Guesthouse

Benedictine Sisters of Morropón (Peru)

In 1969, the Benedictine sisters of Ferdinand (USA) arrived in Peru and consecrated themselves to education in a parish school founded by the Augustinians. In 1982 they founded a monastery at Morropón to receive Peruvian recruits. In 1987 the first Peruvians arrived, and the community now comprises five Peruvian sisters and two postulants. All the sisters have a diploma in education.

The community would like to build a guesthouse to welcome groups and individuals for spiritual retreats. The total cost is estimated at €91,100. The monastery of Ferdinand supports the project up to €21,640, and the community rounds this up by €9,110. They seek other financial support.



Studium for monastic formation

Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Bouaké (Ivory Coast)

In 2016 the superior of the monastery at Bouaké, concerned about the formation of the monks, set up a Studium for philosophical and theological formation linked to the courses of the faculty of theology of the UCAO – UUA (Catholic University of West Africa – University Unit at Abidjan). An agreement was reached between the Studium and the Faculty about the course of study (programmes and time-table), the professors of the Faculty and diplomas. The two-year cycle of philosophy run by the University was to be spread over five years for the Studium, leading to a canonical baccalaureat in theology. The cycle of theology reaches from February to April, and of philosophy from October to December. The agreement envisages a formation more directed towards monastic life, since it is monks who are being formed at the Studium. The course was originally put forward to the monks at Bouaké, and in 2019 was opened to monks and nuns of other monasteries.

From 25th January to 30th April 2020 the theology course took place with a different student-body. Three Benedictine sisters from the neighbouring monastery and a monk of Séguéya (Guinea) participated. The total cost of this time of formation was €4,968, and the participants paid €1,220. Till now the monastery has managed to bear the cost of the Studium. This year some financial assistance is needed because of the rise in the numbers of students registered for the formation-course.

