

# Alliance Inter-Monastères

*Newsletter, 2020 - N° 2*

**Dear brothers, dear sisters, dear friends,**



**A**s this year ends many people are unhappy about the evolution of our humanity and of the world in general. No one really knows where we are going. We are living not only through a time of crisis but more profoundly through a period of change which is leading into a new era. It is not simply a health crisis but more profoundly a time of social, cultural and economic reversal which is affecting the whole planet.

As monks and nuns we enter this time with the eyes of faith in the confidence that Christ is coming to us and fulfilling the will of his Father's love. Let us have no fear, lift up our heads and enter upon this period in the sure hope of things which will not pass away.

At this time especially, monasteries can play a really important part as places of peace, refreshment, renewal, sharing and vitality. All our communities are confronted with the fragility which is affecting every individual, but thanks to our brothers and sisters in community we can face up to the challenge and help others. We can contribute to solidarity on the world scale, thanks to the resources of the communities of the whole Benedictine family.

We do not lack a meeting-place with God, who is waiting for us at the very heart of our human history in his sharing his own life with us at the very moment that many elements all around us seem to be falling apart. Today is the hour of adoration in spirit and in truth beyond all our external securities.

A blessed Advent and a blessed Christmas to all, in the hope of the One Who Comes!

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**Here are some pieces of news:**

## **COUNCIL OF THE AIM**

The Council held its annual meeting on-line in the month of November. All members were either present or represented. The main subject was the situation of the monasteries as a result of the present crisis.

Sister Patricia, Executive Secretary of the International Union of Superiors General, gave an especially remarkable talk, analysing the evolution, and giving some firm footholds from which to understand the future. Her contribution will be published in the next AIM Bulletin.

## SECRETARIATE OF THE AIM

The secretariate is now concentrated in the buildings of 7, rue d'Issy, hosted by the Benedictine sisters of Vanves. This arrangement works well and gives full satisfaction.



## THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM

The international Team has been enriched by new members, Dom Christian Temu OSB (Tanzania), Procurator of the Congregation of Saint-Otilien, and Sister Regina Tesch OSB, of the general house of the Tutzing Sisters.

From now on local correspondents, monks and nuns on each continent will link up with the Team for on-line meetings on the situation of monasteries or on current questions in their own region.

## THE CIB

The International Commission for Benedictine Women (CIB) has undertaken an enquiry on monasteries of women across the globe faced with the Covid-19 crisis. An account of it will be given in their Advent Letter.



## FORMATION

**NEW:** Sant'Anselmo has laid on a two-year formation-course in Spanish (costing a mere €400) for monks and nuns of Latin America, organised by Dom Fernando Rivas, former abbot of Luján. The AIM will be open to giving bursaries for this on-line course.

For all information see <https://ateneo.anselmianum.com/mod/page/view.php?id=195>

### Diploma en Estudios Monásticos en español (online)

El Instituto Monástico de San Anselmo ofrece un Diploma en Estudios Monásticos en español. Como respuesta a los pedidos recibidos, y con el apoyo de AIM y la Fundación Luzern, a partir de Octubre se ofrece online este Diploma, constituido por 12 cursos. Algunos de los títulos:

1. La presencia del Misterio de Cristo a lo largo de la Regla
2. La "ciencia espiritual" de los Padres y la Teología Monástica medieval.
3. Los Salmos en la vida del monje.
4. La "paideia" monástica y la formación del monje.
5. Introducción a la lectura de los textos de los Padres Monásticos.
6. El siglo VI monástico: Gaza y Montecasino como síntesis de la tradición monástica.
7. El sentido de la liturgia de las horas en la Regla y en la vida del monje.
8. Los grandes modelos monásticos en la historia I.
9. Los grandes modelos monásticos en la historia II.

Y tres cursos más, en preparación.

Para cualquier información dirigirse a: [institutomonastico@anselmianum.com](mailto:institutomonastico@anselmianum.com)

Para inscribirse, escribir a la Secretaría.

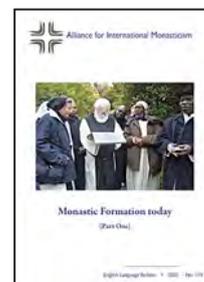
## AROUND THE WORLD

### BRAZIL

- As in many other situations, the meeting of the national monastic Association (CIMBRA) was postponed till January 2021, but there is no certainty that it will be able to take place. Its current President is Dom Filipe Da Silva, abbot of Rio de Janeiro, who is also president of the Brazilian Congregation.
- For formation the question of language limits the possibilities. The formation course at Sant'Anselmo in Spanish could be a useful opportunity.
- In the community of Salvador de Bahia, a new superior has been elected, Mother Benita Fernandes Sodré, replacing Mother Maura de Camargo, who in turn was preceded by Mother Vera-Lucia. The witness of this community remains particularly impressive, marked as it is by poverty and very lively social initiatives.
- There are many isolated communities in the vast territory of Brazil, which demands a special care to ensure solidarity between all the communities. This is the function of CIMBRA.



- The Bulletin in Portuguese is now well-established. In recent years some issues were not translated, in order to allow the Bulletin to keep to the pattern of the French, English and German editions. Numbers 116, 117 and 118 have already been published, and No 119 will be sent out in the first quarter of 2021. The Bulletin can make a good link between communities and can be a useful tool.



## LATIN AMERICA APART FROM BRAZIL

- In many countries the health-situation is dire. Fr Alex Echeandía, Prior of Lurín and president of the monastic association ABECCA for the north of Latin America and the Caribbean, and his community were badly affected. However their situation is now stabilized.
- The next meeting of ABECCA is planned for 2021 at the monastery of Esquipulas (Guatemala). ABECCA brings together forty-three monasteries in seventeen countries, from the equator to Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. Distances are a real problem. In Nicaragua, for example, there are two monasteries far distant from each other.
- It is the ambition of ABECCA to organise an annual course for formators. The first had twenty-nine participants.



Two young foundations should be mentioned:

- In Colombia, six sisters from Venezuela (a foundation of Vitorchiano) set themselves up at El Rosal (cf. the newsletter of July 2019), not too far from the monastery of Benedictine monks. It is well-known that the situation in Venezuela is tense, and the monastery of Colombia could serve as a refuge in case of need.
- In Mexico the monastery of Chiapas, linked to the Abbey of Christ in the Desert (USA) should be mentioned.



The principle difficulty of the monasteries of this region is the sharing of information. The internet does not always work too well, nor is the postal service very active. Information goes to Superiors, who do not always take the trouble to communicate it to members of their communities.

The stability of young monks and nuns is sometimes difficult, more than on other continents. There is a need to develop a new kind of monastic life.

Should a subdivision of the Region of ABECCA be envisaged? There is already a meeting of monasteries of Mexico, UBC, bringing together ten monasteries and meeting three times a year.

- The difficulties experienced by the two Cistercian monasteries of Bolivia (Apolo and La Paz) must also be mentioned. They have been persecuted by the government, notably in connexion with their educational activities. The German sisters present in the monastery of Bolivia have been driven into exile, although they were teaching the senior classes.

## EAST ASIA

- The meeting of BEAO for Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists did not occur this year, and has been put back to 2021. It will take place in Vietnam.

- Two young monks have returned from their studies to the Priory of Taiwan (Wimmer), one from Sant'Anselmo and the other from St Vincent (Latrobe, USA). A third who was also studying at St Vincent's is also due to return soon. This community plays an important part in relations with China.



- A foundation in Vietnam is currently in preparation by the Benedictine sisters of Thu Duc (Congregation of St Bathilde, Vanves). They are in the course of acquiring land halfway between Thu-Duc (near Ho Chi Minh City) and Loc Nam (near Dalat, about 200km away from Ho Chi Minh City).

## INDIA

- At the last meeting of the ISBF in March 2020 a new president was elected, namely Dom James Mylackal, Prior of Navajeevan. All the sessions of the formation programme have been postponed till 2021.
- The health crisis is pretty serious in the region. In the autumn there were about 100,000 dead, including a number of brothers and sisters. The psychological pressure is strong. Nevertheless the monasteries are surviving in prayer and their normal activities - apart from external ministry and school-work, though these dimensions are extremely important in India.



## AFRICA

- Three brothers from the little community of Midelt (Marocco) are in hospital for lung-infections, the Prior (Dom Jean-Pierre), Br José Luis and Br Jean-Pierre. Careful examination is unable to say whether this has anything to do with Covid-19. News is available on the Order's website (<https://ocso.org/>).
- **ABE:** The preparatory commission for the pan-African monastic encounter (African Benedictine Encounter) was due to occur at Ndanda in Tanzania last May, but was cancelled because of the pandemic. So no programme was arranged for the Encounter which was to follow. A new on-line meeting will take place in January 2021 to decide the next step.
- **The Structure Sainte-Anne** for the formation of formators has been re-launched. The three-month session which was due to occur in April-June 2020 was postponed till June-August 2021 because of the pandemic. Thirteen French-speaking monks and nuns of West Africa will meet at the convent of Claretians of Abidjan (Ivory Coast) and then at Bouaké.
- In 2016 the superior of the monastery at Bouaké set up for the formation of monks a Studium for philosophy and theology, linked to the course of study of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of West Africa. An agreement was reached between the Studium and the Faculty for the course of studies, the relevant teachers of the Faculty and diplomas. The cycle of philosophy provided over two years in the Faculty was to be extended over for five years at the Studium. The canonical baccalaureate in theology was proposed. The cycle of Theology runs from February to April, that of philosophy from October to December. The agreement envisages also that, since the Studium will be forming monks, the formation will be more oriented to monastic life. The Studium was originally proposed for the brothers in formation at Bouaké, but in 2019 it was opened to monks and nuns of other monasteries of the locality.



## EUROPE

The community of Vitorchiano (Italy) was badly hit by Covid-19. The sisters split into ‘bubbles’, each isolated in the different buildings of the monastery, guesthouse, noviciate, etc.



Other communities also have suffered badly from Covid-19.

Apart from this, the closure of several Trappist communities in France should be noted, including the Abbey of Our Lady of the Desert, where an initiative called ‘the village of Francis’ is going to be developed, following the initiative of a group of Christian businessmen who intend to encourage the welcome of different kinds of people (of whom some will be in difficulties) according to the integrated ecology of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*.

An increasing number of initiatives for monastic renewal in eastern Europe should also be noted.

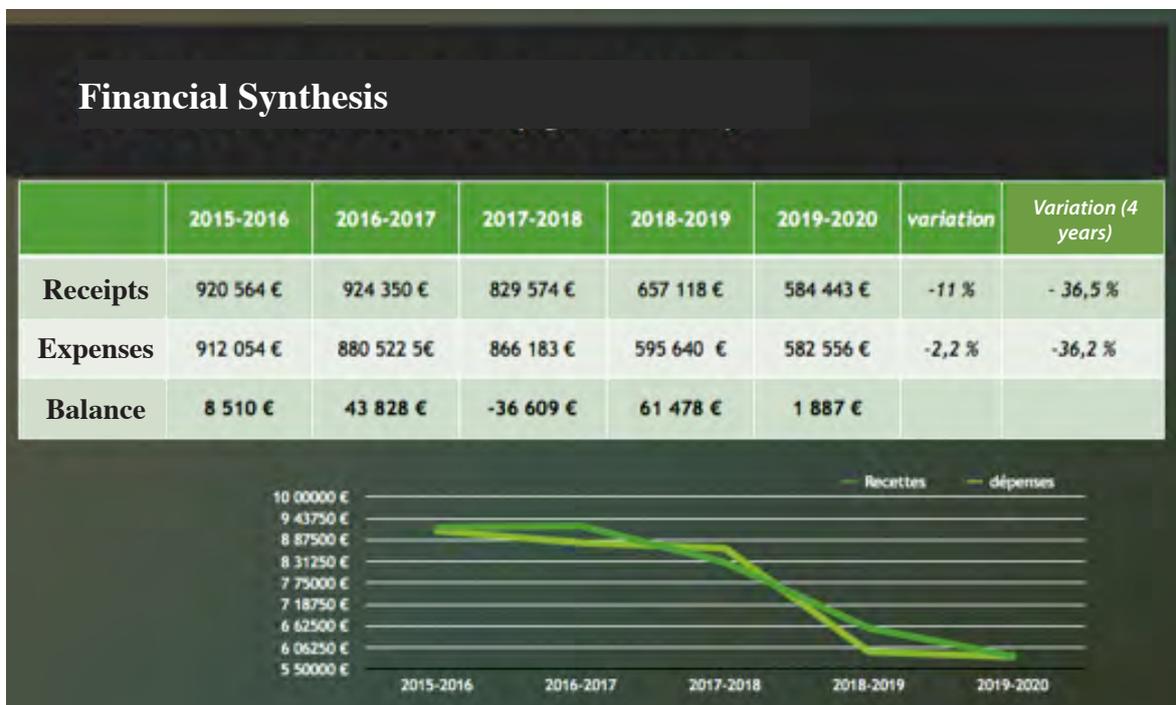
## FINANCIAL BALANCE-SHEET

Receipts and expenditure continue to decrease.

Several private foundations which in the past have been a great help to us are no longer able to do so. Monasteries in certain countries are making less gifts.

The secretariate has greatly reduced its expenditure, but this is far from compensating for the reduction of gifts. It is time for AIM to evolve stronger structures to help more important advances. AMTM and AIM are currently reflecting on these matters.

In any case it must be a time for solidarity.



## TWO NOTICES

- Isabelle Jonveaux, a sociologist working in Austria on contemporary monasticism, has begun research on activities of e-commerce in our monasteries. We would like to thank those concerned who kindly reply to [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4d0xBGCnN0SBHnVBWH9ko4no5boTFbQ2qhlyTzZijsCnZ4Q/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4d0xBGCnN0SBHnVBWH9ko4no5boTFbQ2qhlyTzZijsCnZ4Q/viewform?usp=sf_link)



- A multi-lingual book (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French) has just been published, a help for *lectio divina*, with gospel texts on the left-hand pages and corresponding pictures and designs on the right-hand pages by the celebrated Brazilian artist Claudio Pastro. We warmly recommend this work. To order it:

In French: <http://saintlegerproductions.fr/Livres/Claudio-pastro/BdeC-Claudio-Pastro.html>

In English: <http://saintlegerproductions.fr/Livres/Claudio-pastro/BdeR-Claudio-Pastro-Anglais.html>

In Spanish: <http://saintlegerproductions.fr/Livres/Claudio-pastro/BdeR-Claudio-Pastro-Espagnol.html>

In Portuguese: <http://saintlegerproductions.fr/Livres/Claudio-pastro/BdeR-Claudio-Pastro-Portugais.html>



## CONCLUSION

The internet site of AIM (<http://www.aimintl.org>) gives details of several projects which need support. Thank you for giving these your careful attention and for supporting any which speak to you especially. It is possible also to enter into direct contact with the monastery concerned and to follow this project, whether a bursary, a construction, a renovation or a business-project.

**I**n a spirit of fraternity the monastic network must function in a way which transcends all boundaries. In so doing it will be responding to the encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis to build a new world: monasteries must unite to make this a reality.

Wishing you all a good Advent and a holy year 2021,

**Fr. Jean-Pierre Longeat**  
President of the Alliance Inter-Monastères

### Euro account

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