



G

Gyrovagi

Gyrovagi: An occasional newsletter from the President of the Federation of St. Scholastica

Summer 2019

FSS Election Season 2019

The springtime of each year brings elections of prioress in some of our houses. This year was no different. The Sisters of St. Joseph Monastery in Tulsa held their discernment and election in March, with the assistance of Elaine Fischer (Atchison) as the facilitator. **Marie Therese Long** was elected as prioress to succeed Christine Ereiser who served as prioress for 12 years. Marie Therese was installed as prioress in June.

In April Mary Catherine Wenstrup together with Kim Porter (both of Covington, KY) facilitated the discernment and election process for the Sisters of St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Virginia.



Sister Marie Therese Long

Joanna Burley was elected as prioress to succeed Cecilia Dwyer who had served a total of 28 years as prioress (first for 12 years, then later for an additional 16 years). Joanna was also installed as prioress in June.



Sister Joanna Burley

Also in April the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago held their discernment and election, assisted by Mary Catherine Wenstrup as facilitator.

Judith Murphy was re-elected, generously continuing her many years of service to the community.



Sister Judith Murphy

Inside this issue:

- * FSS Elections 1
- * FSS Council 2
- * FSS President Travels
- * Updates 4
- * Prioresses at LCWR 2018 5
- * New Archivist
- * 55 and Under
- * Centennial Committee 6
- * Bristow 150 Anniversary 7
- * Federation Websites
- * Joint Meeting- Prioresses, Abbots, and Priors 8
- * Upcoming FSS President Travels
- * NAABOD Address 9
- * Esther Fangman Interview 10-11
- * St. Gertrude Monastery
- * CIB 2018 Symposium 12



S. Lynn McKenzie, OSB
Federation President

FSS Council Meeting held at Mount St. Scholastica November 2018



Pictured on left, clockwise: Lynn McKenzie, Kimberly Porter, Anne Wambach, Elaine Fischer, Christine Ereiser, Frances Briseño, Maricarmen Bracamontes, Judith Ann Heble, and Judy Zonsius (recording secretary).

With seriousness and some fun, the new council of the Federation of St. Scholastica met in Atchison, Kansas at Mount St. Scholastica hosted by our First Councilor, Elaine Fischer and her gracious community. While it was the first live and in person meeting of this group, it was not the first meeting, as the Council has met together several times through the magic of video conferencing via Zoom.

This collaborative and wise group generously gives of their time to the work of federation councilors, in addition to their own ministries in their monasteries and beyond.

2019 Travels of FSS President



From left to right: Therese Marie Dupagne (Belgium), Franziska Lukas (Germany), Abbot Pimate Gregory Polan (Sant' Anselmo), Caritas Swai (Tanzania), Mary Jane Vergotz (USA-CIB Secretary, Lynn McKenzie (USA), Maria del Mar Albajar i Viñas (Spain/Catalonia)

In January, I traveled to the monastery of St. Scholastica Abbey in Dinklage, Germany to attend my first meeting of the newly elected Administrative Council of *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB). It was my second time to visit Abbess Franziska Lukas (who currently is the CIB Assistant Moderator) and her community. They are a lovely, diverse and vital community of dedicated women who range in age from 20s to 90s. We had a good first meeting and began getting to know one another and making plans for future meetings.

Also in January I went to Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, Florida, together with my prioress, Tonette Sperando, where we served together as visitators for the Ordinary Canonical Visitation there. It is always a

privilege to be with communities during Visitation, which is sacred time together to explore the life of the community in its local context and also in the context of the federation and of the larger church. I always tell people that visitation is the time that we ask ourselves, "Are we who we say we are, who we profess to be? And how might we be that in a more authentic way?" Tonette and I were grateful for the opportunity to be with our sisters in St. Leo. (There was a poignancy to this visit of two women from the Cullman monastery going to their roots in St. Leo. Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman was a foundation of both St Leo, FL and of Covington, KY!)



(Con't on Page 3)

2019 Travels of FSS President (Con't)

Also in January I went to Mexico City, together with Administrator Anne Shepard, for a special visit with our Sisters at Monasterio de San Benito (MSB). During our visit there we went with the Sisters of MSB to visit the Sisters of Benedictine monastery in another part of Mexico City, Nuestro Señora del Tepeyac. We had a wonderful day of prayer, meetings and a delicious and lively meal together. These two communities are exploring how together they might cooperate and enliven one another's monastic life. Anne and I found the Sisters of Nuestro Señora del Tepeyac to be most gracious and welcoming.

February brought the annual meeting of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses (CBP) back to the Benedictine Sisters Retreat Center in Cullman. As always, it was a perfect opportunity for the CBP members to re-connect and share with each other the ways that their communities are living the monastic life in their locales and discovering ideas for helping all of our communities to live the life more meaningfully. It was also the year for the CBP to meet jointly (which happens every 4 years) with the abbots of our region. We had 2 special guest speakers with us who addressed the participants on the topic of HOPE. Abbot Primate Gregory Polan (former abbot of Conception Abbey in Missouri) and Sister Susan Hutchens (former president of the Federation of St. Benedict) provided much inspiration and spurred good discussion among the prioresses and abbots. The days of meetings, held at St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman, were full and enjoyable.



March took me to St. Paul, Minnesota where I had been invited to be the election discernment facilitator at St. Paul's Monastery. It was my first time to do that in another federation and it was a great experience. I enjoyed working with Kerry O'Reilly, president of the Federation of St. Benedict who presided at the election of Sister Catherine Nehotte, as well as with Sharon Nohner of St. Benedict Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, who was my partner in the facilitation.

Also in March I went to Tulsa for the election discernment facilitated by FSS First Councilor Elaine Fischer, who did excellent work among the sisters there. Her creative artistic side came out in a beautiful way among them. Being with a community at the time of election is also a sacred time. It is when the Sisters look very intentionally to their future and together discern who of their number might best serve them as they go forward. It was a privilege for me to preside at the election of Marie Therese Long as the prioress elect of St. Joseph Monastery, with installation on June 30, 2019.

April brought two more elections – first in Bristow and then in Chicago. At St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Mary Catherine Wenstrup of Covington was the facilitator together with Kimberly Porter also of Covington. After a total of 28 years of service as prioress, Cecilia Dwyer was succeeded by Joanna Burley as prioress. Joanna was installed on June 22. At St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago, Mary Catherine Wenstrup again served as facilitator. (Thank you, Mary Catherine, for your yes over and over again to this important service!) Judith Murphy was re-elected to a second term as prioress.

In May I had the privilege and treat to return to Bristow for a festive celebration which ended their year-long celebration of their 150th anniversary. It was beautiful. Because of the large crowd, the Mass and lunch had to be held on the grounds outside the monastery and chapel. After a night of rain, the sun came out the day of the celebration! With a bit of toweling off the chairs already set up on the grass, a great celebration was held, followed by a magnificent outdoor lunch that was accompanied by fun music from a one man music performer. He was terrific! It was so good to see the many whose lives have been touched by our Sisters of Bristow.

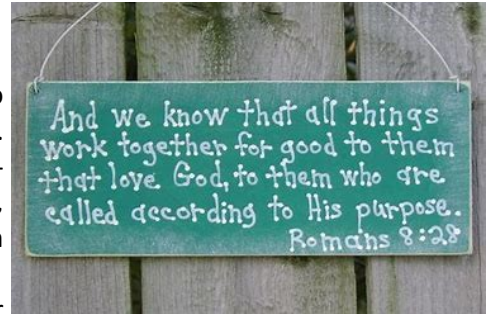
In August I will be attending the annual assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in Scottsdale, Arizona. The CBP members will gather the evening before for a short meeting and a meal together. We will also gather another evening during the week of LCWR for another meal together. And always we sit together for the concluding banquet when the LCWR Leadership Award is given.

(Con't on Page 8)

Updates:

St. Marys, PA

Great news from St. Marys, Pennsylvania – in fall 2018 we were able to complete the sales agreement of the monastery buildings and land to St. Marys parish which adjoins the monastery property. Through the generosity of one of the parishioners who left a portion of her estate to the parish, the parish was able to purchase the property. This sale was a long time in the making!



We are grateful to Archabbot Douglas Nowicki and Prior Earl Henry for their support throughout the process and their agreement, on behalf of the entire monastic community of St. Vincent Archabbey, to allow the Sisters to have the entire proceeds from the sale, despite the fact that the legal title of much of the monastery property was held in the name of St. Vincent Archabbey. We are also grateful to Bishop Lawrence Persico for his time and presence during the process of negotiations with the parish. He hosted us for several meetings over the course of years at the diocesan offices in Erie. We could not have accomplished any of this without the perseverance and wisdom of Sister Rita Brink, appointed administrator of St. Joseph Monastery and our brilliant and generous lawyer, Jack Mehler of Erie. Jack was always available for consultation whenever we called him and also attended meetings with us at the diocesan offices and finally handled the real estate closing for us.

Preserving the culture of the First Benedictine Women's Foundation in the United States, three displays have been set up. Two displays are in St. Marys, one with the adjoining parish that bought the property and also the local Historical Society, and the third one as at the Haehn Museum at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota.

Liberty, MO

In the fall of 2018, the professed Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Liberty, Missouri (Sisters Agnes Helgenberger, Anita Helgenberger and Angela Nuokus) voted to close the monastery. While it is a heartache for them, they remain committed to prayer and their faith in God. Sister Agnes is in the process of transferring her stability to Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, KS. Sister Anita has decided to stay in the Kansas City area and continue her ministries within the diocese. Sister Angela, together with their former scholastic Sister Karsy, decided to return to their home island of Chuuk in Micronesia to found a new Benedictine monastery. Sister Angela goes with the support of the bishop there and with our blessings and prayers.

The monastery property is listed for sale with a local realtor. We hope it will sell soon. In the meantime, Sister Anita keeps an eye on the property while it is being shown to prospective buyers.

Mexico City, Mexico

The Sisters of Monasterio de San Benito in Mexico City have requested to change their association from our federation to the international Subiaco-Cassinese Congregation, and to join with another small monastery of Benedictine women in the Mexico City area at Coyoacan. It is expected that this change will not officially occur for another four years or so. Therefore, Sister Anne Shepard (Atchison) will remain as the monastery administrator of San Benito and lend her considerable experience and talent to the effort of the schools owned by the Sisters in Mexico City and Torreon.



Prioresses at LCWR in St. Louis August 2018

The Benedictines were well represented at the annual LCWR (Leadership Conference for Women Religious) assembly held in St. Louis in August 2018. Each year these leaders take advantage of being together while attending the annual LCWR assembly by having an informal CBP (Conference of Benedictine Prioresses) meeting before the LCWR meeting begins, and having dinner together two other times during the week.



This photo was taken on the final evening of the LCWR assembly at the conclusion of the banquet. These Sisters, together with prioresses elected since last year, will gather again at the LCWR assembly this year to be held in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Meet Our New Archivist



Elaine Nadeau is the new archivist for Mount St. Scholastica and the Federation Archives, housed in Atchison, Kansas. She is a native of Worcester, Massachusetts,

but she spent the last two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chongqing, China, teaching English to university students.

Elaine's experience with archives has spanned local historical societies, historical sites and buildings, as well as an internship at the Archdiocese of Boston Archive. She also has experience working in public and school libraries. She received her B.A. in History from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, her M.A. in History and her M.S. in Library and Information Science: Archives Management from Simmons University in Boston, Massachusetts.

In her free time she enjoys running, traveling, cooking, and petting animals. (See the other pictures of her with 2 LARGE animals on the federation website!)

55 and Under

The 55 and Under committee has been hard at work planning the next 55 and Under meeting scheduled for March 27-29, 2020 at Benedict Inn, Beech Grove, IN. Scheduling conflicts and changes in committee members have posed some challenges along the way, but the committee members (Maria Victoria Cutaia, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration; Susan Reuber, Federation of St. Gertrude; Hannah Vanorny, Federation of St. Benedict and Belinda Monahan, chair, Federation of St. Scholastica) are excited about the way the plans are shaping up.

Roughly 92 Sisters will be eligible (because of the delay in meetings any Sister who was 55 or younger on January 1, 2019 is eligible and several communities have indicated that they will have novices taking vows before next March, so the number is not stable yet!). Our theme for the meeting is "Building Friendships of Hope." Rather than having a speaker, our plan is to spend time in small group discussions about our lives as we live them today and our dreams (and concerns) for the future. We will also spend unstructured time together in order to build the relationships between ourselves and across communities and federations, that we all agree are keys to our future as Benedictines.



**From the Federation Centennial Committee
July, 2019**

We are another year closer to our 2022 centennial celebration which means the planning committee is rolling the ball faster. If you haven't been to the Centennial website recently, we encourage you to visit and sign up to receive emails when we post new content: (www.scholasticacelebration.org). Sister Roberta Bailey, Holy Name Monastery, St. Leo's, FL, is currently offering weekly reflections. She followed Sister Kathy McNany, Emmanuel Monastery, Baltimore, MD, who was our inaugural reflection contributor.

Our most recent podcast is with Sister Anne Stedman, Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado Springs, CO. There are now nine podcasts with sisters, oblates and collaborators available on our page. We invite you to listen and share them. And we are in need of new podcasts and will provide whatever help is necessary if you'd like to create one. Please contact Sister Linda Romey (lromey@gmail.com) to schedule a podcast.

In addition to the website, we have both Facebook and Instagram pages and we'd love it if you'd like us and follow us on those pages—and invite sisters, oblates and friends to do likewise. Look for #scholasticacelebration.

We have some new efforts underway, keeping at the forefront our three goals for this celebration:

1. Make our Benedictine way of life visible and accessible in new ways to today's seekers by celebrating our history and envisioning our future.
2. Share our lives as Benedictine women, past and present, what we stand for, and why we do what we do as we invite others to experience our charism and good zeal and to join us in "running while we have the light of life."
3. Support Benedictine life today so that it can continue to be the same kind of stabilizing presence in our cities and towns and light for spiritual seekers that it has been for more than 1,500 years.

We are building up a Federation-wide photo repository for use on our Instagram and Facebook pages. We'd like to post images from all our monasteries and are counting on you to make available photos that illustrate all aspects of our monastic life. We have set up a DropBox account where you can put your photos. Please include the name of your monastery in the photo name. You can upload photos that inspire beauty as well as action shots of sisters and oblates and others involved in monastic prayer and works. Please make sure that you have the permission of the persons in the photo to use it and also that the action depicted in the image is obvious. In other words, look at it with the eyes of someone who has never been to your monastery, or any monastery, and see what they might see.

The DropBox account is Scholastica Centennial. To access it, use email scholastica.centennial@gmail.com and the password is fss-1922. Please drop your photos in the folder and email committee member Sister Ana Cloughly to let her know you have done so: sana@benethillmonastery.org.

Another new effort is a social media campaign that we are currently preparing. Prioresses and communication directors will soon be hearing from us about the campaign and we hope all our communities will take part in promoting our Federation Centennial. This will also be an effort that individual sisters and oblates, volunteers and staff persons will be able to share on their social media pages. Siobhan O'Neill Meluso, Communications Coordinator, St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, is assisting us with this effort.

Lastly, we have been in conversation with Sister Jennifer Halling of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, KS, the new editor of *Benedictines Magazine*. We will be working with Jennifer to publish a special, expanded edition of *Benedictines* in June 2022, to mark our anniversary. In the coming months we will be tapping authors, artists, poets and photographers, among others, as we begin to compile content for this commemorative issue.

We're grateful for the support of all the sisters and oblates in our Federation and we ask that you continue joining us in our Centennial Prayer, available in English and Spanish on our website.

For more information, contact any committee member: [Ana Cloughly](#) (Colorado Springs); [Catherine Martinez](#) (Tulsa); [Elisabeth Meadows](#) (Cullman); [Andrea Westkamp](#) (Bristow); [Liz Brown](#) (Glendora); [Linda Romey](#) (Erie).



Bristow celebrates 150th Anniversary as a monastery and 125th Anniversary of moving to Bristow from Richmond

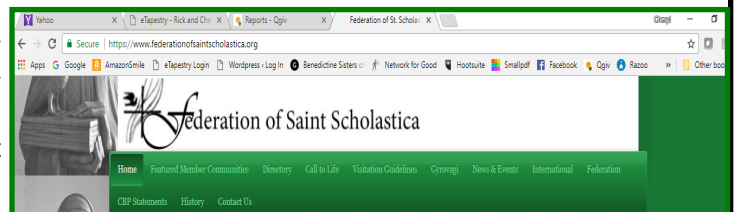
On May 4, 2019 I had the privilege of joining our sisters of St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Virginia as they marked the 125th anniversary of their establishment in Bristow, with a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Bishop Michael Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington. It was also the conclusion of a yearlong of activities marking their 150th anniversary of the founding of St. Benedict Monastery which began in Richmond.

The day was a joyous occasion, during which the rain that had come the night before held off throughout the day's events. Many Oblates, alums, friends and family members of the Sisters came to help them celebrate. After a grand procession of the Bristow Sisters, their Oblates, and the clergy who had come, there was a Mass of Thanksgiving during which Bishop Burbidge preached and Sister Cecilia Dwyer gave an inspiring talk about the long history of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia. Afterward there was a wonderful opportunity for those gathered to mingle and talk and eat a delicious picnic lunch on the grounds of the monastery.

**Happy Anniversary,
Bristow Benedictine Sisters!**

Federation Websites

We are fortunate to have an excellent federation website with many different topics and photos, thanks to webmaster Thérèse Haydel (Cullman). I invite you to explore it if you haven't lately. It is updated frequently. Every month there is another posting by a federation member monastery about what is going on in that house. This is under the tab "Featured Member Communities." As news happens that we are made aware of, Thérèse posts to our "News & Events" tab. (Feel free to send Thérèse news items to be posted to our federation website.)



The federation directory, available for you to download if you know the password, has been updated very recently. (Please contact Lynn or Therese for the password.) Resources are also available on the website, such as [Call to Life](#), Visitation Guidelines, and international links to CIB, circular letters of the Abbot Primate, etc. There are many links to other Benedictine websites on the left hand side of every page of our federation website, for your convenience. Also, at the top of the home page, you will see a link to the video of the presidential address from the 2018 General Chapter. This video just became available, even though the presidential address was a year ago!

And don't forget, if you have not already done so, please sign up to get alerts when there is new material posted to the federation website. Simply go to: <https://www.federationofsaintscholastica.org/> and scroll to the bottom of the page, and sign up at "Subscribe to Our Newsletter." If you have any trouble with that online sign up, simply email our webmaster at: thereseosb03@gmail.com. Thérèse will be happy to add you.

We also have a second website for our upcoming centennial. It is also updated frequently. Just go to: <https://scholastica-celebration.org/>. Also, be sure to read the separate article on Page 6 of this newsletter about centennial planning.

The centennial for our federation will be in 2022 (which happens to coincide with our next General Chapter). The centennial planning committee has been hard at work since the Federation General Chapter a year ago, and they are doing a great job building the excitement for this great opportunity for celebration, including podcasts, etc.

**Joint meeting of Prioresses, Abbots, and Priors in Cullman
February 2019**



Every 4 years the prioresses meet together with their brothers who are abbots and priors in our region of the world. It is always a good opportunity for sharing our monastic lives and what is important in our ministry of leadership. This year was no exception. Our

time together included hearing excellent and inspiring presentations on HOPE by Abbot Primate Gregory Polan (Conception, MO/Sant' Anselmo, Rome) and Sister Susan Hutchens (Rock Island, IL). There was also an opportunity for engaging discussions in groups of 6-10 as well as large group sharing. This time was hosted by the monks at St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman. Of course, the men and women prayed together during this time. There was also a festive banquet hosted by the sisters at Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman. The next joint meeting of the abbots and prioresses is scheduled for 2023.

Upcoming travels of FSS President

In September I will be in Mexico City for the CIB Conference of Delegates meeting at which I hope we will have delegates in attendance from all over the world, in addition to the CIB Administrative Council. Attending from Region 9 (USA & Canada) will be CIB Delegates Jennifer Horner and Tonette Sperando, CIB Substitute Clare Carr, CIB Executive Secretary Mary Jane Vergotz and me as CIB Moderator. I am honored and pleased that 2 of our federation prioresses will be addressing the CIB Conference of Delegates. Esther Fangman (Atchison) will be presenting on the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church, including the abuse of women religious by clergy. Maricarmen Bracamontes (Torreon) will be speaking of the Latin American experience of monastic life.

In October I will be presenting at the annual conference of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) in Dallas. Together with Nancy Bauer, OSB we will present on the topic of *Cor Orans-One year later*. This is a Vatican document which addresses the monastic life of all enclosed (cloistered) women around the world. This document has a large impact on the lives of our sisters who are nuns, and Nancy and I will be presenting about the canonical significance of this document as it affects the way they live their monastic life.

Also in October, from RCRI in Dallas I will fly to Delaware for the regular canonical visitation at St. Gertrude Monastery in their new location of Newark (pronounced new-ARK), Delaware. Karen Joseph (Ferdinand) and I will be the visitators.

Additionally in October I will be going to Covington for the annual meeting of the federation council. Kimberly Porter will be hosting us there along with the sisters of St. Walburg Monastery. We thank them for their hospitality. Following that meeting, I will be going to St. Walburga Monastery in Elizabeth, New Jersey for their regular canonical visitation, together with Mary Catherine Wenstrup (Covington).

In November I will be with our sisters at Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle for their regular canonical visitation together with Michaela Hedican (St. Joseph, Minnesota) and Rita Brink (Covington). I am hopeful that the Chicago area will not have snow while I am in Lisle!

(Con't. on Page 11)



2019 NAABOD Opening Address

The meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors met in July at the retreat center of the Benedictine monks in Schuyler, NE. The following is the address given by Priscilla Cohen (Cullman), NAABOD president.

Welcome to all!!!

We gather this week for a holy pause, a time to reflect on our role as Oblate Directors, Associate Directors, and Oblates in leadership for your monasteries and abbeys.

If you are like me, you may think of so many ideas you may want to implement for your monastery's Oblate program, but then you realize this is not the only ministry you have. Yet, it is such an important ministry for the monastery and its oblates. Many of us have learned to involve other community members and oblates in creating a holy endeavor to share the dance of our Benedictine charism together. Our gathering this week is an opportunity to listen to the holy wisdom of Sister Rosann Ocken, Father Joel Macul, and Sister Marielle Frigge. Their fidelity to monastic living qualifies them to speak on this year's theme: Continuing the Sacred Tradition, Benedictine Spirituality Today and Tomorrow. With your Benedictine hearts, I invite you to listen carefully to their words of wisdom that touch YOUR heart.

The NAABOD gatherings are an excellent time for ongoing formation, sharing, prayer, and social interaction. They are a time of renewal to commit ourselves to renew the energy of relationship between the community and the oblates.

I have heard the idea that the oblate is the bridge between the community and the world. But the more I think about it, I see the Oblate Director also as a bridge between the community and the oblates. As all communities are forever engaged in strategic planning, vision planning, most likely the community's relationship with the oblates in assisting with carrying on the sacred tradition of the Benedictine charism and assisting the community with visibility and outreach has become a priority.

I am sure you have read the Abbot Primate's address to the 2017 World Congress of Oblates. He alludes to a model of togetherness: "As Oblates, you create a living friendship with a monastic community; what makes it a living relationship is the fact that you receive from the community something of importance in your own life, and you then wish to give something back to this community or person from whom you have received this special, sacred, intimate, and truly living gift." He spoke of the sacred triangle with God at the top, and with the oblate and the monastic community at the other two points. He goes on to say, "the relationship between the oblate and the monastic community is a two-way street...when a monk or nun is in communion with the oblate, both the individual monk or nun and their community receive abundant blessings... oblates inspire us who are members of the monastic community."

So it behooves us as Oblate Directors to convey the Abbot Primate's relationship model of togetherness to our monastic communities and oblate chapters.

May our time together this week be a time to listen with the ear of our hearts for sacred words of wisdom that will renew our hearts to dance the Benedictine way of togetherness, thus continuing the sacred tradition of sharing the Benedictine charism to each other and the world that so desperately needs it.

Esther Fangman Interview—October 10, 2018

What is the most memorable event(s) of your 12 years as president of the FSS?

The most memorable event was the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) decision to try to silence Sister Joan Chittister of Erie Pennsylvania by instructing Joan's then prioress, Christine Vladimiroff, to direct Joan not to attend a conference of Women's Ordination Worldwide in Ireland.

I remember that Sister Christine called me to tell me what had happened and together we discussed what we should do. I talked to the federation council who was meeting together just ahead of our Pre-Chapter meeting in Cullman. Together we decided to have a closed session for Pre-Chapter, cancelling our previously scheduled agenda and speaker. We did this because we couldn't decide how to respond to Rome's action, so we decided to take it to the whole Chapter. It was a good experience of how wisdom can grow from a group in the midst of struggle and pain. We did not want to just react to Rome, but we asked ourselves, what is honest and right?



We agreed that it was wrong to use the prioress of a community as the one to do what Rome said should be done. We objected to this interference with the relationship of a prioress with a member of her community. At the Federation Chapter the following year the Chapter voted to write a letter to Rome supporting Sister Christine in her role as prioress.

Together we worked out a plan on how to respond to the hierarchy and to the media. We began to learn more about the relationship of the federation to the Vatican, and the importance of the canonical recognition of the federation by the Vatican.

The case ended up being taken to the Apostolic Signatura in Rome, with the Federation (through Esther and the federation council) and Sister Christine as prioress requesting review of the process that had been used. The Signatura agreed with us on the procedural error by CICLSAL.

There is much more to this chapter in our federation history, but it is memorable to me because of how I was able to see wisdom grown in and arise from the federation chapter delegates assembled together in Cullman. Fear was not the guiding light, but rather openness to one another and trusting in the Spirit allowed wisdom to arise and be our guide. This became an important lesson to me in my continued work in the federation.

Another very memorable and difficult event for me personally and the members of the federation council was the accident during a federation council meeting in Glendora. The serious injury of our sisters on the council was very scary. It was an experience of vulnerability and helplessness. I learned from that experience, too. What I learned from both of these very different events is the importance of relying on others, looking beyond myself and finding the larger truth in the group.

What do you see as today's challenges in our federation?

The most important challenge I see is staying faithful to the Rule and the Gospel, even when there is considerable pressure to become a different external image of monastic life. I see it as similar to the challenges that Pope Francis is facing in those who believe the church should have a different vision and direction that take us backward.

The real challenge is not how to survive but how to be faithful to the Gospel as expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict. If I see Christ in everyone there is no enemy. So dialogue and resolution of differences are always possible. Another challenge today is that is that we don't seem to have a clear voice, writers or speakers among us who can give voice clearly to what is happening among us in monastic life and in the church, who can give a clarion call for how best to live our monastic life in such a way that we make a difference in the world.

(Con't Page 11)

Esther Fangman Interview (Con't)

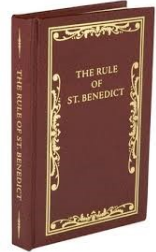
What are signs of hope for our monastic life at this point of critical juncture?

First I want to point out that the real critical juncture is whether we remain faithful to the Gospel and the Rule. I believe that isolationism of individuals and a lack of heart in a member's commitment is the real issue. It is where the monastic practices just become routine, without the heart being invested in community. If the heart is invested, then members can move forward no matter what – together.

The clearest sign of hope I see is when I walk in to our monastic dining room and see sisters engaged with one another and speaking of local, national and global issues, including issues within the church. What I see among my sisters is not just a perfunctory coming together for a community meal, but a real, authentic connection to one another that inspires others. They are in the here and now. And with that connection, we offer hospitality to all those who come to the monastery.



Another sign of hope I see is that we still have wisdom among us, that we can live and work together and be vibrant. Leadership today has to recognize the wisdom in the community and be open to it and let it grow, as opposed to the old idea of the leader having all the wisdom. Leadership is much more than setting goals and planning. It is seeking and finding the wisdom in the community and letting that lead us forward into the future.



St. Gertrude Monastery Re-locates from Ridgely, MD to Newark, DE



The Sisters of St. Gertrude Monastery moved their monastery home from their long time home in Ridgely, MD to their new location in Newark, DE in December 2018. This move has been a long time in the making. The Sisters are very happy with their new space. They are especially glad to be next to their parish where they are becoming part of the larger community there.

Be sure to look them up under the Featured Community tab of the website to see the pictures/video from the blessing of the monastery that was held with in weeks before the actual move to the monastery. In March 2019 the Sisters welcomed over 200 people to their new home with an Open House.

Upcoming travels of FSS President (Con't)

Also in November, I will be travelling to Spain to attend the board meeting of AIM International, to be held in León at Monasterio Santa María de Carbajal. After that I will be visiting several of the women's Benedictine monasteries of Spain, hosted by Abbess Rosario del Camino of Oviedo and Abbess Maria del Mar Albajar i Viñas of Montserrat. Spain constitutes Region 2 of the CIB. I am very happy that I will have the opportunity to meet so many of our sisters who live our monastic way of life as it is lived in Spain. **And then on to 2020!**





2018 Symposium of *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (CIB)* in Rome

In September 2018 at Sant' Anselmo in Rome Benedictine women from all over the world gathered for the quadrennial Symposium. It was a grand gathering of people which enriched all who were there and, I daresay, every community represented there. The theme of the Symposium was **"All are to be welcomed as CHRIST" (RB 53:1)**. It was powerful to have presentations from our sisters

about hospitality to one another as well as hospitality to those who come to us from outside the monastery.

The liturgies were rich and meaningful and in many languages. Two Americans, both from Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD, were the liturgists and did a wonderful job: Patricia Ann Toscano and Jeanne Weber.

The time in Rome was punctuated by a private audience with Pope Francis for our group of women Benedictines. We each were able to personally greet him. This is a memory we will all cherish. Another very meaningful time together was when we renewed our monastic profession, each in her own language, while gathered for the Eucharist at St. Scholastica Monastery in Subiaco.

During the Symposium there was a presentation on T4, and that has yielded some new memberships from outside the US. T4 continues to grow, which is a very good sign for both our initial formation and ongoing formation in our communities. It will only become richer with the contributions of other Benedictines from around the world.



Sister Judith Ann Heble (Lisle), after 12 years of service as CIB Moderator, ended her term of office. Her leadership has been a great gift to the Benedictine women and men of the world. We are proud to have had one of our own at the helm.

Overall, the experience for all American Benedictines who were able to attend was a tremendous opportunity of growing in solidarity with our sisters around the world. We were so happy to have several from our own federation represented in Rome. And we are so grateful for the gifts of Sisters Mary Jane Vergotz (CIB executive secretary) and Linda Romey (CIB treasurer), both of Erie, for their ongoing service to the CIB. It can't happen without them!

At the end of the Symposium, the Delegates of the CIB Conference met and elected new leadership for the next four years. In a shocking development, they elected another American sister – your federation president! Also elected were Mother Franziska Lukas, abbess in Dinklage, Germany, Mother Therese Marie Dupagne, abbess in Belgium, and Mother Caritas Swai, prioress general in Tanzania. After the Conference meeting was closed, two more members were appointed to serve on the CIB Administrative Council: Mother Maria del Mar Albajar-Viñas, abbess of Montserrat, Spain, and Sister Patty Fawkner, congregational leader of the Good Samaritan Sisters of Australia. It is a wonderful working group with wise women whose only mission is to serve the Benedictine women of the world.

The next meeting of the CIB Conference of Delegates will be held in Mexico City in September 2019. Our new CIB delegates from our region, elected by the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses in February 2019, are Sisters Jennifer Horner (CBP chair) and Tonette Sperando (Cullman). Mother Isabel Thouin of Canada will continue her service as our region's delegate representing the nuns.