The Inter-Monastery Alliance (AIM) provides here for the life of the monasteries of the Benedictine family. You will find in this newsletter, some information on the work of the last Council; on the departure of Sr. Gisela from the General Secretariat; on the last two bulletins; and, of course, on the life of some monasteries in different continents with several projects being supported.
The Council of AIM, Schottenstift Abbey (Vienna)

From 30th November to 1st December 2016, the Council of AIM met together in Vienna (Austria) at the Benedictine Monastery of Schottenstift. The welcome from Father Abbot Johannes and of the Community was very fraternal. The well-situated location allowed us to do much good work.

The theme of the meeting examined how the three Orders of the Benedictine family might be able to collaborate in order to move forward in the future. The presence of the Abbot Primate, Gregory Polan, the Abbots General of the Cistercian Orders, Dom Eamon Fitzgerald and Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori, and the President of the CIB, Sr Judith-Ann Heble, allowed us to propose the basis of such a collaboration and to situate the role of AIM in such proposals.

There is an urgency that we should work together and to pursue the objective of good co-ordination in the different regions of the world. You will find some echoes of this perspective in the next Bulletin of AIM.

Sister Gisela Happ, 16 years of service to AIM

Sister Gisela Happ has just given up being in charge of the General Secretariat of the International work of AIM. We wish, here, to pay homage to her.

Sister Gisela entered the monastery of Eibingen in Germany in 1972; she had decided to spend the whole of her life within the four hectares which encompassed the cloister of her monastery. Fairly quickly after her formation, she became Cellarer of the monastery for a number of years. In this role, she was involved in the foundation of Marienrode which she holds dear to her heart. Then, she was called to become General Secretary of AIM; she had forgotten all of her French studies from College and knew nothing of the life of monasteries on other continents. She detested travelling. When she found herself on the Champs-Elysees in Paris, she said to herself: “Ich bin im falschen Film” (I am in a bad film, having a bad dream) and this was her same thought when she went to Sydney or to China!

With great efficiency, she acquired the necessary skills and overcame a number of deficiencies. She has benefited from the precious collaboration she has had with Sr. M-Placid Dolores. Sr Gisela has always said that, without Sister Placid, she would not have been able to accomplish the work she has done.

She saw to the creation of the John XXIII Centre; she wanted to be able to support the studies of the Benedictine family in Paris, and to participate in the development of the Community at Vanves.

Supported by a very active prayer-life, Sister Gisela concentrated on her work in the Secretariat of AIM and in the community at Vanves. She has enabled AIM to grow and develop and to come to the financial aid of more and more projects.
AIM owes great recognition to Sr Gisela for all the work she has faithfully done through all these years. Happily, she will remain in touch with AIM and will ensure the links with German-speaking countries. We repeat our grateful thanks to her and offer our best wishes for this new stage in her life.

Sr Christine Conrath, of the Abbey Our Lady of Jouarre, has already been involved with the Secretariat of AIM over several months. So, here, opens up a new page in the history of AIM.

Le bulletin of AIM

Issue No 111 of the bulletin of AIM reported on the Congress of Benedictine Abbots and Priors, which was held in Rome in September 2016. You will find there the Conferences which were given during the Congress, and, also other interventions that took place. News of monasteries and accounts of journeys undertaken or of other activities are included, as well as notes of lectures on recent books.

We remind you that the bulletin is published in French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and now Italian, in the form of a supplement to the Review La Scala from the Abbey of Nocia. We must draw attention, however, to the fact that the last two editions of the Spanish edition are delayed (Number 110 is in the process of being printed and Number 111 is in preparation); for the bulletin in Brazilian Portuguese, the delay is more important; several numbers remain for the moment without translation; the next edition will be Number 111.

Edition number 112, will appear in May 2017, and will focus on female monastic life. A new more attractive presentation will be proposed.

The bulletin is truly a very useful means of communication. It will be important that those monasteries who are able to support its existence, through subscription, continue to do so, so that those monasteries unable to do, are enabled to receive it free of charge.

You will also find that most of the articles in the bulletin are accessible in the Internet site of AIM (aimintl.org), sometime after their paper publication. However, because of the fact, that not all the monasteries in the world have internet access, consultation on the website only, can never replace being able to read a hard copy. Many monasteries read the bulletin the refectory or before Compline, or at some other gathering of the community. We are grateful for all your suggestions for improving this instrument of fraternal liaison between our monasteries.

News

Latin America

Father Abbot Oscar de Humacao (Porto Rico) has become President of ABECCA, in succession to Mother Stella who is no longer Prioress of Juigalpa (Nicaragua). The next meeting of ABECCA will be held from 13th to 16th July in Columbia.

In Columbia, Father Abbot Guillermo, of Guatape and Medelin has become President of the Subiaco-Cassinese Congregation. Father Humberto has been appointed Prior
Administrator at Guatape for one year. At Medelin, it is envisaged that the monks will construct a small monastery next to the school which is linked to the community.

The community of Lurin in Peru, founded by the congregation of Las Huelgas has asked for aggregation into the Trappist Order.

The next general reunion of the association CIMBRA will be held in November 2017 in Brazil. It is a very vibrant organisation which takes numerous initiatives, most notably in the area of formation.

Africa

Pan-African reunion: during the Abbots’ Congress in Rome in September 2016, there had been a question of a reunion of the French and English speaking Superiors of Africa in Nairobi. The project is still in the process of development.

A German sociologist, Katrin Langewiesche, started a study on the economy of the monasteries of West Africa, with the help of young researchers in sociology. You will find an account of the findings of this work in AIM’s Bulletin 112.

In South Africa, at the “Good Shepherd” Retreat Centre, near to Hartbeespoort Dam, a workshop for formators was held, organised by the Benedictine and Cistercian Association of South Africa (BECOSA). The theme of this workshop was: “Monastic Formation in the 21st Century.” There were a dozen formators, representing eight Benedictine communities from South Africa and Namibia; Fr Mark Butlin, osb, of AIM presented the workshop and was its animator.

It has been noted, that too often, we transform “monastic formation” into “monastic information”, associated with an evaluation of the comportment of the novice, vis-à-vis the community, study and work.

We should rather envisage a formation that would allow the formator and the one in formation to enter into a living relationship with God and with the community of brothers and sisters in order to allow for an experience of true communion.

Asia

In Vietnam, at the initiative of the Cistercian Order, a session for formators of Cistercian monasteries and Benedictines in Vietnam has been held. This session was on the theme of accompaniment and discernment during the time of formation. Some sixty participants gathered together at the Monastery of Phuoc Son, of the Cistercian Congregation of the Holy Family.

There were a certain number of speakers: Father Mauro-Giuseppe, Abbot General of the Cistercian Order, Father Vladimir, Abbot of Lerins, Father John of the Cross, Abbot of Phuoc Son and President of the Holy Family Congregation, Mother Marie-Madeleine, Prioress of Vanves and
President of the Congregation of Sainte Bathilde, Sister Thecle of the Congregation of St Paul of Chartres, Father Dominic, the elderly Master of Novices of Phuoc Son, Father Luke Torcal, Procurator of the Cistercian Order, and Father Jean-Pierre, President of AIM.

It was a great first for the Monastic Formators, both men and women, of this country, who were able to gather together for a common learning experience and to share between themselves, their various different experiences. Accompaniment and Discernment are two major tasks that are facing the development of monasticism in Vietnam. The session allowed for the opportunity to deepen our knowledge of these subjects and to provide encourage to go further.

**OCSO Order**

The different regions of the Trappist Order are preparing for the General Chapter of the Order which will be held in the Autumn of 2017.

**Some recent projects, helped by AIM (see the following pages)**

- **Africa**: Jinja (Uganda)
- **Africa**: Lubango (Angola)
- **Asia**: Anakkara-Kappadu (India)

Thank you to each and every one of you for the indispensable help that you have provided to the young monasteries of our Benedictine family. The projects still arriving for the new Semester are again numerous. Please carry all of this together in your prayers.

Fraternally,

Father Jean-Pierre Longeat
Inter-Monastery Alliance (AIM)

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**Secretariat of AIM**
7 rue d’Issy - 92170 Vanves - France
Tel: (33) 01 46 44 60 05
aim.vanves@wanadoo.fr
allianceintermonasteres@gmail.com
bulletinaim@gmail.com
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Jinja is a town located north of Lake Victoria, the second largest shopping centre in Uganda.

Lake Victoria is sometimes considered the source of the Nile; the lake is fed by rivers of considerable size, the longest of which comes from Rwanda. The Nile has two large tributaries called “White Nile” and “Blue Nile”. The river near Jinja, known as “Victoria Nile”, is part of the White Nile route, while the Blue Nile comes from Ethiopia and joins the White Nile in Khartoum.

HISTORICAL

The Benedictine missionary sisters of Tutzing arrived in 1993 to open their first home in Uganda, not far from the city of Jinja. The monastery building of the priory was completed in 2007 and now houses an international community of fifteen sisters from Uganda, Kenya, the Philippines and Korea.

STATISTICS

Fifteen sisters, including eight solemn professed and seven temporary professed.

ACTIVITIES

In 1995, the sisters opened a clinic for the inhabitants of the locality, and a kindergarten. This later became the current school.

The dispensary run by the sisters received an award recognizing the official recognition of the government authorities.

The school has a total of seven hundred children up to the age of thirteen. The school offers a boarding facility for one hundred pupils, especially orphans and victims of ill-treatment and social misery. The school welcomes Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The Saint Benedict school is ranked fourth in the district out of a total of two hundred and fifty-six schools.

REQUEST

The sisters would like to improve the quality of education:

- Today, training Catholic leaders requires computer skills. Graduate children are often admitted to high-level secondary schools, but they do not have any computer training.
- Improving the quality of student education amounts to increasing the resources of the administration and teachers.

**Planned investment:**

- an upgrade of computers in the administration sector (two laptops and printers);
- the purchase of three computers and a printer for the teaching staff (currently they have none at their disposal);
- the purchase of fifteen computers for the classes (currently the children have none).

The total cost is 16,290 euros.

**Desired amount: 15 800 euros.**
**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

Luanda is the capital of Angola in Southern Africa. The city is located in the north-west of the country on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and enjoys a dry tropical climate. Luanda is the main economic centre of the country and concentrates the tertiary and industrial activities. Since 2002, thanks to the renewed civil peace and oil money extracted from offshore deposits located not far from the capital, it is experiencing particularly significant growth in construction. The port exports the main productions of the country: crude oil and its refined derivatives on the outskirts of the city, iron ore, coffee and fishery products. The transport infrastructure, damaged by the civil war, is under reconstruction.

Lubango is a town in southern Angola and the capital of the province of Huila. A highly fertile agricultural region, its economy is based on agriculture, the production of meat, cereals, tobacco, fruit and vegetables.

**HISTORICAL**

Sr. Lourdes Ecuva, of Angolan nationality, is a religious professor of the Benedictine monastery of San Pelayo, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. She entered and remained twenty-four years in this community. After a long discernment on her part and of her community, she left for Angola in 2011 with the project to begin the Benedictine monastic life there.

For lack of vocations, the community of Santiago could not take care of this foundation and sought the help of the Holy Scholastic Abbey of Umuoji (Nigeria). Seven Nigerian sisters agreed to go and found the Community with Sister Lourdes, the present prioress of this community, called Santa Maria do Camiño.

In May 2012, the sisters temporarily settled in a house provided by the bishop in Caxito near Luanda. Since then, they have acquired land in the diocese of Lubango.

**STATISTICS**

Eight sisters by profession: seven Nigerians and one Angolan.

**REQUEST**

The current house is located in a very noisy neighborhood, and it is too small to accommodate new vocations or to open a guesthouse.

Unable to find suitable land to build a new monastery in this diocese of Caxito, the sisters decided to transplant themselves to the Archdiocese of Lubango, where suitable land was proposed to them. However, the sisters do not have the economic resources to construct the buildings.

The Sisters asked for help from several organizations, including the Spanish Bishops’ Conference, which is ready to support this project with its funds for the new evangelization. The first phase of construction has not yet begun.

The total cost is estimated at € 115,000.
Desired amount: 36 400 euros.
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Kottayam is one of the fourteen districts in the state of Kerala. It is known as the district of the three “L”: Literacy, Lakes and Latex (literacy, lakes and latex). It is the first district in India that has achieved a literacy rate of 100%. Kottayam ranks first in rubber production in India.

Like all of Kerala, Kottayam has a tropical climate with a humidity of up to 90% during the rainy season. It has an extensive network of rivers, ponds but also ancient religious places of which a number have become tourist. The two majority religions in Kottayam are Hinduism and Christianity.

Kappadu is located in the district of Kottayam. Agriculture is the main subsistence resource. Coffee, tapioca and rubber are grown there.

HISTORICAL

The Benedictine abbey of St. Thomas belongs to the Benedictine congregation of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. The monastery of Kappadu was founded under the Syro-Malabar rite by three monks of the Benedictine monastery of Asirvanam (Bangalore), which is a foundation of the Abbey of Saint Andrew (Bruges, Belgium). The three monks were P. Bede Maniyankary, P. Anselm Maniyakkupara and P. John Kurichianil. The small community settled in Kappadu in October 1987, after spending a year and a half in the diocese of Changanacherry, in a house placed at their disposal by a Catholic family where they were able to cultivate the hectares of land.

On January 20, 1988, the new monastery was canonically established, as a priory dependent on the Abbot President and his Council. Father John Kurichianil was appointed Prior. For several years, monks and candidates lived in the original home, built on the property. Gradually, the community was able to buy more land in Kappadu and begin construction of the new monastery. The current church was completed in 2000 and dedicated on December 31, 2000. A guesthouse with thirty-three independent rooms and a spacious refectory was built almost simultaneously.

The monastery was elevated to the rank of conventual priory on the occasion of the General Chapter of the Congregation in 2004. After a few days, the same General Chapter raised Kappadu to the rank of abbey. The prior John Kurichianil was consecrated first abbot on 20 January 2005. He was re-elected abbot on 20 January 2013.

In addition to Kappadu, the community has five other smaller houses. These homes have been developed over the last ten years. Not all are foundations established canonically, but rather houses of formation. There are in each house two or three monks, watching carefully over a group of candidates. This project was launched for three reasons: to facilitate the training of candidates who are often very young (the postulate lasts three years); Strengthening financial sustainability: Since agriculture is the main source of income, small
communities with sufficient land and good farming are more likely to be financially self-sufficient. To spread this kind of Benedictine life in other dioceses of Kerala.

STATISTICS

By 2015, the community comprised forty-four brothers, including thirty-three monks in solemn vows, six brothers having made temporary vows and five novices.

ACTIVITIES

The Kappadu guesthouse meets the needs of the local Church. People come for retreats either in groups or individually. The monks organize programmes of study, in particular courses on the Bible, for priests, religious and laity. They can exchange with monks and ask for spiritual direction.

The monastery has a large plantation of rubber trees. It also produces pepper.

After Kappadu, Anakkara was the first property the community purchased. Kappadu being mainly a rubber plantation, the brothers opted in Anakkara for a plantation of cardamom. It has always been a beneficiary. The brothers were able to reimburse all the expenses incurred on the property and sustain their subsistence. They donate money to Kappadu Abbey. Three years ago, the abbey of Kappadu received about 40,000 euros from the brothers of Anakkara.

Very often the students of the community (the three groups of candidates, novices, students of philosophy and theology) go to Anakkara with their respective masters for at least one week to help with agricultural work. This stay has become an integral part of the lifestyle in Kappadu. There is always a lot of work to do on the estate. Doing things on time is essential; any failure may have adverse consequences on the continuation of production.

REQUEST

Cardamom is cultivated only in height, on hills, in forested areas, where the climate is very mild. But this situation is rapidly changing. Precipitation is rarer from year to year and the summer months are very hot. Irrigation of cardamom plantations has become indispensable not only during the summer months but also during the short periods of drought in the rainy season.

The current irrigation system (water pumped from a reservoir and redistributed by pipes) has become insufficient in view of climate change. Currently, the 9,000 plants are watered in turn, each being watered once a week; this is too little to maintain good production. This year, the community harvested one tonne of cardamom instead of the previous five tons. It is therefore necessary to modify the irrigation system in order to maintain a good yield of cardamon despite an inexorable climate change.

The project consists of so-called mist irrigation, which has been adopted in India from Israel. A small amount of water is sprayed by tiny tubes under each plant, almost like a vapour. Each plant gets thirty litres of water in half an hour. Several tens of plants are irrigated at the same time and several lines of pipes are used together. This makes it possible to irrigate the entire plantation almost every day, or at least every third day. Two workers will be enough to manage the whole system. The biggest advantage is that water can be used very efficiently and sparingly without any waste. Fertilizers and fluid medicines can also be injected by fog irrigation.
The installation of the system on the entire estate is estimated at 10,000 euros, not including the labour costs assumed by the monastery of Kappadu.

**Desired amount: 10 000 euros.**

**Alliance Inter-Monastères**

**USD account**
Name: ALLIANCE INTER MONASTERES  
Bank: BNP PARIBAS  
Agence PARIS XVEME (02353) - France  
IBAN: FR76 3000 4022 4400 0185 0014 026  
BIC: BNPAFRPPSU

**Euro account**
Name: Alliance Inter Monastères  
Bank: BNP Paribas - Agence Vanves  
Place Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny 92170 Vanves - France  
IBAN: FR76 3000 4008 3600 0042 4286 757  
BIC: BNPAFRPPBBT