



Secrétariat Central à la Formation - oco -

Abbaye Notre-Dame du Val d'Igny, 31 mai 2016.

Newsletter 9

To the Superiors, the Regional Secretaries,
the Brothers and Sisters interested by oco-formation.

American Region :

[Juniors at Mepkin Abbey Seminar- South Carolina April 11-23rd, 2016:](#)

Account by William Chng of Vina

A total of 17 Juniors attended the 2 weeks' seminar at Mepkin Abbey. The 13 monks and 4 nuns were from 9 houses of the American Region.

The first presenter was an Augustinian priest, Fr. Martin Laird, who teaches patristics at Villanova University. He conducted a silent prayer retreat for the first week. It included 4 and a half hours of silent prayer in common spread throughout the day, each hour divided into (2x25 minutes; 5 minutes walking meditation in between.) There was a conference and discussion each afternoon. The purpose of the silent prayer retreat is to enable the stillness of heart, to negotiate the world of inner chatter and to help meditator to be here, to be present to the now which is always changing. We have to learn to be focused and invest in the now. We have to learn to meet distractions and enter our mind into the quiet and be still. The monk or nun who continues and persevere with this inner stillness will be a great gift to the community through their inner changes. God is hidden within the soul and the true contemplative will seek him there in love.



The 2nd week was Scripture sessions with our Cistercian Sister Anne Elizabeth Sweet from Tautra Maria kloster in Norway. Sister's theme was on St. Luke's Gospel and Acts of the Apostle. We learned to identify different themes and title found in Luke-Act such as Prayer, theme of the Heart, the Holy Spirit, compassion, repentance, joy. There were passages that are unique to Luke's Gospel such as genealogy of Jesus, John the Baptist's teaching, signs of the time and the Emmaus encounter amongst other passages. What is Luke's message for me and my monastic community?

David George, the Mepkin Infirmarian, presented information about the Mepkin Wellness program on two afternoons. He drew our attention to food, nutrition and care of our body. He specified "brain food" nourishment for the brain with an emphasis on eating more fruits, vegetables, grains, olive oil, nuts, and seafood. He also spoke about the importance of exercise and posture.

Summer School:

A session is scheduled at the Abbey of Val Notre-Dame from May 29 - 31: *Current challenge in the catechetical mission*.
Responsible: Yves Guérette.

Francophone Regions:

Initial formation:

The implementation of the project of the [Region ocso-France-South Internoviciate](#) has taken form. Here in what terms it is presented by the responsible:

Consultation of concerned monasteries has highlighted the importance of the opportunity to persons in formation in our communities to meet brothers and sisters at the same stage of monastic life and thus enable shares and experiences that may not be in the novitiates where there are too few. We have therefore chosen to focus less on intellectual education on monastic values, an anthropological and psychological approach, and the spiritual life.

We have also chosen to use persons from outside our communities to not to overload the masters and mistresses of novices often occupied in addition, and also to ensure that these 3 days are also an opportunity of formation for masters and mistresses of novices (method tips, continuation of the work begun, bibliography).

Here is the project over a year:

Pace: 3 sessions per year for 3 full days.

Participation: Postulants (for the discernment of the community) and novices accompanied by their formators so that they can also take time shares and replay of their load between them.

Contents: 3 sessions per year with a different tone every time:

- 1) spiritual life with a dimension of experience: *prayer, lectio, spiritual warfare, spiritual accompaniment.*
- 2) monastic values: *silence, poverty, solitude and community and fraternal life, work, everyday life, use and integration of media in monastic life.*
- 3) anthropological dimension: *the relationship, listening, affectivity, jealousy, emotions.*

For the first year we put on programme:

26 September-30, 2016, in Chambarand: *Lectio divina: tools, methods, practices*, by Sister Lisa of Bose;

6 February-10, 2017, in Les Neiges: *The Fathers of the Desert and fraternal life*, by Sister Elijah of Jouarre;

24-28 April 2017, in La-Pierre-qui-Vire: *Liturgy, prayer and monastic life*, by Brother Patrick Prétot.

Brothers and sisters that follow [the cycles of the STIM-Bac](#), will have their session from 5 to 11 June 2016, in Paris. For students of 1st and 2nd year it will be end-of-year exams, for 3rd year, review of clearance and for all courses in Canon law: *Law of the sacrament of reconciliation*, by P. Philippe-Joseph Jacquin, of the Abbey of En Calcat and *Theology of the liturgy*, by P. Benoît-Marie Solaberrieta of the Belloc Abbey.

[Regional Meeting - CNE](#) had invited for [a half-day of exchange about the formation](#) of the young brothers and sisters, Mother Marie-Paule, Priory of the Benedictine monastery of Ermeton (B), Brother Bart, General Servant of the community of Tibériade (B) and Sister Marie, CSF-ocso. Reflection focused on a concern for the Region: how to provide good formation, during the period of temporary profession?

So far, the Region has taken advantage of two offers:

ITIM (*Institut Théologique Inter-Monastères*), founded in Belgium in the early 1980s, following exchanges between Benedictine and Cistercians superiors. These formation sessions have functioned to the satisfaction of all until

February 2011. The decrease in vocations prevented the ITIM to continue, but its structures are still legal, which could allow a restart of the formation if there is a sufficient number of interested parties.

STIM (*Studium Théologique Inter-Monastères*), founded in 1998, in France, on the same model as the ITIM, is affiliated with the Faculty of Theology of *Centre Sèvres* in Paris. In order to meet the requirements of the *Congregation for Catholic Education*, this formation continues to evolve to a recognized level. A consequence of this evolution is that for a number of our brothers and sisters in formation this approach seems too academic, they find it hard to follow the proposed route, or even to consider it.

Currently some formation possibilities could be envisaged:

- The Brothers and Sisters of **the Brotherhood of Tibériade**, at Lavaux-Ste-Anne (diocese of Namur) in Belgium, have their own Studium: *The School of the heart*. This formation is a school of spirituality with a quality education. The curriculum lasts 4 years and has 32 material with possible incentives. The formation is given by sessions - Tuesday to Saturday - which have each a major three-day course (15 to 18 hours) and a minor course over two days (10 to 12 hours). Each course includes either a review or a written work. Education is provided both by members of the community, both for visiting professors. **Annex 1-3: Programme and objectives of the intellectual formation of the School of the heart**, (15 pages, in French).

The Brotherhood of Tibériade says herself open to integration in the curriculum for forming brothers and sisters from other communities, provided that herself remains free to set the dates for the sessions. The formation approach has a missionary aim, pastoral sensitivity to the Foundation of Tibériade, which is located in the line of the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

- There are the **Courses of Monastic Formation of the Order of Cîteaux** proposed every year at International Saint Bernard College, in Rome, from late August through September. It is a cycle of three years, with a possible entry each year. All courses are translated into 6 languages (cf. *Newsletter 2*).
- More partial formation possibilities have been reported: the **Dominican University online DOMUNI** which has a monastic section; the **Scriptorium Scourmontois**, on the site of the Abbey of Scourmont; **Brothers and Sisters of our oco-communities**, proposed by their superiors, to give some teaching outside their own monastery (cf. *Newsletters 1 and 2*).

[Continuous formation :](#)

The Father Jean Claude Lavigne, o.p., gave a session in Val d'Igny for the closing of the Year of the Consecrated Life, from 2 to 4 February, 2016. After situating the context of religious life in France from a review this Year of Consecrated Life, Father Lavigne suggested a reflection on the theological foundations of religious life, "a modest way that may be a way of humanizing, a way that deliberately steers our world to the Kingdom".

Text of the conferences, in **Annex 4** (18 pages, in French).

Meetings in Italy:

A [meeting of formators](#) was held in Valsereina from 16 to 20 may, whose theme was: *Benedictine humanism*. Speakers: Mother Monica della Volpe and Dom Guillaume Jedrzejczak.

18 - 23 July 2016, at the Benedictine monastery in Norcia, scheduled a meeting for [young people who are in formation in Italian monasteries](#). The session theme will be: *Wishing the 'good life' of the Gospel*.

A [Monastic Week](#) is scheduled from 4-9 September 2016, at the monastery of Camaldoli. Dom Michel Van Parys (from the monastery of Chevetogne) and Antonio Montanari will speak of *Prayer, in listening to the Rule of St. Benedict and the monastic tradition*.

15 - 17 November 2016 will be held in Rome, a [Congress on Saint Gertrude: La Divina pietas and the Suppletio of Christ in Saint Gertrude of Helfta: A Soteriology of Mercy](#). Speakers, inter alia, Dom Mauro Giuseppe Lepori and Mother Augusta Tescari - programme detailed in **Annex 5**.

An information:

A [text on Thomas Merton](#) shared us by Mr Fyot, Secretary of ARCCIS. The author, Dominique Brulé, currently is a doctoral candidate at the University of Metz and works under the authority of Marie Anne Vanier. Towards the end of this year, the ARCCIS publication *Nouvelles* will publish a summary of the thesis.

The text entitled *Thomas Merton in the fall of 1939*, in **Annex 6** (4 ½ pages, in French).

News received from some Regional Networkers of the AIM:

[Philippines](#): - Mother Adelaida, Priory of Missionaries Sisters of Tutzing in Manila –

The Sisters of Matutum and the Brothers of Guimaras are invited to the formation sessions, such as the *Study Weeks* on the RB; the *Conference of Mindanao*, which includes Benedictines and Cistercians; the *Association of the Benedictine of the Philippines*.

On February 27, the *Association of Benedictine* met in the Benedictine Eucharistic King Abbey at Cogon, was attended by 13 groups of women living according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. The Abbess of Matutum was also present and it was decided to share information about the formation after the ocso Regional Meeting.

[West Africa and Madagascar](#): - of Brother Ezekiel, osb, monastery of the Incarnation of Agbang in Togo –

There are **Inter-Novitiates** that are organized by formation teams grouped. In Togo, there are the Inter-Novitiates of Lomé, Kpalimé, Kara and Dapaong. That of Kara includes the houses of formations of the dioceses of Kara, Sokodé and some Dapaong communities involved. Each year formators choose three themes: one in November; one in March and one in May. Those of Dapaong also do similarly. But those of Lomé, also organize courses every Wednesday. According to themes, each formator decides if he wants to send his young people in formation in a session that is not animated in his environment.

Local formation: each House has its own formation program and there are topics that are taught on-site and others by grouping the young brothers and sisters to allow mixing of ideas and culture.

The formators of Togo and Benin have a union called "Union of formators of Togo and Benin". The purpose of this union is to share experiences and support. This union organizes each year a session of one week for the responsible of the postulants and the novices to equip themselves to improve the quality of formation. These meetings are alternating between Togo and Benin. This union has at its head a coordinating team.

Initial formation is done in each community. Continuous formation is done by young Profess (ses) sessions organized by their responsible.

N.B. At the level of the Benedictines, those of the Congregation of Subiaco and Monte Cassino which are in West Africa occur every three years. This year it was in Bouake in Côte d'Ivoire and in 2019 it will be in Guinea Conakry.

These formations are between all the religious and not monks only. Each community sends at will according to his desire for academic studies, the young persons.

There are also **professional formations**. In the first half of the month of May, some brothers and sisters gather in Benin for technical formation in electricity.

[Brazil](#):-Mother Vera Lucia of the monastery of the Saviour, in El Salvador, osb-

Last March the **three-year curriculum** of the *Monastic Association of Brazil* (CIMBRA) has been fixed.

2016:

- From 17 to 21 October: *Course on archives*, by Dom Pascal Biase, osb, Archivist of his monastery;
- 22-24 November: *The following of Christ in creative fidelity*, by Father Michael Casey.

2017:

- 17-January 25: seminar for the young professed: *Around the monastic table*;
- from 18 to 30 June: Seminar on the RB, for young professed and solemn professed, *Way of life with the RB*, with Mother Hannah of the monastery of Bethany (Belgium) and Sister Teresa Paula;
- 23-25/27 November: **Jubilee gold of the CIMBRA**, with theme: *A vision and a mission*, by Dom Edmilson Amadeu, Dom Bernardo Bonowitz and Mother Vera Lucia. On 26 November, solemnity of Christ the King, conference by Dom Jean-Pierre Longeat.

2018:

- From 17 to 25 January: *Week of Singing and Liturgy*, by a multidisciplinary team.

*

Newsletter 10 :

August 31, 2016.