

7th International CIB Symposium



The first word of St. Benedict's Rule for the monastic life was the theme for this 2014 7th International CIB Symposium held at Sant' Anselmo, Rome, Italy. One hundred four Benedictine women from all parts of the world- representing some fourteen thousand Benedictine women from six continents gathered together in a sisterly bond to reflect on "listening" from the perspective of the Scriptures, from the Rule of St. Benedict and to the signs of the times.

Three days of the week-long symposium were devoted to presentations. The keynote presenter on the topic "Listening through the Scriptures" was Dr. Maria Pina Scanu a scripture scholar and lecturer at Sant' Anselmo. Dr. Scanu dealt primarily with listening as an event that marks God's manifestation in the history of revelation. She analyzed in depth three stories from the OT: the inception of King Solomon, the call and prophetic mission and listening within the cult. The lecture ended with our Benedictine practice of *Lectio Divina* – *lectio in motion*.

Our very own Sr. Aquinata Bockmann was the speaker on the topic "Listening through the Rule of St. Benedict". Sr. Aquinata began her talk by presenting the theology and philosophy –yesterday and today of 'listening and seeing'. She emphasized that ear is not isolated from the eyes. The Lord has his eyes and ears open to us. Our ear inclined to Him is open, but also our eyes are open to the deifying light from Him. With great mastery and wisdom she shed light on how the whole Rule of St. Benedict was permeated with listening to the different ways of monastic life of the Orient and of the Occident. Sr. Aquinata left us in an open ended mode after her input on the barriers in listening and answering to the voice of God. We young professed sisters role played one situation from the RB where listening of the heart can be applied.

The third and last day of the presentations was on the topic "Listening through the Signs of the Times". Sr. Mary John Mananzan, the keynote presenter led us first in reflecting the important trends in our society, in the church and religious life. Even more than the signs

of the times, God speaks through his people particularly those in anguish, despair and supplication. God's voice is also heard in the groaning of the earth- in the midst of the global and ecological crisis we are undergoing now. The second part of her talk dealt on the response that we have to make us Benedictine mystic-prophetic in action.

After the three day-talk a panel of four seniors (Mo. Carmen Davila from Puerto Rico, Mo. Angela Savage from England, Mo. Hannah Quakebeke from Belgium and Mo. Theotestina Maternus Nambunga from East Africa) as well as a panel of newly professed sisters (all young sisters gave their reaction to what the seniors said) was conducted. The panels provided meaningful input based from their own experience as Benedictine women monastics.

The remaining days of the symposium were allotted for the discussion on the topic of Enclosure and the doctoral dissertation on CIB by Sr. Scholastica Haring, OSB a canon lawyer from Germany. Sr. Gisela Kamp gave a report on AIM activities and fund beneficiaries with some pictures of our Alang Alang Retreat House flashed on the screen. A visit was paid at Sant' Egidio- a community of lay people dedicated to evangelization and charity. The president of Sant' Egidio gave a short input on the history of the movement and short talk on peace issue.

One of the highlights of the symposium was the trip to Montecassino. The beauty and majesty of the first monastery established by our Holy Father Benedict is incomparable. Going back to the source of our Benedictine Order, the trip gave us all a feeling of rootedness. Towards the end of the symposium, a guided tour to Subiaco was also arranged by the organizers. Fr. Abbot Primate Notker Wolf presided the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and all the delegates renew their monastic profession of vows.

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Eight OSB Tutzing sisters were present at the symposium. Mo. Angela Strobel, a co-opted delegate, Sr. Lumen Gloria Dungca one of the facilitators, Sr. Aquinata and Sr. Mary John as keynote presenters, Sr. Vania Toscana a substitute delegate from Brazil, Sr. Rose Ann Ocken a delegate from Tanzania, Sr. Angela Wausi Ndunda attending as young sister from Nairobi priory and myself attending as young sister from Manila priory. Mo. Ma. Columba Salinas of BNEK Cogon is one of the participants from the Philippines while Mo. Araceli Escurzon of BSEK is the co-facilitator of Sr. Lumen. Special guests include sisters from Czech Republic, Lithuania and Ukraine. Fr. Abbot Jean-Pierre Longeat president of AIM also came to the symposium.

As Julian Norwich says ‘...with reverence and awe we turn ourselves around toward the working that our good Lord incites us to do, enjoying and thanking with our real selves’. To Mother Adelaida and the sisters of Manila Priory “**Thank You Very Much**” is the least word I can say for all the experiences I had in Rome. Maraming maraming salamat po!

By: Sr. Mary Emmanuel F. Espera, OSB



Group work and group discussion



Filipina sisters:(back row: Mo. Araceli, Sr. Lumen, myself, Sr. Mary John, front: Mo. Columba and Sr. Placid (AIM representative)