



# The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER

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*The mission of the American Monastic Newsletter is to be an instrument of communication and information for Benedictine monasteries of North America and members of the American Benedictine Academy.*

## *Still Time to Register for Convention*

### **Artisans of the Monastery**

**July 19-22, 2018**

**St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota**

Even if one had never read chapter 57 of *The Rule of St. Benedict*, any knowledge of Western history and culture will suggest that there is something about Benedictine life that encourages the arts. This year's convention of the American Benedictine Academy will celebrate the role of the artisans of the monastery.

The convention is never merely for the members of the Academy, but a venue for sharing the work of the ABA with any interested persons from within the monastic community or from among others with an interest in things monastic. This year, it is hoped that there will be a good number of religious or oblate attendees who are themselves artists and craftspeople.

What can these attendees expect? First and throughout, there will be prayer and community. The program will be a combination of presentations and artistic experiences. With registration and welcome on Thursday, July 19, the convention begins on Friday, July 20, at St. Benedict's Monastery with noted poet/essayist Kathleen Norris sharing "A Haphazard Formation: A Writer's Oblate Journey." She will be followed by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, of St. Meinrad Archabbey, who will speak about his own experience as a monastic artist. The next day's speaker will be Br. David Paul Lange, OSB, welcoming the group to his Saint John's Abbey for a talk on "The Intersection of Faith and Architecture: Designing an Abbey Church and Other Spaces for a Modern Era."

To enjoy the art of both monasteries, there will be visits to the sisters' display of extraordinary historical art needlework, the Saint John's Abbey church and crypt chapels, the Saint John's Bible Gallery, and the monks' pottery and woodworking shops. Musical art will be represented by a hymn singing of the work of monastic composers. All monastic artists are invited to send articles for display or pictures of their work for a gallery show even if they cannot attend (See page 6 for information on how to participate).

*(continued on p. 4)*

## *President's Message*

A major exhibition, "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination," opened recently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. You might have read about its opening at this year's Met Gala, the museum's annual fundraising event with celebrities dressed in designers' works of art. Their costumes this year were inspired by the exhibit's theme, which seemed to interest the media more than usual. Although the reviews of the exhibit have not been uniformly rave, I found it to be ethereal.

Featuring the work of 55 designers who were raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, the exhibition explores the various ways in which the Catholic imagination has influenced creativity in a surprisingly reverential way. Strains of Samuel Barber, Gabriel Fauré, George Frideric Handel, Ennio Morricone, Michael Nyman, and Franz Schubert echo throughout, gentling the way the crowds approach the exhibit. The faceless mannequins all strike a tranquil, contemplative pose which enhances the viewer's experience. Incorporating a "pilgrimage" theme, the exhibit moves from one site to another.

My journey began in the Byzantine and medieval galleries where Catholic-inspired fashions of the past

century were displayed in conversation with their ancestral inspirations. Beautiful evening dresses with glittering mosaic designs carried me back to Ravenna, for example. And the Blessed Virgin's fashion garments by Yves Saint Laurent designed for the Chapel of Notre-Dame de Compassion in Paris, and Riccardo Tisci made for the Parish of St. Peter the Apostle in Palagianello, Italy are exquisite.

Downstairs in the Anna Wintour Costume Center, vestments and jewelry on loan from the Vatican are displayed following a decade-long negotiation. These include two amazing jewel-encrusted tiaras worn by Pius IX along with croziers and papal rings. Chasubles and copes are displayed in cases that allow visitors to see the workmanship up close.

The third stop on the pilgrimage at the Cloisters in northern Manhattan still awaits me, but I am looking forward to visiting soon, and re-visiting the entire exhibit as well. Throughout, I found myself wondering what was going through the minds of others crowding around me that day. The experience also made me long to see the exhibit of our sisters' vestment collection at the Haehn Museum at St. Benedict's Monastery, "It's All God's Work." For me that will be a highlight of the 2018 ABA Convention.

My term of office will conclude with the convention. It has been a privilege to serve on the board these past four years and the last two as president. The ABA has been a blessing for in my life since I joined in 1990. I was glad to be able to give back in some way and to see this wonderful group into the future.

Julia Upton, RSM  
ABA president  
uptonj@stjohns.edu



### ***The AMERICAN MONASTIC NEWSLETTER***

Submit any announcements or articles to:

Editor: Judith Sutera, OSB

Mount St. Scholastica, 801 S. 8th, Atchison, KS 66002

Email: jsutera@mountosb.org

For all address changes, membership payments, or any other ABA business, please contact the ABA secretary:

Email: ambenacad@gmail.com

*The American Monastic Newsletter* is published three times per year and it, as well as other ABA information, may be read online at:

***www.americanbenedictine.org***

**CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM**

**ON PAGE 5**

## CANON LAW COLUMN

### *The Canonical Rights Of A Monastic*

Because of the profession of obedience, sometimes monastics assume that they do not have rights, especially if they are commanded under obedience to do something. However, this is not true. The Rule itself states that if a monastic finds a task impossible the monastic has a right to speak with the superior about the matter (RB 68).

This article will list and comment on some of the canonical rights of a monastic. A monastic congregation in its proper law may provide for additional rights. Proper law may prescribe how rights are to be exercised within the monastic congregation. Therefore, the proper law should always be consulted regarding rights.

A right cannot be taken away or limited unless the penal or disciplinary procedures of the law are observed. As noted below, if this should occur, the monastic has a right to canonical advocacy.

#### *Rights particular to monastic profession*

A monastic has the right by profession to participate in the common life of the monastery. This includes participation in common prayer and common meals. A monastic in solemn or perpetual profession has the right to participate in chapter. Chapter participation includes active voice to speak and vote and passive voice unless the monastic does not have the specified qualifications for the office (for example, age or years in monastic profession). If a monastery has a monastic habit, the monastic has a right to wear the habit.

#### *Right to live in the monastery*

A monastic has the right to live in the monastery of his/her profession. This is based on the interpretation that has been given to canon 665 regarding absence from the monastery. Therefore, a monastic cannot be assigned outside the monastery without his/her consent. A monastic congregation, however, may have specified exceptions to this right in its proper law. The Cistercians of the Strict Observance, for example, provide for the assigning of a monastic to another monastery without the consent of the monastic under certain conditions. Members

of a centralized monastic congregation such as the Benedictines of Perpetual Adoration have a right to live in a monastery of the monastic congregation but not in a particular monastery. However, it should be noted that the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has granted indulgences to permit a superior to assign a member to a specialized residence because of certain behavioral issues.

#### *Right to support*

A monastic has a right to support from the monastery in order to live his/her vocation (canon 670). However, this right does not mean that whatever the monastic wants must be provided. The right is governed by the proper law and the customs of the monastery.

#### *Right not to reveal conscience*

By canonical tradition, no one can be forced to manifest his/her conscience; that is, a monastic cannot be forced to reveal private matters or to admit something about his/her behavior. Therefore, a monastic cannot be required under obedience to any of the following:

- a. psychological evaluation
- b. psychological treatment
- c. residence in a psychological facility (see above)
- d. participation in an alcohol or drug treatment program
- e. admission or revelation of private matters such as violation of the obligations of monastic profession, sexual abuse or misconduct, and health issues or records.

#### *Right to files*

A monastic has limited control over his/her personal files in the monastery. Any materials which he/she provided for the files remain under his/her control under canon law according to a decision of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The monastic has a right to review these materials. Further, these materials cannot be released to a third party without the consent of the monastic except in cases where civil law required the release of the materials. However, the monastic does not have rights to other materials in the files.

### *Right to canonical counsel*

If a monastic is subject to canonical discipline or alleges that his/her rights have been violated, the monastic has the right to canonical counsel. The monastery must cover the expenses of such representation. The one exception to the responsibility of the monastery to cover the expenses is if the monastic is earning his/her own income and has kept the income rather than remitting the income to the monastery. However, the monastery does have a right to approve the canonical counsel based on objective criteria such as whether the proposed counsel is an expert in religious law. If the monastic does not know or cannot find a canonical counsel, the monastery must make one available.

### *Right to obediences in writing*

The Code of Canon Law provides that singular decrees and precepts must be “in writing with the reasons at least summarily expressed if it is a decision” (canon 51). For example, in disciplinary actions, the monastic has the right to request and receive the discipline in writing with a summary of the reasons for the discipline. The written document makes clear the reason for recourse (see # 8 below),

### *Right to recourse*

A monastic has a right to recourse if a right has been violated. Recourse is made according to the norms of canon law (canons 1734-1738) and provisions in the proper law. In a monastic congregation with autonomous monasteries, the recourse is normally to the president or abbot general of the monastic congregation. If a monastic is making recourse according to the canons, it is important to make the recourse within the very small window of time allowed by the canons. Canon 1734 only permits ten useful days to ask for the superior to modify or revoke the obedience or decision in question. Once the superior makes a decision, which must be done within 30 days, the monastic has only 15 useful days to appeal to the president or abbot general. If an appeal is made to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life against the decision of the president or abbot general, the recourse must be made within 15 useful days.

### *Rights in the case of dismissal*

If a monastic is being dismissed from the monastery or monastic congregation, the monastic has the right to canonical counsel (see above) and the right to present a defense during each stage of the process.

This list of rights may not exhaust all the rights of a monastic. However, these rights are the rights that often are the subject of canonical processes.

In my next column I will write about those matters that are not rights of a monastic.

Daniel J Ward, OSB  
Djaward44@gmail.com

*Readers are invited to send questions or suggestions for future columns to Father Dan.*

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### ***Convention (continued from p. 1)***

In addition to the opportunities for informal sharing, the convention also includes a designated time for people with particular interests to gather. Current “sections” of the ABA include librarians, archivists, monastic researchers and the visual arts, as well as conversations for oblates.

Another important part of the convention is the biennial business meeting. Those attendees who are members of the Academy will hear reports about the various activities of the organization and have an opportunity to elect their representatives to the board of directors. In order to facilitate the process and have well prepared members, nominations have been made in advance, with photos and brief introductions of the candidates provided in this newsletter.

The convention culminates with a Eucharist and banquet on Saturday evening, July 21. At that time, the incoming president, Sister Antoinette Purcell will share her vision for the next two years and special achievement awards will be presented.



ABA Biennial Convention  
Artisans of the Monastery  
July 19-22, 2018  
St. Benedict Monastery  
St. Joseph, MN

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Form**  
(Please Print!)

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ OSB \_\_\_ Oblate \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

Preferred name on badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Abbey/Monastery and City \_\_\_\_\_

Street/PO Box Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: F ( ) M ( )

**Registration Fee:**  mark your choice

	<u>Before May 1, 2018</u>	<u>After May 1</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	ABA Member	\$200.00 \$225.00	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-member	\$225.00 \$250.00	

Day rate: \$100 per day (includes meals)  
 Friday  Saturday Friday = \$100 Saturday = \$100

**Room and Board:** Includes Thursday evening dinner through Sunday morning breakfast

Private Room: **\$150** (\$50 per night)  Double Room: **\$105** (\$35 per night)

I would like to share the double room with \_\_\_\_\_

Addtl nights at the above per night rate selected: # \_\_\_\_\_

(Specify nights: ex. Sun, Wed)

Please specify dietary restrictions or mobility assistance needed:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Liturgy:** Please volunteer and check as many as you like!

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reader for Liturgy of the Hours/Prayer        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cantor for Liturgy of the Hours/Prayer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reader for Mass/Eucharist                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Cantor for Mass/Eucharist              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer Leader for Liturgy of the Hours/Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharistic Minister                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musician - Type of instrument _____           |   |

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Registration Fee** \_\_\_\_\_ + **Room & Board** \_\_\_\_\_ = **TOTAL Paid:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to "American Benedictine Academy" and submit with your registration form to:

Sister Julia Upton  
600 Convent Road  
Syosset, NY 11791

## Call for Artwork

The Visual Arts Section of the ABA invites Benedictine artists to submit one to four pieces of their artwork for the ABA Art Show at the convention in St. Joseph, Minn. There will also be a digital art gallery for which artists may submit one to three digital images.

### *Criteria for submission:*

- original art work in any medium (fiber, ceramic, woodworking, stain glass, photography, etc.)
- pieces ready for hanging or display on a pedestal or table
- each piece clearly labeled artist's name
- name of artist's community and its location
- shipped in a returnable container with pre-paid return shipping included

### DO NOT SHIP ANYTHING WITH GLASS

Bring art to the convention or ship to arrive at the convention site by 12 noon, July 19, 2018. ABA is not responsible for returning shipments. Shippers will need to make arrangements for return shipping with Gregory Evans. Send art to:

S. Ann Marie Biermaier, OSB  
St. Benedict Monastery / ABA  
104 Chapel Lane  
St. Joseph, MN 56374-0220

Sorry, but the deadline for submissions for the digital gallery was June 16, 2018. Please contact Gregory Evans with questions or concerns: Phone (571) 225-7745, Email: <greg.oblsb@gmail.com>.

## MONASTIC STUDIES GRANTS

ABA members are invited to apply for Monastic Studies Grants, which provide funds to support projects that "cultivate, support and transmit the Benedictine heritage within contemporary culture." Applications will be selected on the basis of quality of the proposal (originality, feasibility, clarity of purpose), potential benefit for monastics, and relevance to the purposes of the Academy.

More details are on the ABA website.

To apply for a grant please supply the following information:

Name, address, phone number, e-mail address

Religious or academic affiliation (if any)

A brief description of the proposed project

The goal(s) of the proposed project

An itemized budget which includes:

total cost of project

sources of funding other than the ABA

sum requested from the ABA

Send completed grant applications to:

Greg Peters

THI, Biola University

13800 Biola Avenue

La Mirada, CA 90639

or submitted by email as a Word document to  
greg.peters@biola.edu

## For those flying to the convention:

The best way to get to St. Benedict's is to use Executive Express (<http://executiveexpress.biz/>). Their website includes a schedule for their frequent regular departures from the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport. The campus stop is outside Gorecki Center at the College of St. Benedict where registration will be held. Watch for other attendees at the shuttle's departure area as there is a discount for multiple passengers with the same destination.

Sister Susan Mary Hooks, OSB, executive secretary and treasurer of the ABA, has resigned from her ABA responsibilities for personal reasons. We are grateful to Susan for her leadership and for the time and energy she put into her ministry with us. She did a good bit of ground work to make technological advances for the organization.

Sisters Antoinette Purcell, Judith Sutera and myself have divided up the responsibilities in the interim: Sister Antoinette, incoming president, has

taken on the responsibility for recruiting a successor to Sister Susan Mary. Sister Judith is taking care of Constant Contact communications. Along with the other responsibilities of the presidency and convention, I will be handling the finances, including membership and convention registration, in the interim. Sister Susan will continue to forward me any forms that are sent to her. We hope that ABA business can continue smoothly.

Sister Julia Upton, ABA president



## NEWS

### *Elections*

The sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery (Boerne, Tex.) elected Sister Frances Briseño OSB as their prioress and the sisters of St. Walburg Monastery (Covington, Ky.) elected Sister Aileen Bankemper OSB. The monks of Saint Louis Abbey (St. Louis, Mo.) have elected Dom P. Gregory Mohrman OSB to be their abbot.

Several superiors were recently re-elected to continue their service to their communities:

Sister Mary David Walgenbach OSB - prioress of Holy Wisdom Monastery (Madison, Wisc.)

Dom Gerard D’Souza OCSO - abbot of Abbey of the Genesee (Piffard, N.Y.)

Mother Rebecca Stramoski OCSO - abbess of Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey (Dubuque, Iowa)

Mother Victoria Murray OCSO - titular prioress of Our Lady of Santa Rita (Sonoita, Ariz.)

Brother Bede Healey OSB Cam. has been named as the new local prior of Incarnation Monastery, Berkeley, Cal.

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### MEDIEVAL CONGRESS REPORT

The ABA sponsored session at the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University is a way to have a Benedictine presence at an annual meeting of 3000 medievalists. The ABA sessions are usually well attended. In this year’s session, four presenters addressed biblical interpretation by Benedictine monks in the medieval period. Michael Martin (Fort Lewis College) spoke about the “Italian Homiliary,” a collection of more than 100 sermons from about 800 AD that survives in 48 manuscripts. The sermons are simplified versions of sermons by Caesarius of Arles, Bede, Gregory the Great, and others. Some of the sermons are addressed to monks. It seems likely that the collection was used to introduce young monks to Biblical interpretation and perhaps to sharpen their knowledge of Latin.

Nathan John Haydon (University of Arkansas) studied the notion of exile in the writings of Aelfric, the abbot and writer in Old English. In Aelfric as in

the Rule of Benedict, exile and eschatology are closely related ideas: we have no lasting home on earth; our patria is yonder. Excommunication is a form of ritual exile, an anticipation of eschatological separation. Welcoming the stranger prepares one for the eternal kingdom.

Jacob Ryeff (Marquette University and oblate of Clyde) has recently published translations of the Old English version of the Rule of Benedict and the writings of Abhishikdananda (Henry Le Saux, OSB). In his talk, Ryeff studied the influence of his Benedictine life on John Lydgate (1451) a prolific writer and monk of Bury St. Edmund’s. That influence is evident in his “Defence of Holy Church” (1413), which reflects ruminative lectio divina by making extensive use of typology in a dynamic, associative way.

Hugh Feiss, OSB (Monastery of the Ascension) compared the Latin Song of Songs commentary of Rupert, abbot of Deutz, and the first commentary on the Song in Armenian by Gregory of Narek. Both men think the literal meaning of the text is a series of metaphors referring to Christ, though Rupert sees them as referring to Christ through Mary. The understanding of Christ is both authors is that he is Lord. One respondent suggested that this project is worth pursuing now when the image of Christ tends to be sentimentalized.

Next year’s session will be on “Images of Christ in Medieval Benedictine Writers and Artists.” Anyone interested in presenting a paper at the session is invited to contact me.

Hugh Feiss, OSB  
hughfeiss@gmail.com

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### *Deaths of Note*

Abbot Timothy Wright OSB, former abbot of Ampleforth and professor at Benedictine University (Lisle, Ill.), a leading voice in monastic/Muslim dialogue

Sister Johnette Putnam OSB, of Mount St. Scholastica (Atchison, Ks.), past president of the Federation of St. Scholastica and prominent figure in the post-Vatican II renewal of women’s monasticism

Father Columba Kelly OSB, of St. Meinrad Archabbey (St. Meinrad, Ind.), prolific composer of vernacular chant for liturgy and charter member of Benedictine Musicians of the Americas.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*A Not-So-Unexciting Life: Essays on Benedictine History and Spirituality in Honor of Michael Casey, OCSO*, edited by Carmel Posa, SGS. Cistercian Publications (Liturgical Press), Collegeville, Minn., 2017. 426 pp., \$39.95, ISBN 978-0-87907-269-8.

This book is a goldmine. Eighteen of the most influential writers on things monastic – Benedictine, Cistercian and lay – have contributed essays to this collection. Some of them, such as Father Terrence Kardong’s “Who Wrote the Rule of Walbert?”, are of a historical nature. Others, like Sister Mary Collins’ “Ritualizing Endings for the Sake of New Beginnings”, tackle some challenges of contemporary monastic reality. The late Helen Lombard is even present in an edited text from talks in which she asked “St. Benedict’s Balanced Lifestyle: Is This Your Life?”.

Father Columba Stewart wraps it up with “Musings of a (Post)Modern Monastic Historian,” before an interview with Michael Casey himself. This is just a taste of the weighty substance of this book, a worthy tribute to one who certainly qualifies as one of the greatest monastic writers of our times.

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Notker Wolf, OSB, with Leo Linder. *Aging Starts in Your Mind*, translated by Gerlinde Büchinger-Schmid. Paraclete Press, Brewster, Mass., 2017. 205 pp., \$17.99, ISBN 978-1-61261-814-2.

Perhaps influenced by his own recent retirement, the always insightful and entertaining former abbot primate offers his thoughts on growing old. He does not sugar-coat the realities, giving vivid descriptions of such things as the last day of work and the time when the excitement and novelty of it wears off, leaving boredom and a sense of invisibility.

The book is filled with commentaries on homey incidents in chapters with intriguing titles like “Greetings from Pink Floyd” or “My Hairdresser and Pope Francis.” The latter, for example, leads into a reflection on these two, a barber and the head of the Church, as two special models of humility in his life.

It is no surprise that the consistent message is acceptance of the reality of aging, and responding to it

with initiative, enthusiasm and prayerful hope in the ultimate fulfillment of our life of faith. Although the book should provide inspiration to those in their later years, it is never too soon to start reading such good advice from a person who is clearly aging well.

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Paul Quenon, OCSO. *In Praise of the Useless Life: A Monk’s Memoir*. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 2018. 160 pp., \$15.95, ISBN 978-1-59471-759-8.

Brother Paul, novice under Thomas Merton and over fifty years a monk of Gethsemani, is known for his powerful black and white photographs and his books of poetry. In this book, he moves to a different venue for his observations on life. Most of it is a collection of little moments, recollections of a page or two in length about a wide variety of things that have happened to him and his community over the years. The pieces give a simple and often humorous glimpse into the Trappist world and also the personal world of Merton.

One section, called “Unexpected Visitors,” describes encounters ranging from rock musicians to Sister Helen Prejean to literary Nobel laureates. Some of the pieces are interspersed with snippets of poetry as well. This is a gentle book, an easy read, that shows the heart of a true contemplative.

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*What I Am Living For: Lessons from the Life and Writings of Thomas Merton*, edited by Jon Sweeney. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 2018. 224 pp., \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-59471-741-3.

Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Merton’s death, twenty essays recall the influence of Merton on the contributors. The authors are a diverse group that includes Sue Monk Kidd, Father James Martin, Robert Ellsberg, rabbis and Buddhists. Just the titles of the chapters and their authors illustrate how this great writer and thinker left his mark on the intellectual and spiritual world of the late twentieth century and how he continues to reverberate today.



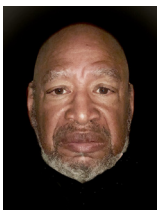
## BOARD ELECTION

At the July convention, those ABA members in attendance will elect new members of the board of directors. The person who is elected vice-president will succeed to the presidency in 2020. Some candidates have accepted nomination for both the vice-presidency and also for a board seat if not elected vice-president.

A vice-president and at least one new board member will be elected. Since the board has been gradually moving from two year to four year terms, Sister René Branigan, OSB of Sacred Heart Monastery (Richardton, N.D.), and Sister Marianne Burkhard, OSB of St. Mary Monastery (Rock Island, Ill.) were elected for two year terms in 2016. Sister Marianne had already served one term, so she is not eligible for re-election. Sister René has completed her interim term so is now eligible for a full four year term. Oblates Greg Peters and Judith Valente were elected for four year terms, so will automatically remain on the board for two more years if not elected vice-president. At least one of the board members must be an oblate.

Duties of the board can be found in the by-laws. Nominations may still be made from the floor at the meeting, but having nominations in advance helps to ensure that there is a sufficient slate for the election process. It also allows for information about the candidates to be published in the *American Monastic Newsletter* in advance of the convention for the members' deliberation and prayer.

### NOMINEES FOR VICE-PRESIDENT



#### **Gregory Evans**

I have been an oblate of St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Va. since 2004, and a member of ABA since 2009. Retired from a career with the Federal Aviation Administration, I volunteer in many capacities at the monastery, but especially in music, art and environment, landscaping, as a speaker/presenter for the Benedictine Pastoral Center, along with facilitating the monastery's "Knitting as Prayer" group, and ministering to the elderly community members by visiting them, assisting them

with shopping, errands, computers, and arts and crafts. I have been ABA Visual Art Convenor since 2013.

As an oblate, I see a direct correlation to my volunteer work and living the Rule of St. Benedict. I would like to serve on the ABA board to be an example for other oblates as to how we as lay members of our monastic communities can and do live a monastic life and are an integral part of today's monasticism.



#### **Greg Peters**

I have spent the last 20+ years studying monasticism and advocating for its re-introduction into Protestant and Evangelical churches, currently as a theology professor at Biola University and as an oblate and retreat leader at St. Andrew's Abbey, Valyermo, Cal. After 15 years of ordained ministry in the Baptist tradition, I became an Anglican in 2005 and was ordained a priest, serving as rector of Church of the Epiphany, La Mirada, Cal. A member of ABA for a number of years and current board member, I received a monastic studies grant in 2010. I am married with two children and am the author of *The Story of Monasticism* and the forthcoming *The Monkhood of All Believers*:

As a Protestant who desires to see monasticism re-introduced into the Evangelical Church tradition, I am certain that the ABA can help to accomplish this task. As vice-president, I would like to assist the ABA in its ongoing work and help to extend its reach into the larger Protestant traditions, to bring the richness of monastic history and spirituality to a largely untapped audience.



#### **Judith Valente**

I am an oblate of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison and author of the books *Atchison Blue*, my memoir of my regular visits to Mount St. Scholastica, and "The Art of Pausing: Meditations for the Overworked and Overwhelmed," co-written with Brother Paul Quenon, OCSO. Her latest book is an exploration of The Rule of St. Benedict, titled "How to Live: What The Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us About Happiness, Meaning and

Community.” I was a delegate to the International Oblate Congress in Rome in 2017, give frequent talks across the country on Benedictine spirituality for lay people, and will lead the 2018 oblate institute, held annually in Atchison for oblates from across the country.

I joined the board of the ABA in 2014. I have twice been honored to be a presenter at ABA conferences. It is an unexpected privilege to serve on the ABA board, the best part of which is connecting with vowed and lay Benedictines from across the world.

### NOMINEES FOR BOARD MEMBER

#### **Renée Branigan, OSB**



A member of Sacred Heart Monastery, in Richardton, N.D. I received my B.A. in oral communications from Mt. Marty College, M.A. in speech and theater from the University of North Dakota; and an M.A. in Christian spirituality from Creighton. I have taught for over 40 years in grade school and high school but primarily at the university level. While teaching, I was also very active in various publications: my community’s newsletters (ongoing), the *ABA Proceedings*, longtime managing editor of *The American Monastic Newsletter*, and I am in my 36th year as editorial assistant for *The American Benedictine Review*. I serve my community as secretary, director of our Foundation, volunteer coordinator, etc.

I have attended every ABA meeting except one since joining in 1980. In 2014, I received the Egregia award for my contributions to the Academy, but, while I felt honored, it did not hold a candle to all the benefits of being a part of the ABA for so many years. Every time I attend a meeting, I meet people who share my life values and I rejoice in the expansion of the ABA in its variety of membership and gifts.



#### **Joanna Burley, OSB**

I am a professed member of Saint Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Virginia. I hold master’s degrees in education (Catholic school leadership) from Marymount University, Arlington, Va., and theology (monastic studies) from Saint John’s University, Collegeville, Minn. Currently, I serve my community as Director of Mission

Integration and Communications, schola director, musician/liturgist, monastic council member, and Federation delegate. In addition, I serve on the boards of our ministries, and I am a member of the steering committee for the 2019 Monastic Worship Forum convention.

I am delighted to be an ABA member! The opportunity to absorb even a fraction of the wisdom of so many people committed to furthering the ideals of monasticism is life-giving for me. I would be honored to work with the ABA to support and promote both the preservation and evolution of our monastic heritage.

**Gregory Evans** (see above) If not elected vice-president, Gergory may be elected to the board.



#### **Hugh Feiss, OSB**

I served on the board many years ago, at a time when the meetings were transitioning from a more academic gathering for professed monks and nuns to the current more heavily lay and practical emphasis. Benedictines are clearly at a crossroads in our history. In many ways I am a representative of a bygone era, but I’ve studied Benedictine history enough to believe that a bright, if so far dimly-defined future lies in store for the Benedictine tradition. If in some way my expertise and hope can serve the ABA I would be glad to serve another term on the board.



#### **Colleen Maura McGrane, OSB**

I entered the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at Clyde, Mo. in 1994. I have previously served as vocation director, liturgist and junior director. I am currently archivist and transfer director. I am working on preparing the third of four volumes of translation of Adalbert de Vogue’s commentaries for publication. I have presented at the Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo on numerous occasions. I have also published in *ABR* and *Magistra*, and given various presentations on the Rule of Benedict in monasteries and colleges in the U.S. and Philippines.

The ABA is important to me because our gatherings serve as an occasion for conversation and exploration of various aspects of the Benedictine

charism and their relevance for the world today. I also value its support of Benedictine scholarship, whether by vowed Benedictines or lay scholars. In a time where there are fewer vowed Benedictines able to devote themselves to scholarship, we need to find ways to insure that such scholarship, dialogue, and serious research continue.



**Valerian Odermann, OSB**

I am a monk of Assumption Abbey, Richardton, N.D. and spent 14 years at its foundation, Monasterio Benedictino de Tibatí, in Bogotá, Colombia. I have been a professor/chaplain at Colegio San Carlos, Universidad de San Buenaventura and the University of Mary. In addition, I have been a retreat master for monastic communities, oblate groups, and the Benedictine Health System. Currently, I serve as chaplain for Sacred Heart Monastery and Mount Marty College, in Yankton, S.D.

I have been an ABA member since the 1990s, and a practitioner and lifelong learner of the Benedictine ethos and spirit. The ABA offers a space to cultivate the monastic spirit, whether in communities of vowed life or in the personal lives of dedicated people carrying on the “work of creation” in diverse careers. Having seen its impact, as well as benefited from its output, I will serve energetically to further its mission and vision.



**Dennis Okholm**

Formerly an oblate of Blue Cloud Abbey, I transferred to St. Andrews Abbey in Valyermo, Cal. I led retreats and taught courses on Benedictine spirituality, culminating in the

publication of *Monk Habits for Everyday People*. More recently, I authored *Dangerous Passions, Deadly Sins: Learning from the Psychology of Ancient Monks*, and have a forthcoming book *Learning Theology Through the Church's Worship*. I was ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA for 29 years before moving my ordination to the Anglican Church in 2011. My wife is a Certified Christian Educator in the Presbyterian Church and an adjunct at Azusa Pacific University. Having taught for 36 years, I am currently

professor of theology at Azusa Pacific University and adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary.

I have previously served on the ABA board for a total of ten years. The first oblate to be elected, I would enjoy another opportunity to make a small contribution that continues to spread the work and wisdom of Benedictines to a culture that desperately needs what this 1500 year tradition has to offer.



**Jeana Visel, OSB**

I joined the sisters of Ferdinand, Ind., in 2003. I have a B.A. in religious studies from Kenyon, M.A. in theology with a concentration in monastic studies from Saint John's,

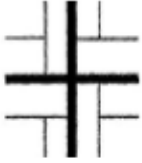
and recently earned a D.Min. in spirituality from The Catholic University of America. I have been studying icon painting since 2006. I am author of *Icons in the Western Church: Toward a More Sacramental Encounter*. As a dean and director of the graduate theology program, I oversee non-seminary programs at Saint Meinrad School of Theology.

ABA represents the scholarly vein of Benedictine life, providing a forum for delving deeper into the riches of our tradition and assessing how they can be lived in light of today's realities. ABA is a place where scholars and “practitioners” of the life can meet. Especially during this period of significant demographic transition, it serves as curator and protector of lively monastic culture, upholding the value of study as part of Benedictine life, while providing a platform for the order to represent itself to the world. As an organization that includes men and women, sisters, monks, and oblates, it provides a collaborative space to work together to draw on the best that the tradition has to offer.

*The election will be held at the biennial business meeting of the convention on Saturday, July 21. Please take time for this serious right of membership by reading this information ahead of the convention and giving it prayerful deliberation.*

## YOUR ABA MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS

The ABA website, *The American Monastic Newsletter*, awards and grants for monastic studies, and conventions (for which members receive a registration discount)



## The American Benedictine Academy

<http://americanbenedictine.org>

### Membership Application

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Do you have any interest or expertise to share with the Academy? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please check if you wish to participate in one or more of the following ABA sections:*

Monastic Research \_\_\_\_\_ Visual Arts \_\_\_\_\_ Archives \_\_\_\_\_ Library \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 for one year membership \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 for two years membership

**PLEASE SEND TO:**

**Sister Julia Upton, RSM  
600 Convent Road  
Syosset, NY 11791**

**email: [ambenacad@gmail.com](mailto:ambenacad@gmail.com)**