



Common Letter No. 20
Mother Angela Strobel, OSB
February 4, 2010
Birthday of Fr. Andreas Amrhein

Dear Sisters all over the world,

The reason for this letter is not really Fr. Andreas' birthday, although it is a good day to write you; there is also a little piece of an enlightening discovery in one of his letters.

The motivation, I suppose, is an African Proverb that came to my mind these days. To avoid the lovely yellow, yet allergenic, mimosa flowers in our garden, I looked for another path for my daily walk, protected by cypress and pine trees. On this path, hardly anybody walks, so grass is sprouting all over. As I was walking, praying and thinking of you, suddenly the proverb came to my mind: *"on the path to a friend no grass should grow."*

So, in order that grass might not grow on the way of our communication I am writing you today.

I will start with the piece of news in a letter of Fr. Andreas Amrhein, dated October 29, 1903. It is addressed to Dean Thomas Bossard at the Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln in Switzerland. Fr. Andreas was in great financial distress at the time and happy to earn some income through his religious art work for the Benziger Publishing Company at Einsiedeln. He writes: *...I completed a large picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus... which fully satisfied Mr. Benziger. It was the first time this happened. He kept repeating: 'this picture of Jesus pleases me very much. There is dignity and nobility, gentleness, love, vitality, light and warmth in it. It is a picture before which one can pray'. This recognition gave me a lift for various reasons, not from vanity....* This Sacred Heart picture of Fr. Amrhein is reproduced on our jubilee prayer leaflet.

Probably the name Andreas Englisch does not mean anything to most of you. He is a Vatican Correspondent and is one of the six journalists who may accompany Pope Benedict in all his journeys. He is the author of a new book with the title "Wenn Gott spricht — Die Prophezeiungen der katholischen Kirche ("When God speaks – the prophecies of the Catholic Church"). One of the 39 chapters is entitled *Ngome*. Of course, as you can expect from a journalist and bestseller author who writes for the masses, there are some inaccuracies and exaggerations with strong expressions. Yet, the picture he draws of the weak yet strong woman, Sr. Reinolda May is pleasant, and you might not expect this message: her obedience, seemingly crazy and useless turned out to be an explosion of power.

The good news about the opening of the beatification process for the Tokwon (North Korea) Martyrs has reached you. Don't you think this is a loving sign from God in our Jubilee year, and an invitation to thanksgiving and prayers of petition?

But now let us go from our saints to those who are still on the way. Finally in March will see important happenings: the Prioresses, elected long ago, will be installed: Sr. Maria Ignatius Glaser in Windhoek and Sr. Timótea Kronschnabl in Torres Novas, Iberian Priory. Sr. Pia Portman's visa for the United States was finally approved. She will leave for Norfolk as soon as she gets her visa

from the US Embassy here in Rome. Sr. Raphaela Händler will start her second term also in March. Our prayers and best wishes go to them and their respective Priors.

The elections of the Prioresses caused a vacuum and needs, and in consequence some transfers and appointments came about. We are grateful for the generosity of the concerned Priors. Sr. Lumen Gloria Dungca from Manila was given for Argentina and Sr. Hilda Buhay, also from Manila, will replace Sr. Gratia Balagot as Superior of Madrid Community. Sr. Gratia was appointed Regional Superior of Angola. Sr. Crescenciana Chilimbo will be released to complete her studies, interrupted long ago. Sr. Amabilis Zink from Ndanda Priory will be the House Coordinator in our Casa Santo Spirito. Sister Angela Barreti from Sorocaba Priory will also join our Casa Community.

Here at the Casa, the RB Course is going on in its second month. This fourth edition has seven Tutzing Sister-participants and, worthy to note, eight monks, including an Abbot. So you can imagine that it is an interesting and enriching group, also for our Liturgy. Yesterday we celebrated together the Silver Jubilee of our Sr. Maria Salette da Rocha. She is also taking part in the RB Course, so that she can acquire the necessary knowledge in order to coordinate the RB Course of next year which is planned to be for the Portuguese-speaking Monastic world.

About the whereabouts of the Generalate other than those here in Rome: Sr. Adelaida and Sr. Terese departed on January 5th for the Election Chapter in Ndanda Priory, and Visitation in Nairobi and Jinja/Uganda until March 4. I will be in Bulgaria, together with Sr. Hildegard Jansing, Prioress of Tutzing, from February 25 to March 3.

Soon we will celebrate the Feast of St. Scholastica, twin sister and disciple of St. Benedict. May she, with her loving intercession, obtain for us abundant rain of grace on the fields of our Congregation, in every community and in every heart.

For the coming Season of Lent, I just repeat St. Benedict's advice: keep your manner of life – our missionary Benedictine charism – most pure; be generous, offer God, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, of your own will, something above the measure ... and look forward to Holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing. (cf. RB 49) So it will be a time of inner joy, which can explode on Easter.

Nothing happens by chance – that is what Fr. Andreas Amrhein explains in a tract. Today, his birthday, we heard the Gospel of the sending of the Twelve, two by two. We in the Casa, together with the RB participants sang joyfully the entrance song to the Eucharist celebration:

*“Just as the Father sent me
So I'm sending you out to be
My witnesses throughout the world,
The whole of the world.
He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free.
And go tell ev'ry one the news that the kingdom of God has come.”*

Keeping you in mind and heart, with gratitude,

M. Angela Strobel OSB