



Common Letter No. 28  
Mother Angela Strobel, OSB  
Rome, June 26, 2011

Dear Sisters,

Greetings from hot, summery Rome! This month of June, we hardly are able to catch up with the sequence and overlapping of Liturgical feasts. Furthermore we are caught between the different calendars of Vatican and Italy. Thus some Sisters went to the Corpus Christi celebration with the Holy Father in the Lateran Church on Thursday; today, Sunday, Campo Santo had its Corpus Christi procession in the Vatican Gardens. July will

start with Solemnities especially dear to us: the Sacred Heart of Jesus, followed closely by the Solemnity of Saint Benedict. This urges me to write you.

Today (Corpus Christi in the Roman church calendar) we had a meaningful homily, about the loving presence between Christ and each person and the loving presence to one another. Although this presence does not need words, once in a while it is good to express our spiritual nearness in words.

In spite of the many feasts we are celebrating these months, the fact is that now we find ourselves liturgically in the Ordinary Time after an abrupt entry into it on Monday after Pentecost. This apparent discontinuity in reality shows the continuity as the Season of the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles' Creed we pray "I believe in the Holy Spirit". Seemingly, nothing else is said about this Holy Spirit; however, the dogmas that follow express the Holy Spirit's action: *the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.*

Here we are at the core of St. Benedict's project: transforming a community of sinners, people who yearn for life (Prol 14) into a community of saints. This can only be the work of the Holy Spirit. Let's remember RB, end of chapter 7: "*Now, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God... . All this the Lord will **by the Holy Spirit** graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins.*" (cf. RB 7,67-70).

Our Constitutions on *Conversatio Morum* also affirm the action of the Spirit in the Missionary Benedictine Community.: "*The more we become open to **the action of the Spirit**, the more he will conform us to Jesus Christ and lead us to the perfection of love.*"

The upcoming solemnities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and our Holy Father, St. Benedict, are opportunities to make us again fully aware of the meaning of our Missionary Benedictine vocation lived in Ordinary Time and Ordinary Circumstances: to run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love" (Prologue 49).

Nowadays news run very fast in different channels and all directions, nevertheless I would like to share some of them from our perspective.

This month of June, after the IWE participants had gone, time came for some shorter and also some unexpected "business" of the Generalate. Sr. Adelaida was for two days at the AIM meeting in Vanves, France; Sr. Maoro did the still outstanding visitation in the Demarest Community, USA, Seoul Priory; Sr. Adelaida and I made a four days' visit to Bulgaria. Unfortunately, Sr. Terese's

visit was to the Hospital San Feliciano of Rome, where she submitted herself to a surgery to remove nodules from the thyroid. She is still recovering.

Other members of the Casa Community are also on the move. Sr. Aquinata is giving seminars for about two months in Korea and in the Philippines, and other Sisters are on vacation or homeleave. Sr. Lucia Jörger went with Sr. Adelaida and Sr. Maoro to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the foundation of our Community in Portugal. Sr. Lucia was the first Prioress of Portugal, when the Priory ran a School in Baltar and took care of the mission station of Cazombo, Angola. Later the school in Baltar had to be handed over to the then socialist government, and Cazombo Mission was closed during the Angolan war. The foreign missionaries went home then, the membership shrank and Portugal in 1977 lost the status of a Priory until 1996 when Torres Novas became again the seat of a Priory. Surely you will hear from Portugal... I just want to mention one of the invited guests who arrived from overseas for the celebration: Sr. Fidelis Jardiel. She stopped in Portugal on her way home to the Philippines. For 47 years – almost a golden jubilee - she had served in Portugal, Tanzania, Nairobi and lately, in Argentina. She left Manila after first profession and right after the novitiate. Now in her 80<sup>th</sup> year of life she returns to her home Priory, Manila. I wish that the young Sisters in our Congregation could imitate such a missionary engagement.

Our visit in Bulgaria had the aim of getting a grasp of the present situation and an idea how to support this mission into the future. Now there are only two Bulgarian sisters left. Sr. Stanislava Bratanova is bedridden after a second stroke that she suffered in March this year. According to the Superior, Sr. Beate Schroeter, Sr. Stanislava sometimes responds when spoken to, but we were not lucky in this. The other Bulgarian Sister is Sr. Bernadetta Bodushka, 80 plus, the one who professed at the age of almost 70. Delighted, we listened to her stories. She was one of 18 girls who had to leave the convent in Zarevbrod when the communists took over. She remained faithful for so many years to her vocation, serving the priests and bishops who were persecuted by the communists. *I only wanted to serve the Lord, she said, but they did not allow me.* They did not allow her to enter the convent, but, with the help she gave the Church, she surely served the Lord. The other 5 Sisters in Bulgaria are expatriates. The Tutzing Priory helps by sending Sisters for a short term, but what is really needed now are young Sisters who will commit themselves to this mission.

Bulgaria is not the only place where Sisters are needed and asked for. Often, the Pories we ask to supply the Sisters need help themselves. In the face of the great need for Sisters in many places, I hope it does not appear egoistic, that we will soon receive in Rome two Sisters, Sr. Marie Ivan Kim from Daegu and Sr. Fortunata Moreira from Portugal. Their presence will give a welcome boost to the Casa Community.

At the beginning of this month, we started the International Juniorate Program with Sisters from Olinda, Sorocaba (Region of Argentina), Windhoek, Nairobi, Seoul, and from Jinja. The Sisters are grateful and happy to be sent here and the Casa Sto. Spirito Community is happy to have them, too.

To all of you, a grace and love-filled Solemnity of the Sacred Heart,  
and may we be a blessing through the intercession of the blessed one, St. Benedict.

Sincerely,

*Sr. Angela OSB*