



Secrétariat Central à la Formation - oco -
Abbaye Notre-Dame du Val d'Igny, november 30, 2017.

Newsletter 15

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

International Symposium on William of St-Thierry: history, theology, spirituality:

The symposium is organized by the Institute of *Souces Chrétiennes* and the Centre for Studies and Research in Cultural History from the University of Reims (France). It will be held in Reims from 4 to 7 June 2018.

The provisional program of the Symposium announces the five themes around which develops thinking:

- ✚ *Years of the formation of William and monasticism in Reims;*
- ✚ *William and his contemporaries, with a conference of Dom Elias from Gethsemane on William and Isaac of Stella and a conference of Brother Denis from Mount St. Bernard on *Natural Knowledge of God*;*
- ✚ *Sources and posterity;*
- ✚ *Theology and philosophy;*
- ✚ *The spirituality of William.*

Spanish Region :

The new Regional Secretary, Father Carlos Maria from Sobrado, shares these informations about formation in his Region.

[Internoviciate for Nuns:](#)

The formation program for postulants and novices is given in the Cistercian Monastery of Mount Sion (Toledo) during five meetings of two months each.

The program started in August of 2014 and the first experience of the cycle concluded in 2016. The first phase of the program was attended by seven postulants and novices. The number has been increased in each course, given the cyclical nature of the formation.

The "Second Edition", started in 2017, developed until now the first two courses. To the four postulants and nine novices, five more novices have participated in one or another course.

The Internoviciate addresses itself especially to the spiritual/vocational dimension which, of course, requires knowledge, and to the psychological-relational dimension of the person:

a) The intellectual dimension: participants acquire a good level of knowledge that allows them to improve themselves and to deepen the charism of the Order. Therefore these courses are given: *History of monasticism* and *History of*

salvation (M. Rosa Ana Izquierdo, CCSB), *Liturgy* (P. Severino M^a Alonso, OCSO), *Liturgical Year* and *Liturgy of the Hours* (M. Pilar Germán, OCSO), *Monastics Values* (F. Juan M^a de la Torre, OCSO). In addition, a person graduated in philosophy and literature (Elena Prieto) teaches *Methodology*.

b) The human dimension: provides basic tools for self-awareness and self-acceptance through a personal work that enhances the relationship. In relation to these themes, have been given courses on *Vulnerability and Limits* (M. Fernanda Soriano, CCSB), on *Self-consciousness and Vocation*, by a guest psychologist (Lourdes Carceller).

c) With the intellectual work, enhances manual and physical work, in order to acquire the capabilities of teamwork and organization of time. In this way, also develops personal creativity.

The team is made up of a novice mistress (M. Fernanda Soriano, CCSB), a sub-mistress (Fátima Menéndez, CCSB) and a person accompanying the students (M. Rosa Ana Izquierdo, CCSB). The team constantly ensures personal and communitarian growth of the young people in formation. The orientation of the daily spiritual reading, as well as the refectory reading, also depends on them.

Internoviciate for monks:

The first Internoviciate session for the monks of the Spanish Region took place from October 24 to December 22, 2017, in the Cistercian Monastery of Mount Sion (Toledo). Five postulants and two novices took part in it.

The subjects that were given them have been:

a) in the intellectual area *Primitive Monasticism I*; *History of salvation I*; and *Catechism of the Catholic Church I* ;

b) in the psychological-relational area : *Limits and Vulnerability*; *Conflict Management*; and *Capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness* ;

c) in the spiritual area: *Spiritual diseases: the passions in Evagrius, Casiano and Gregory the Great*; *Constitutions of the Order I*.

Each monk has had 90 minutes of study; 90-minute daily classes and 2 hours of manual work, all integrated into the monastic day. Also each one of them has had a weekly spiritual accompaniment of 30-minute colloquium with the master of novices. On the other hand, there has been a weekly meeting of 40 minutes for the candidates and the formators in order to have a *collatio* of the *lectio divina* performed during the week.

All this, together with a conviviality intense and narrow, has led the young people in formation to acquire the tools to live together, to understand their vocation and to develop relations.

The formators team is composed of a novice master (B. Paco Rivera, OCSO), a sub-master (P. David Leal, OCSO) and a tutor (B. José Ignacio Manzano, OCSO).

At the end of the course, the masters of novices of the monks in formation went to Mount Sion monastery to meet the master of novices of the Internoviciate in order to inform about the evolution of their novices or postulants.

PREM (Regional Program for Monastic Studies)

From 10 to 25 October 2017 had been given the 2nd half of the *Course V* of the PREM cycle in the Monastery of Viaceli. Met 29 students, of which five of the OSB and one the O.Cist. The subjects were as follows: *Cistercian II: the authors* (F. Antonio Maria Martin, OCSO); *Eschatology* (F. Bernabe Dominguez, OCSO); *Canon Law I* (F. Josep-Enric Parellada, OSB); *Theology Ecumenical Contemporary* (F. Roberto de la Iglesia, OCSO); *Christian Art* (supplementary) (B. Antonio Manuel Perez Camacho, OCSO).

Once the monk in formation has validated the six courses, covering a total of 11 semesters, and overcome successfully all exams, he can present himself for examination in Theology to the University of San Damaso (Madrid).

[Workshop on Saint Bernard:](#)

A new annual cycle of formation has begun to examine Cistercian Fathers and Mothers. The first days of this cycle took place from 7 to 9 November 2017 in the Monastery of Huerta and gathered 32 monks and nuns from different ages. The course focused on Saint Bernard, under the title: *Symbolic exposition of the monastic experience in Saint Bernard*. The speaker was F. Juan María de la Torre, OCSO, which always surprises us with his wisdom, fruit of his monastic experience and a life dedicated to research.

In addition, F. Juan Maria made us a brief presentation on the *Philocalia*, which he has translated into Spanish. Of this work, the first two volumes are already published in the *Monte Casino Editions*.

Next year we will continue to deepen the work of Saint Bernard.

Region NED :

[Formation session for formators:](#)

The traditional *Formation Days for the Mistresses of Novices* ocsa and osb of the Region were held in the Benedictine Abbey in Liège (Belgium), from 2 to 4 October 2017.

The six participants have benefited from the introduction, of S. Marie-Jacques from Liège, in the world of *Nonviolent Communication*. One of the participants, Sister Katharina from Brecht, shares an ... illustrated report!

See **Annex 1**: one page of prelude in Dutch, three pages in French, and two final pages in English!

American Region:

[Regional efforts to better publicize the Cistercian life:](#)

The Regional Secretary, Brother Cassian, gives the latest news of current thinking.

The US Region has been working on increasing possible vocations by developing greater awareness of our monasteries through new digital media. Many of our seniors have stories about finding a magazine or newspaper ad that led them to the Trappists. Today, few people engage with print media. We realize that we are in need of establishing an identity in digital media. Although we do not use such media much ourselves, the young people who are potential vocations, do.

From April 21 – 23, 2015, the superiors and the vocation directors of the American Region gathered at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, GA, for a meeting focused on vocations in the region. Br. Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, the director of the National Religious Vocation Conference, presented two days of conferences. On the third day, the superiors and vocation directors discussed what they had heard and articulated some projects to promote vocations. One of these proposals was to form a sub-committee to find an ad agency to work with us on helping us create a stronger identity in non-print media.

The sub-committee examined several possibilities and chose the Williams Group, an agency which had worked with other Catholic religious communities. They met with the superiors at one Regional Meeting. They proposed a strategic communications workshop which was implemented before the 2017 Regional Meeting. Listening to superiors and vocation directors respond to various questions, they developed some text in clear language that communicates our values. They are currently working on redesigning our regional website to make it easier to update, to include greater visibility for search engines, and to simplify the site so that viewers are directed to an individual monastery's website for more specific information. They will also help us plan some ways to use FaceBook to target specific audiences that would be interested in monastic life.

We are in the midst of developing these ideas and seeing how much the Region will be able to do collectively in order to increase knowledge and interest in our Cistercian life.

Report of a session on Aelred :

Sister Marie-Benoit, from the Abbey of Rivet, gave in Val d'Igny, from 23 to 28 October 2017, a serie of conferences under the title *Aelred and the luminous trail of our Fathers*.

Sharing what she herself received, namely the taste of our Cistercian Fathers, S. Marie-Benoît proposed a reading of the testimony of life of Aelred, as his experience of God. Aelred experimented that happiness is based on the way in which love is lived, well adjusted, ordered and founded in God. At the monastery, he will take "the means of spiritual warfare" to love like God, in truth and chastity; he will therefore not cease to re-read her experiences, first only for himself, then with his Brothers of Rievaulx, to lead them into the path of fraternal charity, unity and peace. The doctrine of Aelred on love and friendship comes out from his founding discovery of the mercy of God, which he describes in Chapter 28 of the *Mirror of Charity*, where he perceived "substantially" the mutual complicity of the grace of God with the freedom of man. Aelred and Bernard meet in this sense: both having used, each according to his personality and his life experiences, the teachings of Augustine and Benedict to live and love in the monastery "in freedom, as a child of light". Fruit of his reflection on his own life, Aelred offers in his treatise on *Spiritual Friendship, Book III*, a scale of friendship to learn to love in God, as a monk, and "fly to the sparkling parts of the dilection". This scale is a practical method that leads to life "with God forever".

Sessions organized in the communities:

Échourgnac: from 12 to 14 december, a session on the subject: *Listen, welcome, dialogue*, led by Sister Anne Da (Xavière) and Marie-Claude Ernst (Professor of Anthropology at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse)

Sessions of the STIM:

Commun Cycle : Session in Laval, from 10 to 16 January 2018, with a total of 30 hours of lessons on *Old Testament; Fundamental Theology; Theology of Religions and Theological Anthropology*.

The courses of *Theology of Religions and Interreligious Dialogue* will be provided by Mr. Dennis Gira; those of *Theological Anthropology* by Frédérique Poulet. Concerning the teachers of the other two subjects, see *Newsletter 14*.

Session for the new students : from 1 to 8 March 2018, with 35 hours of lessons: on *History of Philosophy*, by Mr. Bernard Obellianne; *Methodology*, by B. Bruno Desmoures (ocso) and *History*, by B. Jean-Louis Verstrepen (osb).

A new Bible formation website:

Father Bruno, from the Abbey of Acey, points out this site: <https://labibleensestextes.wordpress.com/>.

There is, among other things, a free online course on the Prophets: *The human and the world in biblical thought*, available until December 15.

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Newsletter 16 :

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