



# ALLIANCE BETWEEN MONASTERIES

## AIM

### Congress of Abbots 2016

The last Congress of Abbots spent time in workshops and in plenary session re-specifying the role of AIM after more than fifty years of existence. The new President, the Council and the General Secretariat set about putting into practice and implementing the conclusions and recommendations that had been reached on this occasion. AIM, besides its mission of helping young communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, especially with training and formation, should also be an organisation promoting alliance between all monasteries following the Rule of St Benedict (Benedictine, Cistercian and Trappist). This is a huge project but it is certain that such work is absolutely necessary today.

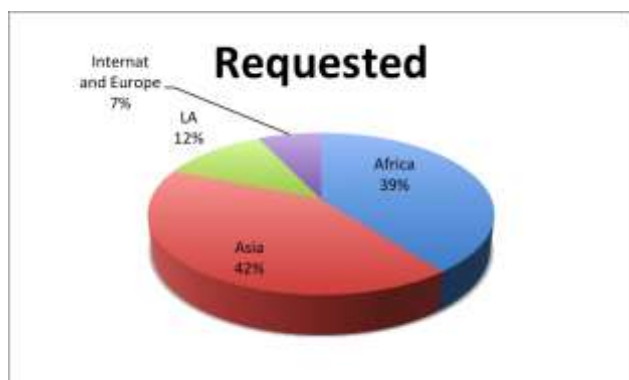
## I. Aid given to monasteries since the last Congress



Reforestation at Esmeraldas (Equator)

**REQUESTS FOR AID: 315 projects**

**APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL: 263 projects**



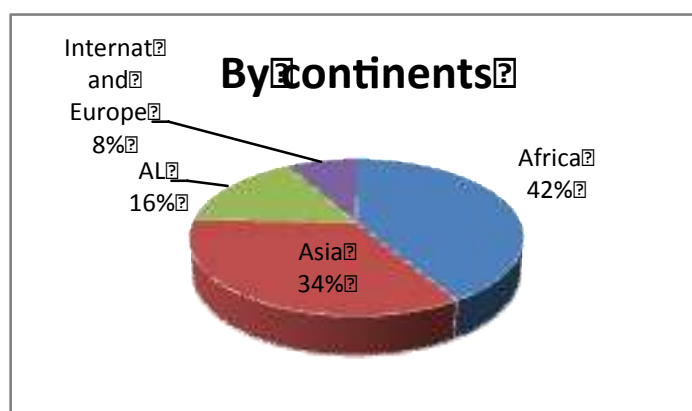
**AID ATTRIBUTED BY CONTINENTS:**

**Africa (42%)**

**Asia (34%)**

**Latin America (16%)**

**International and European (8%)**



#### **BY ORDERS:**

**Benedictine Women: 49,39%**

**Benedictine Men: 23,74%**

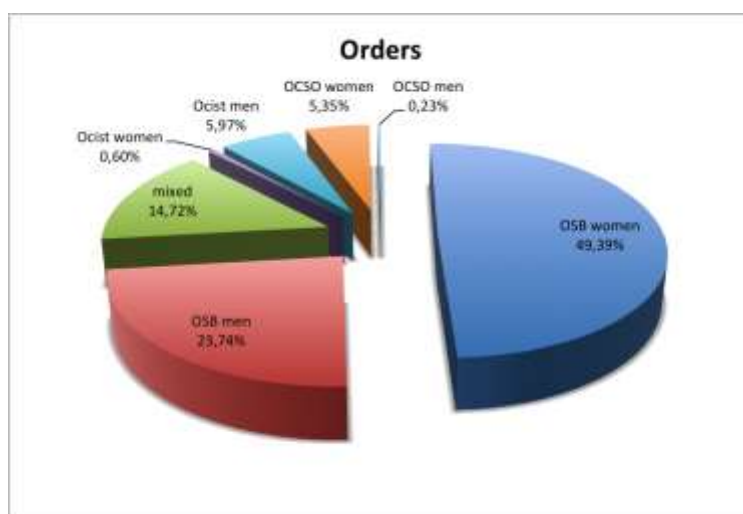
**OSB Men and Women: 14,72%**

**Cistercian women: 0,60%**

**Cistercian men: 5,97%**

**OCSO women: 5,35%**

**OCSO men: 0,23%**



#### **Classification of Countries where most aid has been granted**

1. India
2. Philippines
3. Brazil
4. Vietnam
5. Nigeria

## FINANCED PROJECTS

### Monastic Formation:

Study Grants.....	381 820 Euros
Monastic Formation.....	352 560 Euros
Regional Monastic Meetings.....	96 750 Euros
Liturgy.....	19 300 Euros
Information Technology.....	8 400 Euros
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>858 830 Euros</b>

### Development:

Construction.....	457 385 Euros
Repairs and Renewals.....	94 960 Euros
Basic water needs.....	6 500 Euros
Agriculture and health.....	179 000 Euros
Ecology.....	21 500 Euros
Education.....	8 000 Euros
Cars.....	49 700 Euros
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>817 045 Euros</b>

Projects of Economic Resources ..... 143 590 Euros

Publications ..... 10 000 Euros

Natural Catastrophe ..... 8 700 Euros

**Total..... 1 838 165 Euros**

Stadium at Vanves ..... 192 145 Euros

**TOTAL..... 2 030 310 Euros**

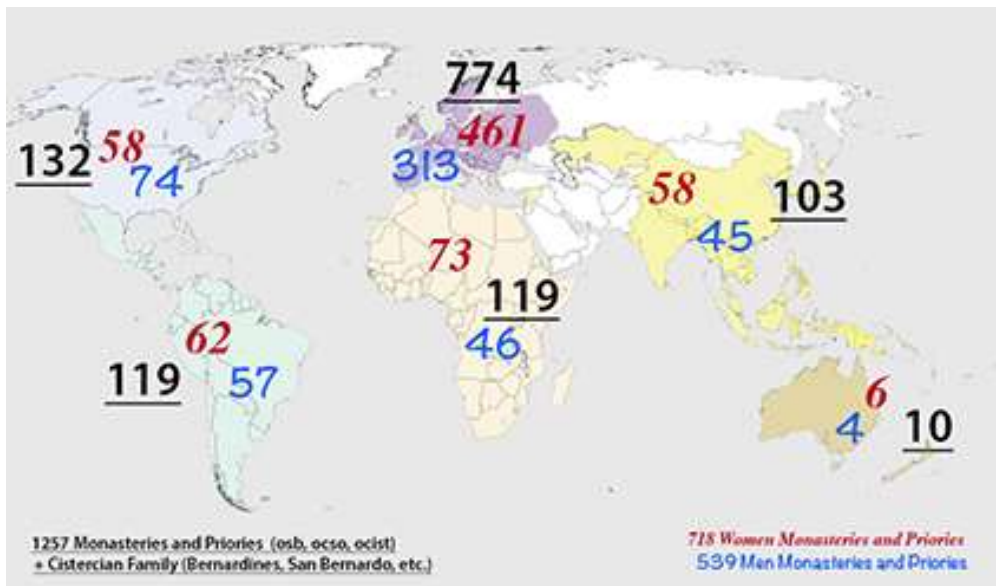
## II. The Work of AIM during the last four years

### 1. Strategic Plan

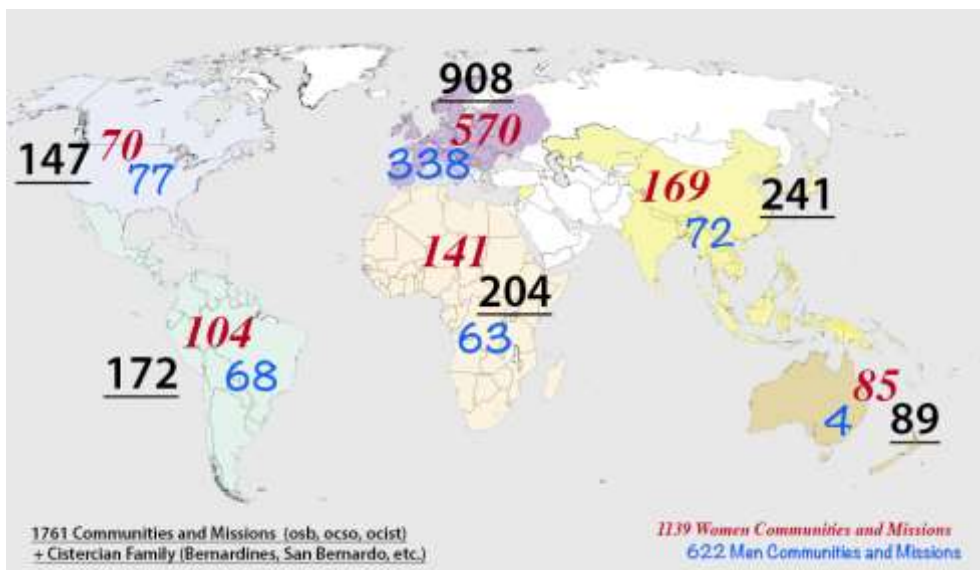
Since the last Abbots' Congress, AIM has developed a strategic plan, which has allowed it in a better way to define its vision, its mission and its goals. A summary table of gifts received and distributed during the course of the last five years and forecasting the next five years has provided a greater clarity to the priorities that AIM has set itself.

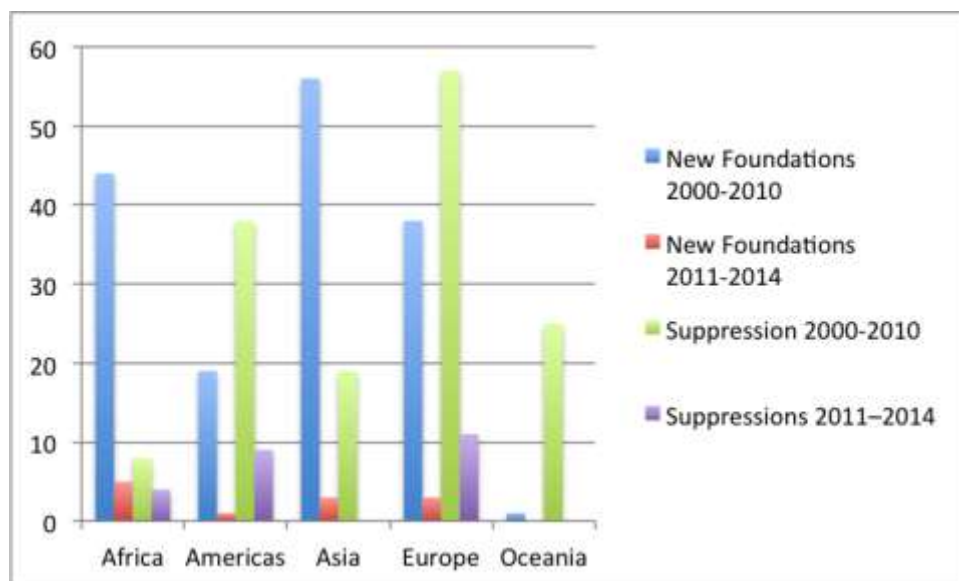
### 2. Statistics of communities living under the Rule of St Benedict in 2015

**Monasteries: 1257**



**Monasteries and Mission Houses: 1761**





In the monasteries of women

- The countries where there were the most foundations during the period 2000 to 2014 were Tanzania (20), India (16), Italy (7) and the Philippines (6).
- However, during this period, some congregations have lost nearly a third of their members.
- Some countries have welcomed for the first time a Benedictine presence : Zambia (2014), Indonesia (2007) and Thailand.

In the monasteries of men

- Since the year 2000, Benedictine monks are present for the first time in : Cuba, Slovakia; Mozambique and Thailand.

During the last fifty years, the pace of foundations was around ten per year, whilst it is less than three per year between 2011 and 2014, whilst the number of closures is increasing.

### **3. Evolution of structures**

The Council has tried to approach the issues of the evolution of existing structures in monasticism.

Some can be very crippling. All are constantly changing in a highly mobile world. There is a need for analysis and perspectives that do not simply replicate the past.

### **4. Management of the Monasteries**

In relation to the difficulty of exercising authority today in the balance between people and the community, the Council has given some guidance on the question of management. It hoped in particular that the management of communities remains firmly rooted in the values of the Rule, which some companies use as a model of management. Furthermore, it has emphasised the acquisition of skills in economic management should allow for good practice of sharing in charity and the use of external aid.

## **5. Visits to Monasteries**

The President of AIM, the members of the International Team around the President and members of the Secretariat on certain occasions have continued to visit monastic foundations in the various continents. They also take part in regional monastic reunions and in gatherings of the CIB. This gives a real insight into the evolution of communities and helps facilitate the choice of projects that have requested financial aid, and allows for monitoring of those projects that have received aid.

## **6. Bulletin**

The Bulletin of AIM will now be published in five languages : French, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. It reflects the thinking of the Council and gives an echo of the life of the monastic regions and AIM's activities. Since the Spring of 2016, a newsletter is published three times per year.

## **7. Publications**

AIM took over the publication, in connection with a French publisher (Saint Leger), of the writings of the patristic and monastic tradition in basic French. These publications are distributed in many monasteries in French speaking Africa and Asia.

## **8. Communication**

AIM's website has been renewed and improved. It contains a lot of information. It presents the news of the Confederation, that of the Cistercian Order and the OCSO. It maintains contact with monastic communities throughout the world; it features videos; it allows us to see projects supported by AIM and it allows consultation papers some time after their publication. It can be of great service; of course, improvement is always possible.

# **III. The future of the monastic life and the role of AIM**



During the workshop at the last Congress of Abbots, it was said that AIM could be an observatory of monastic life in the world. Here, therefore, are some insights into the current situation and a possible perspective.

### **1. Structural Metamorphosis**

The world in which we live is in the process of changing in a totally new way. Institutions are suffering the consequences. This affects every continent due to globalisation. It is true to say, that this phenomenon is recurrent in history. An institution is born, grows, remains active for some time and dies. It is important not to think that structures will always survive as before. In the case of prolonging them artificially, their sclerosis would be even more deadly.

Unfortunately, many communities and community leaders think that they must make an institution survive at all cost. This is not a dynamic perspective. It is necessary to know how to die so that the resurrection can do its work.

It is not therefore a matter of dying to die, but dying to live. In fact, it is good when we agree to let go of the narrow membership of an institution, so that we become capable of a new development.

### **2. Thirst of humanity**

In such a context, what we need most concerns the quality of relationships. It's about living at the depth of our being as a relational base. How to live with yourself, how to live with others if not by accepting what comes from a common source which precedes us. This source continues to emerge in



the world and in the flesh. Monks and nuns have had to make themselves the witnesses of this. Prayer, liturgy, work, community life must be places of work to rejoin this profound source so as to live from it, in community and with all. There is a glaring thirst of humanity at the heart of this world.

### **3. Some spiritual oases**

Thereby, monasteries amongst other structures can become human and spiritual oases for our time. They do not have to live in an independent manner, without links with other structures, of the Church or not. They must share about this in an open manner in relation with dioceses, other monastic communities in their area, and all open to dialogue, laity ready to engage in such a perspective. One could even imagine next to many communities, some of which will persist, the existence of a small group of monks or sisters within a multi-vocational group which plays a role of hospitality in prayer and fraternity.

### **4. Monasticism, a multiple reality**

It is very clear that the monastic life can be expressed in a variety of contexts, as has been the case throughout history. It would be absurd to only want to give it one form. But however there may be different accents according to the Orders and the Congregations, solidarity must play an important role between monasteries as with other social or religious structures. Long gone are the days when the success of this or that Congregation were put in competition with others less fortunate! In a world undone, the monastic and ecclesial fabric can stretch. Monks and nuns must participate as they have frequently done in the participation of a new world.



## **Conclusion**

It is in this spirit that AIM wishes to continue its work of helping in the formation of communities, in developing their roots and in their openness to the new realities which carry the grace of the gospel without withdrawal. Gone are the great romantic reconstructions of the Middle Ages or the glorious era of a conquering Christianity; now the disciples of Christ fit more modestly, but with ambition in a communion of communities in an unstructured world, which is thirsty for meaning and life.

Fr Jean-Pierre Longeat, President  
Sr Gisela Happ, General Secretary