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Globalization and Education: A Benedictine Response

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Three topics lie before us for this hour: globalization, education, and a Benedictine response. How to do any one of them justice, much less tie them all together! I accepted the assignment to link these important matters because I think there is nothing more challenging than exploring a new question. What I can offer is no more than a first try, that aims to contribute to the conversation you have already begun in the two earlier meetings of the International Commission on Benedictine Education. Perhaps it will open us more new questions for all of us.

Globalization: The Phenomenon to Which We Must Respond as Educators

To be Benedictine or Cistercian is to be local; we all have a commitment to our place. Yet the very gathering in one place of Benedictine and Cistercian educators, all of you committed to your own place shows the pull of globalization on all of us. One commentator argues that while there have been many efforts to describe and define globalization, the most fundamental approach takes note of the way in which territorial location is becoming less and less important. Or as he puts it, "There has been a massive growth in social connections that are unhooked - disconnected - in significant ways from territory," the local place.

From our varied locations on the planet earth we are all being drawn into the world wide unfolding of a development we cannot control. We Benedictine educators are clearly not in charge of the contemporary global transformations which minimize the value of the local. But neither can we ignore globalization and its impact on our place and its peoples. Another commentator says we need to be alert to "the corporate takeover of education" and the phenomenon of "branding." We are already hearing from parents who have a corporate outlook on what we are doing in schools. They

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say they are "buying a product from us," purchasing an education for their children as though they were purchasing a car, and wanting to specify the options they want. Furthermore, where there is an acceptance of education as another species of market commodity, there is the whole phenomenon of branding our schools - under sponsorship of Nike or Toyota, Coca-Cola or Pepsi. (Like every human enterprise, globalization can be simultaneously constructive and destructive for the larger human community and for each particular community - and constructive or destructive in different ways. But perhaps, just perhaps, we who are committed to a common enterprise -- educating the young from our traditionally local monastic vantage points -- can together help the next generations - our students - to guide the globalizing world toward preserving a concern for the local, for the human person and for the common good.

Globalization's tentacles reach in many directions simultaneously. (Think "octopus," if you will - or think of the many-limbed mechanical monster in the movie Spiderman Two, if you are looking for images of the phenomenon that is upon us.) I can do no more here than identify something of globalization's vast reach into our lives and its new agendas for us as educators. I do so only as a foundation for what I understand to be the focus of this presentation: A Benedictine Response.

- Wherever our Benedictine and Cistercian schools are located - Delbarton, Chile, Brazil, or Japan, - we are already implicated in the new world of global markets and free trade, labor and economies. The young we are educating today will need to be ready to respond to and participate in changing globalized economies - whether we like it or not. This need to prepare our students for coping with the new economy will make demands on our curricula and pose new challenges to our understanding of our mission.

Wherever we are located - Korea or Australia or the Philippines -- we will have to deal with global technology and its impact on the production of knowledge, goods and services, and communication. However, if we are true to our identity as Benedictines, it will not be enough for our students to know how to work with this technology, to be "computer literate." Since technological production is not value free, our graduates will need critical skills to make sound judgments about the value of the knowledge, goods and services being produced and disseminated. Our institutions themselves must become critical users of technology, if we are to prepare our students work with the "new knowledge" that is being created.

(Anecdote about Sr. Deborah and composition class - use of a software program for group writing of a paper. My question. Her reply about "what business wants." Lots of questions for me.)

- Wherever we are located - at Ealing or Glenstal or Mexico City -- the young we serve need to be concerned about the earth's ecosystems -- about the use, control, conservation, and preservation of the earth's resources. Indeed, the next generations will be facing questions not only about our care of the earth but also about our relationship with our galaxy and indeed with the whole cosmos,

about which we humans are learning new things and relearning old things at an accelerated pace. We Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison were delighted and proud one year ago when Wangari Matthai, one of our own former students from Kenya, won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her work in establishing the Green Belt Movement in Africa, teaching women all over her country the economic, social, and political importance of something as simple as planting trees. We need to be equally proud to educate new generations of young people who will be aware of what it requires to live wisely in the unfolding universe. The traditional Benedictine concern for and commitment to the local will have to expanded to embrace concern for the local planet and the local galaxy and their relationship with the cosmos.

- Wherever we live - in Hungary, Germany, in the United States or Kenya -- our most ordinary human interactions are already having to come to terms with the impact of globalization. Globalization is affecting political ideologies and political systems. Globalization is having its impact on gender roles, gender identities and marriage systems. Globalization is being felt in racial and ethnic dynamics, on the cultural creations of music, visual arts, performance arts, language, literature, and cinema. Globalization is already influencing national and international educational policies and curricula. Education is being spoken widely of as an emerging global "industry," where making profits trumps the transmission of traditional knowledge and wisdom.
- Wherever we are located, we find ourselves interacting in unprecedented ways with multiple expressions of faith, belief systems and religious outlooks -- as well as secular visions of the real. Here, too, the phenomenon of globalization requires that we prepare young people to know themselves. It will be hard enough for them to develop a personal identity rooted in local relationships while they are living in a globalizing world. We must also prepare our students to be open to the "Other." This is no small challenge, but it is one of the many aspects of changing reality that globalization has thrust upon us.

Western monasticism has undergone, participated in, responded to and been shaped, across the century, by many shifts in the reigning social order. What is new in our time is that the shifting dynamics are global and even cosmic in their scale and almost instantaneous in their immediacy. Globalization's Agendas Some among you are leaders in schools that have already metamorphosed into "international schools." Your schools have students from many nations, or your schools have a curriculum attuned to the wisdom of several cultures. But "international schools" are not automatically attuned to the education challenges posed by globalization. Even the International Baccalaureate Curriculum does not face head on the the challenge of the octopus (or mechanical monster) called globalization.

Put simply, globalization is superimposing its own agendas on the lives and learning of our students and on our faculties on every continent. Those agendas are impinging on the traditional educational enterprise in which our monastic communities and monastery-sponsored schools have been

engaged, and it is to those agendas that you as leaders must prepare yourselves to respond for the sake of the current and next generations of students.

Globalization's challenges are many. I will name just three. The first and major challenge concerns the very nature and goal of education itself. This in turn raises other questions. Just who needs to be educated? With whom can we collaborate in our efforts to educate the young in a globalizing world? And to whose good is the educational enterprise directed? In my own monastery dining room I recently had a conversation with a guest who is an independent educational contractor, an entrepreneur in the emerging "education industry." He told me that in his current project he is working for and paid by the U.S. government. He is involved in designing "new madrasas" in poor communities rural Pakistan; the curriculum he has developed aims to be more congenial to westernization than the traditional Muslim madrasa. I asked to whom he was accountable in this work, and he replied only "himself," with occasional reports to funding committees of the U.S. Congress. I wondered if "the poor" he is "helping" are aware of his purpose and the origins of his largesse.

We who operate schools might also be vulnerable to the designs of those who would collaborate with us as our benefactors, especially corporate donors. Who is setting the education agenda, and how will new agendas influence what we do as Benedictine educators? Who are we in monastic communities inviting to join us in our educational enterprise as the numbers of monks, sisters, and brothers in our schools declines? Do we have a clear sense of the mission of Benedictine education, or are we vulnerable to apparently innocent take-over by those whose agendas come from a value system we do not share? Who is the well-educated person in this era of globalization?

A second challenge that globalization's emerging agendas pose to all educators comes in the focus on computer literacy, a topic I mentioned earlier and to which I now return. This new demand for literacy requires the acquisition of new sets of skills necessary for life in a globalized world. But just what do the young need to know about computer technology and why do they need this knowledge? Only a few educators have yet reflected on and written about the need to develop in the young those critical skills necessary to evaluate the social impact of technology in this era of globalization. One of these is Sherry Turkle of the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology.) She notes that the earliest generation of computer users knew what binary programming of computers involved, its assumptions and its weaknesses. They themselves knew how to program and so how to "get inside" what was going on in computers. While the number of computer users has grown exponentially, the majority of today's computer users are skilled as consumers working with pre-programmed software. Her recommendation is that students should be taught the kind of control over computer products that we require that students gain over written texts. Her advocacy caught my attention, perhaps because of Benedictine commitment to interacting with texts in the course of daily lectio. To quote her:

We come to written texts with centuries-long habits of readership. At the very least, we have learned to begin with the journalist's tradition questions: who, what when, where, why, and how. Who wrote these words, what is their message, why were they written, how are they situated in time and place, politically, economically, and socially? In my view, a central goal of global media literacy should be to teach students to interrogate [software] simulations in much the same spirit. The specific questions may be different but the intent is the same: to develop habits of readership appropriate to be informed and critical citizens in a culture of simulation.

What are we teaching the young about this tool? One of our Atchison sisters has a doctorate in educational technology and currently teaches an undersubscribed college level course in Computer Architecture. Should she be teaching all of us who use educational technology about the unexamined power of this new piece of equipment in our class rooms and our monasteries. More of us need to know about the "deep structure" of the computers we use. The list of challenges understanding educational technology could be a "Benet conference" of its own. Here we can only pose the question.

A third challenge posed by the emerging agendas of globalization is the question of how to mediate the formation of identity in the young. The secondary school years are especially critical for the young in their appropriation of an authentic identity. Stable local communities have many ways for mediating the movement from childhood to adulthood. But when societies are in flux, the normal ambiguity, alienation, and ambivalence of the young are inevitably intensified. We know of the ability afforded by the internet for our youth to develop multiple on-line personas and to enter into virtual relationships unknown to parents and other adults. This attack on integrated personal identity exposes the young to uncommon dangers.

The children of migrants and refugees are especially vulnerable both because of their family's cultural displacement and their unprotected exposure to multiple alternative models - some of them provided by media. Religious identity is easily caught up in this confusion. Is it even possible to be genuinely open to the other when personal identity is fragmented?

Globalization's agendas and challenges to educators are many. To name them is only one part of our task here this morning. The other part is to consider how we as Benedictine educators are positioned to respond to globalization in our secondary schools. What distinctive resources can we who live and teach according to and in the spirit of the Rule of Benedict put to the task of educating the young in a time of globalization?

Resources for Benedictine Education in the 21st Century For the past two years I have had the opportunity to be part of a group of abbots, prioresses, and presidents of thirteen Benedictine institutions of higher education in the United States. Because more than half of the college and university presidents are laity and not monastics, they were challenging the monastic leaders to say what is distinctly Benedictine about Benedictine education in a college or university in the North

American setting in the 21st century. The monastic leaders came to the first meeting confident that there was a distinct way of educating that was Benedictine. Yet the group found itself amazingly inarticulate when it came to naming and explaining the educational tradition they expected the colleges and universities to maintain. So they have been reflecting together on the identity of Benedictine institutions. (To use the "branding" language of the marketplace - where everyone is presumed to know what Nike and Sprint and General Motors and Toyota signify - we who educate in Benedictine schools need to "know our own Benedictine brand and its distinctiveness.") With the knowledge of the ABCU, I am going to draw on the current state of their discussion.

I realize that some of you have been having such conversations in your own schools about what makes you "Benedictine." But the addition of many new conversation partners here can only help to sharpen each institution's awareness of the resources of a Benedictine educational institution as it meets the multiple agendas of the twenty-first century globalization phenomenon. At I was reflecting on their ten I have also been working on a project for the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses; by comparing the two lists I found an "eleventh," and I present it thereby authorizing you to add your own voices to this reflection process. I am going to begin by drawing upon that cluster of "ten hallmarks of any Benedictine institution."

There is no special divine revelation or infusion of divine wisdom here. You will be reflecting on many things you already know. As I name them I encourage you to consider ways they have implications for the educational program you devise in an era of globalization and what they might say about how you and your colleagues educate.

An important preliminary note is in order, speaking about our vision of education. Authentic Benedictine education is not so much a matter of a distinctive intellectual tradition as it is an expression of a distinctive wisdom tradition. Intellectual development is too narrow an enterprise for the "school of the Lord's service," although development of the intellect is an intrinsic part. But the whole is the learning of a way of living, for which the foundational building blocks are Scripture, the Rule of Benedict, and tradition. And, I might add, supporting these is the mystery of Creation and Incarnation to which I will turn explicitly at the final section of this presentation.

1. Prayer is the first hallmark of a Benedictine institution. Everyone connected with a Benedictine institution is someone who knows how to pray or who is learning the traditions of prayer. Ours is a rich and living tradition, and the school community needs to be invited into it. But there are new challenges unfolding as our teachers and administrators include more and more men and women who are not professed Benedictines, and sometimes neither Catholic nor Christian. How does the school help all community members to pray with and beside and for one another so as to protect our own distinctive traditions and yet to honor the feasts and seasons of others?

At Assisi, Pope John Paul II showed Catholics and the whole world that we do not need to fear god-seekers who follow different ways. The same pope also charged monastic communities particularly

to engage in interfaith dialogue, and so many of our monastic communities intentionally participate in the work of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue. But that dialogue can arise in many ways. Perhaps in this era of globalization, we will be learning from our students who are not Christian about mutually respectful ways of praying. Benedict had not hesitated to tell his followers that they are wise who listen discerningly to the young. In any case, because in Benedictine schools we have all met one another in the mystery of prayer to God, our schools will be places of attentiveness and mindfulness.

2. Obedience is a second hallmark of a Benedictine institution, the obedience that is possible where there is silence and leisure to reflect. The young who are surrounded by the din, the cacophony and the over-stimulation that our modern societies offer need help in learning to quiet themselves. Benedictine schools can offer them the alternative experience of a measure of silence and leisure that demands no activity or productivity from them - like retreat days and the benefits of association with praying communities. This environment allows growth in obedience that goes beyond compliance to coercion. In a Benedictine school the young who have been given room for interior growth can develop listening hearts. Becoming more present to themselves, they can become more present to the living God and more present and respectful of what is around them. Where mutual respect for other students and their teachers rises on the firm foundation of interior growth, thoughtful obedience is a gain for life.

3. Another hallmark of any Benedictine institution, and so Benedictine schools, is stability, especially stability in relationships. Even in a time of globalization and a tendency to devalue the local Benedictine educators have a commitment to our place and its peoples. Teachers and students alike have confidence that there is wisdom to be found in faithfulness to the daily and to the balanced ordering of lives. For the young who live in a fragmented world, the alternative experience of a stable community where commitments and relationships are sure shows them a solid choice for their own lives. The stability of school relationships, where adults know about the world and the cosmos, but still value the local and the daily can be the foundation for strong personal identity development.

4. The third hallmark of stability leads to the fourth hallmark of discipline. In the school of the Lord's service, we commit ourselves to the discipline of regular daily practice. As teachers of the young, we accept the responsibility of identifying for them what needs the discipline of practice. We do what we do in the classroom, in the chapel, on the playing fields in order to become proficient in living wisely. In the school of the Lord's service the discipline of steady practice serves students well academically. The discipline of daily practice academically and socially also tutors students in developing self-discipline and selflessness. Students formed by faithful response to daily tasks not only learn autonomy but are also able to develop relationships of genuine mutuality.

5. A fifth hallmark of a Benedictine education is stewardship. Awareness of and love for beauty, respect for the inherent properties of things, and delight in the goodness of creation are attitudes

nurtured in the school of the Lord's service. These sensibilities need intentional cultivation because the young are growing up in a throw-away consumer society where the virtual is displacing the material. A Benedictine art teacher told me that during her final years of teaching boys at the end of the twentieth century she had to come to terms with a significant change in the student body. Having grown up handling technological toys, many boys seemed indifferent to exploration of the natural properties of things. They were not particularly interested in manipulation of the materials, discovering what you can do and not do with clay, with wood, with glass and fabric, different metals and paint. She had to work hard to coax them to get their hands dirty handling things. They were not attuned to the tactile, since they had been deeply involved throughout their childhoods in the manipulation of the virtual world. Yet this awareness of the created world and natural beauty is the foundation of our Benedictine confidence about the sacramentality of the created world and their inherent capacity of the natural things to manifest the presence of God. Such appreciation is also the foundation for ecological responsibility.

At mid-point in the listing of the "ten hallmarks" of any Benedictine institution, it should be increasingly evident that the Benedictine wisdom tradition that is ours to share with the globalizing world is not tied to any particular local culture. The wisdom characteristic of a school of the Lord's service, like the Gospel on which it is based, can be at home anywhere. The Benedictine wisdom tradition can affirm the strengths of traditional culture and also modern and postmodern cultures. Even more significantly, the wisdom of our living tradition offers alternative ways to critique and compensate for the ideological weaknesses of globalization. With that observation in mind, we return to our look at the proposed "ten hallmarks" of the Benedictine wisdom tradition and its relevance for our secondary schools in an era of globalization.

6. Humility is the sixth of the "hallmarks." So central is this to the Benedictine way of being that the drafting committee for ABCU asserts "Humility is Benedict's word for wisdom." In operation, humility means that we ourselves practice and then teach our young people to accept the demand for realism and for accountability. The realism and accountability of genuine humility are regularly trampled on in the current context of globalization. Governments and industries often aim to deceive and manipulate those they are called to serve. These same authorities deny all culpability for error and deception. By contrast, daily interaction in the Benedictine community of a secondary school guides all who participate both to acknowledge weaknesses and extend forgiveness while taking responsibility for the ways personal failings can harm the community. Such wise daily interaction will also encourages members to embrace their own strengths and to recognize the gifts of other and to direct them all to the building up of the community.

7. Community itself is the seventh hallmark. We come to know ourselves in relationship with others, and our relationships with others are almost beyond number. We live in communities of communities. Benedictine and Cistercian monastics have our own distinctive experience of being communities within communities. We have handed on to new generations the stories of how Roman

monks went to England, Irish monks went to northern Italy, the English went to Germany, the French to North Africa and West Africa, and the Germans - influenced by Boniface and Lioba, -- travel anywhere and everywhere: Korea, Brazil, East Africa, Manchuria, the United States. Because Benedictine community finds its best expression in mutual service and the service of the Gospel, Your students who have participated in the recent meetings of youth are being readied wisely for the globalizing world. Having made friends from other places and cultures, they are learning to look at other peoples in the globalizing world not simply as economic levers but as brothers and sisters. Globalization needs global community building

8. Hospitality is the eighth hallmark of Benedictine institutions, and so of our schools. Our schools intentionally cultivate the spirit of hospitality in the young at a time when globalization is spawning fear and hostility because strangers we did not invite suddenly appear on the threshold. Our schools, like our monasteries, have traditionally been local in their commitment to people and place. Now, we, our schools, and our students are being stretched to extend our hospitality by the new migrations of peoples in our times and by new expectations about human rights. But there are also long-standing needs for welcoming the "outsiders" in our midst. We all know that two-thirds of the illiteracy in the world is the illiteracy of women, and so we are all aware of the rights of girls and young women for education, and also aware of their great need to be educated not just for basic literacy but also for leadership. Unfortunately, in the past and even into the present, not all Benedictine educational settings have been fully hospitable to young women's presence, their gifts, and their needs. Where that is changing and the equal education and leadership of girls is valued and promoted - and adult males are teaching adolescent males to respect and value their sisters -- the wisdom of the living Benedictine tradition is being enriched. Monastic hospitality dares to welcome and to make brothers and sisters of strangers and their strange ways.

9. Next to last among the "ten hallmarks" of a Benedictine institution is love, mutual love as the Rule of Benedict specifies in its next-to-final chapter. Mutual love in a Benedictine school is intergenerational and it is abiding. It forgives human weakness. It finds expression in patience with one another. The good humor of mutual love bridges disruptions in behavior and good order. The loving blind eye of the elders overlooks youthful foibles. Respectful conversations lead to the loving restoration of harmony in the school community. In a violent world, Benedictine institutions intentionally embrace the practice of non-violent relationships and teach skills for non-violent conflict resolution and peace-making.

10. The tenth and final hallmark of a Benedictine institution offered us for our consideration is *conversatio*, that almost untranslatable reality. Intentional *conversatio* as a mark of our schools requires that in everything we do in our schools is intended as a means to transformation toward fully humanity. The distinctive way of living we pursue intentionally does not end when schooling is completed. Rather, we intend the life long transformation of our students.

Distinctive rituals and symbols appropriate to each local institution typically en flesh that commitment to continuing transformation even beyond the schools years. School colors help sustain the commitment to a Benedictine way of being, as does a school song, or reunion rituals, or a love for the liturgy or for lectio divina, or memories associated with a particular food. (Our monastery kitchen has produced bird-shaped cookies by the hundreds over the decades - cookies iced white for the feast of St. Scholastica and iced with chocolate for the feast of St. Benedict, and students still look forward to them.) A Benedictine school president told me recently that her students had been working on their school song, and they presented for her approval verses that used an overtly Benedictine vocabulary. She expressed surprise, and wondered aloud if they might want to use less "in-house," less Benedictine language. They in turn expressed surprise, responding "But this is who we are!" Such identification says that the transformative way of living begun during secondary school has a future, and is not in danger of being discarded immediately.

11. Ten hallmarks of a Benedictine school responding wisely to globalization deserve an eleventh to keep this reflection open ended. The eleventh hallmark is a concern for establishing justice, what Benedict in the Rule calls the leaven of divine justice, in the face of the injustice and exploitation of others found everywhere in our globalizing world.

Beyond Globalization's Concerns: Locating Ourselves Within the Universe What should be evident from this reflection is that Benedictine education in a globalizing world is a distinctive way of learning for life. It is primarily wisdom about relationships and about the real -- about the Creator and the created world. It does not supplant the best secular education in physics, astronomy and mathematics, in music, literature, and the arts, and so you who are school administrators must see that all your teachers, monastics as well as non-monastics, are themselves well-educated and critically educated in these disciplines.

But something further must be said about the theological and religious education of institutional leaders and teachers in our schools. This is a somewhat delicate matter. Preoccupied by the challenges of the past and the immediate present, few of the church's magisterial teachers are present to and listening well to expanding scientific knowledge of the cosmos and the theological questions it poses to the faith we who have been baptized into the Body of Christ. When they hear of new developments in scientific theory, they do not have time to grasp fully, they can become frightened. Many immediately assume the new developments in scientific understanding of the universe pose dangers to the message of the gospel.

The young, however, live in a globalizing world that has them looking outward into the galaxies. They need a believable world to live in as they grow in their belief in the gospel. They need to hear about a world in which they can understand their own humanity, while also welcoming their relationship to every other thing in the created universe. We know it is not enough simply to repeat for the young the Genesis story of the creation of the world in seven days. But - and this is my own caution -- neither is it helpful for our schools to embrace pseudo-science or pseudo-apologetics for Christian

faith, the latter to be found in the theory of "intelligent design." Catholic scientists - the leading astronomers of the Vatican Observatory among them -- are trying to warn the hierarchy and educators alike to live with the emerging cosmic questions, to live with the Trinitarian mystery rather than to grab for quick answers. Some times as educators we have to live with "not knowing." Humility in the face of mystery is especially appropriate in the science and religion classrooms of Benedictine and Cistercian schools. I am not advocating the "not knowing" of the ill-prepared religion teacher or science teacher lacking curiosity nor the "not knowing" of the agnostic. But I do advocate the "not knowing" that comes with learning to live within the mystery of our Catholic faith. Are Benedictine schools telling well and celebrating with the next generation the story of "the unfolding of the cosmos" and the appearance of our humankind within that story? And are we then locating, within that longer story of the cosmos and its habitation, the story of our humankind, of our Catholic faith in the Incarnation of the Word of God - sent for us and our salvation in what has been called "the fullness of time"?

Benedictine Education in Response to Globalization: A Final Remark If we have any single challenge before us as modern Benedictine educators in a time of globalization, it is to determine how we can maintain and strengthen our mission effectiveness as the numbers of Benedictines on the staffs of our schools and in our classrooms declines. We can hire well-prepared faculties, as we once prepared the junior members of our monasteries for academic excellence. But Benedictine wisdom cannot be purchased in the educational marketplace. Benedictine wisdom emerges through intergenerational interaction in favorable settings, traditionally the setting of our monasteries. Yet many of our monasteries sponsor schools staffed by dedicated teachers who do not have vocations to the Benedictine and Cistercian ways of life. You who are lay people among us can tell us how you came to be inducted into the School of the Lord's Service. With or without the added challenges of globalization, we have reason to wonder: will the wisdom needed to give authentically Benedictine educations persist in these circumstances?

We do what we can, and leave the rest to God. Part of what you can do during these days is discuss among yourselves what seem to be your own best practices for handing on Benedictine wisdom and strengthening mission effectiveness in your own settings. Thank you.