



The International Commission on Benedictine Education

Welcome of the Host Abbot to the Participants of the 2nd International Conference on Benedictine Education

It is with great joy and pleasure that my community and myself welcome you to the Abbey of Saint Gerard, more precisely, to the premises of the Saint Emeric School. Throughout the next days we are going to go deep into the great challenges that the present globalized and suffocating world presents to us, Benedictine educators.

We are gathered here because all of us have based our lives on the Rule of Our Father Saint Benedict, which in its prologue defines our monasteries as "Schools at the Lord's service". Thus our life is a constant learning process to better serve the plan of God.

His plan is to take everyone to His Kingdom - His good seed. How does He make His plan come true? Jesus, in the New Testament, trusted this task to the Church. The growth of the Kingdom belongs to God. However, our participation is indispensable to cultivate, irrigate and care for the land. Without our participation, the seed dies, and His plan does not come to being.

In the Old Testament, God also acted like that. He offered the chosen ones the Promised Land. He said to Abram: The Promised Land is already yours. "Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you." Abram did what God expected from him, assuming all the risks that the task offered.

Later, God also told Moses: The Land is yours, but its conquest will be hard and difficult. You must call your people but they will not always fully understand your words and they will criticize you; you will have to be courageous to face the terrible Pharaoh, to run away from the slavery in Egypt, starting a long journey in an arid and inhospitable desert for forty years. In short, you must carry out a leadership, be totally at the service and at the ministry that I expect from you. In the end, you will not even arrive there.

As for us, characters of the third millennium, God's proposal is the same. His plan is the same and His expectation towards us is also the same: He counts on us to cultivate, irrigate and care for the land. It is what Saint Paul clearly states in his First Letter to the Corinthians: "While there is one that says, 'I belong to Paul' and another that says, 'I belong to Apollos' are you not being only too human? For what is Apollos and what is Paul? The servants through whom you came to believe, and each has only what the Lord has given him. I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth." (1 Cor 3, 4-7)

As Abram and Moses, what risks are we ready to assume in the name of God today? Our steady faith must expect from God what is beyond our strengths and our expectations.

We are going to reflect on this during the next four days.

Badia Primaziale S. Anselmo
Piazza Cavaleiiri di Malta, 5
00153 Roma (RM)

Tel: +39 06 57 91 252
Fax: +39 06 57 91 374
www.anselmianum.com



Why has the Abbey of Saint Gerard been chosen by the organizing committee to host this Conference? I think that it is due to the characteristics of our Abbey, which is turning only 50 years old - half a century, thus of a millenary history. Its origins date from the foundation of the Abbey of Pannonhalm, in Hungary, in the year of 996, when King Saint Stephan promoted the conversion of the Hungarians to Christianity. After several drawbacks throughout these thousand years, even when it seemed that nothing was going right and that the Abbey was near its end, the presence of God was felt, helping our ancestors to face the risks and to rise again, with new strengths, coping with new situations. It is the permanent rise from the ashes to new challenges, always with the faith and the disposition for serving God in every way.

I am totally convinced that our abbey has not been created by chance. Our first monks did not come to Brazil by chance. They did not run away from Hungary, at that time oppressed by wars, because they had to. Their move to Brazil is part of a plan of Divine Redemption, trusted to the Hungarian Benedictine Congregation in Brazilian soil. It was a sad period in the history of a country, torn apart by two world wars and, at the same time, a moment in which God trusted to the Hungarian Benedictine monks the mission of helping to build the future of an emerging nation.

The history of humanity sometimes happens through leaps and bounds. There are moments of leaching away from an apparently peaceful and reassuring past, which leads to a new reflowering with a new life, with a new way of living the perennial values.

Half a century in human history is not that significant. However, the jubilee of the Abbey of Saint Gerard coincides with the great explosion of the Brazilian progress and, particularly, with the incredible development undergone by the city of São Paulo.

Commencing with the first seed, the arrival of a sole monk in 1931, a thick tree was planted, rich in undeniable and gratifying fruits derived from a significant pastoral work since its beginning. Initially, it welcomed the first trends of Hungarian immigrants, who landed with no definite course in a totally unknown country. Later, the pastoral work in parishes; an actuating presence among the underprivileged population that live around us. In addition to that, an intense educational work, with the foundation of Saint Emeric School in 1951, which, since its beginning, has been referred to as a school of academic excellence, attending families that perform a significant role in the Brazilian society.

Saint Emeric School has always stood out for its pedagogical approach, providing their students with a global human formation, nourishing the development of their intellectual potentialities as well as their religious, moral and ethical values.

Nowadays, the family cell undergoes a great crisis, which sometimes even leads to disintegration. The society also suffers frequent attacks to moral and religious values through the means of communication, usually controlled by large groups guided only by economic interests, without any commitment to ethics or Christian values. Our youth has become an easy target to international groups of drugs dealers.

These are the challenges we face today, in this globalized world. Saint Emeric School is always attentive to whatever may arrive and tries to be abreast with the new reality, without forgetting its evangelizing role, its Benedictine ideal, its commitment to remain a school at the Lord's service.

During these four days of intimacy, we wish to share with you our experiences, our worries and our anguishes. At the same time, we would like to hear about your own experiences, and to learn from them the ways to cope with these challenges.

That God may illuminate us and allow us to find the ways, although arduous, to best serve Him.

Let us pray:

Lord, that Your mercy inspires our actions and sustains them until the end,
so that all our prayers and actions be originated in You and receive their finishing from You!
In Christ our Lord!

D. Abade Ernesto Linka, OSB