



**The Ark**

VOLUME 21  
EDITION 2

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## Interchurch Families Learning From Benedictine Spirituality

The American Association of Interchurch Families cordially invites you to register to attend their next Biennial Conference with them at The Holy Wisdom Monastery of the Benedictine Women of Madison, Wisconsin, located at Middleton, Wisconsin

Friday July 9 through and including Sunday, July 11, 2010

Registration materials for this conference are posted at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org)



The ARK, A publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families

International Standard Serial Number: ISSN 1943-6467 (print)

 **April 2010**



An ordinary day lilly in bloom, part of God's creation

©mjpg

**Christ Crucified:**

Contemporary Christian Art made from tree limbs that had fallen in the forest - Nerinx, KY



©mjpg

**Find Inspiration, Peace, Knowledge, Togetherness and Hope at the 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference**

The 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference will be a place where interchurch children and adults alike will find inspiration, peace, knowledge, togetherness and hope.

The Conference will take place from Friday, July 9, through Sunday, July 11, 2010, at the Holy Wisdom Monastery, with the Benedictine Women of Madison, Wisconsin.

Please go to [HYPERLINK "http://www.aifusa.org"](http://www.aifusa.org) to find further details about the AAIF 2010 Biennial Conference and for registration materials.

The American Association of Interchurch Families has decided to go north during one of the warmest parts of our summer. Quite frankly, it tends to be cooler up north in the summer months. The break from the heat can be a welcomed respite for many of us who live further south.

Here are some environmental suggestions from the Web site of the Benedictine Women of Madison, Wisconsin, that you might find useful elsewhere:

**"Care for the earth goes beyond green trends.**

From a summer retreat, the sisters and the oblate community share these practical tips toward greener living:

**Consider your 'fridge.'** As one

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©mjpg

Chicory Flowers in a farm field, Nerinx, KY

**Native Plants: Iron Weed**



©mjpg

Prairie Restoration at Nerinx, KY

A salmon pink daylily in bloom,  
part of God's creation



Continued from the previous page

of the largest energy users in the home, efficiency and size are critical. Bigger is not better, and newer units are usually more efficient. Also, be sure to keep the coils (underneath or in the back) clean.

**Lights, please.** Now available in a wide array of colors from warm to cool, fluorescent lights really do use much less energy and last longer than the old fashioned, incandescent light bulbs.

**Rethink A/C.** Open windows whenever possible. If you do choose to run the A/C, close your blinds or use your awnings to keep out the hot sun and make sure your system is efficient.

**Look for labels.** When buying new equipment, look for the Energy Star label as an indicator of energy efficiency.”  
The Benedictine Women of

Madison, Wisconsin, have posted the following message for all of us:

“ ‘The divine is present in all creation.’ Care for the earth comes out of our spirituality. Holy Wisdom Monastery includes acres of restored prairie and tree-covered land. The plants, the water, the birds and the wildlife are God’s gifts to us.

“People are inspired by their experiences here. They discover a spiritual connection with the land. Whether caring for it as an environmental volunteer, walking the trails or spending time on a bench reflecting on the mysteries around them, there is something wonderful and amazing about having a place preserved as nature intended.

“Our efforts and the commitment of all those who help us preserve, maintain and

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## Purple Cone Flowers:

Native Prairie Flowers of the United States



## Tawny Edged Butterfly on a Thistle Flower:



Continued from the previous page

restore this place go beyond 'green' trends. For us, it is a way of life. We strive to use only what we need so that resources can be preserved for others.

"This reverence for creation informed our decision to decommission Benedict House and ([http://www.benedictinewomen.org/support/support\\_capcampaign.html](http://www.benedictinewomen.org/support/support_capcampaign.html))

replace it with a sustainable monastery building, which has been built to the highest green-building standards. "You are invited to visit us and experience the dynamic beauty of nature." It promises to be such a peaceful place.

To those of us who are in an interchurch marriage, or who are considering entering into an interchurch marriage, almost by definition of being in an interchurch marriage, we are not church dropouts. We are looking for a deeper relationship with God, although we may at times struggle to find ways to do that together as a married couple. We do not wish to form a separate church; we are content with our own traditions that nurtured us--often times from the cradle. We simply want to find a place where that spiritually we both have can be nurtured for both of us together, at the same time, while not excluding either of us.

The Benedictine Women of Madison, Wisconsin, have posted the following message: **"Do you long for a deeper relationship with God? Do**

**you need time out to reflect on your life? In a world defined increasingly by noise, competition and a sense of isolation, Holy Wisdom Monastery offers a place of calm, silence, beauty and simplicity.** Whether you come for an hour, a day or a weekend, we welcome you."

"We look forward to your visit."

What is this **"Rule of Benedict,"** I wondered? I clicked the link for the next Web page.

"That All May Be One"

This is a Biblical quote familiar to interchurch families. Seeing that image at the top of the Web page, I began to think that I am being welcomed to a place that will feel like "coming home" when I get there.

The Benedictine Women of Madison wrote the following message there for us:

**"A practical guide of spirituality.** We are inspired by the *Rule of Benedict* and seek to provide a place where *all* are invited to continue their spiritual journey.

"The spirituality of the *Rule* is lay in its origins. While living in Italy during the 6th century, Benedict of Nursia wrote a guide for community life, which he called a 'little rule for beginners.' This *Rule* quickly became the foundation for monastic communities across Europe, *giving direction for ordinary people wanting to live the Christian life.*

"Disciples came to Benedict's small cave, seeking guidance in their search for God. Benedict and his followers founded monasteries for both women and men throughout Europe. *These monasteries*

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A Tawny Edged Grass Skipper Butterfly on "Mist Flowers" - native plants and butterflies, late summer 2009 in Kentucky

*served as places of hope and hospitality and as a witness to God's love during dark periods of history.*

At Monte Cassino, Benedict wrote his monastic rule, drawing on many years of experience and wisdom.

“Fifteen centuries after its creation, the key values in the *Rule* are pertinent to ordinary life. Short in length and translated in many languages, the *Rule* suggests ways to seek and celebrate God through:

- listening
- hospitality
- humility
- embracing change
- respect for people
- learning
- prayer
- work

“The *Rule* envisions a community that works to support each person’s developing relationship with God and others. Members live and work together, seeking God through living the Christian life.

The *Rule* highlights a balance of daily work and prayer. No work is unimportant. The purpose of work is to provide service to others and an opportunity for personal development.

“The Benedictine tradition lives through the centuries as a testament to the strength and applicability of its message. Modern Benedictine communities live the values of the *Rule* in ways that apply to

their local environment and to the unique skills of each member.”

**The Domestic Church and the American Association of Interchurch Families.** These seem like values that would be taught at home in the “Domestic Church” or the “Little Church of the Home.” Work is valued and the community supports the individual’s talents that are developing. I want to learn more about how the Benedictines live and work.

The American Association of Interchurch Families 2010 Biennial Conference at Holy Wisdom Monastery will add to this experience of nature and Benedictine values the possibility to learn more about interchurch family life.

Whether you are planning to enter into an interchurch marriage, or if you have been in an interchurch

marriage for many years, you are all welcome.

If you give pastoral care to interchurch families, or if you are a family member of someone who is either planning to enter into an interchurch marriage or who is already in such a marriage, please plan to attend this Conference. If you are the adult children of an interchurch marriage, we also would like to have you join us for this upcoming Conference; your stories are important, too.

Whether you live in the United States or in another country, you are most welcome to register for this Conference. You are all invited to become a part of AAIF.

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**Not an interchurch couple from the Alsace region!**

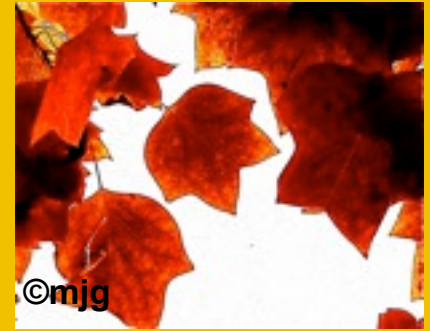
How do we know this? By their clothing style and manner of regional dress. Religious Denominations were chosen by political leaders for their regions in Europe. This region was Roman Catholic, and this couple is dressed in the traditional clothing of this region. Just by looking at how they are dressed, we can visually see that this a Roman Catholic Couple from Alsace. - Times have changed in this regard.





## Autumn:

### Tulip Poplar Leaves



### Bald Cypress near a lake



Continued from the previous page

Please come to see what AAIF does. Please join us at our next biennial conference this coming summer.

HYPERLINK "[http://www.benedictinewomen.org/about/about\\_rule.html](http://www.benedictinewomen.org/about/about_rule.html)"

Registration information and forms are posted on the AAIF website now.

Please see [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org) for these forms and registration information.

Reduced rates are available for those who register early.

Southwest Airlines flies into Milwaukee, Wisconsin at this time. Please let conference planners know if you will need transportation in the area.

References for this article can be found at: HYPERLINK "<http://www.benedictinewomen.org>"

HYPERLINK "[http://www.benedictinewomen.org/care/care\\_greenliving.html](http://www.benedictinewomen.org/care/care_greenliving.html)"

HYPERLINK "<http://www.benedictinewomen.org/care/care.html>"

## A Bee on the Hosta Lillies

These flowers were given to us as a gift from someone who needed to thin out his root bound plants. Gardens and gardeners tend to be like that; they have something they can share and they do share.



## A "chapter of good mood" - the 32nd chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict

'Small, inconspicuous signs of love are important in all those places where people live in close proximity with each other and depend on each other. Huerre calls [the 32nd chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict, on the tools of the monastery] a "chapter of good mood" because concrete elements such as order, cleanliness, and **attentiveness** contribute much to a cheerful atmosphere. Rough and inconsiderate treatment shows disregard for people as well as for things.

The way we treat objects is a criterion of our spirituality. If we come into a community where things are generally neglected, we may question the spiritual depth of the community. Anselm Grün says: "The way of treating things is normally a test for a person's inner attitude," for in the way "in which someone treats things, he treats himself." Conservation of creation is not only a duty of the individual but also of the entire community, and in this a climate of treating objects reverently and even small rules can help. . . . This chapter is of great current interest because we are much more aware today that our environment is subjected to great dangers and how necessary the conservation of our creation has become. We

know that over-exploitation has continued over a long time and that neglect of things, even on a small scale, does add to the destruction of our cosmos. Joan Chittister says: "Benedictine spirituality is as much about good order, wise management, and housecleaning as it is about the meditative and immaterial dimensions of life. Benedictine spirituality sees the care of the earth and the integration of prayer and work, body and soul, as essential parts of the journey to wholeness that answers the emptiness in each of us."

This excerpt is from *Around the Monastic Table—RB31-42: Growing in Mutual Service and Love* by Aquinata Böckmann (Collegetown, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2009).

*Books like this may help interchurch families to find their way in our current times and circumstances as well.*

*How does this attentiveness to all of creation apply to our lived experiences as*



a pink rose in the garden

*interchurch families?*

## The Plenary Speaker at 2010 Biennial AAIF Conference:

**Dr. Lynn H. Turner** has graciously agreed to be a plenary speaker for the AAIF Biennial Conference in Madison Wisconsin. Dr. Turner is a Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the Diederich College of Communication of Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; She is the Director of the Family Studies Minor at the J. William

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**The Virgin Mary & Baby Jesus; Colmar France:** many of the medieval wooden statues of the virgin Mary in this collection showed her with a goiter since the women at that time lacked iodine in their salt, that is, if they had salt. This virgin Mary resembled the women of the Colmar area. Baby Jesus has curly hair.



and Mary Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University.

She studied and earned her B.A. at the University of Illinois; her M.A. at the University of Iowa; and her Ph. D. at Northwestern University.

Why Marquette? Dr. Turner loves the emphasis on social justice and service to the community.

Dr. Turner's research interests include: family communication, gender and communication, and work/family intersections.

I appreciate the expectation for faculty research productivity as well as teaching excellence that she finds at Marquette University. Dr. Turner's research interests include: family communication, gender and communication, and work/family intersections.

Detailed information about Dr. Turner's many accomplishments can be found at this link

<http://diederich.marquette.edu/COC/Turner.aspx>

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Turner is the director of the Diederich Communication Family Studies Minor. This

concept may be new to some of us although we have lived in family units of one form or another all of our lives, we may have taken them for granted when they worked well and been bewildered by them when they didn't function well at all.

"The Marquette University Family Studies Interdisciplinary Minor introduces students to scholarship pertaining to the family across many disciplinary perspectives. The course of study in the minor is geared to bridge vocabularies and interpretations of family, providing students with an understanding of the complex meanings of family life."

"The program combines social scientific, applied, and humanistic approaches to family issues. In so doing, the minor focuses on both theory

and praxis. In addition, the Family Studies Interdisciplinary Minor seeks to demonstrate ways in which knowledge about family allows for the development of personal and professional growth as well as the application of principles of social justice."

"Students undertaking this major will study the family as an experience of human existence, a system within our society and as a resource which fulfills basic human needs. The goals of the minor as an academic discipline are to provide various theoretical perspectives on the family, utilize various research methodologies, and to explore the multiple purposes of the family including its role in health maintenance."  
"A rigorous and thorough knowledge of the family is appropriate to any major."

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Koi Pond with children enjoying them in San Juan, Puerto Rico - Their father is in the background



"A Marquette student explains, " 'Family studies is not just a minor that deals with the idea of family - it is an in depth study about the constructs/ structure of the family, how it operates, functions and what constitutes a family' "

"What can you do with a family studies minor?"

"A family studies minor complements most majors. It focuses on the context of the family to illustrate the principles in many majors. For example, nursing takes a holistic approach to health, emphasizing the whole person. Family studies can extend and amplify this focus by concentrating on health within the context of the family. Similarly, education also concentrates on the interaction of the learning/teaching environment with the home

Satterwaite Memorial at Cave Hill in Louisville; art made public for eternity >



environment. This provides a natural connection to family studies. Thus, students can use the minor to direct the precepts of the major specifically toward the context of the family."

Career Opportunities? See What You Can Do With a Family Studies Minor: Education, Physical Therapy, Speech Pathology, Family Counseling, Family Law, Pediatrics, Psychological Counseling, Social Welfare and Justice



Family Studies combines well with all of the majors listed above that we are very familiar with from years gone by. I am looking forward to hearing how a Family Studies Minor can broaden the scope of these traditional areas of study, and anything that Dr. Turner can tell us about contemporary families and what future generations can expect when compared to what we have traditionally thought to be family.

We are looking forward to hearing Dr. Lynn H. Turner speak at the up-coming 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference in Madison Wisconsin from July 9 and through and Including Sunday July 11, 2010.

Further information and registration materials are posted at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org)

Please register before May 1, 2010

to save money Please join AAIF at the next Biennial Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

- Mary Jane Glauber

## How does this attentiveness to all of creation apply to our lived experiences as interchurch families?

Where would we look for examples for ideas how to do this?



**"Interchurch Families Learning From Benedictine Spirituality"**  
~ the theme for the 2010 AAIF Conference



**BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY SEES THE CARE OF THE EARTH AND THE INTEGRATION OF PRAYER AND WORK, BODY AND SOUL, AS ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS THAT ANSWERS THE EMPTINESS IN EACH OF US."**



*"Conservation of creation is not only a duty of the individual but also of the entire community"...,*

**But how do we create community? How best to conserve creation? Is not our first purpose, to create sustainable communities? Are we not called to reach out to the stranger? to treat our neighbor the way we would like to be treated? Where do we get ideas for how we should start? God, we are crying in the wilderness...your wilderness !! Hear our cries !!**

**Things are a mess, but if we work together, will you help us? How do we work together? Please show us the right path, God.**

# You Are Witnesses of These Things

## Luke 24:48

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

January 18-25, 2010

The theme for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was "You Are Witnesses of These Things (Lk 24:48). Each year the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity approve and commission the work of a select group of delegates who develop the theme for prayer. In the process it consults a local ecumenical group which begins work on the theme.

This year's consultation invited a Scottish ecumenical group brought together by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) at the invitation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland. The reason for this choice is because the Scottish capital celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the Edinburgh International Missionary Conference of 1910 which many consider to be the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. The theme of the Centenary is Witnessing to the Gospel, which suggested to the group this year's theme and Scripture reading from Luke's twenty-fourth chapter.

The working group recommended the reading of the entire chapter for meditation throughout the year, as well as during the Week of Prayer.

### Mission and Witness

The theme could hardly be more relevant. After a hundred years of dialogue and ecumenical effort the nature and mission of the Church is the central issue being discussed by the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement generally. Rather than a theoretical discussion of the issue, the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC saw this topic as pivotal to progress forward toward the goal of Christian unity. Whether viewed as a focus for faith and order, life and work or the missionary thrust of the World Council, or as a central issue for bi-lateral or multi-lateral dialogue, this single topic holds center stage today.

From a practical point of view, human beings are more apt to judge things by how they act, rather than by an analysis of what they are. "Actions speak louder than words" is an old adage. In the light of the leading philosophical systems of our day, the acting person (phenomenology) was the focus of philosophical discussion. Put simply, it will be easier for Christians to accept Christian unity by

focusing of the nature and mission of the Church than by trying to lay out a blueprint for Christian unity. Trying to understand the saving plan of God for salvation in Jesus Christ will lead to a fruitful revelation of where God is calling the Churches today.

### Luke's Gospel

The working group suggested the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke because it tells the entire story of Christ's resurrection. It's central idea is that the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was revealed to the early Christian community so that it might be proclaimed to the ends of the earth - "You are witnesses to these things" Jesus tells them, as they are sends them into the world.

Those who are familiar with the ecumenical enterprise realize that what drives the ecumenical movement and those who embrace it, is not so much talking about Christian unity, but embracing Jesus Christ and his mission to the world. Christ was sent by the Father on a mission of salvation. Every Christian shares that mission by virtue of their baptism. By engaging together in the work of evangelization - bringing the gospel to the world - Christians become more and more aware of their communion in Christ, and in the body of Christ which is the

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Church. Christian unity is not an idea, it is an experience.

### Prayer for Unity

Our common witness to the truth of the gospel is the path to Christian unity. Our common prayer deepens that realization. Underneath our reflection is the conviction that prayer for unity is not unimportant to the ecumenical effort. Spiritual ecumenism, the realization that the goal of Christian unity is not ours to achieve, but God's to give (indeed he has already given it).

Each year we need this week and its prayer to help us to understand that prayer is central to the ecumenical effort. It is God's work rather than our own. The goal is in God's hands. Prayer will open our minds and hearts to its achievement

Ernest Falardeau, SSS

## The Religious Challenges of Today —the Benedictine Answer

"Abbot Primate Nokter Wolf, the symbol of unity among Benedictine communities worldwide, in addressing the assembly suggested that these are special, difficult times of crisis; both in economies and in security and it is hoped that Benedictine Oblates may help respond to these challenges. What was the Benedictine Oblate answer? Contemplation and dialogue"....

"The Second Oblate World Congress was introduced with a Russian icon, Christ the Light of the World and the comment, "Deep within the human heart is a desire to see

the face of God and live." Thus began a graced time of personal transfiguration." An initial overview of today's religious challenges and the Benedictine answer was given:

- **Be watchful—take stock of our contradictions.**
- **Build bridges so we may approach strangers.**
- **Bear witness to our faith — express our hope.**
- **Be open to meet anyone, die to the self that obstructs openness.**

With that we were wished good prayer and fruitful work.

"Nokter Wolf emphasized that despite our difficult times there is a new search for meaning and a communal aspect to our spirituality. "

"Andrew Tanya-anan, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, presented "Mission and Interreligious Dialogue."...repeated the message **"the mission of dialogue is not optional."**

"William Skudlarek, an American Benedictine residing in Rome, noted that **inter-religious dialogue is a basic contemplative practice because one must listen, attentively, receptively, and non-judgmentally.** " (Please note that Interchurch Families may shout out, "Amen" at this point in this text.)

"Mother Marie Hickey, OSB, of England, presented "Personal Relations and

Continued on the next page



A child, on a beach, playing with a toy dump truck...See the world with the eyes of a child in awe and wonder and enjoy God's creation with a playful delight and abandonment.

## Spring in a City Park in Louisville, Kentucky

This city park, created more than a century ago, is still enjoyed by many people today. An Olmsted designed park, like Central Park in New York City, it is enjoyed by many people today who want to be immersed in nature, but who live in the city.



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Communion," offering that the **Benedictine understanding of community has great potential to make a significant contribution to the global process of community building.**

First we must bring the Congress to our own community, strengthen it and then establish networks. As we network, encountering the need to accommodate diversity, we must focus on what is essential—liturgy of hours, lectio divina, the Rule of Benedict and applying it to our life."

• **Bear witness to our faith — express our hope.**

"Hope is truly the presence of Christ among us every day of our lives. Sometimes we are more aware of that presence

than other times, and then when we notice God as a glimmer of hope that has been right there with us all along, but we just didn't notice. Well, it is just so refreshing when that happens!"

• **Be open to meet anyone, die to the self that obstructs openness.**

*Sometimes we may need to remind ourselves that each person has a gift, and we must seek out what that gift may be, but since there is that of God in all people, it is incumbent upon all of us to look for that of God in all people no matter who they are and no matter from where they come. "Dying to a narrowness of thought" is what it means to be an interchurch spouse, almost by definition. We*

spend a great deal of time educating the general public and dispelling misconceptions especially as we broaden our understanding and our horizons. It is a delightful expansion of the heart and mind that overflows into the world around us."

I would like to learn more from the Worldwide Benedictines about their experiences of community building and how they have done this on the global scale. Mother Marie Hickey, OSB has indicated at least two aspects that are needed in the community building process: encountering the need to accommodate diversity, and focusing on what is essential while they network among themselves. Network among themselves? Each becomes a minister or teacher

Continued on the next page

one to the other. This is a good idea that also needs to be examined further.

As a part of the Interchurch Families International Network, this also may be two, and perhaps three, aspects of community building, both within our own homes and beyond, that we may need to become more aware of in a more conscious way so that we can observe what it is that has made it work for us, especially in these number of long standing and now well identified interchurch marriages, and highlight indicators of success.

Then there was a panel discussion among the Worldwide Gathering of Benedictines In Rome that addressed four questions. As I read over them, I can only say that I wish that I had been there when they broke up into language groups so that I could hear what was said as they discussed these topics, and then the group reports or summaries at the end. The questions are wonderful. As Americans, if we held a huge mirror of reality up or we did a "reality check" as it is sometimes phrased here, what would we see or get in response to the same questions? That is what these four questions were designed to pull out.

The questions are formulated from a religious perspective, as they should be. Here are their questions again. Their answers are above in this same article, but you can formulate your own answers as an ecumenist to the same questions below and then go back to see how The

Worldwide Benedictines answered these same questions if you would like: (It is perfectly fine if you answer from your lived American experience as a member of an Interchurch Family. That is what you know as an ecumenist.)

- 1. How can religion answer the challenge of the world's need resulting from technology?**
- 2. What are the challenges that are most important for religion to deal with?**
- 3. How can religion foster societies that are truly pluralist?**
- 4. If we are open and compare our deepest religious beliefs with the beliefs of others, do we risk losing our faith?**

If you would like, send me some of your thoughts by way of an answer, please send them to [mjglauber@gmail.com](mailto:mjglauber@gmail.com) In the message box please write "Benedictine Answers". Answer all four or just one of your choosing. I am looking forward to hearing (reading) your thoughts;perhaps others might enjoy reading them too.

- Commentary by Mary Jane Glauber

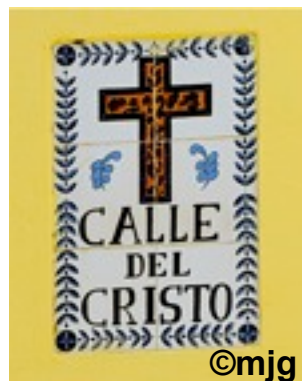


**A Gecko on a tree in El Yunque National Tropical Rainforest,** the only tropical rainforest in the United States National Park System is in Puerto Rico. The Gecko provides a valuable service in the balance of nature.

**God's creation - are we taking care of it for the future?**

**< A Street Sign in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, Calle del Cristo;**

What are the names on the new streets of newly formed subdivisions being built now? How do those names reflect our culture today?



### Red Sessile Trillium - spring native wild flower

This flower is in a city park in Louisville, Kentucky designed by L.Frederick Olmsted many years ago for our enjoyment in this century - his gift to the future.

What are we leaving for future generations to enjoy? What are we planting now for the future to see in full bloom and to enjoy?





Flat Stanley visits Old San Juan where he is photographed with a girl from San Juan, perhaps someone's cousin.

©mjpg

**The Flat Stanley Project teaches writing, world geography, unites generations, closes cultural gaps and allows us to love our neighbors around the world: whether they are of our denomination or from another**

“Flat Stanley is a 1964 children's book by Jeff Brown (1926 - December 3, 2003) and illustrated by Tomi Ungerer. It was the first in a series of books featuring Stanley Lambchop, a completely flat boy. It was published by HarperCollins.”  
 “Stanley Lambchop and his younger brother Arthur are

given a big bulletin board by their Dad for putting pictures and posters on. He hangs it on the wall over Stanley's bed, but during the night the board falls from the wall, flattening Stanley in his sleep. He survives and makes the best of his altered state, and soon he is entering locked rooms by sliding under the door, and playing with his younger brother by being used as a kite. Stanley even helps catch some art museum sneak thieves by posing as a painting on the wall. But one special advantage is that Flat Stanley can now visit his friends by being mailed in an envelope. Eventually Arthur, who tires of all the attention Stanley has been getting, reverts Stanley to his proper shape through an air pump used for footballs.”

**The Flat Stanley Project**

“The Flat Stanley Project was started in 1995 by Dale Hubert, a third grade schoolteacher in London, Ontario, Canada. It is meant to facilitate letter-writing by schoolchildren to each other as they document what Flat Stanley has done with them. Dale Hubert received the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2001 for the Flat Stanley Project.”

The Project provides an opportunity for students to make connections with students of other member schools who've signed up with the project. Students begin by reading the book and becoming acquainted with the story. They make paper "Flat Stanleys" (or pictures of the Stanley Lambchop character) and keep a journal for a few days, documenting the places and activities in which Flat Stanley is involved. The Flat Stanley and the journal are mailed to other people who are asked to treat the figure as a visiting guest and add to his journal, then return them both after a period of time. The project has many similarities to the “Travelling Gnome Prank,” as seen in a sweet French movie” some years ago now,

Continued on the next page

Photo of window in the Cathedral of old San Juan, Puerto Rico



©mjpg

Perhaps Christian Unity will be the same as when the philharmonic plays music together, each one plays their own part. Alone they sound all right. Together they sound beautiful. In fact, the philharmonic sounds absolutely wonderful when they play music together. What examples do we give our children? How do we prepare them for the future they will inherit? Will they inherit an ecumenical world? ▼

Continued from the previous page

"except, of course, for the Flat Stanley Project's focus on literacy."

Students may find it fun to plot Flat Stanley's travels on maps and share the contents of the journal. Often, a Flat Stanley returns with a photo or postcard from his visit."

I used Wikipedia to verify the facts about this children's book and how this project got started.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat\\_Stanley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_Stanley)

Last year, I received a "Flat Stanley" in an envelope mailed to me at our address by US mail. I had never heard of this project before, nor had I read this book. The parameters for the project described on the Wikipedia website seem to have evolved so that the entire community is now involved; I liked that.

My youngest daughter gave me a synopsis of the story. She was very familiar with the project. It seems that it has been going on for some time.

I thought that it was a wonderful project.

I had remembered the French movie with the gnome in it; the movie was

These children will be the future ecumenists or rather they have that potential.



Amélie. Amélie goes about doing kind deeds to improve the lives of the people around her. She exercises understanding and compassion for the human condition, especially the "underdog." It is a delightful film, and one that I would highly recommend to everyone whether they are interchurch families or not. The book helps to connect people across boundaries, national boundaries just as a starter.

all of you who participated from around the world. There is no doubt in my mind that these postcards were shared in that Second Grade Class Room so that all the students could profit from knowing that kind people live all around the world on every continent who are very much like them and their families and the people in their neighborhoods, not strangers, but real people, who just happen to live far away.

I was so excited to be a part of "The Flat Stanley Project." Sending a postcard in return was a very simple and easy request that I could do.

I reached out far and wide around the world to people of faith in order to send "Flat Stanley" on his journey, and they responded in a very positive way. Many thanks to

The child's mother told me that she has made a book with all of the wonderful postcard messages in them for her son to read again when he is mature, and when he can fully understand the love that was poured out to him. She was so grateful for all the love that was poured out to her son in those postcards.

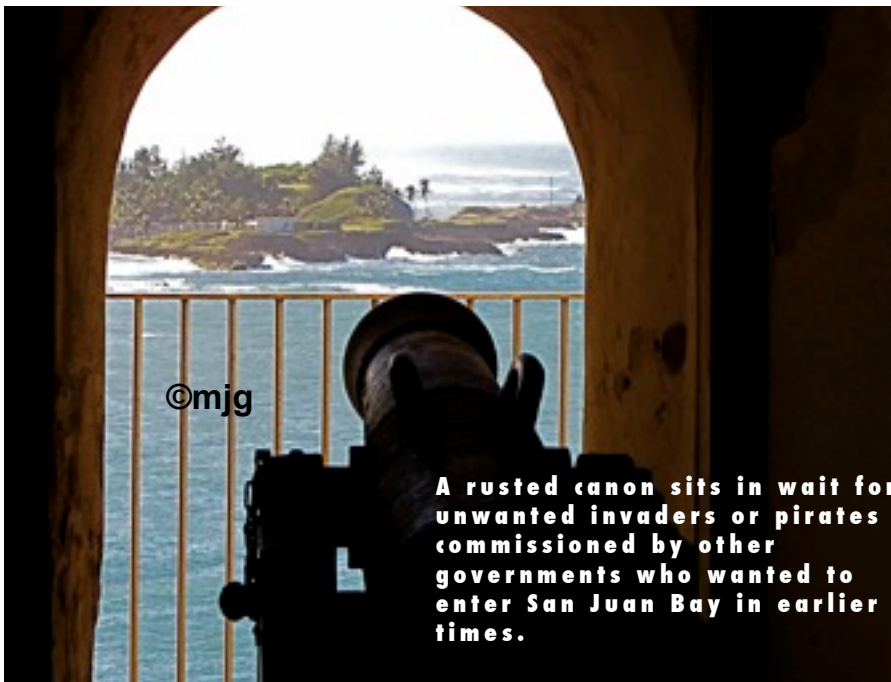
## Family = The Domestic Church

Poster on the door of the Cathedral in San Juan, PR



Year one: 2010

Continued on the next page



**A rusted canon sits in wait for unwanted invaders or pirates commissioned by other governments who wanted to enter San Juan Bay in earlier times.**

This is the kind of ground work that helps to build the kind of world I envision for the future, but I think that others wish for a world where people reach out with acts of simple kindness, even to people who live very far away whom they have not yet met, with good faith that those people are just like us. The only difference is that we have not yet heard their stories. When we get all of their "postcards" we may discover that those people are filled with as much capacity for love as we are. Their style of dress may be different. They may have to deal with climate and geographical, historical or political conditions that are different from ours, but they have the same capacity to give love to their neighbor as we do if we nurture this.

**"Teaching values to young children as we teach reading skills using popular culture"**

The Flat Stanley project sets a good foundation for this kind of positive thinking that is needed in the world. Thank you so much for your positive contribution. It is especially good that this global thinking is being introduced in the Second Grade. We are very much a part of a global community. Dale Hubert, a third grade schoolteacher in London, Ontario, Canada received the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2001 for developing the Flat Stanley Project. Although he had created it as a writing project, it has multiple benefits, and all of them are very positive for the development of children and the future. The values the project instills are all positive.

Marc Brown, while in the process of writing another book in this series, died. Hope did not die. The "Flat Stanley" project is thriving based on reading his book. Bravo to all who keep this project alive!

Another children's author to keep our eyes on is Mo Willems. A former creator and writer for Sesame Street, I have found his children's books and illustrations to be delightful. "Since 2004, Willems' has authored numerous books for young children, many of which have garnered significant critical acclaim. The New York Times Book Review referred to Willems as "the biggest new talent to emerge thus far in the 2000's."

"Three of Willems' books have been awarded a Caldecott Honor: Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! (2004), Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale (2005), and Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity (2008). Recently he has been creating the Elephant and Piggie books, an early reader series about a friendly elephant and pig. Elephant and Piggie won the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in 2008 and 2009."

My first introduction to Mo Willems was through our own Public Library's website. Local public school students had voted on their favorite books, and I was looking for a birthday present to buy for a young person. Once I got to the book store and began reading some of his books, I was "hooked." They are fun. The images are clear. Elephant and Piggie deal with the nature of friendship.

*Ah, that precious gift of friendship isn't always so easy to understand. Even some adults have to stop and rethink this process at times or why is that we keep fighting wars around the globe century after century?*

-Mary Jane Glauber

# imagine

**THE FUTURE FROM A PERSPECTIVE THAT ALLOWS FOR AN INCLUSIVE, LOVING, NON COMPETITIVE FORM OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.**

**USING CHRIST'S LIFE AS AN EXAMPLE, WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIAN UNITY LOOK LIKE?**



The future is for the children. They will learn by the examples we set, and they will be able to build on the foundations we provide for them. What makes community work on a global scale although we may only act on a local level? That is how we must look at things now.

Please, think about these things.

Philippians: Chapter 4; Verse 8:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

**"Virgin" - Cathedral San Juan, PR**

**A beautiful Puerto Rican "Virgin" Mary, a portrait of the virgin as a Puerto Rican Woman, watches over little angels of many races and colors; all races are in her care.**



"The first peace, which is the most important is that which comes from within the souls of men and women when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the Universe and all its powers. "  
Black Elk



**Our world is made up of many people. We are all inter-related. We share the same planet, God's creation for us.**

**"Remember, what you will become rests with what you are willing to do"**

Perhaps you might like to plan your family summer vacation either before or after the AAIF 2010 Biennial Conference - Here is a link to get you started:

Wisconsin Tourist Destinations:  
<http://www.travelwisconsin.com/>



### AAIF City Chapter Listening Sessions:

*"Listening is an act of love"*

AAIF has established City Chapters for the purpose of allowing couples to gather so that they can share correct information informally. The ARK, the publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families, will be sponsoring "listening sessions" in our AAIF City Chapters between March 2010 and June 2012. If you are interested in creating a City Chapter in

your area, please join AAIF. Membership Forms can be found at the AAIF website [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org).

If you would like to help to organize your local AAIF City Chapter, please contact [aaif.co.chair@gmail.com](mailto:aaif.co.chair@gmail.com). If you would like discussion group guidelines for the ARK-sponsored "AAIF Listening Project," please contact [mjglauber@gmail.com](mailto:mjglauber@gmail.com) attention: ARK Listening Project

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AAIF is incorporated as a non-profit organization in the State of Nebraska

Many thanks to Carol and Dave Natella for their support in the editing of the ARK. I would also like to thank Father George Kilcourse and Father Ernest Falardeau for their on-going support of interchurch families. Father Falardeau, Thank you for your written contribution to this edition of the ARK. Many thanks to Libbye Montgomery for her cheerful efforts and hard work in making the arrangements to put together the next AAIF Conference. Registration forms for the July 9-11 2010 AAIF Conference can be found at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org) ~ Mary Jane Glauber

Please send written articles for publication in future issues of the ARK via email to [mjglauber@gmail.com](mailto:mjglauber@gmail.com) attention: For the ARK

International Standard Serial Number: ISSN 1943-6467 (print)

The ARK, a publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families  
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The ARK

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A·A·I·F<sup>®</sup>

American Association of  
 Interchurch Families

TO:

Registration forms and further AAIF 2010 conference information have now been posted at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org). The 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference will be from July 9 through and including July 11, 2010, Madison, WI. Pre and post conference outings have been planned. Discounts are available for those who register and pay before May 1, 2010.