

V International Encounter of Lay Cistercian Communities  
Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa, May 18-24, 2011

Report of Conversi delegates Martha Krieg and Kate Zilla  
(as submitted by Martha Krieg, 8/27/2011)

Martha Krieg (Council member and Head of the Formation Committee) and Kate Zilla (former Council member and member [formerly Head] of the Formation Committee) attended the International Encounter to represent Conversi. Martha arrived Friday evening, May 17. Kate arrived late afternoon on Saturday, May 18 (due to a family obligation). We were both honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to represent Conversi at this meeting. The last formal event of the Encounter was the dinner on Friday, 27 May. Martha left after Mass and breakfast on Saturday; Kate remained through late Saturday afternoon. Paul Lindenmeyer did not attend the sessions, but served as a volunteer manning the Cistercian Publications/Cistercian Studies Quarterly sale table for the first few days.

Those in attendance at the meeting voted on several items that are really important for the organization of lay communities, most of which addressed the structure of the International Association, in contrast to the Huerta meeting, which focused primarily on the spiritual foundation of the Association. In the end, the existence of the organization itself is going to make a lot of difference to our existence as communities. The formal documents from the meeting have been posted on the Association website, accessible through the Conversi site. The official photographs are already on the website, under the "Dubuque" link.

The plenary sessions (with all language groups) and the language-group breakout sessions usually ran an hour and a half, one in the morning and two in the afternoon. This report will first provide a short summary, and then more detail for those who want it.

Kindly note that the full text of Mother Gail's survey results should not be distributed beyond Conversi and AIC.

## **I. Summary Report**

The Association is being formed because the Cistercian Order has requested it, in order to have a single, stable point of contact and discussion with the lay communities. Although the votes that were taken were critical for the existence of the Association, the relationships that were built are no less so. This includes the relationships with the monks and nuns who attended as well as among the various lay groups in attendance. Some of the monks and nuns were quite surprised at the number of lay communities and at the obvious dedication, deep spirituality, and strong formation of the lay people present.

Many of us spent years as isolated contemplatives, and had a deep sense of coming home at last when we found Conversi. In a sense, something analogous is going on with the Association, where groups that have grown up isolated from other groups have discovered that they are not alone. We find we share experiences and problems in some areas, but each group has its own personality as well.

### **Our activities at the Encounter**

1. We followed most of the Liturgy of the Hours, with each day framed by Lauds and Mass, Terce, None, Sext, Vespers, and Compline in French, Spanish, or English. People were free to pray Vigils on their own.
2. We voted to create the Association of Lay Cistercian Communities on a permanent basis, with a Steering Committee of three people, to be elected every three years, one from each of the working-language areas (English, French, Spanish). The primary purpose of the Steering Committee is to act as a liaison between the member groups and the Cistercian Order, especially the General Chapter. A secondary purpose is to organize the International Encounter every three years.
3. We discussed and voted on whether any aspects of our relationships with our monastery should be adopted as a common ideal, and if so what they were. We also discussed which should be considered minimal for all lay Cistercian communities, and in addition whether there should be any criteria for the group to belong to the Association. A formation program was one of the essentials.
4. We adopted a statute that the criteria for allowing a group to be a member of the organization should be the following:
  - a. There are two classes of membership. "Provisional" communities are associated with a monastery but have not yet reached a level of stability and formation such that the monastery formally acknowledges them. "Recognized" communities have been recognized by the abbot or abbess as formally associated with the monastery.
  - b. Each lay community must complete an application form for membership, which the abbot or abbess of the monastery to which the group is attached must sign, certifying which type of membership is appropriate for the group. Suggestions that this membership needed to be renewed annually were rejected, in favor of saying a group remains in its status until the Abbot or Abbess informs the Association that the status has changed. Yes, this means that technically, until formal documentation is provided, the Association has no members. However, for purposes of proceeding this year, it was assumed that the presence of delegates and the monastic liaison from the associated abbey was sufficient proof that the group is formally

recognized, but not at what level. [Conversi is actively in the process of having Mother Nettie and Father Brendan sign a document that acknowledges our relationship to the Abbeys. This is expected to be signed shortly after the retreat. Although for our own existence, such a written document is not required by the international association (only a abbot/abbess-signed application is), it is suggested as providing stability in the face of possible change of abbot or abbess,, or of questions concerning the nature of the obligations on both sides.

- c. Only Provisional or Recognized communities may attend Association meetings.
  - d. If an abbot or abbess rescinds recognition of a community, the community's membership in the organization is rescinded.
5. We discussed and voted on which aspects of formation seemed essential. In a plenary session of May 27, we decided that a statement of formation is indeed needed (and will be further developed at the next triennial meeting out of our preliminary consensual decisions here), which acknowledges the respect given to the 'autonomy of the individual communities'. Included in the statement should be: (a) the principles and purpose of formation; (b) that formation should be a process which guides us, not a program per se; and (c) that this statement of formation should be tied to both the Huerta Identity document and the Ratio Institutiones (Guidelines for Formation), with an emphasis on initial and ongoing formation. Such a document should be used as (a) a guideline for formators (with the Holy Spirit being the key formator!), along with the discernment of the individual community; (b) as a spark to stimulate discussion; and (c) as a resource to encourage all in a group to use their gifts within the group. Finally, in the context of each autonomous community, four elements should be present: (1) modeling and mutual accountability in living the charism; (2) fostering of a relationship that includes 'immersion' in the local monastery and its lay community; (3) making use of authentic Cistercian resources and mentors; and (4) acknowledgement of the crucial nature of discernment and the stages in formation.
6. We elected the Steering Committee members who will serve for the next three years, plus an alternate for each one. These are English: Dennis Day, alternate Teresa McMahon; French: Marie-Christine Rossignol, alternate Pascal Sonzogni; Spanish: Albertina (Tina) Parayre, alternate Leopoldo (Polo) Mosquera Ossorio. This means the regular Steering Committee members are unchanged. The alternates will serve as a support to the primary members of the steering committee (e.g., if a steering committee member cannot participate in an important proceeding/meeting, an alternate may substitute).
7. We had a "vacation day" on Thursday. We took two large commercial buses, first to New Melleray, then to Our Lady of the Mississippi. We then went to

the Port of Dubuque and boarded The Spirit of Dubuque for a two-hour trip down and up the Mississippi, with a buffet lunch and a nice barbershop quartet.

## **II. Detailed Report**

### **Where we met**

Clarke College in Dubuque is a small Catholic liberal arts college about half an hour's drive from New Melleray. Each of us had a dormitory room (monks, nuns, and priests were housed in the student apartment building next door). The cafeteria, meeting hall and chapel were all accessible through basement corridors (lovely on a rainy day) or an outside sidewalk. The food was excellent and the staff very friendly. The volunteers from AIC (and perhaps other groups as well) were extremely important – Linda Harrington was responsible not only for the liturgy book, which contained all the texts for all the Offices, but for ensuring that all the liturgical logistics (people, places, things) came together. We owe her a huge vote of thanks.

### **How the meeting worked**

Fr. Mark Scott, OCSO, currently residing in Gethsemani and serving as editor for Cistercian Studies Quarterly and Cistercian Publications, was the moderator, and his measured calm, clear articulation, and intelligent questioning were a great help in allowing us to work through as many substantive issues as we did. The Steering Committee of the Association consisted of Dennis Day (English), Marie-Christine Rossignol (French; unfortunately unable to attend due to a personal emergency), and Albertina (Tina) Parayre (Spanish, from Spain).

The attendees consisted of one or two members from each of about 33 communities, with a monk or nun representing the abbey they are associated with. The monks and nuns had voice but not vote in the meetings. The uncertainty in numbers comes from the fact that not everyone invited came, and one legitimate group that was not invited because the Steering Committee did not know about them sent a representative.

The pace of the meeting took some getting used to. Most of us are probably used to meetings in which the items to be discussed are presented in “working papers” ahead of time, or are simple enough to be readily comprehended and voted upon within the space of an hour or two. Neither of these was the case here. In part that was because the topics for the rest of the week depended in large part on the decisions made in the first vote, the topics for the third session depended on the second, etc.

Typically, we would have a plenary session or two with all the representatives (and simultaneous translation through headphones), then meet in working-language groups in separate rooms to discuss the items to be voted on in the next plenary session. There were two basic formats of plenary session: a talk and/or panel (Denny, Sr. Gail Fitzpatrick, Dom Armand Veilleux, Fr. Pierre-André Burton), or a discussion of the results of the working-language group discussion results followed by a plenary vote.

There was a separate group for each of three languages, English, French, and Spanish. Although sometimes these were referred to as “cultural areas”, Fr. Mark Scott told Martha that was inaccurate. These divisions correspond to the languages people can function in, even if they are not their native languages. The General Chapter (and the United Nations) use similar divisions.<sup>1</sup> Each group elected a moderator and a secretary who served throughout the week. Theresa McMahon (AIC) was our moderator and Rocky Thomas (Lay Cistercian Associates of Holy Spirit) was our secretary. Typically the secretary would present the views of their group in the plenary, then we would pass a document with suggestions for tweaking it, then after further language-group discussions, we would ratify the major tweaks in the next plenary. Both in the language group and in the plenary, each community had only one vote. There are some abbeys which sponsor more than one lay community (e.g., Holy Spirit Abbey from Conyers, GA. had 7 different lay associate communities represented by at least one delegate), but just as AIC and Conversi are distinct communities, so each of these communities, though all “daughters” of the same monastery, has its own separate personality and structure.

## **The talks that were given**

Our first session was Saturday afternoon. Teresa McMahon, Mother Nettie Gamble (OLM), and Fr. Brendan Freeman (NM), plus Fr. Mark Scott, each gave us a brief welcoming introduction. The announcements usual for the beginning of such a meeting were given, including an orientation to the contents of our folders and tote

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<sup>1</sup> A suggestion was made to add another group (or at least another Steering Committee member) for communities from non-European/non-US/non-Latin-American areas. While these communities do indeed need extra care to be sure they are included and their concerns are addressed, a separate group would suffer from the problem of which language to communicate in. There are dozens of African languages, several varieties of Chinese, etc., and the representatives from these areas may not share a single “colonial” or “trade” language. We were told originally the Steering Committee had contained more members, but that the rest had simply “disappeared.” If there were more SC members, that would not necessarily imply another working-language group, though. There is also the problem of financial and political difficulties in bringing enough “minority” groups to make a viable working group on their own.

bags, reminders about the importance of keeping our key and security ID chip on us at all times, and where changes to the schedule would be posted. The packets included a printed schedule, list of participants, map of the facility, the OCSO Ratio (guidelines for formation), and information on Dubuque history. There was also a copy of *This One Dear Place*.

Dom Armand Veilleux gave a long talk on the history of the Cistercian lay associates and of the Association.

Sr. Gail Fitzpatrick spoke on "The Hopes and Fears of the monks and nuns of the Order concerning Lay Cistercians." See the summary below under "How do they really regard us?" Because Sr. Gail is close to us, and because her results are already summarized, it rates more than a paragraph here.

Dennis reported on the finances of the Association. He had a written report which he did not pass out, because it did not include the most up-to-date figures. He read those. Now that there is a formal organization, it is clear that we need as well to formalize the handling of the funds. A suggestion was made that the usual annual reports be done by an accountant, though there was not time to develop a consensus, and this was not voted on. Although one delegate in particular was quite upset that this was not already being done, Denny had a point that until we had a real Association, there was no real entity to report on, nor was there a stated requirement that such reporting be done by anyone other than the Steering Committee itself.

Fr. Pierre-André Burton spoke on "What Formation?" In this talk (which runs to some seventeen densely-reasoned pages), he stated that the question of formation is indeed fundamental. Though we do not always think of it as "formation," in fact, we are engaged in formation in many aspects of our lives. As St. Bernard says, there are three questions – *What* am I? *Who* am I? *Which one* am I? Formation is thus closely linked to our identity, to how we perceive ourselves, and to how we are perceived by society and those with whom we interact. We are formed by our family, by our schools and schoolmates, by our religious education. Later we are formed by our choice of activities and associates. Our Cistercian formation can be divided into three steps: we were created in Christ, we were reformed through Christ, and we will reach perfection together with Christ. But how do we get there? Formation consists of two types: institution and experience. "Institution" here has a meaning that is not our usual English meaning – it means causing a person to be established as a person, as a Christian, and as a monk. This happens in large part through regular observance of monastic routine. But there is also the way of experience, which consists of seeking to know God through his word and through prayer. A quick summary: both ways are necessary. The person who thinks monastic life is merely succeeding in following all the rules rigidly has missed the point. But the person who attempts to find God without any supporting structure is also likely to miss the mark, because it is too easy to avoid full self-knowledge if we are off on our own. We must first come to know ourselves, including the bitter self-knowledge that

we are not as good as we would like to think, and cannot become so on our own, before we are able to learn the depth of God's mercy. Formation is thus a great deal more than mere religious education. It is a complete revamping of our inward, outward, and spiritual selves.

Dom Armand Veilleux gave a spontaneous talk on Thursday evening concerning the seven Cistercian monks of Tibhirine who were martyred 17 years ago. His talk was so riveting that only six people attended Compline. Among other things, he said the monks were so beloved that even now the local people take care of the monastery and its grounds, that it's cleaner than when the monks lived there, and that not so much as a bowl, a fork, or a spoon has been taken. In contrast, some of the nuns of another order who left around that time had everything stolen from their building within 24 hours. Dom Armand was the person who viewed the heads to identify the monks – there had been an attempt to cover up the fact that they had been beheaded, and the Order wanted to be completely sure they had been found. It is difficult to convey in typed words what it is like to be at just one remove from the monks themselves, with someone who had known them for many years, who had been their monastic visitor, and clearly cared deeply for them.

## **The votes that were taken**

Five major votes were taken during this meeting. Most were unanimous at the plenary level, which was amazing considering the amount of debate that went on, at least in the English-language sessions! The substance of these votes is given in the Summary section above; a few details are added here.

1. The ratification of the document "The Bonds of Charity that Unite Us" passed at Huerta, to formally create the Association on a permanent basis.
2. A vote concerning the standards for being a lay Cistercian group.
3. A vote concerning the criteria for membership in this Association. It is assumed that an abbot or abbess will not "recognize" a group that does not have a strong formation program in place. We voted to have two types of membership, as discussed in the summary above. Originally, nothing was in the suggested document or the questions leading up to it about how a group would be decertified. The groups unanimously added that. [The issue of whether Provisional member groups should have "voice and vote" or just "voice" was left to the next Encounter. There are good reasons for allowing "voice only", primarily because the whole point of a group's being Provisional is normally that it has not yet had sufficient formation to understand the Cistercian charism thoroughly, and therefore should not be making decisions that determine what does and does not make a group "Cistercian."]
4. A vote concerning whether or not there should be criteria for acceptable formation programs.
5. A vote for steering committee members

### **1. The formal creation of the association – and why**

First, it is important to understand that the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order itself requested that the communities of lay people associated with Cistercian abbeys around the world come together in a group that could be recognized as what is known in canon law as a “moral person” (corresponding somewhat roughly to a corporate entity in the lay world). The purpose of this entity is to give the General Chapter (that is, the Order as a whole) a way to deal with a coherent, stable, and representative body, rather than with individuals. Such individual, though perhaps claiming to represent a group, may or may not truly represent any ongoing community. We are not “unionizing” to force ourselves on the Order; the Order wishes to deal with us, and needs an organization to do so. The fact that it is the Order that requested that the communities associate is important.

At the meeting three years ago in Huerta, the International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities was founded only “ad experimentum,” that is, on a trial basis.

Our first task was to vote whether to formally ratify the creation of this group. If we did not pass it, there would be no need for further discussions, as there would be no association to deal with. The document as presented for approval included a change to the name, from the “International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities” to the “International Alliance of Lay Communities Associated with Cistercian Monasteries.” The proposed change was due to two issues. One was the connotations the term “Association” has in Spanish, where it implies a business-like association rather than a spiritual. The second was the objection of some Cistercian abbots to the use of “Cistercian” as a noun referring to lay people – that is, “Lay Cistercian” seems to them a contradiction in terms. However, after much debate both in the language groups and in the plenary session, it became clear that it was impossible to find a single word that would be cognate across all three languages that had the proper connotations in all of them. In order not to waste an endless amount of time on the words rather than the substance of the group, we ratified the document with the original name.

Each lay community has grown up with its own sponsoring abbey. As each abbey within the Cistercian order is autonomous, so each lay group’s association with its abbey has grown up as that abbey pleased. One American group and the Nigerian group were concerned about how the Association would affect their lay community, though perhaps in different ways. The American group seemed to be concerned that the Association would begin to legislate a greater uniformity of detailed formation, etc., than the group (or at least the representative) was happy with. The Nigerians were concerned that several developments in the wider Catholic church, especially a greater openness to ecumenism than works in their culture, would be forced upon them. It was repeatedly stressed by the moderators and the Steering Committee that we know that conditions differ even within the same country, that monasteries are different because of that, and hence their communities will also differ.



That said, it is also the case that the Cistercian Order has a legitimate concern that if the adjective “Cistercian” is attached to a group or a product, nothing about that group or product should be in conflict with the ideals of the Order. To put it somewhat facetiously, they “own the brand,” and have the right to say that a group must meet certain criteria in order to be “franchised.”

Now that several years of this development have passed, both abbeys and groups are discovering that sometimes things do not run smoothly. One concern is those groups which are functioning well and maturing, but whose abbeys no longer have resources to support them as groups that physically visit the abbey (this has happened at Genesee, spawning a group that has become an on-line group associated with the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Georgia.), or which have been “let go” when a change in monastic leadership led to a change in priorities.

### **How are we really regarded?**

The fact that the Order is asking us to form an association is in itself a sign that they take those attempting to live the Cistercian charism as lay people seriously. Many have a highly favorable view, seeing the charism as belonging not to a single monastery, nor even to the Order, but to the whole Church (as Dom Bernardo Olivera, the Abbot General, wrote). That said, even those most in favor of lay Cistercian groups do have concerns; to be fair, those concerns are shared by the most thoughtful and well-developed members of lay Cistercian communities.

In fact, Sr. Gail Fitzpatrick, former abbess of OLM, did a survey. She sent an email query to 26 houses of the order and received 16 responses, a 62% response rate. Unfortunately, perhaps due to the fact that the survey was sent out in English, none of the Latin American communities responded. The full report will be available on the *Conversi* web site – but it is confidential. Please do not make copies for anyone outside *Conversi*.

In short – all but one group that responded said they were in favor of lay associate groups; even the group that said no was in favor of allowing existing groups to continue. (For our own group: the proportions among the monks at New Melleray and nuns at Our Lady of the Mississippi are similar – overwhelmingly in favor). She noted that the vote at the general chapter concerning the lay expression of the charism was also significant: yes – 132 no -21 abstain 0 (over 86% in favor).

To look at the fears (which might never materialize) or current problems, she found eleven, which I quote verbatim here:

1. These groups may involve communities in pastoral ministry that is not ours and for which we do not have resources or training.
2. Hosting meetings involves distraction, time and energy as well as possibly disturbing peace and prayerfulness of monastery

3. Some groups can seem to intrude into the community life, or even “take over” and speak as the authentic voice of Cistercian spirituality. There is a concern that a group, or individuals in a group, may divide a community. (This can be unconscious and as much the responsibility of the community members as the associates.)
4. No standard formation program is in place yet so it is left up to individual groups. Can formation and ongoing development happen in that case? Are there objective criteria by which a group can be considered Associates of Cistercians? [note that these were precisely the concerns of this year’s Encounter]
5. Some groups are larger than the community. Not easy to find liaison or teacher.
6. 6. There can be too much copying of religious life, ex. Postulant, novice, vows, etc. When that happens boundaries can be blurred.
7. Will they become just another therapeutic group of intellectual reading club? Or will they be a forum for gripes with the institutional Church?
8. The fear or concern that was voiced most often is one that was also mentioned in the discussion at the MGM. In the future will a community be forced to accept a group of associates against its better judgment.
9. Groups that accept non-Catholics have to deal with the difficult situation of reception of Eucharist...so how do groups deal with the controversial issues of abortion and gay marriage, etc. or should they?
10. The second most often mentioned fear is that of the name. Several prefer that “Cistercian” not be in the official name as a noun. So Associates of Iowa Cistercians would be okay, but not Lay Cistercians of Iowa. [actually, this is NOT quite clear – as the name she cites as OK actually contains Cistercians as a noun! But in that case it clearly refers to the monks/nuns with which the lay people are associated. I suspect that actually any use of the term “Cistercian” as an adjective or noun referring directly to the associate is the problem, says Martha]
11. It happens that the Abbot/Abbess is sometimes called upon to resolve tensions in the group. That can be an added burden for the superior.

However, the same people who have concerns also have hopes:

1. That members continue to be enriched spiritually by being associated with Cistercians.
2. That their own faith life will deepend and that they can be a leaven of love in society as well as a source of support to each other.
3. That their presence in their own family and community can raise awareness and appreciation of Contemplative life and of ongoing conversion to Christ in the Church and in the world.
4. They hope that the groups move forward to develop a viable formation plan for themselves and clarify expectations concerning membership.
5. That the groups come to consensus about their own leadership without undue dependence on their contact monastery or on the Order.
6. That their **lay** identity be maintained at all times.

7. **And a final note of care:** that they be granted the grace of perseverance!...
8. One more point: three of the communities [of nuns] said “we enjoy the lay associates”. I thought you’d like to hear that.

## Formation in General

The first thing that sprang to most delegates’ minds among minimal criteria for being a lay group that could be recognized by a monastery was a strong formation program. Some groups were quite disturbed by this, fearing that a standard formation curriculum might be imposed by the Association. It was repeatedly stressed that the abbeys are autonomous and the groups that are attached to abbeys will be following the directives given by their own abbey, not a detailed central curriculum. Still, we went on to determine what we considered to be important. Although we came out with the formal recommendation that the Ratio Institutiones (Guidelines for Formation) of the OCSO with monastery-specific pieces removed was appropriate, it is useful to recall some of what we discussed before arriving at this decision.

1. The primary formator is the Holy Spirit. The other things we discuss are merely the tools the Spirit uses.
2. The community is a school of the Lord’s service. Active participation in the community is essential, and this means not only showing up, but helping as needed with the tasks of running the community and its meetings.
3. Teachings should flow from Scripture and Cistercian tradition: the Cistercian Fathers, present-day monks and nuns, well-formed lay folks.
4. Discernment of spirit is needed in what kinds of relationships are needed and what resources are available for and within each group.
5. Different strokes for different folks.
6. Different stages need different levels of support and mentoring
7. Individual mentors are helpful in formation, even after someone is considered “formed,” someone to mentor/accompany them is helpful.
8. Beware of ego-strength issues concerning formation. Partly this is a matter of discerning who should enter, partly of taking care in mentoring relationships.
9. Sr. Gail commented that what is in the document should be possible. By that she meant we should not write up something so idealistic and overly demanding that it would be ignored because no one could live up to it.
10. We should explain what we are not as well as what we are. We are not a therapy group, we are not a self-help group.
11. One person stressed repeatedly that to imbibe the proper spirit, it is essential to be physically present at the community’s home monastery monthly; Sr. Lillian Shank, OCSO (formerly of OLM) who supervises three semi-detached communities associated with the Abbey of the Holy Spirit responded that she “couldn’t disagree more strongly” with that opinion.
12. There is currently a fairly wide spread in what is required to become a full member of a community. For Conyers, there is a 5-year formation program including the Rule, the Fathers, Cistercian history, Cistercian spirituality, etc.,

and how to bring this back into the world. It should not remain something that exists only in our meetings and prayer times. At present it is not intended that the Association should determine this in detail. However, it is probably that as abbots and abbesses consider whether or not to recognize their local communities, they will be guided in part by their own sense of how well the lay community is working toward the sort of formation program that is presumed by the Ratio.

13. We discussed how communities might support and help each other:
  - a. Share each community's way of life guidelines (most have stronger ones than Conversi does)
  - b. Share on-line newsletters (with care about what material is appropriate. For example, if a member biography is there, it may not be appropriate to share beyond the originating community.)
  - c. Communications in general
  - d. Regional meetings
  - e. A contact person for each community on the Association website. (Denny: that's there, but people don't tell him when the contact info changes, creating "dead" links and email addresses.)
  - f. Perhaps an on-line forum.
  - g. Mutual respect between communities
  - h. Hospitality between groups.
  - i. Prayer (maybe we could have a "Community a Day" to pray for, as well as for the individuals within Conversi?)
  - j. Suggested: Decennial meeting of all lay Cistercians (not just delegates) in Rome
  - k. Sharing experiences
  - l. Special support during time of problems
  - m. Sharing audio and text resources.

This last, having a shared library of resources that all communities can access, was something many people wanted, strongly enough that Denny asked for volunteers to head it. Martha Krieg volunteered, reasoning that she reads English, French, and Spanish fluently, has a library degree, and works as a senior programmer/analyst. Though not a web designer, she feels she is well positioned to learn the necessary skills for this position rapidly. However, the library will take some time to build. In the past, not all submissions were considered appropriate. Denny points out that issues of which content is acceptable (does it need to have a Nihil Obstat, for instance?), how to determine permissions for individual talks originally recorded/written for a single community, and how to ensure that plagiarism or other copyright violations do not occur will need to be resolved before we start. As no one has time to translate everything, it is most likely that there would be separate sections for English, French, and Spanish resources. Patrons of this library will want to be aware that attitudes vary from culture to culture, and content should be screened by the group that wants to use it, to ensure that it meets their needs.

The sharing of resources is important, because the monasteries are already overstretched trying to mentor the lay communities. Since the recorded talks are available, our own monks and nuns are becoming increasingly unwilling to prepare a talk and come in person. (Martha's personal feeling: although the content of the talk is indeed available, the monks and nuns might consider coming long enough to listen to the talk they gave and be willing to answer questions about it. That would require significantly less time. I think they underestimate the witness of the live person!) We could gain a wider set of input by using other groups' recordings as well, and by using written materials.

For future delegates: Mostly people dressed in casual clothing, slacks and a polo shirt or guayabera for men; slacks, jeans, or skirts and simple tops for women. Neat, well-maintained denim was acceptable. Europeans tended to dress fairly stylishly even when wearing denim; the African contingent sometimes wore tabards/scapulars with a large picture of their patron saint. (Africans often wear clothing printed with political figures, so this is not unique.) Layers were a good idea – some rooms were quite chilly.