

A.1: Preamble

Since the time of Saint Benedict (480-548), in one form or another, studies have always been a part of monastic life, initially for the monks themselves, then for the young men destined for monastic life and offered to the monastery as oblates by their parents, then in cloister schools for the sons of noblemen in the late Middle Ages, and later for students at the medieval universities of Paris and Oxford. The Renaissance, and above all the Catholic Reform in the XVI century, led to a rebirth not only of monastic life itself but also of academic study among the Benedictines, demonstrated clearly, for example, in the case of the French Congregation of Saint-Maur, founded in 1632, the members of which (including Dom Jean Mabillon) were among the founders of the modern erudition. Following the vicissitudes of the French Revolution and the consequent virtual collapse of Benedictine life in much of Europe, the extraordinary revival of this lifestyle at the end of the first half of the nineteenth century brought with it a surge in academic studies at Benedictine monasteries. It is in this context that we must understand the establishment of S. Anselmo.

The Pontifical Athenaeum S. Anselmo, originally founded in 1687 by Pope Innocent XI as a university for Benedictine in Rome, was re-established and entrusted to the whole Benedictine Confederation as its international university by Pope Leo XIII in 1887.

S. Anselmo was re-established:

- to strengthen the union between the various Benedictine groups, known as “Congregations”,
- to offer solid academic training to monks from all over the world and
- to encourage, using contacts forged by the Benedictines, a relationship with the Eastern churches, most of which have a strong sense of monasticism.

From the beginning, S. Anselmo built a reputation for research into the original sources for historical, critical, biblical and patristic reflection which focussed on symbolism and wisdom, as the seat of scholars such as A. Stolz, C. Vagaggini, K. Möhlberg, M. Löhrer, K. Hallinger, S. Marsili, B. Studer, A. De Vogue and J. Leclercq. Since its creation, the University has also provided the Holy See with

skilled consultants for the various departments of the Roman Curia, as well as specialized support for particular projects, including the Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law) of 1917 (Cardinal Justinian Serédi OSB) and 1982 (Bishop Viktor Dammertz OSB). One special collaboration was the Athenaeum's work on the production of the 1970 Roman Missal, specifically the composition of Eucharistic prayers by the aforementioned Prof. Cipriano Vaggagini.

Informally authorised to award pontifical academic degrees in Theology from 1891, this right was formalised in 1914 in a decree by Saint Pius X, which included the right to award degrees in two other faculties, those of philosophy and canon law. This decree put S. Anselmo on equal footing with Rome's other Pontifical Universities. Following an academic reorganization after the years of crisis during the First World War, when the Athenaeum was closed for four years, the Faculty of Canon Law was suspended in 1925 and under a new *ratio studiorum* in the same year, the Athenaeum concentrated on the teaching of Theology and philosophy.

Although the *ratio studiorum* of 1925 continued to provide the standard academic basis, the Faculty of Theology began to develop teaching and research specialisations, which in turn led to the foundation of two institutes within the Faculty, the Institute of Liturgical Research in 1950 and the Monastic Institute in 1952. The Institute of Liturgical Research became what is probably S. Anselmo's greatest contribution to the universal Church when, in 1961, under the Blessed Pope John XXIII, it was reconfigured as the Pontifical Institute of Liturgy, the first Institute of its kind in the world. In 1978, this Institute became a Faculty in itself, with more than 200 students, and is now the largest of the three faculties. It still remains the only Faculty of Liturgy in the world with the right to award pontifical degrees in sacred liturgy.

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), from 1968, the Congregation for Catholic Education completely reorganised ecclesiastical studies. The new ecclesiastical study program requires two years of specialisation – following basic studies in Philosophy and/or Theology – in order to obtain a higher education degree. This requirement led, from 1972, to specialisations in Monastic Studies at the Monastic Institute, Dogmatic and Sacramental Theology, Philosophy of Religion and, in 2000, History of Theology at the Jean

Mabillon Institute. These specialisations are regularly updated. At the start of 2012, the Monastic Institute's entire academic program was fundamentally revised. The result of this revision is that the specialisation in Monastic Studies has evolved into a specialisation in Monastic Spiritual Theology. The Benedictine Spirituality and Leadership specialization, currently under development, will also represent another new addition to the program.

S. Anselmo, the international university of the Benedictine order in Rome, is thus committed to offering:

- University studies for the baccalaureate in philosophy and theology.
- Post-graduate courses for diplomas, licenses and doctorates with specialisations in:
 - Monastic Spiritual Theology
 - Sacred Liturgy
 - Sacramental Theology
 - History of Theology
 - Philosophy of Religion

With its Faculties of Philosophy, Theology and Liturgy and some thirty tenured professors, S. Anselmo aims to provide high quality theological instruction for the Benedictine Confederation. Both as a university and a place of residence, S. Anselmo attracts students from every Benedictine Congregation worldwide. The University also welcomes other students, men and women, both laypeople and religious, from other orders and congregations, from the diocesan clergy and from other religious traditions. At the end of the 1890s, the Pontifical University of S. Anselmo began its work with a very small and exclusively Benedictine student body of approximately 40/50 students; during the time of the Second Vatican Council and immediately thereafter, S. Anselmo had a new beginning, reaching its maximum of around 350 students in 1965; by around 1975 the number of students had dropped to approximately 180, and the current number of students - approximately 500 - ensures that the university is able to maintain a personal approach to knowledge and skills, education and research.

Through its various affiliations with approximately a dozen institutes in Italy and abroad, in countries such as Switzerland, Spain, Hungary, Israel, the United States and Brazil, S. Anselmo is playing

its part in supporting theological and philosophical studies in the Benedictine tradition for a much wider student body.

Constantly aware of the need to provide courses which meet the requirements of the Church and the modern world, as well as those of the Benedictine Confederation, S. Anselmo is working to develop new areas and methods of research, firmly based on the Tradition of the Church and its Magisterium. One of the factors motivating this awareness is the fall in the number of people following monastic vocations in Europe and the United States, which is only partly compensated for by increasing numbers of the same in Asia and Africa. In addition to this, there is an increased awareness of the need for improved theological education which is more widespread among laypeople, both men and women.

One particular challenge, and an opportunity which is becoming ever clearer, is the need to provide an unprejudiced forum for theological and philosophical dialogue between cultures, religions and creeds. The growing intellectual and spiritual uprooting of many people, in particular in the Western World, requires a solution, but a solution which is based on a desire to learn rather than teach, a desire to look for something more than settling for pre-packaged and unconvincing solutions.

Despite the generosity of the Congregations, who continue to pay the various subsidies which make the everyday existence of S. Anselmo possible, and who have also generously financed essential maintenance and restoration at S. Anselmo, the Athenaeum is chronically lacking in funds. In view of both its dwindling finances and the current difficulty in maintaining the numbers of student monks, as well as in recruiting monks as professors, the Athenaeum has had to re-examine its situation. In light of this re-examination, it is clear that S. Anselmo and its Athenaeum are necessary, both for cohesion within the Confederation, and for the clear institutional and theological perceptibility of the Confederation among the various organizations and theologies of the world church. We are however also convinced that S. Anselmo requires a strategic plan in order to achieve its vision and mission in a world which is rapidly changing.

Aware of these factors, and in order to ensure the effective provision of the services required, S. Anselmo recognises the need for a short

and long term strategic plan, a plan which must become a mental habit, making the best use of the methods and tools available today, and recognising that the strategic plan is a process which requires courage, flexibility, the development of new skills and the desire and the ability of all those concerned to work together.