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Dedication of Merit

Patrick Henry, Ph.D., Judith Simmer-Brown, Fr. William Skudlarek, OSB

from *Benedict's Dharma*, September 2001

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Patrick Henry: I'm very glad you [Ven. Heng Sure] started speaking again: the fruit of six years of silence. I've spent my career learning how to respond appropriately and all I can do is say thank you on behalf of all of us. Rev. Heng Sure has given us a postscript. We're now asking all of you to continue that process of postscripts to Benedict's Dharma the book and Benedict's Dharma the conference. We're going to give you a piece of paper and we're going to ask you to spend the next forty minutes or as much of the next forty minutes as you care to, writing something. And that writing may be simply a paragraph or two. It could be a poem, it could be a picture, but we would like you to add your reflections to this process. We will then, without guaranteeing that we use them all, but the idea is to post these on the web site as a continuation of this process of the reception of Benedict's Dharma.

I'm going to ask that at 10:15 you return here to deposit those in a bowl which will be part of the Dedication of Merit and Judith has asked if she could have just a few minutes to give us a reflection, and as an author of the book, she has that privilege, so I would ask us all to come back here at 10:15 so that Judith can speak to us for about five minutes. At that point, then, we will move out to Mary's circle.

Judith Simmer-Brown: We Buddhists are so trained that we cannot leave situations until we dedicate the merit. So, what I am saying is a more informal of what we will be doing next. I couldn't go to the airport without saying a few small things. The first is that I think I speak for all the Buddhst commentators that we are astonished at the kind of



Patrick Henry, Ph.D., (here on the left with Fr. Patrick Barry) recently retired as executive director of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota. He was the editor of *Benedict's Dharma*.

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Judith Simmer-Brown is

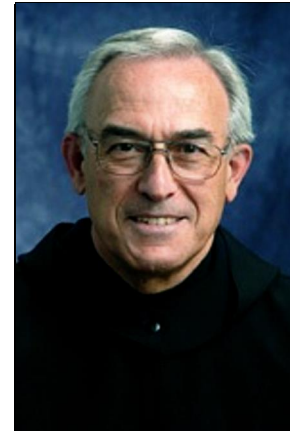
response we have received to reflections that we did out of our own pleasure and deepening our understanding of our own practice, traditions, and contemplative lives. This entire project was a fun discovery and conversation for us—it was not done as work or to help someone else, but more out a sense of clarifying for ourselves something delightful to find in the Western tradition something of such deep resonance to our own contemplative lives. If it is a benefit to others, that's wonderful, but I find myself still astonished that there could be benefit from something that was such an enjoyable process.

I think that what I come away from this conference with is a joy that at a time of such broken-heartedness in our country where there is such turbulence and such ragged-mindedness everywhere around us, it is extremely important for us to promote contemplative life wherever it can be practiced—inside the monastery, in households, in parishes and churches, in our religious communities, whether Buddhist or Christian—and how important it is that we carry a sense of a deeper contemplative stream and peace in our own minds out beyond this situation. Part of any Dedication of Merit is understanding that whatever we have done, if it can be of benefit to others, we must extend it in some way, so that we can take a voice and mind of sanity into an environment that needs that sanity very much. So, it has been a great joy to connect with others who have a connection with that mind of sanity in themselves.

I do have a few thanks to give as well and I hope that I can speak for the Buddhist commentators, for Yifa, and for Norman and Joseph who I know wanted so much to be here, that this was such an enjoyable thing for us to do, and the conversation was a way for us to become closer to each other. But we also have been so appreciative of those who have not, themselves, been thanked by anyone and I wanted to thank three people for the book specifically. First Brother David. Brother David wrote the letters to us each in his own hand writing each of us in his wonderful hand, saying, "Will you please do this?" I mean, none of us could possibly say no to Brother David, and I thank him for his request because it turned out to be such a joy. I wanted to thank Sister Meg for the ongoing enthusiasm, support, and reflection she provided to this entire book process. On behalf of MID, she really was the one who kept

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**All articles by or about
Judith Simmer-Brown**



Fr. William Skudlarek, OSB, has been the Secretary General of DIMMID since November 1, 2008. Prior to that he served as chair of the MID board from 2000 to 2005, and as Executive Director of MID until his appointment as Secretary General. He is a monk of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, but resides at Sant'Anselmo in Rome.

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us moving. And I wanted to thank Patrick who has been up here as moderator. You can see the kind of care and listening and elegance that he brought to the process. And you can see in the book what he made it.

I think you can take a very plain, very simple picture and put it in a lovely frame and it looks much nicer, and this book has benefited enormously from the kind of care he gave. I wanted to thank every one here at Our Lady of Grace Monastery and the speakers at the conference, everyone who came, for also creating a further wave of this kind of conversation to take it out further. So that's all I really wanted to do is to express that, at least from my perspective, this was a labor of love, a sort of surprised, unexpected love. And to see that it has some beneficial effect is extremely wonderful. I hope you take it further than this. Thank you.

Fr. William Skudlarek: Just a word about how we will do this. As Patrick said, if you gather in the foyer, we'll go out again in double file. Since our time is running a little short, I thought it might be good to take our cue from the Rule: "They should hurry to see who could get first to the oratory for the work of God, but of course they should do this with due dignity and restraint" [laughter]. So, we will hasten with due dignity and restraint in double file. When we get to the statue of Mary, if we would just then go into a single file and keep circling around that statue until we are all there. We need to be a little closer together so the Rev. Heng Sure doesn't have to shout as he leads this service of the Dedication of Merit. Thank you.

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