



# *Monialibus*

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers  
International Bulletin*



**No 16, June 2006**



**Inter-federal meeting  
with the Master of the Order  
Caleruega, Spain**

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## LETTER OF FR. MANUEL MERTEN, OP

**Dear Sisters,**

This time my letter to you will be short. As compensation you will receive my official report to the General Chapter, which will be held in Bogotá, Columbia, from July 17 to August 8. Sr. Isabel María de la Trinidad (Spain) and Sr. Clara Mercedes del Rosario (Columbia) were invited by the Master of the Order and will, together with me, represent the nuns.

In January, I spent more than two weeks in Peru. Sr. Blanca, the former Federal Prioress and member of the International Commission of the Nuns of the Order, had invited me to take part in the Federal Assembly at Chosica. During this meeting Sr. Rosa Luz (Santa Rosa, Arequipa) was elected new Federal Prioress, and Sr. Rosa Elvira (Santa Catalina, Arequipa) became the new secretary.

After the assembly, I visited our six Dominican monasteries in Peru (2 in Lima; 2 Cusco, Quillabamba, 2 in Arequipa), as well as some places of the friars, particularly the famous priory of Santo Domingo in Lima and that of Cusco. I took a day off in order to travel to Machupichu together with Father Cesar Medina, who is the religious assistant of the federation of Our Lady of the Rosary in Peru. As a result of this visit, I fell even more deeply in love with Rosa de Lima and Martin de Porres. Peru is a country so full of beauty and cultural heritage. If it is in accord with God's providence I would like to go there again in order to do some studies on Rosa and Martin right where they lived.

February 3 and 4 I spent in our monastery in Lage (Germany) in order to do some preparation for the retreat, which the Master will preach in September 2008 to the nuns of the non-federated monasteries of the Region of Europe. This retreat will be held in Strahlfeld/Germany and is followed by an assembly of the prioresses of this region with the Master present.

March 26 to 28 I was in Spain for the Inter-federal Assembly of the three Spanish federations, which is mentioned in my report to the General Chapter.

April 10 to 15 I gave a formation course on communication to the nuns in Fátima. They themselves wrote a little report, which will give you an idea of what we tried to do.

Ahead of me is the assembly of the prioresses of our Eastern European monasteries taking place in Krakow (Poland) from June 17 to 22 and the already mentioned General Chapter.

I keep each and all of you in my prayer and ask you to do the same with me. May I remind you also of the Master's request to pray for the General Chapter and any other concern of the Order.

Your brother in S. Dominic,



**Report of the General Promoter of the Nuns of the Order to the General Chapter of 2007 in  
Bogota, Colombia (cf. LCO 430)**

**1. General Job Description and Period of Tenure**

The task of the General Promoter of the Nuns of the Order (Promotor Generalis Monialium) is defined in the Constitutions of the Friars of the Order (LCO). In accordance with LCO N° 438, it is incumbent upon him to support the Master of the Order and the Procurator General in all circumstances relating to the nuns, and also to foster good communications between the nuns and concerning them within the Order (“*informationes circa eas vel pro eis colligere et ipsis ac diversis provinciis communicare*”). The General Promoter is a member of the General Curia, but is not a member of the General Council.

I was appointed as General Promoter of the Nuns by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2000, took up the office on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2000 and was confirmed in the continuation of this office by Fr. Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa, then Master of the Order in September 2001. (cf. LCO 431 § 2).

**2. Tasks at Santa Sabina (Rome)**

Just like the friars, the nuns of the Order make their vow of obedience to the Master of the Order. He is the specific and direct superior of all nuns and monasteries (cf Liber Constitutionum Monialium - LCM 238: “*Magister Ordinis: 1) proprius et immediatur superior regularis est omnium monialium et monasterium...*”). This is a particular feature of the Order of Preachers. It implies a particular duty of care on the part of the Master of the Order for each nun and for each monastery. Consequently the contacts between the monasteries and their nuns on the one hand and the General Curia of the Order on the other are frequent and wide ranging. This communication concerns chiefly the administration of canonical matters, but frequently extends well beyond that. A considerable part of the associated telephone calls, conversations, visits and also correspondence falls to me. In this respect, to the best of my ability I support the work of the Master of the Order, his Vicar and not least the General Procurator. In many cases, it is a question of advising sisters in complicated situations, helping them in the search for solutions, and in their implementation, in tandem with the appropriate superiors.

Regular meetings, ‘ad hoc conversations’ and actively keeping the Master of the Order, his vicar and the General Procurator abreast of correspondence, show that the service of the nuns in the Curia is to a considerable extent one of fostering of co-ordination. Twice a year I make a report to the General Council concerning my activities; I also have the opportunity for sharing with the brethren joyful events and seeking advice in difficult cases.

In my service I experience a particular degree of support from the group of male and female Promoters. Through our regular meetings, we do not only share about our official preoccupations. We are also concerned for there to be a spiritual dimension, we co-ordinate our work, and co-operate in many ways, and seek possibilities for establishing synergy. In this connexion we are increasingly conscious of the fact that even if we start off from different standpoints, the activity of all promoters is a service of the whole ‘familia dominicana’, and must become increasingly so.

### **3. Tasks Outside Santa Sabina**

By far the most important way of gathering information and fostering communication between the monasteries and with the other branches of the Dominican family is making visits to the monasteries, taking part in the meetings that are important for their life, fulfilling the role of moderator or offering support on occasion.

In this respect I visit monasteries in response to a specific request, for example, spiritual and practical preparation for elections, mediation in internal or external conflicts, advising in difficult situations, for the improvement of communication between communities, but also for the development of strategies for problem solving that exist outside, when these can be of help to the community being visited. Since the conclusion of my report to the General Chapter at Krakow in July/August 2004 I have visited the following monasteries.

#### **2004:**

**April:** Senekal (South Africa)

**May:** Lagundo / Algund (Italy)

**June/July:** Azzano S. Paolo (Italy)

**July/August:** Seto + Konan + Morioka + Bandai (Japan); Wanchin (Taiwan), Paeron (Korea)

**August:** Fátima (Portugal)

**September:** Langley + Berthierville (Canada); Ortonville + Syracuse + Elmira (USA)

**November:** Prague (Czech Republic) – Preparation for the meeting of European prioresses in Prague.

#### **2005:**

**February:** Farmington Hills (USA); Herne (Belgium),

**March:** Vilnius (Lithuania); Keralapuram – Kollam (India) – consecration of the newly founded monastery

**May/July:** Valencia/Torrent (Spain) – Annual meeting of ICN

**July:** Prague (Czech Republic) – Preparation for the meeting of European prioresses in Prague.

**July/August:** Union City (USA)

**August:** Lago de Guadalupe (Mexico) – participation in the retreat preached to the nuns of Mexico by the Master of the Order

**October:** Prague (Czech Republic); Oslo (Norway)

**November:** Prouilhe (France)

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#### **2006:**

**January:** Ilorin (Nigeria),

**January/February:** Senekal (South Africa); Karachi (Pakistan)

**March:** Rieste-Lage (Germany); El Hierro + La Laguna, Teneriffa (Canary Islands, Spain)

**April:** Pratovecchio + Bergamo (Italy)

**April/May:** Prouilhe (France) – Congress “Catching fire from the vision of St Dominic”; Annual meeting of ICN

**June/July:** Farmington Hills (USA); Adrian - participation in the retreat preached to the nuns of the USA and Canada by the Master of the Order

**August:** El Hierro + La Laguna, Teneriffa (Canary Islands, Spain)

**September/October:** Jumilla + La Solana + Cordoba + Baena + Ècija + Arahal + Sevilla (Madre de Dios) + Sevilla (Bormujos) + Jerez de la Frontera + San Lucar de Barrameda + Antequera + Granada (Zafra) + Granada (Realejo) + Granada (Piedad) + Alcalá la Real + Torredonjimeno + Jaén + Villanueva + Baza + Huescar + Murcia (Spain – Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary)

**October:** Weesen (750th Anniversary - Switzerland); Cangas del Narcea (Profession of the first Novices from the new foundation in India – Spain); Oslo (Norway)

**November:** Guadalajara Jesús Maria + Guadalajara Santa Maria de Gracia + Xilitla + Santa Maria de Guadalupe (Mexico)

**December:** Prouilhe (France)

## **2007:**

**January:** Wil (Switzerland); Lima – Santa Rosa de Lima + Cuzco - Santa Catalina de Sena + Quillabamba + Arequipa – Santa Catalina de Sena + Arequipa – Santa Rosa de Lima + Lima – Santa Catalina de Sena

**February:** Rieste-Lage (Germany); Lienz (Austria)

In addition to this, since the last chapter I have also taken part in the following assemblies, contributing through homilies, lectures, direction or moderation or indeed organisational tasks.

- Meetings of the prioresses of Eastern Europe (June 2004 in Radonie, Poland; June 2006 in Znojmo (Czech Republic) – these meetings are a combination of an exchange of experiences and study sessions.
- Meeting of the prioresses of the monasteries of Africa (April 2004 in Senekal, South Africa)
- Meeting of the German-speaking prioresses (August/September 2004 and 2006, at Landsberg, Germany on both occasions)
- General Assembly of the Conference of Monasteries of the USA (September 2004, Northampton, USA)
- Meeting with prioresses of Italian monasteries (April 2005 in Rome)

- Meeting with the prioresses of Europe whose monasteries are non-federated (Prague, September 2005)
- General Assembly of the Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary, Peru (Chosica, January 2007)

#### **4. The International Commission of the Nuns of the Order**

A significant role in the fostering of communication within the world of the nuns of the Order is played by the International Commission, which is comprised of representatives of eleven federations or regions (Spain 3; France 1; Italy 1; the rest of Europe 1; North America 1; Mexico 1; South America 1; Africa 1; Asia-Pacific 1). The federations or regions themselves propose to the Master of the Order the names of three possible representatives to be appointed to the International Commission. One of them will be selected for a term of office of 6 years. Half of the commission's members are renewed every three years. And so despite necessary change, each time a certain continuity in the work of the commission is ensured, as some experienced members continue in office. The last changeover took place in 2005. At this time the following sisters left the commission: Sr. Mary Thomas Michalek, Sr. Teresa Coronado, Sor Isabel María Gutiérrez Reyes, Soeur Claire-Marie de Jésus Rolf and Sr. Maria Thomas Schniederberend. They deserve most hearty thanks for all their hard work. These departing sisters were replaced by Sr. Mary Lucy Chmura (Buffalo, North America), Sor Rosa María López Zendejas (Mexico), Sor Isabel María de la Trinidad Orenes Fernández (Spain, Federation of the Holy Rosary), Soeur Jean-Thérèse Vauhkonen (France), Sr. Breda Carroll (non-federated monasteries of Europe).

The international Commission meets once a year for a week to work together under the presidency of the General Promoter, thus in October 2004 in Santa Sabina (Rome, Italy), in July 2005 in Valencia /Torrente (Spain) and in April/May at Prouilhe (France). The next meeting is scheduled for November 2007 at Orbey, the successor of the former monastery of Unterlinden at Colmar (France).

Here is a selection of the themes discussed: the report of the General Promoter and reports from the various federations and regions; the Bulletin of the nuns 'Monialibus'; the project for an international monastery at Prouilhe; retrospective on the General Chapter at Krakow; preaching as the responsibility of the whole Dominican family – how do the nuns of the Order preach?; relations and co-operation with the other branches and groups of the Dominican family; setting up of the eight hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first Dominican community (Prouilhe 2006); preparatory work for a letter of the Master of the Order to the Dominican family on contemplation; preparation for the Congress of the International councils and Commissions of the Dominican Family - "Catching Fire



from Dominic's Vision" in April/may 2006 in Fanjeaux/Prouilhe; practical questions concerning the constitutions of the nuns and the Code of Canon Law in the presence of the General Procurator Fr. Robert Ombres; liturgical questions concerning the proper of the Dominican Order in the presence of the president of the liturgical commission of the Order Fr. Dominique Dye; setting up of spiritual partnerships of monasteries during the jubilee year.

## **5. The Bulletin "Monialibus"**

The members of the International Commission of the nuns have a special role to play in respect of the twice-yearly bulletin "Monialibus". They are responsible for gathering information, news and contributions from the respective federations and regions and passing them on to the editor responsible, Sr. Mary Emmanuelle Cruz (Monastery of Bocaue, Philippines).

Together with the editor, the General Promoter is responsible for the publication of "Monialibus" in the official languages of the Order: English, Spanish and French. The bulletin is communicated in electronic form to the members of the International Commission. These ensure distribution (and further translations if necessary) in their own regions or federations. This further distribution is also done electronically whenever possible, otherwise by post.

In addition, "Monialibus" is also distributed to some of those responsible for the formation of friars and other interested persons within the Dominican Family. It can also be accessed on the official homepage of the Order. For many things that can be dealt with only briefly in this report, further details and background are available in this bulletin.

"Monialibus" is pleased that the nuns of the Order have become fond of it and in many communities it is read in the refectory. Its production and distribution are realised with remarkably little financial expenditure.

## **6. Special Projects and Tasks**

Alongside the many smaller tasks to be undertaken for individual nuns or monasteries, some are more considerable and of wider significance:

### **The International Monastery at Prouilhe**

For background information relative to the origins and the first years of the international community at Prouilhe, I refer you to N°s 323-325 of the Acts of the General Chapter of Providence in 2001, my

report to the General Chapter at Krakow in 2004, to the contribution of Sr. Claire Rolf, OP former prioress of Prouilhe to this same Chapter, as well as to the resolutions and recommendations of Krakow concerning Prouilhe/Fanjeaux (cf. N°s 278-283).

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006 the mandate of the first prioress appointed by the Master of the Order to the “International Monastery at Prouilhe” came to an end. Sr. Catalina Lage Braña (Valdeflores, Spain) was elected as the new prioress. At the same time as this change of office, the temporary transfer period of several sisters from abroad came to an end, and the question of possible definitive translocation for others. At the end of a not- always-pain-free process of deliberation, consultation and negotiation, there remained only three of the original nine sisters from abroad who had come to Prouilhe. After reflecting on this experience, and with the help of Fr. Dominique Renouard and myself, the community of Prouilhe worked on the orientations to be taken for the invitation and acceptance of “volunteers”, and so a new initiative for wooing sisters from monasteries abroad was begun. So far five sisters from various countries would be prepared to come to Prouilhe on at least a temporary transfer, with the support of their home communities.

The project for restoring the basilica is advancing only slowly, as the various permissions take time, and as before, the necessary money is lacking. As far as the desired increase in co-operation of all the branches of the Dominican family at Fanjeaux/Prouilhe, as expressed at the last General Chapter (P N°. 323; K N° 278 – 283), is concerned, some progress has been made, thanks not least to the Commission set up by the Master of the Order (K N°281). But there still remains much to be done! Perhaps the Jubilee Year Novena instituted by the Master of the Order to run until the eight hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Order in 2016 will provide a window of opportunity for this option. In any case I would certainly recommend that as soon as possible exact objectives and time limits be fixed to enable the achievement of clearly specified goals.

### **Administration of the property of the former monastery in Luxemburg and care for the nuns still living:**

In accordance with LCM 269 § 2 it is the responsibility of the Master of the Order to wind up the outstanding affairs of monasteries of nuns of the Order that close to the advantage of others that are in need. With effect from 28<sup>th</sup> December 2001 the monastery in Luxemburg was canonically closed. It was possible to sell the buildings and parts of the land belonging to the sisters to the city and state of Luxemburg at a good price. Transferring the sum directly to the fund for the nuns would however have

involved paying a tax of around 40%. This tax however was not payable if the sum were to be invested in housing projects inside Luxemburg.

Accordingly, the Master of the Order with his Council decided, in co-operation with the archdiocese of Luxemburg, to initiate a building scheme. The Master of the Order appointed me as his Vicar for all that concerns this project and all associated matters.

Approval for the building project turned out to be more difficult and much longer than expected. But meanwhile things have advanced to the stage where building can be expected to begin shortly. When at the end of 2007 three blocks containing 12 units of varying sizes are completed and rented out, we can count on some regular income, which will in part be paid into the fund for the nuns, and the rest will go towards building further houses on remaining unused plots of land. Already money is regularly paid into the fund for the nuns from particular sources of income of the former monastery in Luxemburg. The sisters of which are proud that in this way, through their “death as a community” they can serve the life of the wider community of the nuns of the Order.

### **Foundations and closures of monasteries of the Order:**

Foundations of monasteries are being prepared in various locations and are in differing stages of advancement.

- **Vietnam:** The responsibility for this foundation is borne by the Monastery of Farmington Hills (USA). A few formerly “active” Vietnamese Dominican sisters have completed their formation as nuns of the Order there (noviciate, temporary and solemn profession) and are now living either in the United States or have already returned to Vietnam. In close collaboration with the friars, the five Dominican Congregations of apostolically active sisters and the laity in Vietnam, we are drawing ever closer to the official foundation. On account of the restrictions still in place in this communist-controlled country, one has to avoid attracting attention to anything out of the ordinary.
- **India:** The responsibility for this foundation is borne by the Monastery of Cangas del Narcea (Spain). In close co-operation with the friars of the Order (Fr. Paul Kuruvilla OP is Vicar of the Master of the Order on the spot) a plot of land was able to be acquired, a monastery built and solemnly consecrated. Sisters from the monastery of Cangas del Narcea take it in turns to spend some time in India, so as to live with the local candidates and to test their vocation to contemplative Dominican life. The novitiate and subsequent formation up to

solemn profession are divided between India and Spain. In October 2006 the first three Indian sisters of this new foundation completed their novitiate and made their first profession.

- **White Russia:** The monastery of Drogheda (Ireland) has “adopted” the idea of a foundation of a monastery of nuns in White Russia, and is housing two White Russian sisters who belong to the monastery of Krakow in Poland for a period of more intensive formation. At some subsequent point, the Irish sisters are willing to help the White Russian sisters find a way of realising a monastic foundation in their homeland. However the present political situation in the country will necessitate much patience.

Since my last report, the following monasteries have been canonically closed or have taken steps to prepare for their closure:

- **Spain:** Isla Del Hierro (Canaries) – This foundation that dates back to a request from Bishop Felipe Fernandez (Tenerife) did not have a long existence. The conditions on the spot proved to be not very promising, and so at the end of last summer, the monastery was closed and the buildings returned to the Federation of the Holy Rosary (Spain). The five sisters who had lived there returned to their previous communities in Mexico. Now some Mexican sisters are preparing for the project of the international community at Prouilhe.
- **USA:** By a decree of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Communities of Apostolic Life of 09.06.2005 the Monastery of St. Dominic, Newark was closed.
- **Spain:** The Monastery “de la Encarnación” in Lejona was, with the agreement of this same Congregation incorporated into the “Monasterio de la Consolación“ in Salamanca (Spain)
- **Spain:** The Monastery of "Nostra Señora de Belén" in Torrent was, with the agreement of the same Congregation, on 20.10.2006 incorporated into the “Monasterio de la Inmaculada" at Torrent (Spain).
- **Spain:** By decree of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Communities of Apostolic life of 14.11.2006 the monastery of Malaga (Spain) was closed.

## **7. The Jubilee Year (800 years since the founding of the Monastery of Prouilhe)**

In accordance with the wish of the Master of the Order, the Jubilee Year will not be centred on Prouilhe, but is to be presented as a celebration of the whole Order locally, wherever people are. Hence nuns all over the world are taking the initiative in particular ways, as representatives of the first community to be founded by Dominic.

## **A wealth of Ideas, Opportunities and Publications**

The Master of the Order's idea was taken up with great enthusiasm by many monasteries. Inaugural celebrations for the Jubilee Year in the presence of the local bishop and various branches of the Dominican family were almost "standard practice". The ringing of bells, special prayer times, exhibitions, lectures, open days, pilgrimages, creation of new websites, jubilee calendars, medals, new initiatives in the pastoral care of vocations, increased publicity, the issue of special stamps and much more besides are all ways imagined by the nuns of the Order of sharing with others their joy and gratitude for eight hundred years of Dominican history.

Special mention should be made of the numerous publications, some of which are special editions of (monastic) periodicals; others appeared for the occasion of the Jubilee year. Some examples are given here:

Sr. Barbara Beaumont OP – Fr. Elie Pascal Epinoux OP – Sr. Marie de Jésus OP:

Sainte-Marie de Prouilhe – 800 Years of Dominican History 1206 – 2006, Editions du Signe, Strasbourg 2006 (English, French, Spanish)

Fr. Thomas McCarthy (editor):

Religious Life Review Vol. 45 November-December Nr. 241, Dominican Publications, Dublin 2006. Special edition for the 800-year Jubilee with contributions from: Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa OP, Margaret Hopkins OP, Barbara Beaumont OP, Paul Murray OP, Liam Walsh OP, Claire Marie de Jésus Rolf OP

Sr. Mary Vincent Wagner OP (editor):

Search for living waters – Dominican nuns reflect on contemplative spirituality, Farmington Hills 2006

*Le Sorelle Contemplative Domenicane*

L'Arancio fiorisce ancora (The orange tree is still blooming), Arezzo 2006

Monastero Domenicano "S. Maria della Neve" di Pratovecchio

Piccole Luci – Attingiamo fuoco dal sogno di Domenico (Let us catch fire from the vision of Dominic), Arezzo 2006

## **Spiritual Highlights of the Jubilee Year**

***The Indulgence:*** Amongst the spiritual “highlights” of the Jubilee Year ranks the possibility in many monasteries that people may gain an indulgence by visiting the monastic church. Handbills, posters, homepages, magazines and circular letters invite people to gain this indulgence, explaining its significance and how it can be achieved.

***The Jubilee prayer:*** The Jubilee prayer, composed by the International Commission of Nuns is enjoying great success. From me alone the following quantities of prayer cards have been requested: 24,000 in Spanish, 18,000 in English, 10,000 in French and 4,000 in German. The Dominican Sisters of Bethany, who very kindly took on the despatching for me, have mailed over 120 kg weight of paper. Prayer cards in Czech, Polish, Tagalog and Italian are being printed in the respective countries and distributed locally. The prayer has been reproduced in a number of publications and also on some monasteries’ websites, and also by other branches of the Dominican family.

***The spiritual twinning of monasteries:*** at the suggestion of a French nun, the International Commission decided to initiate for the Jubilee Year a “spiritual twinning” between monasteries from North and South as well as from East and West. The invitation to this kind of “sistering” was communicated via “Monialibus”. Thirty-two monasteries offered to take part. It was not easy to link them up in accordance with their expressed wishes. Above all, the language barrier proved to be no easy matter. Meanwhile the “spiritual twinings” are functioning as well as possible, and the communities enjoy telling of the positive experience of praying for each other, of exchanging news and offering mutual support. At the end of the Jubilee year, “Monialibus” expects to publish reports of this sharing between monasteries, so that other communities can profit from the good fruits of this initiative.

***The letter (pending) of the Master of the Order on Contemplation:*** Already at the meeting of the International Commission in October of the year 2004 in Rome was the idea of a letter by the nuns born, by means of which, they, via the mouth and the hand of the Master of the Order, would share their experience gained through contemplation with the whole Dominican family as a “Jubilee gift”.

In the December 2004 issue of “Monialibus” went out an invitation to all nuns and monasteries to take part in the preparatory work for this letter. Input in the form of four questions offered structure for the reflection:

1. How do I “contemplate”?
2. “What” do I contemplate?

3. How has “contemplation” changed my life?
4. What would I like to say to the Dominican family about “contemplation”?

Until Easter 2005, especially during Lent, the nuns were invited to consider these questions individually. In the period between Easter and Pentecost, it was suggested that the sisters gather in at community level the personal reflections of each individual sister, and reflect together on the findings and formulate commonly experienced “results” to their local representative on the International Commission of the Nuns. She would then collate all the reflections from her federation or region in preparation for further work by the Commission.

The reaction was overwhelming. More than a third of all monasteries, and also some individual nuns, sent in answers, some of which were very long. At its annual meeting in May 2005 at Torrente (Spain) the International Commission dealt with the many contributions and decided to tackle the work of collation in language groups. A detailed index should make it quick and easy to find the source in the original text. The responsibility for collation in French was taken on by Sr. Marie-Thérèse (Orbey), France), in Spanish by Sr. Isabel (Jumilla – Spain) and in English by Sr. Breda – (Drogheda – Ireland). Other members of the International Commission as well as, and above all, young sisters in the novitiates and juniorates helped the above-named in their work. In December 2005 I was able to hand the completed results to the Master of the Order in a small volume in French, Spanish and English, together with documentation explaining all the contributions.

At its meeting in April/May 2006 in Prouilhe the International Commission again looked at the collated material, in order to offer the Master of the Order some concrete help in the composition of his letter on contemplation. Sr. Breda collated all of the results of the work and sketched out a possible letter from the Master of the Order to the Dominican family. What is now lacking is the time that Fr. Carlos could devote to this letter. As far as the nuns are concerned, from what has been gathered in from the process of preparation and what has happened so far has already been a fruitful self assessment, as well as a form of “preaching for the Jubilee Year” under the heading “We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have heard and seen” (Acts. 4, 20).

At their next session in November 2007 at Orbey the International Commission will tackle the question as to whether and in what form the quantitatively and qualitatively rich experience of the nuns with “Contemplation” reflected in the many contributions sent in can be made accessible to the Dominican family.

## **8. Solidarity and Co-Operation**

The great majority of our monasteries have been members of federations for years already, so as to be able to offer mutual support to each other and to foster more effective co-operation. The degree of efficiency in working together is decisive in the matter. Basically it has been demonstrated that the adherence of various monasteries to federations, associations or other forms of groupings is useful to the member communities and enhances the possibilities of responding to the many demands of contemplative Dominican life (cf. VITA CONSACRATA N°. 59; VERBI SPONSA N°. 27 also N°. 338 and 339 of the Acts of the General Chapter of Providence 2001).

### **St. Mary's Association of the Dominican Monasteries in Japan**

At their meeting of 24 -25<sup>th</sup> July 2004 the prioresses and delegates of the four Japanese monasteries had decided to move towards the founding of an association. Subsequently statutes were drawn up and submitted to the Holy See for approval. This was granted on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005, and thus a good year after the original decision to come together was taken. Our Japanese sisters chose as the name for their new entity St. Mary's Association of the Dominican Monasteries in Japan. All four monasteries joined the association thus giving a clear sign of their feeling for unity and a common cause, without bringing into question their canonical autonomy. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006 the first general assembly was held, where Sr. Marie Thomas Notohara OP was elected president. At the request of the association, the Holy See appointed Fr. Nobuaki Tanaka OP their first religious assistant.

### **Association of Dominican Monasteries in the USA**

The process of forming an association of the monasteries of the Order in the USA – the idea was first mooted at the General assembly of the “Conference of the monasteries of the USA” in 1998 – has also come to fruition in the meantime. By a decree of 27 May 2006 the Holy See erected the Association of the monasteries of the nuns of the Order of Preachers in the United States of America” and confirmed its statutes. The monasteries of Port of Spain, Menlo Park, Lufkin, Los Angeles, Lancaster, Elmira, Bronx, Summit and Farmington Hills joined the association. The Fr. Provincial Dominic Izzo OP was appointed as the first religious assistant of the association.



## **Union of Monasteries in Africa Ordinis Praedicatorum (UMAOP)**

As early as April 2004 at a gathering of prioresses of our African monasteries, the so-called Union of Monasteries in Africa Ordinis Praedicatorum came into being. One of the most important goals of this union was mutual support in the domain of initial formation and ongoing formation. Even at the foundation meeting, the new union faced trial by fire. It succeeded in working out a new orientation for the monastery of Senekal (South Africa) that was in difficulties, and this by means of support with personnel from the monasteries of Karen/Nairobi (Kenya) and Bambui (Cameroon).

## **Some further examples of Co-operation and Solidarity**

Within federations, but also in the case of single monasteries, there are many examples of largely selfless commitment for the good of the mission of the Order. It is not possible to mention them all, much takes place out of the limelight, and some things I only get to hear of by chance, in conformity with the word of Scripture “Your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you” (Mt 6,4).

Yet I would like to give a few examples in the spirit of “pars pro toto”. Thus the communities of Jumilla (Spain), Rieste-Lage (Germany), Pratovecchio and Bergamo (Italy), Drogheda (Ireland) and Prouilhe are supporting and completing the formation of sisters from a Nigerian community, who are discerning the question as to whether they wish, in the canonical sense, to become “nuns of the Order” and adopt the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers.

The monastery of Farmington Hills in the USA functions not only as founding monastery according to LCM 229 et seq. for the foundation in Vietnam, but is also responsible for the foundation at Langley (Canada). And moreover Farmington Hills is helping the foundation in India with personnel.

In this connection mention must also be made of the “Fondo Monache” [the nuns’ fund], which enables the Master of the Order to provide financial support to monasteries in need or wish to realise certain projects, which they cannot shoulder with their own financial resources. This fund is exceptionally well provided for by considerable donations, which will be spent by the monasteries themselves.

As a final example of solidarity and selfless commitment to the mission of the nuns of the Order mention should be made of a decision taken by the federation of our monasteries in Peru on the occasion of their last General assembly in January this year at Chosica. The federation explained its

willingness to provide the personnel for the foundation of a monastery in Bolivia, and to bring it to fruition in collaboration with the friars of the two vicariates (Teutonia and St Albert, USA).

## **9. Particular concerns and problems**

### ***The lack of vocations to contemplative Dominican life***

Just about worldwide – with the exception of a few regions – the regression of vocations to religious life is general, and particularly notable in the case of the contemplative cloistered life as Dominican nuns. Consequently many of our monasteries in Europe and the USA already are, or in the near future will be, experiencing great and varied difficulties. Intensive co-operation would be necessary. So far, only a few initiatives are discernible in the domain of tackling the problem together and looking for solutions that provide a new direction that encompasses the future of Dominican contemplative life as a whole. The search is still predominantly for solutions (sometimes problematic) that have as their goal simply the survival of one or other monastery.

In September/October of last year such circumstances were made patently clear to me during a visit to more than twenty monasteries of the Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary (Southern Spain). The meetings with the sisters in each place were wonderful and rewarding, yet a painful impression remained. In the future it will be impossible to keep alive and flourishing all of these monasteries that are so rich in history, tradition and culture. There is an extreme lack of home-grown vocations. Even today most of the monasteries visited could not survive, were it not for the support of nuns whose home is in India, Africa or Latin America.

Not least against the background of these experiences, and in accordance with a decision of the General Council at the end of March this year there will be a meeting in Caleruega to which the Master of the Order has invited the General Promoter of the nuns, the socius for the Iberian peninsula, the presidents of the three Spanish federations, the council members and the religious assistants of the three federations. Here for the first time there will be something resembling a panel of those responsible in the Order to tackle the difficulties referred to above and to search together for necessary possible steps forward.

The prioresses of the non-federated monasteries in the European region will also tackle this theme at their gathering at Strahlfeld (Germany) in 2008 in the presence of the Master of the Order.

## **Formation and Study in the Monasteries**

In many of our monasteries, if not in general, there are only novices from time to time; they undertake their novitiate and the years of formation leading up to solemn profession alone. This is not a healthy situation for human and religious development, for in such circumstances it is difficult to ensure a good formation with regular study times. Closer co-operation among the monasteries as well as a greater use of distance-learning techniques could help. This was mentioned in N°s 315-317 of the Acts of the General Chapter of Providence.

## **Democratic government – Communication – Visitation**

The government of a monastery, but also the formation of sisters in the time preceding their solemn profession makes great demands on those who bear these responsibilities. This is particularly the case with the democratic aspect of leadership which is the hallmark of our Order. This particular form of leadership is expressed in the working together of the Prioress, the council and the chapter, as requested in the Constitutions. For this working together to succeed and bear fruit, there needs to be a good measure of the qualities of leadership and moderation on the part of those responsible, and a well-developed and trained ability to communicate on the part of each sister. I think I won't be hurting anybody's feelings when I say that in many of our monasteries there are deficiencies in this regard, that need particular attention and require the help of specialists, who have a particular understanding of the conditions of the enclosed life.

A visitation can be helpful for the government of a monastery and for the improvement of internal and external communication (cf. LCM 227, 228 and Providence N° 343 et seq.). According to Blessed Hyacinthe Cormier, former Master of the Order, the purpose of a visitation is first and foremost the internal "government of a monastery". It should result in the sisters themselves taking in hand in an effective way responsibility for their monastery and their life, being free to look at the situation head-on and thus - in the true sense of the term - become "autonomous" (cf. the letter of Fr. Timothy Radcliffe to the Nuns of the Order "A City set on a hill-top..." Chapter 5).

Many monasteries regularly ask the Master of the Order for such a visitation every two or three years. And many monasteries don't. It would be desirable and undoubtedly beneficial for those who haven't dared, to try a visitation again, after years or even decades of abstinence.

## **10. Concluding Remarks**

I would not want to conclude this report without a word of gratitude for the faithful service in prayer and sacrifice that our nuns offer for the mission of the Order. Wherever I meet them, I see evidence of their great interest in the life and work of the friars and the work of apostolic sisters and the commitment of the laity. Their love of the Order is generously shared wherever the Order or its members are experiencing particular difficulties or needs. I often ask myself whether we the friars value sufficiently this priceless gift of our nuns and recognise their service with the brotherly interest and attentiveness to their special vocation?

Personally I would like to express thanks for the enriching experience, particularly on a spiritual level, that my service as General Promoter over these last years has been. I already know that I will be missing something when I hand over my responsibilities to my successor in the coming year. If I were to be asked – in the manner of Master Reginald – “Was it not too hard to receive the habit?” my answer would have to be “I think that I have not gained much merit through this task, as I have always enjoyed it so much (cf. Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, N° 49).

Santa Sabina, on the feast of St Patrick, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007



promotor generalis monialium

### **Program of the General Promoter**

#### **Year 2007**

June 16	Krakow (PL): Meeting of the Eastern European Prioresses
July 15	Bogotá (COL): General Chapter
August 9	Strahlfeld (G): Meeting of German Speaking Prioresses (Nuns and Sisters)
August 13	Orbey (F): Preparation for the Meeting of ICN
August 20	New York: Visit to the Monastery in Bronx
September 9	Drogheda (IRL): Visit to Monastery
September 14	Formation Course for Junior Dominican Sisters of Bethany

October 28 Walberberg (G): Meeting of International Promoters  
November 02 Orbey (F): Meeting of the International Commission of Nuns  
November 24 Walberberg (G): Ceremony of Closing the priory  
November 26 Strahlfeld (G): Preparatory meeting for the Retreat of the Master in 2008  
December 6 Benguela (Angola): General Assembly of the UMAOP  
December 27 Prague (CZ): Visit to Monastery > preparation for election of prioress

### **Year 2008**

January 6 Prouilhe (F): Closing of Jubilee Year / finishing term of office as General Promoter of the Nuns of the Order and handing over the task to my successor

## SHARING WITH ALL THE OP NUNS

### INTERFEDERAL MEETING WITH THE MASTER OF THE ORDER

#### FATHER CARLOS A. AZPIROZ COSTA, OP

*By Sr. Flora Maria Collado, OP  
(Interfederal Secretary)*

We would like to give you an account of the Interfederal Meeting on 27 and 28 March 2007 which took place at the 'House of Spirituality' of the Dominican Brethren in Caleruega (Burgos) Spain, where we trace our roots as Dominicans, at the birth place of St. Dominic. The meeting was convoked and presided by the Master of the Order, Father Carlos Azpiroz Costa, OP; present were the Religious Assistants of the Spanish Federations, the General Promoter for the Nuns, the Socius for the Provinces of the Iberian Peninsula, the Federal Prioresses accompanied by their respective Councils. A total of 27 participants numbered 6 friars and 21 nuns.

The session began at 4 P.M. after having prayed None in the conference room. Then the Master addressed the assembly and expressed his gratitude for the response accorded by those present to his

letter of convocation. He also commented that this occasion was a momentous one because it marked the Jubilee Year of the Order. The words of the Master inspired us to dream, and for this he invoked the figure of Joseph, the dreamer, as example. We all have dreams, illusions, expectations, projects, plans that are shaped and projected in Councils and Assemblies.

The Religious Assistant for the Federation of Betica acted as Moderator. Three nuns were appointed as liturgical coordinators and two nuns were designated as secretaries, one for the afternoon session and the other for the following day. Immediately, the session proceeded to vote for the topics of major importance that needed to be addressed during the meeting.

The dialogue was conducted in a spirit of freedom, trust and respect, on the part of the Master, the nuns, and the Religious Assistants. The Dominican family spirit was palpable and all were of one mind and heart in seeking the common good and in respecting the individual rhythm and vision of each person.

In reality, all were preoccupied with the situation in many monasteries, given the aging of the nuns, the lack of new vocations and the precarious state of life in some communities. We were analyzing diverse realities, keeping in mind that the short-term solution to urgent problems might degenerate into “bread for today and hunger for tomorrow”.

We ought to give account of specific circumstances where the fulfilment of the contemplative life is no longer feasible; and where clear and concise criteria are needed in order to take action. What then are these? When and who must weigh the matter? These were some of the attempted questions which needed to be answered in this meeting. We must desire to live according to the Constitutions and not merely to be preoccupied with where we would wish to die. The fundamental thing is how we ought to live our life. We have to distinguish and know that the vows are for life, but to live in one place or another is not decisive. This truth must be integrated in formation.

The topics were interweaving and interconnected. The talks continued on the need to foster spiritual values. We ought not to attain that which is unrealistic but instead formulate viable projects or undertakings. But where? Each age or epoch has its challenges and so has ours; notwithstanding, we keep maintaining the vision and mission of some monasteries that respond to the needs of another time and age in Christian life. We must endeavour to undertake new projects with courage.

The example of our Father Dominic with the nuns of San Sisto in Rome ought to encourage us. He had a clear idea or vision and was able to unfold it with much patience. He visited the different monasteries and had direct contact with the sisters...until he succeeded in achieving their reunification.

The discussion and treatment of the topics were done without a single joke until the Moderator, a typical Andalusian, spiced and peppered his talk and elicited much laughter among those present.

The first session lasted four hours with only a short break. Vespers and Eucharist that followed were celebrated in choir. The Master presided and in his homily he related the temptations of Jesus in the desert to the liturgical season of Lent.

Here we expound some of his thoughts: The culture of a town is determined by three elements with which the human person relates; they are material things, other people and God. The objects of the temptations of Jesus were precisely these three things. First, the tempter asked Jesus to change the stones into bread – a manifestation of man's relation to things - to which Jesus replied that man does not live by bread alone. Secondly, the tempter asked Jesus to do something spectacular by leaping from the heights of the pinnacle and thus earn the applause of people. Human beings are continually tempted to do this. And finally, the tempter asked Jesus to prostrate himself and adore him. Man always need to adore a transcendent Someone to whom he can surrender his life, but God alone is worthy of adoration. Precisely, these are the three dimensions of human life to which we re-orient the fulfilment of our religious vows.

**Poverty:** Counterpoise to the hunger which a large portion of humanity suffers is the unbridled attitude to accumulate more and more things. Many people succumb to this temptation. For this reason, we make the vow of poverty.

**Chastity:** Majority of people are obsessed with the seeking of praise and adulation; this engenders violence, envy. Over and above this we decided to be brothers and sisters through the vow of chastity.

**Obedience:** Since man is eager to dominate and to exploit things and people for his self-satisfaction, we decided through the profession of vows to obey God alone.

In this way, we witness to His Kingdom in our culture, offering the salvation that Jesus has won for us. This is the mission of the whole Church, of the Order and of each one of us.

Thus, on this first day we laid out the problems and on the day following, the steps to be followed that would lead to their solution. We come to the end of the first day, after partaking of a good supper which was not as frugal as what we are used to in our monasteries.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> we began at 7:30 A.M with the praying of Lauds and Office of Readings, followed by the Eucharistic Liturgy and Terce. The Master again celebrated the Mass. His homily focused on the meaning of freedom. It was shorter than that of the previous day but one unique idea stands out. In synthesis, he spoke to us of freedom as the capacity to act by ourselves. Without freedom we cannot say “Here I am.” This is very important in the Bible. “Here I am” means my person with its lights and shadows, with my history, my limits, my qualities, with my community, my Federation, my Order.

But is “Here I am” enough? The most profound secret of freedom does not lie on just being able to say “Here I am” because this lacks an important aspect which is “we are here for a mission.” This goes back to our baptism but God has called and chosen us into religious life to make us more free for mission. We are for the mission. To be in order to work. To be free is important, but that which is at the heart or marrow of liberty is, ultimately, the vocation. To know that here I am for something and that this thing is the mission which God has entrusted to each one of us, to the Order and to the Church.

At 9:30, we had breakfast and at 10:30 we began the session which lasted until 2:00 P.M. The meeting ended after the midday meal. In the morning session, the Master answered some of the questions which were not major ones but were, nevertheless, of common interest to the nuns which we summarize here. With respect to possible changes in the Book of Constitutions, something which the monasteries have been working at – it has been suggested that Verbi Sponsa be cited on the places where Venite Seorsum is mentioned. The rest do not need to be modified. The Ordinations in LCM have the force of law as long as these are not revoked by an authority equal to the one who formulated them; as this principle also applies to the Constitutions of the Order (cf. LCO 287). We believe these points to be of common interest to the nuns.

The thrust of this meeting was the desire of each one for mutual fraternal help without imposing anything on anyone. The moving spirit behind was for the good of the contemplative life in Spain. It was for this purpose that the letter of convocation was addressed to the three Federations.

After dinner, we bade farewell to one another. The Master had to leave, as well as the nuns. Others would depart the following day; they have much distance to travel. But before this, the photos are very important for the archives which are gradually expanding in our convents.

We hope that with this sharing we are able to impart a little of what we had intensely experienced during the two sessions covering a total of 24 hours; days filled with work, enlivened with the joy of the meeting and the Dominican family spirit which animated all those present.



May our Father Dominic bless these efforts done in favor of the contemplative life of the Dominican Order in Spain.

## WHAT DO THE NUNS EXPECT FROM THE FATHERS?

**Report by Sr. M. VINCENZA PANZA, O.P.**  
**Member of the International Commission of the Nuns**  
**to the Provincials of Europe**  
**Bologna – 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2007**

I greet and thank all of you on behalf of all the nuns of Italy for the opportunity given me to express the monasteries' expectations in regard to the Fathers. The Eighth Centenary can be a providential occasion to renew the mutual spirit that unites us in Saint Dominic, to serve the Church and the Order.

We are encouraged by the fact that most of our Fathers still hold in great esteem the mission of contemplative nuns in the Order. In the first place there is our dear Master of the Order, Father Carlos, who never misses an opportunity to express his brotherly love through his interest and concern for each one of us. When announcing the Jubilee Year to the Order, he wrote these words which reveal his fatherly love: *“Truly it is just and necessary to thank God for the gift of our contemplative nuns! They support us on our way; in their specific way they take part in our preaching; they welcome us as we confide to them the joys and hopes, sorrows and worries of our itinerant ministry, ... they spur us on not to be afraid, to advance along on the way on which we meet those who long to know God; they urge us to live our passion for Christ and mankind”* (from *“Let’s walk faithful to the first love”*). This echoes what the Church says about nuns in *“Verbi Sponsa”* n° 7: *“...dwelling in the missionary heart of the Church, through unceasing prayer, the oblation of themselves, and the offering of the sacrifice of praise, their lives become a mysterious source of apostolic fertility and blessing for the Christian community and the whole world”*.

We sincerely hope that all the members of our beautiful and extensive Dominican Family feel the same attentiveness to our mission. For us this is an encouragement to live our specific vocation faithfully, with enthusiasm and generosity.

For this meeting, I was asked to develop the theme: **“What do the Nuns expect from the Fathers?”**

Among the Acts of the General Chapter of Providence there is one concerning the nuns, the fifth one. In numbers 308-316 we find it written what the nuns expect from the Fathers. It is not my intention to repeat what has already been fully debated and defined. Nevertheless, recalling some of the passages will remind us first of all, and then you, how the Order has always been attentive in fostering the spiritual life and the formation of its nuns.

As a member of the International Commission of the Nuns and of the Secretariat of the Assembly of the Italian Prioresses, I have had the opportunity of meeting a good number of communities and listening to a good number of sisters, thus acquiring a fairly wide experience which is at the heart of what I will try to say in this meeting.

I would like to introduce my talk by giving a short report on the Italian monasteries.

\* There are 30 monasteries and 310 nuns. We have communities of 3, 4, 6, and 8 nuns. The largest community has 28 members. All these communities live in big monasteries, some of which are of great historical and artistic value.

\* The average age of the nuns is 70 years.

\* There are 12 young ones in formation.

There are two Federations: one in the north, “Federation S.M.O.M. [” with seven monasteries; and one in the south, “Federation S.E.A.T.O.”], with nine monasteries. Fourteen other monasteries are not federated.

In 1990 the Assembly of Prioresses was constituted, independent from the Federations and having a Vicar of the Master of the Order. We have tried to help the nuns in many ways, such as organizing meetings of ongoing formation for Prioresses, Mistresses of Formation and nuns in formation. Initiatives have been proposed and ways studied to try to resolve the precarious situations of some monasteries: for example, combining communities having few and aged members. This solution was not accepted, thus leaving these difficult situations unresolved.

In 2000, the Assembly of Prioresses renewed the Secretariat with the election of three Prioresses. In 2004 there was a new election, and during this meeting the Assembly established its first short Constitution. Later the Master of the Order appointed a new Vicar. Together we continue to carry out the work proposed, fostering unity while at the same time respecting the autonomy of each monastery.

The situation of the Dominican contemplative life in Italy is no better than that of other monasteries in Europe. We all hope that the Jubilee will bring a renewal. Let's all pray to the Holy Spirit, that He may truly renew us!

And now, after these introductory notes, **“What do the Nuns expect from the Fathers?”**

The answer comes directly from the already-mentioned numbers of the Chapter of Providence (n° 310-312). We read in them: *“Petitions have been forwarded asking the Fathers to become more involved in the service given to monasteries. We know from our Rules and tradition that this has always been given great consideration and encouragement.*

**Petition:** *We therefore ask our Major Superiors who have convents in their territories, to put at their disposal some Fathers able to collaborate in the formation of the nuns and pay attention to their spiritual needs. Better yet, we wish to say even more! We understand that this help must be mutual because we need each other. Thus it is essential to establish fraternal and open relations between Fathers and nuns”.*

Besides this number I'd like to read out the first number of the Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns. *“To these nuns and to the others founded by him in other places, our Blessed Father (Saint Dominic) gave a rule of life to be followed, and he always bestowed fatherly love and care: ‘in fact they had no other Master to teach them the things of the Order’. Since they were part of the same Order, he entrusted them to the brotherly care of his Fathers”.* On purpose I underlined this sentence because it is very important to all of us. These quotations could be enough to express what we wish from our Dominican Fathers. Nevertheless I asked for suggestions from a few Prioresses. These are their answers and expectations on this subject.

1) We ask our Fathers to become deeply acquainted with the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order, particularly the Fundamental Constitution from which the real form of life of a Dominican Nun comes forth.

You may object: *“With all the studying we have to do and the engagements harassing us, do you imagine that we have time to read your Constitutions?”* This is true. And perhaps we don't know

them well ourselves. In fact, some difficulties which our monasteries have to face are a consequence of the non-observance of fundamental points that would guarantee us an unerring way forward. Nevertheless, if you really wish to help your sisters, it's indispensable to know our rules. Some Fathers, surely in good faith but with only a superficial knowledge of our specific vocation, demand from us services, suggest initiatives, or support lifestyles which do not reflect the real features of the Nun desired by St. Dominic.

In his letter "*A city on a mountaintop cannot be hidden*", Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., writes: "*Life in the monasteries can be rendered difficult by a good number of men claiming a certain authority over you (chaplains, assistants, vicars, provincials and bishops). All these persons should support you and not interfere in your life. Your relationship with the Fathers should be first of all one of mutual support*".

In these last decades there has been a lot of confusion about the identity of the Dominican Nun; many times we have heard in formation of mistresses saying bitterly: "We have no identity". This statement has had its repercussions on the young nuns still in formation.

In the years after the Vatican Council, some monasteries in Europe have tried a form of life that is quite different from what we find in LCM. We hope that in this matter somebody will have enough courage to help these monasteries find their explicit identity and express it in a personal rule (according to LCM n° 37 and can. 667, 3). In this way, any differences will not be confusing to those who wish to persevere in a lifestyle which the Church even at present defends and encourages, since it continues the way traced by Saint Dominic.

I wasn't present at the last meeting of the International Commission of the Nuns, but I read in the report that there are members in our Order who are not clear in their minds about the difference between the contemplative nuns and the sisters of apostolic life.

If I'm not mistaken, in your Constitutions (n° 142) we read: "*According to St. Dominic's wish, the Nuns of the Order dedicate themselves entirely to communion with God with their religious contemplative life, while giving witness of prayer, silence and penance. This communion nourishes the apostolic life of the Fathers and that of the other members of the Dominican Family*". Similarly in n° 96 of our own Constitutions we find: "*The Fathers belonging to the Order, 'totally engaged in announcing the Word of God', carry out their vocation especially through preaching. The Nuns, instead, especially called by God to a life of prayer, are not completely deprived of the ministry of the*

*Word by that fact. For by listening to the Word, celebrating it and preserving it (Lk. 11, 18), they announce God's Gospel with their own lives".*

These texts are important because they express the specific way in which the nuns should assume the service of the Word: clearly that it does not mean that nuns should go out to preach. Fathers and Nuns share the same care about the salvation of souls, but while the Fathers collaborate with bishops in the ministry of the Word, the nuns remain in silence at the source, where the Word is born. As John Paul II wrote: "...*your way of consecrating your lives exists so that this world may not run out of a ray of divine beauty that enlightens the road of human existence*" (Vita Consecrata 109). Father Timothy concludes: "*Therefore, be confident in your monastic life. It is God's gift*".

For this reason, we ask the Fathers to be *objective and less ideological in their studies and in their conclusions about our life*. Eventually, *they should help us read history, documents and facts so that we can be faithful to our original vocation*.

2) In what concerns initial and permanent formation, the nuns should be able to avail themselves of the help offered by the Fathers, within the limits of their possibilities. We are grateful to those who can offer us specific and pertinent help regarding our form of contemplative life (Chapter of Providence, n° 315-317); again, from Fr. Timothy's letter: "*The flourishing of the Dominican Rhineland monasteries in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century was also due to the fact that Herman von Minden, Provincial of the Teutonic region, used to send some of his best theologians to teach the nuns*".

3) As a member of the International Commission of the Nuns, I am well aware of the increasing numerical crisis of the European monasteries and of the sadness in seeing those who, in attempting to survive at all costs, are not taking into consideration the consequences that this implies. In my opinion groups of three or four nuns, often of an advanced age, cannot live fully the Dominican contemplative life. In the above-mentioned Chapter of Providence at numbers 326-330 this question was discussed, again following Fr. Timothy's letter: "*For us who preach Christ's death and resurrection, survival is not an absolute value. If the monastery is really a place where you 'set up housekeeping' with God, then you will not be homeless if you leave it*".

4) Nuns complain about the lack of a pastoral letter on vocations in favour of monasteries! But Pope Benedict XVI in his message for the 44<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayers for Vocations urges us *to implore the gift of vocations firstly by praying to the Lord incessantly and together*: – *the exhortation to "pray the Owner that He may send workers into His fields" is in the plural*. May Mary, Our Lord's Mother, be with us – she who sustained the first community where all were 'unanimous in prayer'.

To conclude, I would like to assure all of you who here represent the Order in Europe that today's nuns, like those who lived in the past centuries of our history, are always very blessed and happy in their Dominican vocation which places them in the heart of the Holy Preaching. Because of this, we assure each and every one of your Provinces of our prayer of praise and intercession, as we strive to be always better "preachers" of the Gospel of peace, with our life of preaching in silence the fraternal love which makes us "one heart and one soul in God".

## WHAT CAN OUR SISTERS, THE NUNS, GIVE TO US FRIARS?

### **Meeting of the Provincials of Europe**

**Bologna – 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2007**

*By Fr. Didier Boillat, OP  
Province of Switzerland*

This is a very delicate question! How can anyone speak on behalf of the brethren, and on behalf of the nuns too? We could stick to the lines of the ideal and the general: "How good it is to dwell together in unity!" Or again, we could follow the line of personal testimony: "What my monastic sisters give (or don't give) to me is ...". I am going to take a middle way, taking care to avoid excess and the risk of deforming or misrepresenting reality. I have been engaged in an exchange with nuns from two monasteries (Estavayer-le-Lac in Switzerland and Orbey in France) to give substance to what I am going to say. The situation varies considerably from Province to Province, and in accordance with the cultural environment. There is the big story, but there are little stories too, that make up the fabric of daily life. And our "family relationships" in the Order of Preachers are colored by these "little stories" also, with their ups and downs!

There are certain words that acquire a special tone with reference to the bonds between nuns and friars: family, vocation, mission, communion, juridical links. Each part of the Order has its place, with its difference and its specific nature. It is not a matter of erasing the differences, but of entering a dynamism of respect and mutual recognition. We live in the style of solidarity and collaboration. Our

primary and common aim is charity. Various texts from our Constitutions, both those of the brethren and those of the nuns, echo each other:

- “The nuns of the Order, according to the plan of St. Dominic, dedicate themselves totally in their contemplative religious life to communion with God, whereby the apostolic life of the brethren as well as of the other groups of the Dominican family is nourished while the nuns provide a witness of prayer, silence, and penance.” C 142
- “The nuns of the Order of Preachers came into being when our holy Father Dominic gathered women converts to the Catholic Faith in the monastery of Blessed Mary of Prouilhe. These women, free for God alone, he associated with his “holy preaching” by their prayer and penance...” C1-1
- “By their way of life both the friars and nuns strive toward perfect love of God and neighbour, which is effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of all people...” C1-2

So I will speak here of the bond that unites us, nuns and friars. But let us not forget that the nuns have been responsible, in good times and bad, not only for the buildings they live in, but above all for a testimony of life which greatly contributes to giving our Order credibility! We could have been caught up in the fluctuations of history; the way of life of our monastic sisters, both away from the world and in the very heart of the world, gives the Order authentic solidity and guiding landmarks.

## **1. A common vocation and a shared mission: a birthplace.**

We are celebrating the Jubilee Year of our Dominican nuns. And this Jubilee reminds us that our sisters were able to live without the presence of the friars for a good twelve years. We might have forgotten that! From the time of the foundation at Prouilhe, Dominic already had the intuition of an itinerant preaching: words on the move, as it were. This first monastery was given the name “Sainte Prédication” – Holy Preaching. And this preaching was the fruit of “living with” Christ: “Come and see!” This “living with” takes on three dimensions for us with our nuns: community life and observance of the Rule; liturgy and prayer; study. The “Word made flesh” is at the centre: it is experienced through community life, it is prayed and celebrated, and it is studied. Our mission arose from this “being with” the Master, this intimacy, a personal and community encounter with Him. Our own words as preachers are supported by these three pillars. Our monastic sisters give us the taste and the authenticity of witness by their choice of *monastic* contemplative life. But as one of them

remarked: “We don’t do what the friars won’t do.” She was thinking, I believe, of contemplation – or silence!

In the Province of France where I did my noviciate, but also for instance in the Vicariate of Rwanda and Burundi, the retreat in preparation for clothing is always made in one of our monastic communities. So for me and for other novices, our birth in the Order was among the nuns. And I believe that a monastery is always a place of birth for the brethren: birth into fraternal life, birth into prayer and love for the living Word. It is also a way of experiencing concretely what Dominic wished for, and of receiving in oneself this primary strength of foundation and innovation. Our religious and Dominican identity is constructed in this time we spend with our sisters from the start of our formation. It is a favourable environment for the flowering of a vocation as a preacher! We go back to the origins of the Order. In the life of a community of nuns, we see the fruits of Dominic’s preaching.

## ***2. In our proclamation of the Word: a place to draw breath***

One or another of us is bound to spend some time with our monastic sisters: for a fraternal visit, a short period of rest, as chaplain to the community, on a canonical visit. What will we receive from our sisters? Certainly material support, but doubtless spiritual support too! As another nun pointed out: “That’s possible if the friar is kind and respectful towards us!” When our nuns offer us hospitality, they do so as a community ready to welcome the friar into their life of prayer and into their daily life. They give us their confidence. In this way they offer us a place of intimacy and sharing. True, faithful friendships grow up between friars and nuns. We offer each other a shoulder to lean on as we walk in Christ’s footsteps. There are friars who have remained in the Order thanks to a meeting with a monastic community or an individual nun. The power of prayer, too, creates a fraternal climate. It can open a way out of what may seem an impasse, at the personal or community level. We Swiss have been able to celebrate our last three Chapters in Dominican monastic houses! Like the friars, our sisters cherish the desire to seek the Lord and to work in the footsteps of Dominic so that Christ may be better known and loved. We can find a new impetus for our vocation and our mission. We are encouraged to set out once again on the road to meet those who are seeking God. Our mission itself becomes clearer and more pertinent. New projects of apostolate may be born of the time we spend with our nuns. In any case they will be there to accompany us, to share with us their own apostolic intuitions, to warn and encourage us. This is the service of charity!



Every monastery has a “church” that is open to the world, offering a privileged place for preaching: the attentive listening of our sisters and of the people who come to pray with them. Often, monasteries are places of radiance and life. So much joy can spring up in us when we preach in our Dominican monasteries! A special atmosphere emerges in the celebration. Our words are related to being and to acting. Together we bear witness to our faith. Those who participate appreciate this lovely harmony. And we find a place where our words have all their freedom and pertinence! This is the fruit of confidence given and received! Our sisters have no hesitation in offering comments that serve to make our preaching “better”. So this is a good school for preachers!

When we preach, we want to give a Word of life to the world. Our very words are called to be evangelized in order to be Good News! The bond with our monastic sisters is fundamental for this mission of evangelization, it gives us something extra. But as one nun notes: “It all depends on what the friar is looking for. A friar can live his Dominican life without visiting the nuns, but in my view he’s depriving himself of something.” So what is this “little extra” that changes everything? I will make three points, though there are certainly more!

In our commitment to follow Christ, our monastic sisters give us an element of femininity, this radical self-giving to a life project. Our bonds with them demand, on both sides, a proper attitude, education of the heart, mutual respect. Our vow of chastity, too, is involved: this ability to welcome the other for him/herself. Our hearts grow to the degree that we live these meetings really attentively. In our ministry, we are often involved in one way or another with women. We have to have a healthy, constructive relationship with them. Our different apostolates thus take on a dimension of delicacy and generosity through the friendships we have with our nuns.

Another challenge is that of continuity and fidelity. Our world demands performance, an ability to change and develop unceasingly. This is good, but there remains a risk of becoming superficial and no longer grasping what is essential. The “simple” testimony of a community of nuns gives us another point of view and invites us to embark on a lasting project, one that may be called into question but that continually goes to the source and is built on rock. Our prayer and study are involved, and must be anchored in the faithfulness of God. We are involved in a covenant whose roots are in the very life of God.

The choice of religious life, and of Dominican life, is a choosing of life. This choice brings joy and generosity. Dominic had this joy and generosity in his heart; our sisters and we ourselves have this joy in our most intimate depths. This joy is something we can share among us, give each other, procure

for each other; it is consolation and encouragement. Our mission is to bring the joy of this Good News into the places where we exercise our apostolate. If we friars and nuns exchange joy, that joy will become still stronger and more alive. And the world urgently needs messengers of joy, bearers of good news! There is already so much bad news going around ... sometimes even among us friars and nuns. “Joy has come into the world! We proclaim it to you!”

I am coming to the end of my talk! A triple acknowledgment emerges: acknowledgment of Christ who calls us to follow him; acknowledgment of Dominic who created the Order; acknowledgment of each and every one – friars, nuns, sisters of apostolic life, committed lay Dominicans, friends. It is not a matter of comparing ourselves with each other, but of welcoming what the Spirit prompted in the past and what the Spirit still prompts today in Dominican life. This always comes about through real people, real communities, capable of entering into a generous sharing of the Word in our hearts.

Our sisters in monastic life can prompt in us the “new man” of the Gospel, although of course they are not the only ones! Their life of following Christ and their closeness to Dominic urgently call us to give of our best to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to anchor ourselves in the Word of God made flesh. Curiously enough, they also remind us that we are men on the move and that it may be dangerous to stop along the way to settle down.

By their life today, our Dominican nuns show us and the world that it is possible to live on the Word of God, to contemplate it. This Word nourishes and soothes the human heart. This Word *is* its nourishment. The Word edifies and strengthens the community. It does not remain locked in our hearts, it is reconciliation with God and our neighbour. We are its messengers today, and its witnesses! “Let us love one another so that in the same spirit we may confess the Father, the Son and the Spirit” (Master of the Order, during a meeting with the nuns at Prouilhe, 28-31 January 1970). Our religious and Dominican life is a confession of faith in the love of a God who calls us unceasingly and sends us out “at large”, whether in a monastery or in the field of the world!

ON-GOING FORMATION:  
THE ART OF RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

*By the Sisters in Fatima*

## **Introduction**

At the suggestion and with the agreement of our Community, the Vicar of the Master for our Monastery invited Fr. Manuel Merten to visit us. Father came during the Easter Octave this year. The purpose of his visit was to lead us in some days of on-going formation. The theme for these days was: *Communication - Art of Listening and Talking with Mutual Respect and Love for the Other and Oneself.*

These days were indeed a Jubilee gift! The presence of Fr. Manuel was a great help, support and joy especially in those Easter days - a time when we perceive so profoundly the presence of the Risen Lord among us and within us.

## **Process**

The process that Fr. Manuel used, while incorporating both intellectual and psychological elements of communication/dialogue, was essentially spiritual.

Prayer was first in these sessions.

Scripture passages with a particular relevance to communication were read and reflected upon by each Sister and shared in the group.

Preaching on Scripture readings at the Holy Mass emphasized the theme of these days.

- At the very start each Sister was invited to identify her expectations and or concerns and to suggest any 'Ground Rules' she thought might be helpful in order to create an open and respectful atmosphere for communication.
- Small group exchanges/dialogue
- Practical experience of techniques of communication learned
- Guidelines for Evaluation of a Chapter Meeting: Especially the role of the moderator
- Final Evaluation of the these sessions of on-going formation

## Responses from the Sisters about this experience

All the Sisters expressed great peace and satisfaction at the close of these days. Here are some of the comments by individual Sisters:

- “The recent meetings with Fr. Merten were very enlightening as we had ‘hands on’ experience of seeing ourselves at regular chapter meeting... We gained insight into our many weaknesses; we learned what we should and should not do in order to achieve good results without ill feelings at such meetings...for myself I gained much self awareness of my short comings and also knowledge of each Sister’s thoughts and sensitivity to what was discussed...”
- “The beautiful portrayal of the story of the disciples on the road the Emmaus gave a very prayerful opening to these days of on going formation...I learned some of the mechanics of communication and a bit of self knowledge...openness, respectful listening, sharing were some of the qualities enumerated as essential to good communication. It seemed that Fr. Manuel’s effort was sealed by the Holy Spirit during our retreat with Fr. Ed that followed immediately...and where the same qualities were mentioned.”
- “Fr. Manuel led us to discover an avenue that will enhance an effective communication...we recognize that communication is a two way process when we listen to others and are able to convey our opinions and meet at a certain level. It demands discipline by setting aside our own ideas in order to make room for others. This was clearly portrayed during the role play we had on conducting a chapter meeting...”
- “Fr. Manuel arrived in our monastery on Easter Tuesday. To be honest I was not very enthusiastic, just another meeting! Instead, I found myself listening to Father’s introduction on Communication – art of listening and talking with mutual respect - asking myself a few questions...I feel all my Sisters desire and appreciate good community life and want real, honest communication. We know the way community life can help us and the benefits it brings. We are not communities of perfection therefore we need help. Community growth is often held up because each one is waiting for the other to act...As a community we must continue those days of openness and reflect on the mystery which is community itself. Members of any community need to stop whatever they are doing from time to time and contemplate what the community is. A community discussion that is honest and trusting is perhaps the closest contemporary approximation to this ideal...I enjoyed immensely those days of on-going formation with my Sisters...We have nothing to lose if we daily fix our eyes on the Emmaus

Road. The story of Emmaus gives us a perfect reminder of coming to know Jesus as Lord in the Eucharist and in community.”

- “The whole process was a beautiful learning experience for us as we discover our strengths and weaknesses especially in conducting community meetings and how we can improve this area of our community life. We are filled with hope that whatever sincere effort we have put into this important aspect of community life will be guided and blessed by God and Our Lady.”
- “In his preaching on the daily readings for Holy Mass, Father opened our eyes to the wealth of learning on communication/dialogue that one can find in the Scriptures.

These days of on going formation gave us the opportunity:

- to learn the ideal *process* for conducting/guiding chapter meetings on the part of the moderator and the members
- for “volunteer” moderators to put into practice these techniques of communication/dialogue as they conducted trial chapter meetings
- to learn one’s own capacity – or lack of – to listen and dialogue with others
- to grow in self-knowledge and thereby humility and charity...so important to the process of dialogue

Fr. Manuel presented and directed us toward the ideal and encouraged us to reach for this.”

- “It was especially meaningful that these sessions took place during the Easter octave when the Readings from the Sacred Liturgy and Divine Office are so poignant. When we were accompanied by the disciples and Mary Magdalene and could more readily ‘recognize the Lord in our midst’! These meetings with Fr. Manuel were a means towards knowing ourselves better and growing both spiritually and psychologically. We were guided towards a more mature approach to our Chapter meetings and also towards a greater mutual respect for one another’s personality. In a word, we learned to try to open ourselves to one another and to Christ in the other; to grow in humility and charity in order to face the practical circumstances of our life in common. With self-knowledge one learns what to let go of and what to hold on to i.e. CHRIST alone and all that is His...Fr. Manuel made himself readily available to our needs and humbly and patiently placed himself at our service in those days putting all of his knowledge and experience to work for our benefit. From the outset, Father encouraged us to establish “ground rules” for our meetings. All of these were to consider the contemplative nature of our lives and were to be agreed upon by all the Sisters of the Chapter.”

- “Our reflection on the Word of God was particularly fruitful. Take for example the passage proposed to us by Fr. Manuel from St. Mark’s Gospel, (Mk 7:24-30) which relates the meeting of Jesus with the Gentile woman whose daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit. Here is genuine dialogue and communication. The distressed mother is filled with hope and courage, and humbly accepts the Master’s apparent rebuke for her daughter’s sake, and is satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the table for the dogs. Her faith and perseverance bring about the miracle.”

## **Conclusion**

Through these pages of *Monialibus* we wish to thank Fr. Manuel Merten for sharing so generously his knowledge and experience with us. These days of on-going formation brought each one greater self-knowledge while building our mutual trust and understanding, so important for a mature manner of meeting in Community.

And what is more, these days proved to be a deep spiritual preparation for our annual retreat which began the following week with Fr. Edward Ruane, OP leading us. Yet another gift in this Jubilee year!

## COMMUNITY ON THE WAY

### 750 YEARS FOR THE MONASTERY OF DOMINICAN NUNS IN WEESSEN, SWITZERLAND

For the past 750 years the Sisters in Weesen have been walking their spiritual journey in the Order of St. Dominic. Dominican brothers were present from the very beginning, when the community of beguines joined the Dominican Order. On their journey from the convent of Zurich to the convent in Chur the brethren would stop at the house of the sisters, receiving hospitality and giving spiritual encouragement. 750 years later we experience the same joy in giving hospitality to our Dominican brothers, especially Fr. Manuel Merten OP, Promoter for the Nuns, and receiving encouragement for our spiritual way today. For two evenings Fr. Manuel helped us, with meditation and community sharing, to see and feel God’s presence in our own life and in the life of the community.

We were able to finish a great part of the renovation of our convent buildings in time for the Jubilee. We used this chance to open our doors to the laity from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 7th.

Hundreds of people came from the neighbourhood or from farther away to learn more about our monastery and our way of life. Following a marked route they could see our church, parlor, guest area, recreation room, chapter hall, refectory, kitchen and host bakery. Posters explained the meaning and function of the rooms, our schedule and our spiritual life. Speaking with the people we found this “open house” to be an edifying experience, not only for the visitors, but also for us sisters as well.

Some visitors from our own village said that they had lived for more than 50 years near the convent, but that only now had they gotten an idea of what’s going on behind our walls! As some visitors took a leisurely walk through our convent, others jogged, walked and sprinted through the narrow streets of our village, earning money with each round for the renovation of our guest house, St. Dominicus. To share our spiritual gifts and to strengthen others in the faith, whether groups of children or adults, we need sufficiently large and suitable rooms which can be heated in winter. With much zeal and labor, the Lions Club Rapperswil organized the “Joggathon” to raise funds for this house of meditation and encounter. More than 200 people participated in this project. The youngest participant, not yet a year old, was wheeled in a buggy; the oldest, a lady over 90, walked arm in arm with her daughter. Capuchins, Cistercian sisters from nearby, Dominican sisters, friends, children, the mayor, etc., ran for us. How could we stay away, where so many labored for us? Eight of our eleven Sisters joined the Joggathon, and even Lussi our dog ran with our prioress Sr. Dominique to earn money for St. Dominic House.

Fr. Manuel showed that he is willing to promote our community not only by spiritual encouragement, but also with bodily activity. He ran eight rounds, cheered on by the sisters and friends. The atmosphere and joy of this event was really unique. This joyous and somewhat turbulent day ended with a Solemn Holy Mass, presided over by Fr. Manuel. In his homily he spoke to us about the beginnings, not of our community, but of the Dominican Order itself, and about St. Dominic’s unique gift of openness and readiness to work together with others. In this Eucharist we were able to give thanks for all the material and spiritual gifts which we received, not only on this day, but back through the decades and centuries before us.

One of the greatest gifts is the friendship within our Dominican family. We were especially glad that besides our Swiss brothers and sisters, nuns from Bergamo, Prague, and Orbey (Alsace) celebrated our Jubilee with us. Thank you for coming!

The spiritual highlight was the Solemn Mass on Sunday with our Dominican brothers and sisters, benefactors and friends, religious and lay people. Markus Büchel, our new bishop of St. Gallen,

celebrated this Mass and encouraged us in his preaching to trust God, who cared for this community through 750 years and with whom everything is possible. We in the convent need the support of our friends; and as a contemplative community, we have the important duty of bringing some deceleration to their hectic world. Appropriately for Dominicans who live for and from the Word of God, Bishop Buchel consecrated the new ambo in our church. The feast continued with a reception for all, and the convent garden was filled with people. There was joy and laughter, talking and sharing.

We ate dinner with almost 300 invited guests in a big tent. In a brief play at the end, even sisters from eternity joined the dreaming postulant onstage: one spoke of their trust in God and the help of the brothers in the hard beginnings of 1256; a prioress from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century related the poverty and difficulties of building a church and convent; another talked about their hardships, fears and God's providence during the time of revolution and war in Switzerland after 1798, when soldiers occupied part of the convent. This short play received much applause and showed us once more God's loving care for His daughters. An impressive tribute was the concert of the Kaltbrunn Children's Choir in the parish church. Finally, vespers in the convent church gave a quiet and meditative conclusion to a day full of joy and grace.

JUBILEE YEAR



#### JAPANESE DOMINICAN PILGRIMAGE

*Sr. Marie Josephina DAIDO, O.P.*

*Monastery of St. Mary of Prouilhe*

In 2006 Sr. Josephina, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Seto, Japan, transfiliated to the International Community of Prouilhe. This is her account of the first visit of our Japanese Dominican nuns, who made a pilgrimage to the holy places associated with the Order in France. The group included her own mother, Mrs. Kazuko Daido, her prioress Sr. Marie Thomas, with Sr. Marie Catherine, Sr. Marie Rose, Sr. Anne Marie (Seto), Sr. Marie Emiliana (Bandai), and Sr. Marie Emmanuelle (Morioka), as well as the Lay Dominicans and friends of the monasteries.



### **Toulouse 1 - Sunday, 28 January**

The pilgrimage began in Toulouse, where we visited the Dominican brethren's convent for a magnificent Sunday Eucharist. The pilgrims were introduced to the congregation at the beginning of the Mass. After Mass we recited the *De Profundis* with the brothers and dined in the refectory. Everyone seemed very happy in spite of the fact that very few of the Japanese spoke French. Fr. Alain, the prior, loved our Japanese fans, called "*uchiwa*". Ably guided by Sister Andree, O.P., we visited the house of Pierre Seilhan, where our brothers established their first community with St. Dominic. We then moved on to the Cathedral of St. Etienne guided by Madame Louise, a volunteer. She spent her youth in Japan and speaks excellent Japanese.

### **Toulouse 2 - Monday, 29 January**

Having mastered the city buses, we arrived in the right places at the right times, and visited the Augustinian Museum and also the ancient Basilica of St. Sernin. Lunch at the Institute Catholique, a self-service restaurant, threw the French staff into confusion. Being Japanese, we took food according to our custom: Japanese people prefer many different kinds of dishes with smaller portions of each. The poor cook who served us didn't understand this, and continued to serve us large portions! The lady responsible for the bill had a lot of work trying to figure out how much to charge us.

In the evening we participated in the Solemn Mass for the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas at the church of the Jacobins. It was wonderful, but also very cold; yet we were all very happy to participate in this beautiful liturgy. We enjoyed being in the midst of so many Dominicans.

Right after Mass we had to rush on to Lourdes. Madame Louise, waiting on the bus, had made "*obento*" for us (Japanese-style picnic food); they were delicious. We arrived at Lourdes by 11 p.m., where we were welcomed by a Columbian sister who reminded me of our Peruvian O.P. sisters with their Spanish-accented French.

### **Lourdes - Tuesday, 30 January**

We received a privilege from Our Lady of Lourdes in being able to celebrate Mass at the grotto. (I felt that we were the children of Mary's womb, and that experience has remained in my heart.). We lunched at the Dominican monastery here, and enjoyed a warm exchange with our nuns. Our Japanese sisters particularly wished to visit the tomb of Sister Elizabeth, who had stayed in Japan for many years helping our foundation. Our older sisters remembered her very well because of the

great kindness she showed to novices. Our Japanese sisters felt very moved to be able to pray at her tomb. And of course, no trip to Lourdes is complete without a visit to the house of St. Bernadette.

### **The monastery at Dax - Wednesday, 31 January**

Sr. Veronique and her community welcomed us very warmly. She had planned our time very well, a delight for us. We participated in choir for a beautiful liturgy. When I pray with members of the Dominican family I am always left with a strong impression. This sort of family experience is of great help to me. The sisters at Dax prepared a Japanese dish following a recipe they had found, and all of us were delighted. The Japanese nuns toured the cloister, while others in the group took a tour of the city. For me, learning about life in another monastery is helpful as it allows me to discover more about my own monastic life. We also saw the stained glass and the modern art works of Fr. Kim En Joong, O.P., in the chapel's contemplative ambience. Sr. Veronique then served aperitifs (an excellent walnut liquor) in the cozy atmosphere of the community room.

When we began our lunch, I was wondering where our driver was. I discovered him cutting bread with the sisters of Dax. This surprised me! He brought us plates filled with hors d'oeuvre and *foie gras* which had been made by his own sister. He explained that when he had worked in Japan, his employer had been very kind to him and told him, "Jacques, if you ever have the opportunity to welcome Japanese people, be kind to them." A non-Christian had sown some seeds, and we were able to enjoy the harvest!

After these adventures we arrived in Prouilhe where the community was eagerly awaiting us. The atmosphere in the monastery was full of joy.

### **Prouilhe, Fanjeaux, Carcassonne - Thursday, 1 February**

Of course, all were keen to visit the house of St. Dominic with Prouilhe's chaplain, Fr. Brian Bricker, O.P., guiding us. We celebrated Mass at the ancient Dominican convent (now The Holy Family Sisters). The walled city of Carcassonne awaited us next: St. Dominic preached in the basilica of St. Nazaire within this old city during Lent of 1213.

### **Prouilhe 2 - Friday, 2 February**

The Feast of the Presentation is the anniversary of the *International Community at Prouilhe* and we were thrilled to celebrate together. The entire Prouilhe community welcomed our Japanese group by sharing a festive evening meal in the guest refectory, a lovely time of exchange for everyone.

### **Final Day - Saturday, 3 February**

The pilgrimage of our Japanese nuns and O.P. family concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist along with the Prouilhe community. At the Toulouse Airport departure gate I was feeling very sad, when I saw my mother coming back. She told me they wouldn't accept her small carry-on bag! Okay, okay; I'm very used to this kind of thing happening right up to the last minute!

### **Conclusions**

A pilgrimage is a miniature portrait of our own lives. I have experienced many different emotions during this exciting and special experience. Japanese people do not like to feel that they are imposing on anyone, yet this French O.P. pilgrimage deepened our relationships with everyone we met. We felt very privileged for all that took place in Christ and St. Dominic.

Now our Japanese nuns are back in their own monasteries, and I am very happy to be in the cloister among my sisters again, in our chapel, doing my work, praying in my familiar way, and so on. I have rediscovered the great grace of being 'at home' with an upsurge of gratitude for my vocation as a Dominican nun, even when God gives me unexpected special missions like being a tour guide!

In this 800<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the Dominican Order I hope that all of St. Dominic's daughters and sons will be blessed. I say thank you again to all our sisters and everyone, for their warm hospitality and assistance, and for everything our Japanese pilgrimage group experienced in these holy lands of St. Dominic.

# Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare

Música: Pedro Aizpurua

*Solemne* *rit* **Fin**

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of five systems of music. The first system is a piano introduction in 2/4 time, marked 'Solemne', with lyrics 'Lau - da - re - Be - ne - di - ce - re - Prae - di - ca - re.' The second system is in 16/8 time, marked 'p Solo' and 'mf Todas', with lyrics 'Alabad a Dios !Te alabamos - Se - ñor!'. The third system is in 16/8 time, marked 'mf Solo' and 'f Todos', with lyrics 'Benedicid a Dios: !Te bendecimos Se - ñor!'. The fourth system is in 3/4 time, marked 'f Solo' and 'f Todas', with lyrics 'Predicad a Dios, !Te proclama - mos Se - ñor,'. The fifth system is in 3/4 time, marked 'f Andante' and 'rit', with lyrics 'En la I glesia, con la I glesia, pa - ra la I glesia.' and ends with 'D.C'.

Lau - da - re - Be - ne - di - ce - re - Prae - di - ca - re.

*p* Solo *mf* Todas  
Alabad a Dios !Te alabamos - Se - ñor!

*mf* Solo *f* Todos  
Benedicid a Dios: !Te bendecimos Se - ñor!

*f* Solo *f* Todas  
Predicad a Dios, !Te proclama - mos Se - ñor,

*f* Andante *rit*  
En la I glesia, con la I glesia, pa - ra la I glesia. **D.C**

Letra: Hermanas Dominiccas Santorini, Grecia