



# *Monialibus*

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers  
International Bulletin*



*N° 27 July 2012*



**"The nuns of de Order are to seek,  
ponder and call pond God in solitude"**

(Cf. Fundamental Constitution & II)



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Letter of fr. Brian, op

“Santa Creu” Hermitage  
August 2012  
Montserrat, Cataluña, Spain

My Dear Sisters in St. Dominic, “the man of God with a missionary heart” –

I greet you from the small hermitage of “Santa Creu” (Holy Cross), built into an ancient cave, several hundred meters above the magnificent Benedictine monastery of Montserrat in Spain. A monk named Fr. Stanislaw lived for a number of years in this hermitage, before setting off for the Holy Land, and then to Japan, where he lived as a hermit for 30 years. Brother Vicenç, the monk who walked up to the hermitage with me on the first day of my retreat, believes that while in Japan, Fr. Stanislaw met Fr. Oshida, our Dominican brother who founded and lived for many years in the rural community and meditation center called Takamori Soan. Interestingly enough, I had the joy of spending four days in Takamori during the week of Easter. I am fascinated by this seeming paradox – hermits who are also missionaries! But why should I seem surprised? After all, you, the nuns of the Order of Preachers, are at the same time contemplative, cloistered, and missionary! What a wonderful paradox! What a wonderful vocation!

This year, in October, the Synod of Bishops will gather again in Rome, this time to reflect on the theme of *New Evangelization*. As you remember, the 2008 Synod focused on the Word of God in the life and mission of the church. The Master, fr Bruno, will represent the Union of Major Superiors of Religious in Rome in this year’s Synod. Both of these Synods touch deeply the mission of our Order. St. Dominic, as we know, founded an Order dedicated primarily to the task of evangelization, and Dominican iconography frequently shows him walking along a road, with a walking stick in one hand and the Word of God in the other. Ever so simple: the Word of God and the

mission of evangelization. Each of you, my sisters in St. Dominic, are called to be both contemplative and missionary – like Fr. Stanislaw, and fr Oshida, and our Father, Dominic.

I am continually amazed with the missionary dimension of many of our monasteries. During my recent visits to the monasteries in Angola, Korea and Taiwan, I was so happy to meet a few of the original Spanish founding “*madres*”. Seeing them diminish in number, as the “local sisters” increase, reminded me of the words of John the Baptist, “He must increase and I must decrease.” Though it may sound strange, it is always “good news” to see a monastery “diminish” in this way, taking on the faces and customs of the local people. We are blessed today to have Peruvian nuns founding a new monastery in Bolivia, and Indian nuns sent from Spain for the foundation in India. French sisters founded the monastery in Burundi, and now the nuns from Burundi are beginning to feel the missionary call to go to other parts of Africa. Kenyan nuns support the monastery in South Africa (founded originally by Spanish nuns), while several Mexican nuns live their missionary monastic life in Nicaragua and Cuba. Two Belorussian nuns in the monastery in Ireland hope one day to take Dominican contemplative life back to their homeland.

Several Vietnamese nuns received part of their initial formation in Michigan (USA), while young women from Madagascar are being formed today in Spain, so that one day they can plant Dominican contemplative life in their country. Venezuelan sisters are deepening their Dominican formation in several different monasteries today, while a Spanish nun who lives in Chile recently gave a series of lectures in the monasteries of Ecuador. The newly-erected monastery in Western Canada is composed of nuns from four or five different monasteries and various countries, while the monastery in Eastern Canada will express its missionary vocation by courageously moving to a new home, which they will share with a congregation of apostolic Dominican sisters! Now that is real missionary spirit!!

I enjoyed immensely my Easter visit to the three monasteries in Japan, where our sisters are

a silent witness to the gospel of Christ in a land where the ancient Asian religious traditions are deeply rooted. The nuns and all the Dominican Family in Japan have showed great solidarity with those affected by last year's earthquake and tsunami. There were formerly four monasteries in Japan, but two of them fused last year. To see a copy of *Monialibus* translated beautifully into Japanese filled my heart with joy, and made me more aware of the many nuns who express their missionary spirit by translating *Monialibus* and many other letters and documents for the Order into a plethora of languages! Thanks to all of you!

And of course, we must not forget about the Order's first missionary monastery, the "mother monastery" in Prouilhe, France. It was from Prouilhe that Dominic invited some nuns to set off as missionaries and "teach the Order", helping to establish the first monastery in Rome. For several years the sisters of Prouilhe have opened their doors to nuns from around the world, and they remind me from time to time that the doors are still open for any nun who would like to deepen her Dominican contemplative vocation in southern France for a few years.

Yes, my sisters, we are a missionary Order. But as you know better than I, the most important dimension of your missionary life is lived in the silence of your heart – in the midst of your community. My life as a Dominican friar has now taken me to almost every corner of the world, but as I sit in this quiet hermitage today, it is *your* missionary life – as Dominican contemplative nuns – that deeply challenges me. It is easier to board a plane and fly across the world (though it gets "less easy" every day!) than it is to open one's heart to the broken, suffering immensity of our world today. But is that not where we are called to live our missionary lives in a most profound way? The early sources tell us that Dominic began to let his beard grow in preparation for his mission to the Cumans and beyond. Interestingly, though, he never made it that far. Perhaps his greatest missionary experience was the one that he lived during his long nights of prayer in Santa Sabina in Rome, lying prostrate on the marble slab covering the remains of the martyrs. One of the

greatest blessings for me in Santa Sabina is to pray each morning and evening in that very place. I am frequently reminded of Dominic, the contemplative missionary, who preached as much with his tears as with his words. It is Jordan of Saxony who tells us that, "God had given [Dominic] a special grace to weep for sinners and for the afflicted and oppressed; he bore their distress in the inmost shrine of his compassion, and the warm sympathy he felt for them in his heart spilled over in the tears which flowed from his eyes."

**Many of our monasteries offer varied kinds of service or attention to the poor, the hungry, immigrants and the imprisoned. Like St. Dominic, their hearts have become a shrine of compassion. I have had the privilege of visiting several of these monasteries, and I give thanks to God for their gospel witness. They have seen Lazarus, lying at the door of the monastery, and have responded as Jesus would respond. Many years ago, in a monastery in the United States, I met a nun named Sr. Mary Michael. Confined for many years to a wheel chair, this sister spent her life corresponding through letters to prisoners, some of whom have been condemned to death. Her contemplative ministry of mercy reminds me of St Catherine of Siena's ministry to the condemned prisoner, Niccolo di Toldo. Enclosure is part of the Dominican monastic tradition, but we know that monastic enclosure, like contemplative silence, should never "protect us" from the cries of the poor. If this happens, we have missed the message of the gospel. As you know so well, Sisters, our contemplative silence, like St. Dominic's, should make us *more* attentive to the cry of the poor – not less.**

Sisters, as we celebrate the Feast Day (and the month!) of our Holy Father, St. Dominic – but even more than that, as we *live* our vocation to be contemplative missionaries of Christ – may we have the courage to open our hearts to the world, and if necessary, **be wounded** in our mission of sharing with that same world the Good News of Jesus Christ.  
your itinerant, missionary brother,  
fr Brian

Original: English

## Consecration of the church of the Monastery Christ the King (Brazil)

I make mine the words of the Psalm 85 "I thank you with all my heart, Lord my God, I glorify your name for ever", because of the arrival of the day about which our community and all the people who helped us had dreamt: the consecration of the church of the Monastery Christ the King, of Saint Roque – Brazil.

We began to prepare for this event nine days before. Each day in the homily a symbol of the church was explained: the water, the door, the altar, the sacred space...

On the sixth of August at 3 p.m., at the hour when blood and water poured out from the side of Christ, which symbolize the Church and the sacraments, the Consecration of the church was carried out in the context of the Eucharist when the sun was shining more brightly than other days - so it looks like as if nature was accompanying us in our thanksgiving to the Lord.

What was happening was like a sweet dream which now had come true. Two sisters from Argentina from the Federation of the Immaculate, Sr Amalia and Sr Carmen Choren, accompanied us at this celebration and they were in charge of introducing us.

The rite was presided over by his Excellency Bishop Walter Michael Ebejer, OP. There were also present the Provincial Edmilson de Oliveira, OP, all our Dominican brothers from Brazil; Father Daniel who is the parish priest of Saint Roque, the prior Fr Leandro OCD; Fr Geraldo OCD and some diocesan priests.

We were also accompanied by the Dominican Family of Brazil in its different branches, the Dominican Youth, the Prioress Rosa Elvira Marroquin, Sr Elisabeth of the Heart of Jesus from the Monastery of St Catherine – Arequipa, Peru. ... Martha Lucía, three Benedictine nuns, the Prioress of the Concepcionists Sr Ines Mary, nine Capuchin sisters, nuns of the Trinity, Passionist sisters, sisters of Jesus Priest, the whole town of St Roque and friends from different parts of Brazil.

At the entrance procession we walked while singing "Let's go to the House of the Lord

with joy". When we arrived at the door of the church our architect and artist Claudio Pastro explained the meaning of the door. Then the Bishop gave the keys of the church to the Prioress to open the doors and she invited the people to go in: "Come in through the doors of the Lord giving thanks!" After this the Bishop blessed the water and sprinkled with holy water all the walls and the people while we were singing: "This is the water which came out from the right side of the temple, alleluia".

After the litany of all the saints sung by Fr Almy, OP, the greatest moment came: the anointing of the altar by the Bishop. The walls of the church were also anointed. The right side was anointed by the Provincial and the left side by our parish priest, Father Daniel.

The Bishop put five candles made of incense on the five crosses of the altar. Between the incense and the light of the candles we sang: "Lord, let our prayer rise in your presence like incense".

At the Offertory the bread and the wine were offered by Claudio Pastro and Mother Lucila. After the Communion our Lord is put in the tabernacle for the first time.

After the final blessing I was invited to utter some words of gratitude. I gave thanks to God for the community and to all the people who helped to carry out this work with their money and their prayer.

Original: Spanish

### Formation week for young Dominican nuns

*Chieri, 4-10 November 2011*

We young nuns in formation, belonging to the monasteries "SS.mo Rosario" in Monte Mario (Rome), "S. Maria della Neve" in Pratovecchio (Arezzo), "Maria di Magdala" in Moncalieri (Turin), accompanied by our mistresses, we met together in the beginning of November for a week of formation organized at the Italian level. The week was included in the course of formation in act since some years.

We got together in the convent "St. Dominic" of our brothers at Chieri (Turin), a nice

and warm community and rich in experience which made us feel at home.

The formation sessions were held by Dr. Fornero Saura, a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist specialized in group therapy and has deep knowledge of the Dominican charism, and by br. Viktor Hofstetter OP, promoter of the nuns in the years 1990-2000, at present residing in the convent of Zurich in Switzerland.

The course has been planned and realized in a dynamic way: the theoretical parts were alternated with sessions guided or self-managed and with moments of personal work, all together or in separated groups (both mistresses and formatives) or in mixed groups. We could confront and share our personal experiences, as was proposed by the speakers. It was a great exercise for us to listen to each other, which was enriching and stimulating.

Dr. Fornero opened the working week with the theme: "Some elements for the management of emotions in the Dominican community life", dealing with the fatigue and joy of the encounter with the *other* - with God, with the sisters in the communities, with one's own "other" inner life... To live the Dominican life, in fact, is to realize the relationship with oneself and with others, hence the difficulties arising on the emotional level, whose continual overcoming puts into trial our human limitations. How much we found ourselves in her words! The key to this process has a contemplative nature: we need to *so-stare* (to **stay on**) in front of our own feelings to leave that they exist in order manage them. It is a difficult goal to achieve, that of **to stay on** (*so-stare*) for our nature so used in **doing** ... We understood how important it is for a common life to know one's own interior motions and to learn to how to manage them: this is the real responsibility of each, to reach and experience the freedom that our charism demands and promises.

The speaker underlined the fundamental importance in this process of self-knowledge, to live the *entrusting* not closing in on ourselves but by putting God at the center of our lives and thus opening ourselves to the sisters and to all. The *entrusting*, united with *so-stare* on *here* and

*now* of the present moment, allows the overcoming of "performance anxiety" and fear, typical of early stages of the formation; it also allows the continuous renewal of the relationship with the *other*, avoiding the risk of the habitude and of motions of control towards who live around us.

Dr. Fornero helped us to become aware of the "self deception": unconscious mechanisms, but can be recognized that, by putting our ego at the centre, diminishes the authenticity of altruism and prevent the opening towards the *other*. Each one of us worked on oneself, and together we shared hardships and difficulties, but also advice and possible "coming out" from the "trap".

In this process of knowledge and personal growth there also needs a deep *inner hygiene*, towards which our charism pays a particular attention: the silence, the prayer, the solitude... It was wonderful to discover on the basis of our Constitutions that there is a deep understanding of the humanity. Three days of intense effort, but with great hope to look forward with enthusiasm.

The weather conditions did not allow us the expected visit to the monastery of Bose, a monastic community of men and women from different Christian churches, whose founder and prior is Br. Enzo Bianchi; so, that morning, we dedicated to know better some of the artistic and cultural attractions of Chieri and for a bit a of rest. In the afternoon, as we had planned, we went to visit the "young" Dominican monastery "Maria di Magdala". With the community we celebrated the Vespers of the Feast of All Dominican Saints and we had a time of warm fraternity, sharing a nice *pizza*.

In the last three days of the course, br. Viktor spoke to us about the letter of br. Damian Byrne on the Dominican community life with which we had an across-reading of the LCM. The sharing of the many interesting experiences of br. Viktor, as promoter of the nuns near to the Masters fr. Damian Byrne and br. Timothy Radcliffe, enriched the theoretical content of the matter, helping us to grasp its vital aspect.

Our brother stressed the need to have a wise reading of our Constitutions, to find answers not to the question: "What should I



do?", but: "*In what spirit should I live the various elements of Dominican life?*". We then focused our attention on the importance of the community, present in almost on every page of the LCM: it is through the community that passes the voice of God, it is the community that gives the stability to the contemplative life, it is to the community that we promise our obedience, freely and not blindly.

Even the personal experience of God passes through the common life, quoting in fact S. Augustine: "the common life is essentially a friendship based on our common search for God." Thus, the common life requires the sharing of faith, because no one owns the whole truth. Besides it is also our responsibility to have care of the delicate equilibrium between personal and community prayer.

Another aspect of the community life is that of fraternal correction as a continuous work of mercy, specifying how the dynamic of reconciliation is effective only if it takes place between equals. It was very precious the witness of Br. Viktor who has a rich experience of life lived and shared with br. Damian precisely on this aspect.

Facing the topic "common life and study / formation," Br. Viktor recalled the personal responsibility of each and that of the community. The Order can give some suggestions, but it is up to us to discern the appropriate life choices. In addition, the human formation is important to adapt the desire to live in the communities with the ability to do it, which does not always match.

The final aspect dealt with Br. Viktor was "community building". We remained to reflect on the need to constantly question ourselves and find answers to ever new sense to adapt it to the regular life at the present time. We should have the courage to listen to what the Spirit prompts us.

We had also a beautiful and enriching moment lived with br. Viktor who shared with us a *lectio* on Luke 10.13-17. After collecting the echoes of each one of us, he brought out the teachings of Jesus to the crowd not to forget the true meaning of the synagogue (the community, for us nuns): through the Word, the community should let heal and release from closed schemes

and to praise the wonders of the Lord and be witness of His mercy.

It was a very significant week of formation. The daily life together with the joint formation, the frequent sharings, the cheerful recreations have now been very well impressed in our memory as real formative experience.

We thank the Lord for those who guided us in this spiritual journey, for our mistresses who organized it, for our communities, which allowed us the participation in the meetings, for the community of friars of Chieri, by whom we were welcomed heartily and with whom we could well enjoy fraternity of the Order, for the presence of each of us, in the hope that every year we can always be more in number to share the joys and hardships of our spiritual journey on the way that the holy Father Dominic continues to show us to be fruitful and tangible gift in the Church and in the Order.

Original: English

**Translation of the**  
**Monastery of St. Agnes,**  
*Bogotá, Colombia*

Dear sisters, we greet you in the joy of the Spirit of the Lord who supports and goes with us in the way to our encounter with Him.

We would like to share with you some of the history of our community, its comings and goings and how the Lord has guided this new process of translation of our monastery.

The community of the Monastery of Saint Agnes was born thanks to a lay initiative: Juan Clemente de Chávez, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July in 1645 with the help of three Concepcionist nuns, the ecclesiastic approval and the Spanish government. It was located in the centre of the city, near the main square. This monastery was the twelfth founded in the New Granada and the forth in Santa Fe of Bogotá.

The community changed its residence for the first time on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February in 1863 when the dictator Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera expelled all the religious communities. It was the beginning of many years of exile. During this period 11 nuns went to the monastery of

Saint Catherina in the Havana, Cuba. After 25 years only two nuns returned to restore the community that was dying. They took as their residence a house which was near the first monastery but some years later was demolished to enlarge the avenue 10a.

In 1948 the community faced what was called "9<sup>th</sup> of April" known as the "Bogotazo" and had to flee because there was a violent irruption in the monasteries due to the assassination of the political leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán. The community scattered and gathered together again 8 days later but they found the monastery of the Concepcionist, which was next to our monastery, burned. Then they built a new monastery and as a consequence of the construction the foundations of our monastery were damaged and some walls fell down. This event obliged the community to leave the monastery again. The Dominican sisters of the Presentation received our community in their Central House for five years. After this period, with the help of some benefactors and by selling some of their possessions, the nuns were able to get a new building to live in. This new building is a school which belonged to the Teresian sisters.

Last 28<sup>th</sup> of October we celebrated 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the move to this school which was adapted to be a monastery.

Soon we will again emigrate to a rural zone which belonged to a nearby town (an hour by car) called "Madrid". It is a beautiful piece of land that we could purchase thanks to God and to the generous help of our ex Master of the Order Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, OP, and the syndic of the Order, Fr. Bernardo Vallejo, OP who gave us the money from the nuns' fund. Thanks again to them and to the monasteries that have helped to provide this fund.

At present we are 17 nuns in the community. Next 7<sup>th</sup> of December we will put the first stone of what will be the new "Holy preaching" the design of which was drawn up by a commission with the participation of the community. This process has implied for all of us a detachment, a change of mind, leaving our own opinion to accept the opinion of the community because we know that the community always seeks the common good.

This has been a good opportunity to let a dream come true to which those who preceded us in the sign of faith were looking forward for 20 years and which we, now, are trying to carry out for the glory of God.

The aim of each corner of this new house is to fulfill our Dominican contemplative vocation in and for the Church "without losing sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith (...)" from now has taken his place at the right of God's throne" (Hb 12,2).

We want that this monastery is His throne. We trust He who started this work will finish it. "With so many witnesses (brothers and sisters) in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us... and keep running steadily in the race we have started" (Hb 12,1).

You are the big cloud of witnesses who are watching this struggle. We entrust this work to your prayers. We also rely on your spiritual support and if it is possible your financial support, according to your possibilities. We have a long period of construction and next May we have to leave the building where we are living and look for a place to live until our monastery is finished. We all know God always blesses those who give with joy. He is never outdone in generosity and He will reward those who give in His name as he said: "You did it to me". We addressed ourselves to you knowing that you are our brothers and sisters. We know that preaching is our mission and we are all involved as a family.

We rely on your intercession and we offer ours. We are very grateful for having the opportunity of sharing this dream which God has put in our hearts. We trust we are able to fulfill this dream for the sake of the Church and ours.

We embrace you in our father St. Dominic and the Queen of Preachers.

Your sisters from the Monastery of St. Agnes of Montepulciano, Bogotá, Colombia.

Original: Spanish

## *A Most Welcome Surprise !!*

Yes we were most happy when Fr. Brian Pierce wrote and told us of the possibility of coming to Africa and to us among other communities. As arrangements went on, it turned out that he would be with us for about five days then he would proceed to Angola to see the other two monasteries there. It really sounded too good to be true because it was completely unexpected.

So, on 19th January, it happened. Our airport is about three and a half hours drive one way.

Imagine how happy we were when a priest, a good friend of ours here in South Africa told us that he would be going to Johannesburg where the airport is situated around the same time that father would be arriving and would be glad to pick him up. Oh it was like an angel from .... a great relief indeed. It turned out that they actually were known to each other as they had met many years ago in Santa Sabina when they were younger, I guess.

By Lunch hour they were here and what a joy to see each other again? We all had seen father Brian before and it was a wonderful reunion.

It is very difficult for us to see our Dominican Brothers here in South Africa. They live quite far away from us and so we are denied among other things the joy of having classes from them. So Father's arrival was a joy to us in many ways. For three days he gave us classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. They were mainly on Conventual Chapters and Councils in the Dominican Spirit as given Fr. Carlo Avagnina. They were very enlightening. He also spoke of the Word and how we should let It Fire our hearts and then be ready to pass that fire on to others. The Jubilee theme for this year about the Women Preaching came handy—" Go and Tell The Brothers." Actually as I write this now, two days after Easter, this is the Gospel we had in today's Mass, Jesus sending St. Mary Magdalen to his "Brothers"..... So indeed the classes were very good, We were Informed, Formed, Encouraged and also Challenged. He challenged us

especially in the areas of Obedience and Study. It would have been wonderful if other sisters from our African Monasteries were with us, but it was just impossible. Anyway the sisters of Angola were able to share our joy since father was to go to them too. Some weeks had passed when I heard one of our sisters at a community meeting share one of the things that had touched her during the classes and it was very good, and a reminder to the rest of us.

Other uplifting moments were the those of praying together and celebrating the Eucharist together. It was still summer time here, with the evenings quite long. So after supper we would sit on one of the corridors and share the news from far and near both light and not so light. He made our minds wander north and south, east and west as he gave us as many stories as he could remember from Santa Sabina and the monasteries. One of the sisters asked him to repeat a story he had told us before but this time it took on a new face and he made us laugh until we cried and our ribs were almost at breaking point. This story had a song to it with the words "Waltzing Matilda". We still remember it but unfortunately no more than just the two words. Oh yes, we also updated him on the situation of our community, our dreams, our fears and hopes. It is a New foundation remember!

Time came for us to say Goodbye since all good things too come to an END. And so we did.

Original: English

## *Doctorate in Sacred Scripture*



**ST. MARK'S COLLEGE**  
THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 12, 2012

Dear Sister Mary Claire:

On behalf of the Chancellor of St. Mark's College, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, and the Senate of St. Mark's College, I am pleased to express to you our desire to confer on your

community of Queen of Peace Monastery the title of Doctor of Sacred Letters.

The St. Mark's College honorary degree (*honoris causa*) is awarded to men and women who exemplify the values the College strives to embrace and promote within its own students and the broader community. The Doctor of Sacred Letters is offered to your community to recognize your unique and important contribution to the New Evangelization which features an integrated approach to Catholic higher education within a stable community of prayer, charity, work, and hospitality in the Upper Squamish Valley. Your community's contribution will be of service not only to the Archdiocese of Vancouver, but also to the broader Catholic community in Western Canada and beyond.

The ceremony for conferral of this degree is scheduled for Sunday May 27 beginning at 2 p.m., and would take place within the annual convocation ceremony for both St. Mark's and Corpus Christi Colleges. You are asked to arrive at 1:00 p.m., for vesting and procession instructions.

Sister Mary Claire, we very much look forward to celebrating this honor with Our Lady Queen of Peace Monastery at St. Mark's College!

Thank you, sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Mark A. Hagemoen, PH  
Principal, St. Mark's College



Queen of Peace Monastery

25 April 2012  
Feast of St Mark

Dear Fr. Mark,

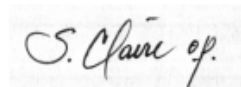
The community of Queen of Peace is both humbled and honoured by your letter expressing the desire of the Chancellor of St. Mark's College, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, and the Senate of St. Mark's College, to confer on the Community of Queen of Peace Monastery the title of Doctor Sacred Letters.

We are aware that it is the 'Holy Preaching', the witness of our community of the Order of Preachers, which is being honoured. It speaks of your understanding of our vocation and your confidence in our mission.

When Saint Dominic established the very first community of the Order of Preachers in 1206, he named it "the Holy Preaching of Prouilhe". He believed that the way of life of these women, consecrated to God by public vows of the evangelical councils, was a prophetic proclamation of the gospel and was effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of all people.

We are blessed to be a 'Holy Preaching' in the of the Archdiocese of Vancouver and assure you of our deep gratitude at this honour and our loving prayer for St Marks and its mission in our world today.

Your sisters in Christ,



Sister Claire Marie de Jesus op (Prioress of Queen of Peace Monastery) and the Community of Queen of Peace

Original: English

#### **IV Centenary of the foundation of the Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena (Córdoba – Argentina)**

Dear brothers and sisters:

We are pleased to communicate to our brothers and sisters that from the coming 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2012, feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2013 we will celebrate 400 years of the foundation of our monastery, the first contemplative monastery of the country. We would like you to participate in the opening Mass which will take place on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May at 7.00 p.m. Our archbishop Monsignor Carlos José Nañez will preside at the Mass. We have also invited all the bishops of the country.

The festive activities "ad extra" will be religious and cultural conferences and they will be celebrated on the first Friday of each month. The themes will be about the commemoration,

contemplative life, culture and ethical-religious values which were the foundation of our beginnings. The conferences will be given by lay people, priests and friars of the Order who are specialized in these topics. Each conference concludes with a recital by a choir.



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will consist of a common sharing on themes that every week each nun will s

We are aware that the main celebrations are carried out by our Lord and His Mother in our life as Dominican worshippers. We are sure that the fruit will be to the advantage of the pilgrim Church of our country, our society, the universal Church and the whole world.

God has granted us 400 years of existence. We live this with great joy and we are very grateful. The Lord gave us life almost at the same time as the city when "Cordoba of the new Andalusia" was a small and defenseless village in the middle of the country. We thank God and the Virgin Mary we have remained in the heart of this huge city as it now is. We have been testimony of the past, witness of its history and faithful companion in all the vicissitudes of its whole existence.

We are negotiating with the Apostolic Penitentiary to have the plenary indulgence in our church. We will communicate you the results.

We wish to let you know that we have the Dominican Family always in our prayers and through them we support the mission of the Order from the heart of our Cordoba and the Church.

May the Lord and the Virgin of the Holy Rosary be with you all.

Sr Sandra López, OP

Original: Spanish

## *Dominican nuns and Preaching*

*Intervention of Sr Giovanna Figinini (Patrovecchio-Italy) Santa Sabina 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2012*



The fundamental constitution of the Order says that "we consecrate ourselves totally to God with the profession that insert us in the Order e it puts us in a new way to a total

disposal of the universal church, fully committed in proclaiming the Word of God."

Yes it is true that this is said in the fundamental constitution of the friars, but it is also true that we nuns do the same profession that incorporate us in the Order and we are totally committed in proclaiming the Word of God.

What changes in the proclamation is the mode. The contemplative life subjected to the closure prevents us from teaching in the universities, we haven't itinerant preaching as the other members of the Dominican family, but it remains true that if we do not proclaim from our part the Word of God in the way we do and how we are being shown, we can not claim to be part of the same family.

In this 'Salone' a question was asked to us: "What evokes in me the image of the mandate of Magdalene?"

Well, looking at the face of Magdalene and Christ's face, I can find the essence (the heart) of the preaching, and the announcement that leaves and remains in this glance.

Two searching faces, two meeting eyes and two beating and pulsing hearts to find oneself after having experienced the emptiness and absence.

Mary Magdalene, a woman in love, looks at Christ, the beloved of her heart, the woman who loves what he loves. Two glances that are united in one. The spoken Word: 'go to my brothers', immediately becomes life and witness: Magdalene does not hesitate: she turns and runs to tell about him.

And this familiarity with Jesus, this communion, which leads her to endure his own thirst for the salvation of souls

Here then, to be with the Lord, our sharing with the sisters of the community in mutual communion can only lead us to the mission which we nuns, instead of manifesting it in activities that 'take us off', carry in our hearts and prayers this thirst, this *nostalgia*, this passion for the salvation of souls, re-placing everything in the life of Christ because united in Him we can be his witnesses.

But for us the challenge is even greater and more responsible because it requires the dynamic stability and freedom in the rule of life.

Magdalene looks at the Risen Christ ... how can we, nuns, meet the risen Christ in our community and in our personal prayer if it does not origin in us the same glance of love for the persons whose dramas and anxieties that every day we listen? He met and responded to their needs, whatever they might be... We, the nuns, can we 'be satisfied' (and I use this expression in the inverted comas) taking these needs ONLY in the prayer? Yes, we bring them before the Lord in prayer, and then, in the community, but it is this cry that comes from our being with him and becomes one in community so as to say the same words of St. Dominic: What will become of the sinners?

It challenges us. What we must do and what we can do in our way of life that should always keep in mind that we are contemplative nuns?

And what I have said till now I would express taking into consideration the experience that we are living this year.

Our monastery is located in a hilly village of 3500 inhabitants, in the splendid valley of Casentino, which is in the borders of the diocese and of the city. The parish is quite empty of youth and it lives of the traditional faith of the old people. So the church, as in many other places, gets emptied and the lack of spirituality in people's lives is felt very much.

The parish priest celebrates the Eucharist daily in our monastery church and, in this last 2-3 years we hear him more and more tired, and demoralized so that his suffering has become ours. There was a time when in the Eucharistic celebration, instead of leaving us signs of feast, *please don't misunderstand me*, we could grasp the anguish and the sufferings that the parish priest was having for his little flock. In our

community we often shared these problems and a recurring phrase that was knocking at the door of a sister's heart was, 'What will become of these simple and frail souls, of children, if no one teaches them who Jesus is?' It was from this sharing that we have been asked to teach catechism by our Bishop who was informed of the realities of our parish from our parish priest and the catechists.

We questioned ourselves "can we do something?". Does this decision obstacle our community journey? Who could do it? Well there are various questions that we asked to ourselves, but after having listened to each other and speaking with the parish priest we came to an agreement that was good for both the sides. And after 7 months we can only say that the form that we have adapted did not present any problem. Indeed! We proposed two of our sisters to take two classes of catechism (one is of the First Holy Communion and the other one is that of Confirmation). From this small commitment of two classes of catechism it has been started a formation course for the same catechists and the families that we had not planned in our program.

An indomitable catechism class of last year, this year is marked by the joy of being together and listening to the Gospel because the nun in charge has put aside the various books of catechism and she began to do the lectio of the Sunday Gospel with the children and she says that it has created an enthusiastic response in them. Such an enthusiasm has become contagious also to the parents so that in an evening of Advent season, we invited them to stay together for a *pizza* and a brief reflection in preparation for Christmas.

It was so strong that the joy of this meeting was transmitted in the village, so that there was a second meeting at their request, where they were given more time to listen to the Word of God, and we dared to give them a harder bread to chew. And the answer was surprising!!!!!!

And so one evening during a recreation in the community while commenting on the need for these families, there came up come bizarre idea that we then informed to the parish priest: why not organize evenings in preparation for

the World Day of the families also connecting via web with Milan for the Feast, on the occasion of these meetings for the families, giving them the opportunity to come together and meet many other families who live the same faith? It's a drop because there had been only 3 sessions, but have awakened the hope in the parish priest because he sees a good number of families, willing to listen and live the Gospel. And that we are living it together as community because before these meetings the prayer prepares and accompanies the sisters who are directly involved in this field of preaching.

Here is the latest experience of evangelization where we're trying to respond to what we are asked by the local church, but if it is true that our Order is universal, today we are allowed to be present throughout the world through internet. Our community began the use of the internet in 1997. Its beginning is quite interesting. In that year we had to call a technician to repair our computer and he gave us a detailed information regarding the use of the internet and since then we have begun its use. Till then we did not know how it worked, but from that time the community has given us the confidence and we began to make the first steps. Obviously there were some criticism and judgments by outsiders, secular people, not because we were the first monastery to use the internet in Italy and have a website, but what we had been experimenting inside of it we considered as positive and not harmful to our lives.

People come here to spend a period of time with us to have spiritual refreshments or even physical rests where our hospitality is not a presence as that of hotels but where the guest can experience the presence of a community that accepts them as persons loved by God.

Then there came the facebook and I have to say always that this time also it was by chance .... Because my nephew sent me an email with a link to connect to see the photos and I enrolled my name thinking of just watching this thing and I had never heard of it before. Thus I entered in this the world of facebook and I thought that I could insert the advertising of the meeting of spirituality that we hold usually at the year end. There we began a new adventure

of our presence and we realize how important it is to be in the world in this way. We are in the extent that we are given. We are preachers of THE WORD AND WITH THE WORD AND OF THE WORD WE WANT TO BE A SIGN OF HIS PRESENCE IN THE WORLD. The strengthening of our charisma is the collaboration and in the communion: among us, and between the whole Dominican Family.

We should work together and thus would have done also St. Dominic. And that's our strength.

Original: Italian

### *Echoes of the feast of the Visitation*

*The report on the Visitation To our Dominican Nuns at their Monastery at Senekal in Free State Province – South Africa by Sr Michael Mdluli O.P*

In September 2011 the members of the DSI Co-ordinating Council met for their usual Annual meeting in Rome. What was special in 2011 was that the reunion took place at the time when the members of the International Commission of Dominican Nuns were just about to finish their meeting in Santa Sabina in Rome. DSI Coordinators and the International Coordinator, Sr Fabiola Velasquez Maya O.P. had been invited to attend a Special Day's meeting with the Dominican Nuns to share some ideas on special matters of interest for Dominican Family. The DSI Coordinating Council was privileged to be given a joint session with the Nuns, and their Promoter, Fr Brian Pierce O.P.

One of the outcomes of this meeting was the realization that the Nuns and the Apostolic Dominican Sisters need to create space and time when they could meet and enjoy each others' presence, share and know each other better. This was highly appreciated and each Continent was advised to plan such a Visitation and the preferred time was 31<sup>st</sup> May of each year and this to begin in 2012. Dominican Laity was also mentioned to the fact that such a visitation could benefit them as well.

## AFRICA

In January 2012 the annual meeting of Coordinators for Dominican Sisters Africa was held in Johannesburg. This was attended by all the Zonal Coordinators for Africa but unfortunately there was a problem with Central Africa Zone and was not represented. One of the items discussed was the Visitation to the Nuns in their Monasteries. But most of the Congregations had already made plans for the year, but it was still good to see if a chance presented itself for such a visit.

## SOUTH AFRICA

This is where I belong and we are blessed to have a Dominican Nuns Monastery in Senekal in the Free State Province. It was not possible to visit on 31st May but a chance presented itself on 9 June 2012 which was a Saturday and the following day, to be a Feast of Corpus Christi. One Congregation planned to go to Senekal and 11 Sisters left in a minibus to the Free State. These Montebello Sisters were greeted by falling snow and the weather was very cold but the hearts were warm with excitement when they reached the Monastery at 3 pm and the warmth from the Sisters was amazing. They had planned to stay overnight and this was made possible by occupying rooms a bit further away from the Cloister but the very experience of being in the Monastery was just too good. After afternoon tea Sr Monica, the Prioress, invited everybody to a meeting room and a short agenda was drawn up.

Sr Monica addressed this special audience explain how the idea of this visitation came about in Rome. Each Sister introduced herself, where she came from, how she happened to be a Nun or a Sister.

Items for the Agenda

The Monasteries in Africa

1. How they came to be established in the Free State at the invitation of the Local Bishop and what their presence meant.
2. How each Monastery is linked to the rest of the others in Africa and overseas.
3. The essence of the life of the Nuns in general
4. The fact that they are directly under the Master of the Order and what it means.

5. The shortage of vocations and how they recruit new members .

6. How they promote vocations and how Apostolic Sisters can assist them in recruiting. Responses and sharing were very fruitful.

The Visiting Sisters as part of Dominican Life in Southern Africa had a chance to share.

The Nuns wanted to know how Dominican Congregations in South Africa came to the idea of a Structure known as Federation of Dominican Sisters in South Africa (FEDOSA) in 1974 and later included all other branches of the Dominican Family including the Brethren and the Laity.

Sr Michael was able to give a brief sketch of the Foundations and how each grew from its mother. Then the new developments came about in 1974 and further other developments with the rest of the Dominican Family.

The meeting was closed with a Night Prayer that the Visiting Sisters volunteered to lead. Singing the psalms and praying together marked the end of the day and we parted ways. Snow was still falling outside.

## SUNDAY

The morning Eucharist was very good as it was the Feast of Corpus Christi

After breakfast preparations, it was time for the visiting Sisters to leave. Time for photo taking was important. The Goodbyes took long and the visitors left.

Original: English

*The experience of the Visitation with our Apostolic Sisters. Monastery of St. Joseph Seto, Japan*

On Saturday, June 2 we had a gathering with the Apostolic Sisters (Congregation of the Religious Missionaries of St. Dominic) of Okazaki.

We welcomed seven sisters who visited us by car from Okazaki about 40 kilometers away from Seto.

At 2:00 p.m. we began the Lectio Divina. We were divided into three groups and shared echoes, prayers and reflections after having listened to the Gospel of the next day (the Feast of the Holy Trinity) which we had chosen as our



meditation resource. By this sharing we appreciated the freshness of the spiritual communion.

From 2:50 they showed us the slide of their experiences in the Philippines and we shared in their apostolic activities drinking tea.

From 3:45 we said the rosary and the litany interlacing a song and meditation.

From 4:30 we sang Vespers together. After we sang Salve Regina and O Lumen, we said goodbye with thanks promising next reunion.

For the first time we experienced such commune like this, which brings us many blessings and a pleasant memory. Deo gratias!!



*Queen of Angels Monastery. Bocaue, Bulacan Philippines*

The first Visitation Day of our Dominican Apostolic Sisters last May 31 here in the Philippines was indeed a great success. 120 Apostolic Sisters from different Dominican Congregations and 22 Contemplative Nuns participated. The occasion brought joy to everyone, young and old sisters as well especially to the nuns, who by our chosen lifestyle can only go so far as our front yard and backyard.

The different congregations shared prepared food to the Filipino Dominican taste. There were also sister sharers of the day who inspired and challenged our preaching mission by their personal witnessing and experience in their respective areas of apostolate.

The parlor games, participated by the sisters, have also added joy and laughter to our gathering. We are grateful to our Emcee, Dr. Belen Tangco from the Lay Dominicans, and of course our celebrant in the Eucharistic celebration, the new Father Provincial of

Philippine Province, Fr. Gerard Timoner, OP, for a well delivered homily and meaningful Eucharist.

Everybody went home with all their big smile in their faces when they were given a nice customized umbrella, care of the Queen of Angels Monastery.

Original: English

### ***The ten year journey***

*The first meeting at the dominican Monastery  
Of our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Vietnam*

*"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, For His love endures forever" (Ps 107,1 )*

This past May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012, the Feast of the Visitation of Holy Mary, our Monastery held the first meeting including the Brothers, Sisters and Dominican Laity who represent more than 100,000 members of the Dominican Family in Viet Nam.

There were two reasons for the meeting:

- The request of Fr. Bruno Cadore, O.P., Master of the Order, who wanted to have annual meeting of the members of the Order at each Dominican Monastery.

- In thanksgiving to God for ten years of the presence of the Dominican Nuns in Viet Nam.

The exodus was an important event for the people of God. From that event, Israel became God's own people. Throughout all time, the account and remembrance of the exodus is there to be reinterpreted to find out new meanings in our every circumstance.

On this occasion, we would like to review some historical things about our foundation.

- I. The Form of the New Foundation
  - II. The Hidden Life
  - III. Dream and Needs for Future
  - IV. Heartfelt Thanks
- I The Form of the new foundation

*A. Stage of Preparation (1996 – 2002)*

*1. Visitation and Dreams*

. Since 1996, there were many visits to our country of Superiors from the Curia in Rome such as Fr. Damian Byrne, OP., Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP., Fr. Bernard East, OP., Fr. Kevin

Toomey, OP., Fr. Victor Hofstetter, OP. They all referred to having a Dominican Monastery of Nuns in Viet Nam ...

. On February 22, 1996 Fr. Kevin Toomey, OP., General Promotor of the Dominican Nuns, wrote to the Superiors of the Congregations in Viet Nam about a dream to have a Dominican Monastery in what he called a mystical nation.

. Fr. Timothy Radcliff, OP, then Master of the Order, sent a letter to the Province Chapter of the Province of Queen of Martyrs in Viet Nam in 1999: "The concern that most touched my heart is how to establish a Dominican Monastery in Viet Nam, your country." He tried many ways to do every good thing for his dream until "the eleventh hour" of his term.

. Fr. Victor Hofstetter, OP, Former General Promotor of the Nuns, told Sr. Maria Rose Huong, OP. on January 24, 1999, with loving words: "I continue my work as a Promotor or a midwife." Sr. Maria Rose wondered: "Where is the baby?" He answered: "It depends on the Brothers and Sisters in Viet Nam who would make a good environment for the baby to be born!"

### *2. Plans for a House*

The Vietnamese Dominican Province was willing to give a beautiful piece of land to build the house for the nuns.

### *3. Formation*

Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP., Master of the Order, wrote a letter to Sister Mary Rose, OP., Prioress, and the Dominican Nuns in Farmington Hills, Michigan on June 25, 2001, asking them to be the sponsoring Monastery for the new Foundation in Viet Nam and to especially provide the formation necessary for those who would undertake the foundation. The sisters in Farmington Hills accepted the responsibility to be the founding monastery with much joy and hope.

### *4. Preparing for the sisters*

. On August 29, 1999, Sr. Maria Rose Đinh Thi Ngoc Huong, belonging to the Congregation of Tam Hiep, was sent to the Monastery in Farmington Hills, Michigan, USA to begin a two

year novitiate of the Dominican contemplative life.

. On May 09, 2000 Sr. Têrêsa Bui Thi Tam belonging to the Congregation of Thanh Tam joined her, also to receive the two year Novitiate formation.

### *B. 2nd Stage of Foundation (2002 – 2012)*

On October 23, 2002, God's hour had come! A new page in the history of the Dominican Family in Viet Nam was opened: The first Dominican Monastery was born in the communist country after a lot of pain, worry and dreams from long ago. An historic meeting was held at St. Albert the Great Convent between Fr. Manuel Merten, OP, General Promotor of the Nuns; Fr. Joseph Nguyen Cao Luat, OP, Provincial of the Vietnamese Province of Queen of Martyrs; Sr. Mary Rose Figura, OP, Prioress of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament, Farmington Hills, USA; the Superiors of the Federation of the Apostolic Dominican Sisters in Viet Nam; Sister Maria Rose Đinh Thi Ngoc Huong, OP. and Sr. Theresa of The Holy Spirit Bui Thi Tam OP, who were to become the first two Dominican Nuns of our country.

What a great joy for the Dominican Family in Viet Nam and for the whole world!

### *II. The Hidden Life*

\* From the beginning, we were "watched and visited" by local policemen many times. They wanted to scatter us and to send us away from the house or to return to our former Congregations. We, however, enduring in prayer and trusting in God's love, remained in the house, waiting for God's hour. After 7 years living in prayer, secretly in a small house, we were as a seed hidden in the ground waiting to sprout. With the changing of the religious policy of the government, it seemed easier than before, to live our life without fear. We bought some small pieces of land and added some more rooms for the sisters and the new candidates who were asking to join us.

On September 15, 2010, thanks to the intercession of Mary, Queen of Martyrs, Patroness of the Dominican Province in Viet Nam, and St. Dominic, our father, we received

the written permission of the local government to live as a religious community. They approved our community as one of the convents directly belonging to the Dominican Province in Viet Nam! It was amazing! This thing has never happened for the apostolic Sisters!

Thanks be to God, for His goodness and love forever!

Our house is too small, but God's grace is too great. He has unceasingly bestowed upon us overflowing graces and many vocations.

\* Since 1998 until 2008, there were four Sisters who were formed in the founding Monastery in the United States. Because of the difference in languages and the cold weather in Michigan, we received written permission from Fr. Carlos Azpiros Costa, OP, Master of the Order, in 2008 to make probation and formation of new candidates here in Viet nam.

There are now five sisters in solemn vows, two sisters in temporary vows, two novices, two postulants and four aspirants,

### III. Dream and Needs for Future

1. We have a dream: Our Monastery would like to become a place for our brothers and sisters to come and rest after their long journeys of preaching the Word of God.
2. What we needs :

a. We need your "prayer intentions" to pray for. Please send your request by mail or email address: [danviendaminh@yahoo.com](mailto:danviendaminh@yahoo.com)

b. We need to be formed by our Dominican Friars and Sisters in order to grow much more in the spirituality of the Order.

### IV/ Heartfelt Thanks

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Fr. Bruno Cadore, OP., Master of the Order; the Former Masters; The Curia in Rome; Fr. Brian Pierce, OP., General Promotor of the Nuns and the former General Promotors; Sister Mary Rose, OP., Sister Mary Thomas, OP., Prioresses and the Sisters of the Mother Monastery in Farmington Hills, Michigan; Fr. Joseph Dinh, OP., our Vicar, Fr. Joseph Luat, OP., Former Vicar; Brothers and Sisters of the Dominican Family in Viet nam and in the world for the love, prayer and generous help that you gave us in so many ways to make the establishment of our Dominican Contemplative Monastery a reality in our poor country.

May the Lord bless and grant you much graces and deep peace of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Original: English

## Report on the course about Dominican mystical

Dear Sisters, with this report I would like to share with you the experience we had in Spain from the 23rd to 27th of June 2012 on the course about Dominican mysticals. The course was organized by the Federation of the Immaculate, within its formation programme, but it was open to participation from other monasteries of Spain. The venue that was chosen to celebrate this course was Caleruega: the birthplace of our father Dominic. The course was given by Fray Brian J. Pierce, op, our Promoter, and Sr Silvia Bara Bancel, op, sister of the Roman Congregation of St Dominic; she is specialized in Rhine mysticism.

The participants arrived on the 23rd afternoon. We were 75 sisters from different monasteries of the three Spanish federations. I must mention the presence of the Common Novitiate of the Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary and some sisters from Chile who belong to the Federation of the Immaculate. They had come to Spain to participate in the Federal Elective Assembly which was celebrated at the end of May and beginning of June.

The course consisted of two talks in the morning and two talks in the afternoon, intercalated with work in groups and breaks. Two important moments for prayer were: in the morning the celebration of the Eucharist and Lauds and in the afternoon Vespers with private prayer with the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This timetable did not permit us to get bored at all. Thanks to the path taken so far, the experience of the meeting among so many sisters is of great joy and richness for all because of the time we were able to share. For this reason the work in groups and moments of fraternity created a communion among us all. In the groups we talked about different topics: The situation of the monasteries, the experience of the sisters' vocation and we commented on

the text about the Dominican mystic that had been prepared in a notebook by the Mother Federal of the Federation of the Immaculate. In this notebook we had the work explained by fr. Brian and Sr Silvia.

During the course we lived different experiences: the novices added charm to the recreation with different dances, guitars and African drums. The sisters of the Roman Congregation of St. Dominic who were doing a formation course joined us in one of the recreations. We also had a moment of intense prayer at the well of St. Dominic with Dominican songs and of course we had some water from the well. We made a parade to the Parish of St. Dominic where father Basilio, op, the parish priest of Caleruega, encouraged us to live the grace of the Baptism. We enjoyed listening to the faithful of Caleruega singing songs about our father St. Dominic.

At the end of the course we visited the monastery of Lerma. The sisters welcomed us with a big snack. After all this we had a great wish of deepening in the charisma of our Order and our knowledge of Dominican mysticism and to keep walking along this path. We lived a special moment listening to the music of "The Mission", etc...

Everything was an abundance of graces that encouraged us to go on with our mission of the "Holy Preaching".

Thanks to all the people who made possible this course.

A participant

Original: English

**"...and the greatest of these is LOVE."**

*1 Cor 13:13*

*A vision of confidence for the future*

In this article I would like to share a concern for the care of the many elderly and infirm Nuns of the Order of Preachers and ask if we might open a dialogue in these pages of *Monialibus* on this concern which touches each of our communities.

Presently, we try to care as best we can for our infirm Sisters. When there is a need for total care we are sometimes left without an

alternative but to find a home for our Sisters where continuity of care is assured. At times it is possible to place our Sister in a care center administered by Religious. But other times the Sister is obliged to live in a more secular environment or even, as the Master of the Order said, in situations he would not wish to see his own Mother.

In our Community when a Sister appears to be growing more infirm the concern is always: What will we do if Sister ..... requires complete care and we are not able to provide this? Then the day arrives when this is a reality and the crisis of what to do is upon us...where to find a home suitable for the Sister or helpers to come and assist with her care. How different it would be for the Community and for the individual Sister if there was a Dominican care center for the Nuns where any Sister who is in need could go for long-term care. I believe that the stress could diminish significantly for the Sister, who is not only very ill but also may feel as a burden to the limited resources of care in her Monastery and to the Community, who feels torn by their loving duty to care for the sick as well as to continue to strive to live the full monastic way of life. While some monasteries may be able to support several Sisters in total care at the same time and still maintain a strong contemplative life there are others where this is not the case either for financial reasons or for lack of Sisters who have the strength needed for this work.

With our current reality world wide – one has only to look at the median age range of the various regions – national/regional/local Dominican care centers for our Nuns or some similar plan would be a means of providing for their care within the Dominican context, in other words, embraced by Dominican compassion. I ask myself, is it not more Christ-like to anticipate and with the help of God's grace and Providence provide a central place of care for our own Sisters? It is not a matter of abandoning our infirm Sisters but rather providing for them ahead of time. These Sisters are as precious to the Order as new, young vocations. It's also true that at the end of the life cycle the needs of each Nun are really very similar even though there may be some differences in the individual

monasteries in which they have lived their Dominican cloistered life.

In LCM N°. 7 we read these words of Humbert of Romans: "A good which meets with general approval is quickly and easily achieved." If we agree that there is a need, perhaps an urgent need, to come together in order to plan for the care of our Sisters then our dialogue will lead to action. At this moment I am reminded of a Bishop who, after assessing all the needs of his diocese concluded that "inaction is no longer an option". Our holy Father St Dominic, as Fr. Bruno reminds us, did not plan to found anything, he simply saw a great need and responded with the compassion of the Heart of Christ.

It has been said that: "Authentic dialogue is the work of love. Only the one who loves is able to dialogue." Through dialogue the future also becomes a work of love. St. Dominic knew that his labors, his sacrifices and his prayers would prepare the earth and plant the seeds of the Kingdom, the harvest would come later. Our dialogue now can prepare the way for the future. Yet, there may be fears that could impede fruitful dialogue. It might be the fear of not having the necessary funds for such a plan, or a fear of losing the particular spirit of our monastery or some may wonder if this is just the first step to closing the monastery. In response to such fears I believe that dialogue founded on mutual love can only be positive and possibly lead to a practical and viable plan of care for our infirm Sisters. In the world, projects are conceived, executed and completed but we live and serve in God's Plan which is Divine and ongoing with no discontinuity. Our present reality, with so many in need of care and attention, is already enfolded in the Plan of God. He will sustain us. At times it seems the world is held prisoner by its own fears. But we, by our call, are women 'set free for God' living every moment in the love of Christ our Spouse. This love is the key that opens the door to authentic dialogue which brings solutions inspired and fulfilled in the Holy Spirit. Fr. Bruno has written: "In the end the only authority is love and that is what can help us to obtain solutions."

In preparing this article some questions have occurred to me. For example:

- How many of our Sisters are currently in care homes or receiving total care in their monastery? (This information would help assess the actual needs in each region or language area.)
- What are the resources of care already available in each region/country? Is it possible to formulate a list of these for the benefit of all?
- If care centers for the Nuns have been proposed in some regions in the past what was the result?
- Are there Dominican monasteries/convents which are empty that could serve as a possible care center?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages to regional/national care homes?
- What alternatives remain if we do not come together on this question?

In conclusion, we may recall that Fr. Carlos, former Master of the Order urged the Nuns to "teach us the Order". He also invited us to "take the first step" and offered these inspiring words from the prophet Isaiah: "*No need to remember past events, No need to think about what was done before. Look, I am doing something new. Even now it comes to light; can you not see it? I will even make a way in the wilderness... and rivers in the desert.*" (Is 43:18-19) In reflecting on these words in relation to the needs of our infirm Sisters I see them not as a call to abandon our Dominican traditions but rather, as a call to respond together today in faith with the humility and compassion of our Father St. Dominic knowing that love makes all things possible!

May Our Lady of the Rosary protect our monasteries and guide us towards a vision of confidence for the future as we plan the care of our more fragile Sisters.

Sr. Maria Lúcia, OP (Fatima)

Original: English

## ***An interview with Sr Agnes***

*Let Heaven Shine Within Us*

For the last 50 years Sr Agnes has been praying and working within the enclosure walls of the monastery of nuns of St Peter by the Stream in Schwyz. How is it possible to survive there, ask worldly minded people. Sr Agnes provides the answers.

Franz Steinegger questioned Sr Agnes.

### ***Sr Agnes, are you happy?***

I never say that I am happy. One the one hand, monastic life is for me a stony and thorny path. But I am content. I have been able to experience many wonderful things. And that helps a person to carry the cross until death. Jesus said: "He who does not take up his cross to follow me cannot be my disciple".

### ***Why did you opt for monastic life?***

In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at school, the teacher read to us about Fatima. In that place the Mother of God called us to pray without ceasing. Prayer is very powerful – in heaven and on earth. Many things can be changed and improved through prayer.

### ***How did you experience your vocation?***

From childhood on, I had felt this urge to pray. That is the most important thing in life. Jesus said "Keep watch and pray and announce the Gospel". I also suspected that monastic life would be right for me, and so I asked God to give me a sign regarding this decision. I wanted to know if he wanted me. And he gave me several such clues. One example: when I was a young woman I found myself in a terrible thunder storm on the way home one evening. There had been thunder and lightning for hours. I was very afraid and asked God that I might see a star in the sky before I got home. Just five minutes after this prayer I saw three stars, and their number kept on increasing.

### ***Why did you want an enclosed monastery?***

I wanted to live completely for God.

### ***And why in particular did you choose the Dominican monastery of St Peter by the Stream in Schwyz?***

A priest who had organised visiting days at several places for girls thinking about monastic life pointed out several possible monasteries to me. When I entered the parlour at St Peter's I liked it immediately. I was very sure: I'll stay here. And still today I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

### ***Were you brought up in a particularly religious way?***

I grew up in a farming family in Benken. The parental home left its mark of course. We prayed a lot, saying grace and other prayers at home. I learnt the first prayers from my mother. We were 15 children in the family; there are still seven girls alive.

### ***What did you do before entering the monastery?***

I was the eleventh child. First of all I worked in a factory. I had to earn a living, because the family needed the money. Later I was in service in the Basel area and then in Winterthur. I began studying to be a psychiatric nurse, and entered the monastery at age twenty-two in the middle of this training because the monastery wished it, but it was a great sacrifice for me.

### ***Was there a particular event that prompted you to enter the monastery?***

The decision matured in the course of time. I had a last battle to win. My father was very ill as the result of an accident. The family wanted to keep me as nurse. I asked Jesus for an answer while I was on my way to the hospital. In front of the hospital a neighbour told me that my father had died unexpectedly that day. My first thought was: now I can enter the monastery. My father had prayed a lot that one of his children might choose a life with God. Jesus helps the one who asks him for something.

### ***Did you never wish to get married and have children?***

No, this never entered my mind.

***Do you not miss the exciting life of the world?***

No, not at all, I don't care for it.

***Do you still have contact with your sisters and relatives?***

Yes, I experience much love, devotion and readiness to help on the part of my sisters and relatives. Since the Council (1962-1965) we may leave the monastery in order to visit relatives, holidays are also allowed. But I only went home on holiday once. They all went to a lot of trouble. I enjoyed it, but I don't like to sit around doing nothing. Now I go from time to time on the occasion of a major birthday celebration of one of my sisters. It is important that their children and children's children can get to talk to their auntie the nun. In this way I can spread the Good News.

***Have you ever doubted that this is the right way of life for you?***

I have never had doubts about my vocation. I got so many signs. But there was a time when the burden was very heavy. Two days after a particular experience, at Holy Communion I was conscious of Jesus within me, it was as if he had put his left arm around my shoulder and said: "You are my mother". With this experience the whole burden fell away, I felt a great lightness. All that had been difficult before now seemed ridiculous.

***Could you or would you be allowed to leave the monastery?***

My being here at all in the monastery of nuns in Schwyz had to be approved by the majority of the sisters of the community. With solemn vows, I made the promise before God that I will remain until death in the Order and in the monastery. It is comparable to the marriage vow; as with marriage, man should not separate what God has joined together.

***Do you know what is going on in the world outside the monastery walls?***

I look at the newspaper and we have a small portable radio. I watch little TV and then only the Catholic station K-TV or Bible-TV. We have no computers or Internet in our monastery. What is the difference between computers and

the Internet? (Note : it was briefly explained to her.)

***Do you take part in political life?***

Yes, I vote by post.

***Do you go out of the monastery grounds every now and then?***

In the first eleven years, I never went outside. In 1973 the dentist Hürlimann could no longer come to the monastery, so I had to attend his practice. The night before a dentist appointment I could not sleep, it was as if I had to go to Paris. For some years now I go walking to keep hip pain at bay - to the Gibel of Ingenbohl, to Morschach or to the Tschütschi.

***What do the sisters live on?***

We bake altar breads and have old age pensions as well as gifts from benefactors who are grateful for the daily prayer.

***Do you feel supported by the people of Schwyz?***

Yes, yes, very definitely. No monastery has as much support as we do. You can tell this from the evening prayer on every first Tuesday of the month (8 p.m.) to which many people come. The people are so good to us. We're very thankful for that.

***At present, how many sisters live in the monastery?***

Now we are 9. In 1962, when I joined, we were 40.

***What does the future look like?***

We can't tell. In the Church a break with the past is discernible. We are here for God and put our fate in his hands. He will see to it. In 1483 there were three sisters in the monastery, round about 1550, only one, sister Verena Gru was prioress. She admitted new sisters on her deathbed. Then there came an upturn in 1629 and in 1639, the present monastery building was erected.

***How is your day organised?***

At 6.10 a.m. the day begins with morning prayer, Lauds, as prayed in all monasteries and also by all priests. Around 7.00 a.m. Holy Mass,

followed by contemplation. Breakfast is at 8.00 am. We pray the midday office at 10.50 a.m., followed by lunch. At 1 p.m. we have spiritual reading, then the office in choir at 3 p.m., at 4.30 p.m. in Lent, the months of May and October we pray the Rosary; we sing Vespers at 4.45 p.m. at other times. After that is contemplation and Rosary in choir. At 6.15 pm we have supper. At 7.20 p.m., we ring for Compline (night prayer). The great silence is at 9.15 p.m. until after breakfast. During the day we don't talk much, only at recreation after lunch and the evening meal. Between the prayer times, we are busy with work.

*At midnight, one can hear the familiar ringing of the monastery bells in Schwyz. Who rings them?*

For several years now they have been electrified. The office was formerly at this time. This is no longer so. We wanted to turn off the ringing at midnight, but the local people asked us to keep it. They told us that this peal of bells was so familiar to them. Some people pray when they hear this bell or know that they should go home from the pub.

*Has your monastic life changed since 1962 ?*

In 1962, it was much stricter. It would have been considered a mortal sin to put even a toe outside the monastery walls. I never believed that. Until 1972, we slept on straw mattresses. Then, the women of Schwyz raised funds for beds. We are still using these beds today and are very grateful for them. The altar bread bakery was modernized. Before, hosts were baked from Monday morning to Saturday evening. With the new machine after 1976, we bake enough on one day for about three weeks. In 5 o'clock in the morning we used to hear the monastery mill run by Paul Etter starting up. The mill was demolished in 1986.

*Do you have a garden or keep animals?*

Until 1990, we had between two and six pigs and forty chickens. Also, we had a beautiful vegetable garden and 105 fruit trees. Now there are only 55. Fifteen years ago 38 dwarf fruit trees were planted, and the tall trees died off. Where

the vegetable gardens were is now grassed over. Holy silence reigns in the stables.

*Were there also renovations of the buildings?*

The inadequate heating was replaced. The small wood burning stoves and the many chimneys sticking out of the roof disappeared. In the parlour, the triple grille was removed and made more pleasant. In the nuns' choir, the wood-fired stove was replaced by warm air heating. The bells were electrified by a benefactor. The domestic bell was replaced by an electrical chime. The kitchen was modernised, replacing coal with gas and electricity. A 100-litre hot water tank used to be suspended from the kitchen ceiling, and that had to suffice for all. Now, there is hot and cold water all over the house.

*Do you feel that the Church has lightened the strict regulations of earlier times?*

After the Council, we changed our veils. Until 1978 the office was prayed and sung in Latin. Then we began to use the new German language psalters. For some special feasts, we have retained the Latin.

*Is it possible for you to fulfill personal desires?*

We sisters have no money. If we need something, it is allocated to us. I am very frugal. I cut open the tube of toothpaste to get out the last bit. I'm not short of anything. There is nothing I need. I don't feel restricted, I'm fine here.

*Does the community also participate in parish life, or do you keep yourselves to yourselves?*

We pray daily for the parish. In the context of preparation for the Sunday after Easter first communion children often come in groups. We explain to them how the hosts are made. I have found that many children do not understand the Holy Mass. Therefore I explain the Eucharist to them. I want to inspire them about Jesus. It often takes years before they are grateful to him. It is the most important thing in life that you have friendship with Jesus. I tell the children: "You must make Jesus your friend now, don't wait."



***Is this your religious message?***

Jesus lives in us since our baptism. We can discover him within and thus light up the whole of heaven inside us. Our goal is to share the Gospel and strengthen people in the faith.

***Identity***

- Name : Hofstetter Elisabeth, Sister Agnes
- Birthday: November 16, 1939
- Occupation: Nun
- Entered the monastery: 31 May 1962
- First Profession : February 2, 1964
- Hobbies: I have no time for them
- Favorite activity: Doing what I am told to do.
- Favorite food: What comes to the table.
- Favorite drink: Water

Original: English

***Pray for...******Pray for Bleeding-Africa !!***

We had just gained our independence from the British. I was still a teenager when we learnt a song that was entitled... Drum-Beats of Africa. The song spoke of what those drum-beats were saying, namely "freedom from disease, hunger and hate". Do these still exist? We will see....

In this article, I want to highlight some of the pains and sufferings the Africans endure today.

This is just so that we, as women of prayer can pray for our brothers and sisters afflicted in many different ways. We already are aware of most of these things but a reminder helps us to bring them to the Lord in our prayer. The Black continent, Africa has known such evils as not many other continents have known. I am thinking for example of the Horrible -Slave Trade that saw the death of so many of our people and misplaced so many others, driving them away from their loved ones and cherished homes. Yes it is an old evil but nonetheless its marks and wounds are visible to this day

and one cannot help remembering it. We see such marks for example in that our people are spread in many parts of the world as a result of the Slave- trade (although there are other reasons.) But God who writes straight with crooked lines used the situation to give us our Sister Chikaba, OP. whom we hope one day will be canonized. Before her however we have the famous St. Martin de Porres and may be others I am not aware of. But how many of us even know these holy people?

In our own day, we have witnessed much pain and struggle in such countries as Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somali, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and of late Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and on the list continues. I will only say something short about some of them for now. Some are suffering because of the corruption and greed of their leaders. This has caused so much death of innocent people and one wonders what to make of it all since the wars there are still continuing even after the death of the leader in question like Libya or the stepping down of the leaders. Also one laments what became of the beautiful ideal of "Justice without violence?"

Sudan has had trouble since time immemorial. A big change has occurred because the worst was that North and South were fighting. Now they have been separated and South Sudan has its own President but still poverty, hunger, disease due to poor medical aids and death are still there. People are still not at rest, not at peace. How do people continue with life with all this pain especially when an end to it all seems so remote. How much evangelization can be done in such circumstances? How can people grow and development be achieved? The situation in Somali is not much better. Yes may be there is not as much famine as last year but poverty and all that it brings must still be a

big cause for concern. I think there is even a war going on there.

Democratic Republic of Congo is another country that is going through lots of trouble, fighting and the results of such endless fighting. Congo is a rich country with even rare minerals and I dare think that maybe because of these same minerals, they are suffering. These riches attract people and then greed and corruption claim their right and the result is what we see and hear. In Congo, the mothers and the girl-children suffer the horrible stigma of rape, and mindless sex- abuse and there is so much poverty and of course death. Thousands have been displaced from their ancestral homes and villages; some fleeing with only the clothes on their bodies and in some cases mothers having children on their back. They find themselves traveling through dangerous forests for days as they try to run away from violence and the onslaught of the so called freedom fighters. The adult soldiers take the boys as sex slaves while others are taken as child-soldiers which must be to them like walking to their own graves.

But the Catholics are spread throughout the country where they number 35million in six archdioceses and 41dioceses. The Church suffers with the people but needless to say evangelization is slowed down. The Church also tries to seek peace together with some Congolese of good will in the country as also many people from outside who are trying to help in different ways. The Church as she tries to help is not spared from the death of the hierarchy, the priests, the religious and even the laity. The Congolese must be helped to realize that the responsibility for peace rests first and foremost upon them. May God come to their help.

In February, trouble erupted in Ethiopia. Thousands of Ethiopians who looked very

poor had to vacate their land and homes to give way to some Foreign- Investors. It was such a cruel-looking thing made worse by the fact that whatever the products of the land in the hands of the foreigners would be, would not benefit the Ethiopians, (at least not directly) but would most likely be exported. This of course was ordered by the authorities. A local chief was being interviewed and was saying that they did not want to move even though he knew the government would force them to move away. It is not clear how things are going for them now. But one can only guess that if things continued the way they began that day, they can only be worse now meaning a lot of suffering. In all these countries many people live as refugees here or there. What a life???

Looking at the country of South Africa, one sees a country that is really struggling to free itself from the last cords of the Apartheid Regime and this can be very hard at times. Family life seems to be one of the most affected areas of the society especially where the children and the youth are concerned. Parents are known to discipline properly their children in normal life but in SA if the parents do this they can risk being reported by the children to the authorities as the children have been given that freedom by the government. With life like this there is no end to the problem that children can get into. Evils abound in the society and children have a hard time escaping all these.

Among them, even Satanism finds its way to many. In schools they get into problems with this evil and the chaos it brings to their life is not little. We have had some coming and telling us how they hear voices in their heads and when one follows, you find they have been involved in one way or other in Satanism knowingly or otherwise. Human trafficking is alive here

still plus the legalization of such terrible things as Abortion, Homosexuality, Lesbianism and now there is a move towards legalizing Prostitution. How will they survive in a society of this kind. One dares not judge but it becomes a concern for many who unfortunately can do very little. That is why I ask you to please bring such problems to the Lord for this is the only solution, the only weapon we can use. People need to be enlightened and made to understand what life is all about. Many families suffer because of poverty, poor housing, no jobs, poor family background and so many other problems.

In SA also, Catholic population is very low and the faith needs to be much more deepened which the Church is, must do her best to address.

Going back to my song, has the longed for freedom been attained? NO. May be some at least but there is still so much suffering and we can only ask for prayers that the Lord somehow brings peace, comfort, some happiness and hope to our suffering brothers and sisters.

Original: English