



Monialibus

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers
International Bulletin*



N° 28 January 2013



*“Do unto
me according
to your Word”*

Year 2013: Mary: Contemplation and Preaching of the Word

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The following sisters have collaborated as translators for this issue of Monialibus:
fr. Larry Kelli, op (Ireland.)

Letter of fr. Brian, op

January 2013

My Dear Sisters in
St. Dominic, *Aquam
Sapientiae*

Greetings to all!
May the New Year lead us
to a new and deeper
encounter with the God of life, our God who is
always new and who is constantly renewing us.

This past year I have become aware of a very interesting fact: a number of our monasteries were founded alongside or very near a river or stream. I first reflected on this powerful, life-giving image when I visited the monastery in Lienz, Austria last summer, along with our brother, fr Viktor Hofstetter. A beautiful, rushing river flows alongside this very ancient monastery (which Saint Hyacinth visited in 1218, after receiving the habit from St. Dominic in Rome). A few months later I discovered another lovely river just outside of the walls of the monastery in Langeac, France, reminding me that several of the monasteries that I have visited are next to or very near rivers and streams. Some others that come to my mind are Korea, Santa Catalina in Arequipa, Peru, and the new monastery in Squamish, B.C., Canada. And the list goes on.

Then another surprise came to me this week, while reading one of the SHOP History booklets published by Sr. Barbara Beaumont, OP ("1207-1215 *Where was Dominic?*"). Speaking of some of the land grants given to the first community of Sainte-Marie of Prouilhe, there is a reference (in an article by fr Elie-Pascal, OP, whom many of us remember with great fondness) to, "plots of land on the boundaries of the monastery around the 'old castle' of Prouilhe [which] gave access to 'St Mary's Spring', the source of fresh water" (p. 15). So I was happily surprised to discover that the Order itself was born near a spring of fresh water! And, of course, we cannot forget the Well of our Holy Father Dominic, directly beneath the altar in the Church of our nuns in Caleruega!! Yes, the same Dominic whom we invoke as *Aquam*

Sapientiae, the Water of Wisdom, each time we sing the *O Lumen*.

Our Holy Scriptures are filled with references to the waters of life. In the Book of Genesis, a mighty Ruah-wind sweeps over the dark waters, out of which we hear God's creative voice. We know that Moses struck the rock in the desert, bringing forth a gushing river for the people of Israel and their livestock (Num. 20:10; see also Ps 78, 105 and 114). Several centuries later, Isaiah the prophet announced, "I will open up rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the broad valleys; I will turn the desert into a marshland, and the dry ground into springs of water" (41:18). And it is the Prophet Exekiel who offers us the magnificent image of the Temple as the source of the River of God's life and love which flows out to the whole world (Ez 47).

Sisters, this is God's promise to us!! Does this not fill us with hope and joy?

We are reminded of our own thirst for God in one of my favorite Psalms: "As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My being thirsts for God, the living God. When can I go and see the face of God?" ... Deep calls to deep in the roar of your torrents. All your waves and breakers sweep over me. At dawn may the LORD bestow faithful love that I may sing praise through the night, praise to the God of my life" (Ps 42:2-4.8-9).

What does it mean for our monasteries to be places where people come to drink from the Spring of Living Water? How do we live with conscious gratitude for the gifts of baptism and the Eucharist – both flowing like a river from the side of the Crucified Christ (Jn 19:34)? John, the Evangelist, also reminds us that it is the Lamb himself who will shepherd all of God's people to the springs of life-giving water, wiping away every tear from our eyes (Rev 7:17). Here in Santa Sabina, we contemplate this mystery everyday, painted in the vault above the main altar.

In the Final Message to the People of God, from the recent Synod on the New Evangelization (at which fr Bruno and other Dominicans participated), we read:

“Like Jesus at the well of Sychar, the Church also feels obliged to sit beside today’s men and women. She wants to render the Lord present in their lives so that they could encounter him, because he alone is the water that gives true and eternal life.”

Is a monastery of Dominican nuns not similar to Jesus, sitting at the well, welcoming the thirsty world to drink of the waters of life, “the deep Sea of Peace”? As a friar, it may be that I identify more with the Samaritan woman who, having tasted the life-giving water, runs to tell the others the Good News. But Sisters, I believe that your mission, equally *apostolic*, is to open your hearts (and your monastery doors!) and invite the thirsty world to enter and drink of God’s unconditional mercy and love. The Master of the Order, fr Bruno, has said on several occasions this year that all Dominicans make *one vow* – the vow to preach. Sisters, you preach each time you share the Living Water of God’s Word with our thirsty world!

Again from the Synod:

“Our work, as Pope Benedict XVI told us, can seem like a path across the desert; we know that we must journey, taking with us what is essential: the company of Jesus, the truth of his word, the eucharistic bread which nourishes us, the fellowship of ecclesial communion, the impetus of charity. It is the water of the well that makes the desert bloom. As stars shine more brightly at night in the desert, so the light of Mary, Star of the new evangelization, brightly shines in heaven on our way. To her we confidently entrust ourselves.” (n. 14).

May Jesus, the Living Water, bless our thirsty hearts with the Water of Wisdom, so that we can lead others to the River of Life! And may Mary, deep Well of faith, accompany us along the way.

friar Brian, your brother in the Holy Preaching

Some news and information from the Promoter of the Nuns:

- Our International Commission of Nuns meeting in Ireland was a most blessed experience! We thank the nuns of Drogheda for their marvelous hospitality and for the contemplative atmosphere of their monastery.
- The recent Assemblies of Nuns in Europe and North America and the meetings of Prioresses and Federal Councils in Spain, France and Italy have been gatherings filled with hope and realism (see the stories in this *Monialibus*). The Master continues call all of the Order to be courageous in embracing the future. We are challenged to see the merging and uniting of communities not as death, but as a sign of hope and renewal, trusting in the Spirit’s power to recreate us and breathe new life into the Order.
- Another topic that the Master continues to place before the monasteries is the need to combine efforts in the area of initial formation. Is it just and wise to form a novice *alone*? Can a community truly discern a new sister’s capacity to live Dominican life if she only relates to sisters who are more like her “mothers” (the novice mistress, the prioress and the older, professed sisters)? The Master is inviting each region to strengthen common formation programs, a common Ratio for sisters in formation, and common meetings and formation for novice mistresses. There are several regions that are already involved in wonderful common formation initiatives.
- Several monasteries in Spain recently came together for a workshop on caring for the elderly and infirmed sisters in their monasteries. Is this not something that can be repeated in other regions? See the report in this issue of *Monialibus*.
- **DOMUNI** – Beginning this year, there are new opportunities for nuns to study philosophy, theology and religious studies via the Dominican “DOMUNI”

online University. For any monasteries or sisters interested, for English go to: <http://www.domuni.eu/en/>; for French: <http://www.domuni.eu/fr/>; and for Spanish: <http://www.domuni.eu/es/>

- The process of *foundation* for new monasteries in Bolivia, Vietnam and soon in Benin continues to go forward (the monastery in India was canonically “founded” two years ago). In these economically difficult times, the Nuns’ Fund of the Order is very low and therefore limited in how much it can help these new monasteries. If any monastery feels called to give a gift to a needy monastery, or would like to support some sisters who hope to be able to study in the DOMUNI programs, please contact either the Syndic of the Order, fr Hilario Provecho, OP, or write directly to the Master. We are most grateful to two Spanish monasteries that have given generous gifts towards the purchase of land for the new monastery in Bolivia.
- In the last meeting of the International commission of Nuns, we spoke at length about *Monialibus*. We give thanks to God for this periodical that unites us, and we give thanks to the sisters who have served as editors. Sister Isabel María, from the monastery of Murcia in Spain, is doing an excellent job! To help her we have created a team of assistant editors, who will help Sr. Isabel María with editing the articles in the different languages. Sometimes we see that an article for *Monialibus* is a bit too long. We ask you to please understand if an article that you send must be edited/shortened. Thank you.

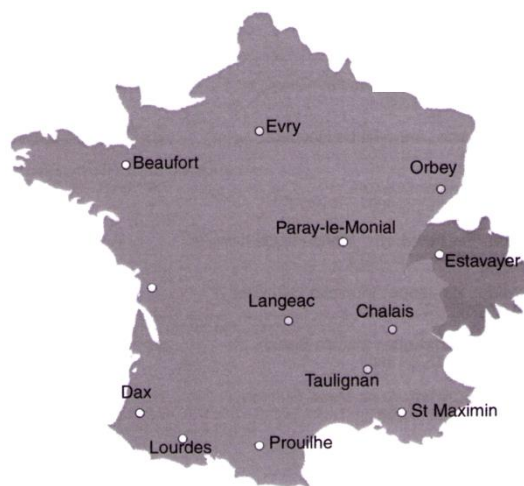
Original: english

Echoes from France

With this issue, the bulletin monialibus begins a new section, “Echoes from the Regions.” Each region of Dominican nuns worldwide will have

a chance to present itself and say something about life in the different communities of the region.

When I asked the French monasteries how they wanted me to present them, several sisters suggested that I show how the Dominican monasteries fit into the rich spiritual patrimony of our country. I offer you, then, a little historical/spiritual tour of France.



You all know Prouille, at least in name. It is there that our first sisters, brought together by Dominic, settled in 1206. In the last ten years the community has been living an international experience and it is now the most numerous of our communities.

By 1206 a monastery had already been in existence at Chalais for more than a hundred years! Hermits called “Chalaisians” lived there, and Carthusian monks succeeded them. After the French revolution, Lacordaire took up residence at Chalais in order to restore the Dominican Order in France. Since the 1960s it has been a community of Dominican nuns who have been keeping the prayer watch.

Orbey, a small monastery in Alsace, descends from the great monastery of Unterlinden which was founded in 1232 at Colmar, one of the holy places of Rhineland mysticism. Together with their brothers in Strasbourg, the nuns continue the centuries-long Dominican presence in Alsace.

And Estavayer-le-Lac in French-speaking Switzerland? With the two German-speaking Swiss monasteries, Estavayer is one of the oldest Dominican monasteries; in it, praise has never

been interrupted. In 2016 it will celebrate 700 years of existence.

Langeac, where Blessed Agnes lived, was founded in 1623. Beatified in 1994, Agnes is often invoked on behalf of the unborn in the womb, and for the holiness of priests.

Evry descended from the ancient Monastery of the Cross in Paris (1637). Today it is a contemplative presence in a new and very cosmopolitan city.

Other monasteries, though less ancient, are situated in places of great spiritual significance. This is the case with Lourdes (1889) where the Dominican monastery seems to overhang the sanctuaries and the grotto where Bernadette was asked to pray for sinners. The sisters live in the rhythm of the pilgrimages, especially the Rosary pilgrimage which brings together the brethren of the two French provinces.

St-Maximin is the place where the relics of St. Mary Magdalen are kept. According to tradition, it is the place to which she came in order to live out her days in prayer and penance in the grotto of la Sainte-Baume. The place has been entrusted to the care of the brethren since the 13th century. The nuns founded a monastery there in 1872, but the growth of the city made it necessary for them to construct a new building, to which they moved four years ago.

Paray-le-Monial, where Jesus showed his heart to St. Margaret-Mary, is a place of many gatherings. The vocation of the community is contemplation of the Heart of Jesus in the mysteries of the Rosary.

Still other monasteries have flourished where God sowed them.

The community of Taulignan was sown in the south of France in 1957, in the midst of the grape-vines and the lavender. With its project of organic agriculture, it responds to a desire of the diocese: that the monastery be a spiritual centre from which radiates a Christian way of living with care for the ecology.

The sisters of Beaufort settled in 1963 in an old Breton manor. Their influence radiates even to the Netherlands because of the Dominican lay fraternities which are attached to them.

Dax is the result, sixteen years ago, of a union among several monasteries. They will celebrate in December the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the first of these houses. But there is no question of living in the past. Seven "sisters preachers" of the community are going to collaborate with the OP brothers of Lille to conduct a "Retreat in the City" on the Internet during the Lent of 2013. They are already recording the videos for vespers.

The number of nuns in the communities of France varies from eleven to twenty-eight sisters. These monasteries, together with the monasteries of "La Reunion" and of Oslo, form the Federation of Our Lady of Preachers. This federation has a supple structure, and its goal is to promote mutual acquaintance, help, and formation. We have an assembly every four years to elect a president and her council but we do not have a federal house as Spain and Mexico do.

The prioresses meet every year and the federation organizes several formation programs: an annual ten-day theology program for sisters in initial formation (there is a five-year cycle); meetings for novice mistresses (open to the brethren and to sisters of congregations); programs for bursars.....

Among monasteries which are close enough geographically there are sometimes special links, not to mention the vivid interpersonal bonds existing between sisters of diverse communities. Every four years we organize a special time together. This year there were the beautiful Federation Days at Citeaux, a report of which you will find farther on in this bulletin.

We communicate by a twice-yearly bulletin called "En Chemin" ("On the way"), which gives news from the monasteries and reports on special meetings and programs in one or other community. But some years ago we invented "Fed'info" (Federation information): each community can send a message by Internet to ask for prayers, give information, invite to a special event in one or other of the monasteries. It is a very small initiative, but it has given us much joy to have news from other communities more frequently than had been the case.

Currently, we are going through a period of uncertainty. Entrances are rare. We have a hard time discerning what is the will of God in our time. Our sisters of Evry have taken the painful decision of closing their monastery. The Federation will support them in various ways in the next months in order to find places where our sisters will be able to pursue their Dominican vocation. Other monasteries have started to reflect on their future.

This year we are trying an "itinerant Federation novena" to ask our Lord what He wants of us. Each monastery prays in turn for our communities for nine days, in the manner which suits them best: intentions at Lauds and Vespers, a Compline procession which is a bit more solemn than usual (it seems that in our federation we are very fond of candles!).... At the end of the nine days, a "Fed'info" is sent on with news. This simple idea has greatly energized our communion and given us much enjoyment.

Begun at Prouille (of course!) on August 8, our novena – after some days of common prayer - will finish on Gaudete Sunday. On that day Mass in each monastery will be celebrated with a large Host made by our sisters at Dax. Communion of Communions!

Come back to this section in the next Monialibus. Sr. Vincenza will take her turn by giving you a little visit to the Region of ITALY !

Sr. Isabelle Lepoutre, OP
Estavayer-le-Lac (Switzerland)
Original: French

The Master of the Order, fr. Bruno, participates in two Regional Assemblies

On September 8, 2012 the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadoré, OP, was warmly welcomed to the third Regional Assembly, *EUROMON OP 2012*, of prioresses and delegates from the Dominican monasteries of

the region 'Europa Utriusque'. The meeting was held on September 5-10, 2012 near Krakow in Poland. In attendance were nuns from thirteen monasteries in Austria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Lithuania, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland, along with fr. Brian Pierce, OP Promoter General of the Nuns; fr. Viktor Hofstetter, OP (Promoter in the 1990's); fr. Józef Zborzil, Promoter of the Nuns in Poland and fr. Krzysztof Popławski, the Polish Provincial.

Later that same month, on September 22, fr. Bruno arrived for the Second General Assembly of The Association of the Monasteries of Nuns of the Order of Preachers in the USA, which was held Sept. 18 - 28, 2012 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters in Springfield, IL., USA. Other participants included fr. Brian Pierce, OP and Fr. Dominic Izzo, OP, the friar Consultant for the Association. The Guest speakers were the *Director of Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers*, Sr. Barbara Beaumont, OP and former *Socius* for the Order in northwest Europe and Canada, fr. Allan White, OP.

The themes of the two Assemblies were *Freedom and Obedience* (Europa Utriusque) and *That they may have life* (USA/North America region). There were many common themes shared at both assemblies, many of which are captured in the following quotes from fr Bruno: *"The passion of being Dominican creates differences. In the Order we are free together. This freedom is received in dialogue with each other. Dialogue is a spiritual matter; we do not have to be the same to be brothers and sisters. We miss a lot of opportunities that can help us grow together when we refuse to dialogue with our sisters and brothers. We Dominicans dialogue to understand each other and not necessarily to agree. We do this not to have the same identity but to promote communion. Federations and Associations are formed to help us be Dominicans together, and because the Church sees their value."*

On the question of formation he shared these questions and comments: *"What are some of the reasons why monasteries do not participate together? If we want to, then we*

must find ways by which to do so. Can we accept one another's points of view? We have to be patient in the dialogue, but we also have to organize that patience. Young people today are coming from many different 'planets'. If we understand this it will help us to love the world. It is important for novice mistresses to speak freely about what the novices experience in the world. Our nuns are first Dominicans and not just 'generic' contemplative nuns. We must think of the future together with the brothers. What is the mission of the Order if not to announce to the world that the body of Christ is not an institution or building? A monastery is a house for listening, sharing and offering the Word to the world. What is most important for the Order is the manner in which we listen as Contemplative Nuns. We made profession to be preachers. Our vow is a vow of obedience to preach. We preach the God that came [down] to our level. He chose to live with us; we ask for his mercy so that his Word may come into our lives. The vow of obedience is not a game. We like others to decide for us so that when we make a mistake we can blame them. This is not obedience, but a game. St. Thomas said that the mystery of the Incarnation is the advent of mercy. We are preachers of that mercy. Your mission, sisters (and it is the same for the brothers), is to be preachers of that advent. Our only mission is to announce that Jesus is the friend of everyone and he wants to be our friend also. The Order was founded to evangelize; therefore our task is the word of God."



At the Regional Assembly, EUROMON OP 2012, the Master also emphasized *"the need for the nuns to read and share the word of God*

together. It must be at the center of our lives. Every day nuns should give themselves to reading and studying the Word of God. The nuns must make this decision. We need brothers and sisters studying together. The Word of God and Lectio Divina are at the center of LCM. We have to be contemplative because we are preachers. We must learn to live with the Word of God."

In our vocational promotion he encourages us to say, *"Dominican Nuns live with the Word of God,"* and not simply, *"we live the monastic life."* *"We can say to the young, 'come join us so we can make our houses places of the Word'. This is our main observance. When we allow a novice the chance to be formed in common with other novices, it is a service to her freedom and a service to her community. 'Why?' he asked, because the novice does not belong to us, but to God. Our democratic process offers us the chance to give ourselves to God and to let God do something; it is not an opportunity to take and grab something from God.*

Several times the Master made reference to our not being simply *"generic contemplatives."* He also reminded us that, *"Study is the main observance of the Order, for both the brothers and sisters, because our Order's mission is Evangelization. We share the Word through liturgy. Our Order wants to celebrate the Word, like welcoming a friend who comes to visit us. Shared Lectio creates authenticity. We cannot, however, force anyone to be vulnerable before his or her time; we can only create the environment. Let us listen to the Word together, not just so that we can be together, but because togetherness is our only hope.*

Our Master, fr Bruno, defined the role of a prioress as, *"a servant of the coming down of our Lord. The true goal of authority is to leave the first place to God. We need to build a common listening of the word. Who is the one building community, if not the superior who serves the coming down of the Word? How do we leave room for the authority of the Word to come down to us in our communities? I have visited some monasteries where authority is*

seen as 'power' and not the service of the coming down of the Word. He recommended that, "before a prioress assigns authority, it is good for the community to meet and discuss and to name the common good together. Too often we like to have power over others and we call that being a servant. By welcoming the Word together we are asking the Word heal us of all division."



The Master invited the USA/North American Assembly 2012, "to take the Order's joy to the mission. We need the Order's joy; we need to let the truth take hold of us and teach us that we do not need to take ourselves too seriously, because we are not the center of the universe nor are we the glory of the past." He invited the nuns, "not to hold on to all the monasteries in the region, because we cannot continue as usual. We need to have fewer monasteries that are good, so that our sisters can be joyful and give the joy of the Order to the world and to the Church. We have confused our lives by sometimes preferring to stay in the same monasteries instead of giving ourselves over to the preaching mission of the Order. To be old in the Order is not a problem. It is a blessing. Some monasteries are too weak to be joyful. We have to entrust the responsibility of the common good to the young and capable members of the community." He also spoke some very challenging words to us: "In the world, when faced with problems 'normal people' have to sell things. Have we become too attached to our properties? We blame 'autonomy' as the reason why we are not being able to move. But the real problem is the vow of poverty. We like to be owners. Are we living in joy or are we running cloistered monasteries?"

"We say, 'I profess in this monastery, therefore I am autonomous.' This is a

disconnected autonomy – a postmodern illusion. We say that young people want their autonomy to do what they want, but are we not doing the same thing? Autonomy is not achieved through disconnection because of differences. It is through dialogue that we can learn why each other is this way or that way. What service can we give to the Church today? Are we open to a true dialogue with those who may seem different? Communion is not built; it is received. It is a gift for which we must beg."

We know that all the monasteries in the region will not survive, so we have to make a dream draft or plan. So, where do we want to see monasteries today? When you have made your dream draft, then invite the provincials and the brothers to sit down with us and help us to look toward the future mission together. Then discuss with your communities and take some steps in faith. It may not always be the weak monasteries that must be closed; sometimes it is best to close a strong one and help a weak one. There is only one common mission, and we build our communities, the Order, and the Church through communion with each other."

"Dominican nuns have a specific way of life; we are not Benedictines. Yes, we have to live somewhere and have stability. But where? In the Word of God. The Word of God is the house for Dominicans. The Word of God is our stability."

Sr. Anna Marie Pierre, OP
Monastery of Mary the Queen, USA
Sr. Marie Josefa Strettiova, OP
Monastery of Dominican Nuns
Prague, Czech Republic
Original: english

Federation Days at Citeaux

In a time of fragility for most of the monasteries, our French Federation was able to bring together more than fifty sisters for three days of Federation meetings at Citeaux. The theme was "Dominican Nuns and the Word of God." All the monasteries of the Federation except Evry were represented by delegates from

one to nine in number. Evry was very close to us in our thoughts.

In 2007 there had already been a federation trip to the sanctuary of Rocamadour. Then at Chalais there was a retreat preached by the Master of the Order. Each time, everyone returned home strengthened in her Dominican vocation, nourished by the teachings and the personal encounters.

For the recent Federation days, which were neither retreat nor assembly, the federal Council had devised a program which joined together: masterful teachings, bearing of witness, roundtable and small-group sharing, participative workshops, common celebration of the liturgy, words from brothers, from sisters, and even from Cistercian monks - all in a good balance between times for silence and times for speaking.

But why choose Citeaux, cradle of the Cistercian Order, for a Dominican gathering? It was a Cistercian house that St. Dominic and his Bishop were passing near at a crucial moment, after their first visit to the pope and just before the gathering at Montpellier. For us to come to Citeaux, then, was a little like putting our steps in those of St. Dominic and rediscovering, as he and Diego did, fundamental aspects of our monastic life. The Cistercian monks offered us hospitality as wonderful as it was simple and fraternal. We could meet the community each day at the Liturgy, as well as at a sumptuous buffet prepared in our honor. We should mention among their contributions to our meeting the lecture/*lectio* on the Cortona "Annunciation" of Fra Angelico, given by Brother Bernard, a Cistercian, with the help of a Power-point presentation.

One of the riches of these federation days was having to work in unaccustomed ways. The **round table** on Study of the Word of God was one of these sessions, new to us, which were very fruitful. Since we cannot recount everything, we offer only some echoes here.

The round table brought together: two nuns, Sr. Marie of the Cross of the St-Maximin monastery and Sr. Marie of Langeac; two monks, Benoit and Frederic; two Dominican friars, Pascal Marin and Patrick-Dominic Link;

and our [federation] Assistant, fr. Denis Bissuel, as leader.

Fr. Denis began vigorously by recalling that "the consecrated life is born from the Word of God and receives the Gospel as its rule of life," that the following of Christ is "a living exegesis of the word of God," and that "the Word of God is given us precisely in order to build community" (*Verbum Domini*, nn. 83 and 86). It was within this frame that the six interventions were to be situated. Each person had about ten minutes to speak - which held everyone to being clear and concise!



The first question asked of three of the participants was: **"What does study of the Word of God bring you by way of knowledge of God and of human beings?"**

For Sr. Marie of the Cross, it is a matter of "knowing this God who speaks and what his language is."

Brother Benoit of the abbey cited the Cistercian Constitutions: "*Lectio divina* fosters faith; it is a source of prayer and a school of contemplation."

Brother Pascal took the model of language to express the goal of study which gives us words for receiving the Word, a language to unify our thought and our being, and also permits us to win silence by quieting the brouhaha of contradictory thoughts.

The three participants underlined in their own way the link of study of the Word to community: "Study forms a community which keeps to the route," according to Sr. Marie of the Cross. *Lectio divina* is an opening to fraternity for Brother Benoit, who used a comparison between the Baptist's preaching and the

preaching of Jesus: Jesus was the one who could see brothers. And Brother Pascal spoke of the benefits of a “community of study.”

A second question – **“What is the link between study and *lectio divina*?”** - was posed to the other three round table participants.

Sr. Marie began with her own journey: a life of study which preceded the experience of *lectio*, the luminous evidence of the Word of God which one day called to the point of being a temptation to abandon study...except that God’s visits blotted that out! Then established itself between study and *lectio*, to avoid subjectivism, fundamentalism or sentimentality in reading the Word, to have a deeper understanding of the literal sense and to grasp the extent of the reception of a text in the great Jewish and Christian traditions. The exigences of study include a demand for one vision of myself and the world, of my faith and the faiths which surround us. The questions of our contemporaries can then be ours and intellectual work is fulfilled in the prayer of intercession.

Brother Frederic of Citeaux set his tone with a saying from a man of experience: “the attentiveness our spirits does not far exceed that of our backsides.” Comparing the intellectual life to a stomach, he deduced that not everyone can assimilate the same nourishment. But he showed how each intellectual effort can be transformed in the spiritual life: with time, life and prayer become only one reality.

For Brother Patrick-Dominic from the convent of Nancy, *lectio divina* permits a savoring and loving knowledge of God; study is necessary for new understanding of the God’s Word.

Following this time of presentation, there was discussion bearing on the content of study (Can one read everything? Is everything good to read?), with particular attention to the question of the historical truth of the Scriptures and the state of study on this point.

Each of the participants bore witness in a very personal way to a lifegiving experience of study and of *lectio*. In no case is it a matter for them of accumulating knowledge, or of a quest that is solely intellectual. Study and *lectio* together open a path which leads at the same

time to the unification of our being and to an opening to otherness, often through the giving up of what we might have “known.”

On the last day, the participants initiated the discussions. Questions about the future were brought up, sometimes with a touch of uneasiness but also with much hope, for the three days had anchored us in the strength and beauty of our charism as Dominican nuns. We had experienced, touched, the vivid life of our life, a call to joy, a call to confidence, a call to perseverance and to fruitfulness. That is what shone out in the festive closing evening, which should have taken only an hour but which lasted until...one o’clock in the morning!

Sr. Marie of Langeac (introduction)

Sr. Pascale of Chalais (roundtable)

Original: french

Federal Nursing Course

Dear Sisters:

As the Federal Mother reported in her latest circular, the nursing course requested by the last Federal Assembly was held in the Spiritual Center of the Heart of Jesus, Valladolid, from 8 to 11 November last.

32 sisters from 16 communities of the Federation were present, among them some councillors who came earlier for the Council meeting. The course was given by Mrs. M^a Isabel Collado Martínez, a head nurse with 30 years of professional experience and a great humanity. As our teacher, Maribel, is a woman of faith and a sister of our own Sister Maria Flora, our Dominican monastic setting was very familiar and dear to her. She participated with us in the Eucharist and in the Liturgy of the Hours. And above all, she communicated to us her passion for relieving the sick, never tiring of answering the innumerable queries from everyone about all kinds of illness. Her knowledge and experience were greatly appreciated.

They have been a wonderful times for the fraternity which existed among the sisters, with different ages and nationalities, and with the atmosphere of prayer and work. The

program was organized with a good balance reached so as to be able to celebrate the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours in community, having long moments of personal prayer in the morning and evening, four daily classes which were well done, and even some time shared together on an outing or visit to the center.

In the introduction, each participant had to present herself with their name, their community, and speak of the expectations which they had of the course. It was very beautiful to hear the different experiences of each sister. The topics which were touched are already known to you: " Bedridden patients and senile dementia-Alzheimer's. " Maribel developed them with the clarity, simplicity and many concrete examples. Sometimes she showed a DVD which enabled us to see what she was explaining. We learned about many necessary aspects about the care and attention of the elderly and sick sisters. As the Federal Mother had taken responsibility for the recording of the conferences, you will receive them. I encourage you to listen to the lesson about the emotional aspects, as a community, as it can be of help to everyone and give much guidance. The topic of " the care of the caregiver " is also very interesting and necessary. The theme of " the emotions " began with a practical exercise, singing and dancing, in this way positively activating the endocrine hormones which produce a sense of well being in a person. The person who most animated the dancing was the Federal Mother, who was invited to take the stand to serve as a model. At all times the joy of salvation was present.

On Saturday at noon three young men, Rafa, Antonio and Ciro , who are currently doing the pre novitiate at San Gregorio of Valladolid, came to the meeting. All three are members of the Province of Bética. We had a space for recreational music where we could enjoy ourselves, with the piano played by Rafa and the Ciro and Antonio doing the singing. They told us about their vocations and an important fact for us is that all three have been supported by the nuns in their first steps towards the Order. We promised them that we

would continue to accompany them with our prayers, asking for their perseverance, and for their parents also, because some do not understand, or accept, their son's vocation.

The last day had a very tight schedule in order to finish all the topics. Classes were easily prolonged with the questions, and at the end even more. But we could end with the delivery of a folder which contained all the topics discussed and this beautiful wish as the culmination of it all:

"If you can heal, heal.

If you cannot cure, sooth.

If you cannot sooth, comfort.

And always LOVE.

We had had you all very much present, especially our elderly and sick sisters. And as in the Spirituality Center you can really feel the Heart of Jesus beating, which wraps us up in His love, we have been much more attracted by a thirst for this love, and joined in the fire of that Heart which loves us so much.

THANKS ! Federal Mother, for this beautiful experience and thanks to all for your participation and for the joyful fraternity.

Sor María de la Iglesia Aristegui O. P.
Monastery of Santorini, Greece
Original: Spanish

Echoes of the meeting of the
International Commission of Nuns
October 6th – 15th, 2012
Monastery of Saint Catherine of Siena
(Drogheda, Ireland.)

This year's annual meeting of the International Commission of Nuns, has taken place in the Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena, Drogheda, Ireland. Last June, Dublin hosted the International Eucharistic Congress, and the community of Drogheda, being essentially Eucharistic, hosted our meeting this year. This monastery takes its life especially from the Eucharist, which has been in solemn exposition for the whole day, for almost a century. The atmosphere of prayer, silence and contemplation, was palpable in every corner of

the house, and the both fraternal and intimate community has helped us to live out our work in the Commission more intensely.

Our meeting began on the 7th, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The themes for this year focused on some topics proposed by Fr Brian:

1. New things that have happened this year in your region.
2. Caring for older sisters.
3. The joint formation program.
4. How the nuns preach.

The work presented by the various members, varied according to the reality of each region. The care of the elderly sisters is something which concerns the monasteries which cannot do it properly, and those which do not always have the means and appropriate possibilities. But although there are residences which can receive the sisters, most communities try to look after them to the best of their ability, and there are regions where the sisters can be cared for in their own monastery by the other Sisters.

Training is a burning topic and one which is of particular interest to the communities, with the programmed study sometimes remaining a subject to be addressed. However the formation at the Federation or Regional levels, in one's own monastery or diocese, is something which is well consolidated. In most places, the nuns have shared courses, of several days or weeks duration, and in the case of some federations, the entire course, especially for novices and nuns in formation, with the possibility of sharing it with male novices and seminarians. The courses for the nuns continue to be shared in almost all regions.

Regarding the question of how the nuns preach, we are almost all agreed that the best method we have is prayer, silence and the common life. In some places the sisters discuss the Gospel or the short reading, reading and sharing it in community. The reflection also comes from Lectio Divina, which is done in community. In other regions, the nuns see preaching as being the special care taken with the liturgy, a job well done, the parlour when on

occasion people sometimes come for help and advice. Also many things are done through Internet, in communion with the friars ... or in publications at the level of our own federations, provinces or dioceses. The theme of Lectio Divina, which is shared so much in community and with outside groups, is of particular interest in the different geographical areas, when monasteries are offered as places of meeting and prayer. This is something which is important for us, given the current situation we are experiencing, as a means of sharing what is ours and to create a deeper knowledge and awareness about our contemplative life. This can also help when it comes to getting vocations. One of the fundamental avenues which the nuns have for preaching, is through the lay fraternities. The lay fraternities, in the cities and towns where there is a monastery, are directed and accompanied by the nuns. Through their fortnightly or monthly meetings, they share the Word of God, or share themes related to Dominican spirituality which can help them in their Christian lives, and in their commitment within the Order. There are also formation courses which the community shares with the

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Another interesting element is the emergence of prayer groups around some monasteries, in which there is a structure of reflection, study and lectio around the Sunday Gospel texts, and to which lay people, both young and old, feel attracted in many instances. For them, a monastery is a place of all that is exceptional, and the prayer life of the nuns attracts them and questions them, given the emptiness, loneliness and despair in which

many people unfortunately find themselves. The shared liturgy, especially the prayer of Vespers, is also a point of meeting and of attraction, especially for those people who devote time to prayer, or even have begun to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

This year's meeting has had a more formative aspect than those in the past. So, one day fr. Pablo Condrac op, of the Province of Argentina, spoke to us on "The Prioral Service in the Dominican Life." Another day, the person who acted as translator, Monica Maher, who is from New York and has been a lay Dominican for 25 years, spoke on "Women in the Bible". The next day it was fr. Brian who spoke wonderfully to us about "Monastic Silence" and its impact on our lives, and about everything which is a help to monastic silence. The topics were well shared, through group dynamics, with some sisters from the Drogheda community participating. It helped us in every sense, in the formative and the reflective aspects, and in the process of responding to the hard work required for meetings. All were very satisfied with it, and committed themselves to doing it, in so far as possible, in future meetings.

We also had a break in the middle of the meeting, and were able to enjoy nature, visiting Glendalough and the places where St. Kevin, a monk of the 16th century, lived his contemplative life in communion with God. Fr. Michael Rodgers op, with his background knowledge, accompanied us on the tour. We also visited the Sisters in Wicklow. We had Vespers and supper with the friars in St. Savior's Priory, Dublin. And on Sunday we made the pilgrimage to Knock, in County Mayo, where we venerated the Virgin Mary in an extraordinary celebration, on a day dedicated especially to the Dominican Family and the Virgin Mary to whom the Irish have a special devotion.

And finally, from my notes, I will share some of the words, collected by fr Brian, which have been spoken by the Master of the Order to nuns in different parts of the world. I think they can help us to reflect and make plans for the future:

We make a vow of preachers, this is our only vow. The monastery is the place in which to preach and offer the Word to the world. We make a vow of obedience for the mission of the Order, and this vow is to preach. We ask for God's mercy so that His Word may enter into our lives, and so that the Word will live in us.

What is the mission of the nuns today? - to announce that the Body of Christ is the place where the Word has come down to be with us. The mystery of the Incarnation, is the coming of mercy to us. We are preachers of this Advent, of this coming. The mission of the friars and the nuns, is the same: to be preachers of this Advent.

We have to hear the Word, and share it, together. We all have an hour each day to study the Word of God, and Lectio Divina, which are on the other hand at the center of our lives. The pillar of community life is not being together, but sharing the Word together. The definition of a superior: the servant, the abasement of Our Lord. The Superior is the servant who leaves the first place and space to God. Do we leave room for the authority of the Word and for it to work in us?. Before giving a prioress tasks to do in a monastery, it is better to gather the community together and see how we can do everything well, together. This is what it means to be a servant.

The Order teaches us the joy of contemplation, we need to renew our joy. We need to let joy invade us. Our job is not to maintain monasteries, but to give the contemplative life to the Order and the Church. We cannot continue as we always have done, we have to live with happiness. Sometimes it seems to be more important to us to stay in the monastery than to dedicate ourselves to preaching. Being elderly in the Order is not a problem, it is a blessing, and one must know how to transmit the joy of the common good to the young.

We like to be proprietors, owners. The problem is not autonomy, but the vow of poverty. Do we live in joy or do we simply maintain the monasteries?.

Our vision, or point of view, is not only unique, we must be patient and enter into dialogue.

We say: I made profession in this monastery and I am autonomous, but this autonomy is disconnected. We need to dialogue within our monastery and between monasteries.

We are Dominicans, not "generic contemplatives," and we must talk together among all members of the Order. As Dominicans, we have our home in the Word of God, and this is our stability. We do not make vows to a place, but to live with the Word and in the Word. We have to be contemplatives because we are preachers, and learn to live with the Word of God.

Dialogue is essential, and begins when we try to understand each other. We dialogue to achieve that, to understand each other, not so that we can agree with each other. We want to advance the community, we do not want all to have the same opinion. In the Order we are free, and this opens us to dialogue with others. Being together is the only way to preach communion. Communion is walking together so that we can understand each other. It is not being the same thing.

And that's it. We thank God for giving us this meeting, with the possibility of exchanging dreams and realities, and so we ensure that making this journey together revives our desire for communion and for life.

Let's get to work. The draft of our dreams has to be done.....

Sr María Inmaculada de Jesús Serrano, OP.
Monastery of San José,
La Solana. Ciudad Real. (SPAIN)
Original: spanish

40 years in Mendoza, Argentina.

In July 2012 our community of Our Lady of the Rosary Monastery is celebrating forty years of presence in this Archdiocese of Mendoza, Argentina. This is a community which originated in Spain in the late nineteenth century and which moved to this Argentinian province in 1972. In this chronicle we want to

briefly recount its history and, at the same time, give thanks to the Lord for the loving plans of His providence, toward us.

The Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary was founded in Forcall, a village situated in the northwest of the province of Castellón, Spain, on July 25, 1888, the Solemnity of St. James the Apostol, patron of that nation.

The six founding nuns came from the Monastery of "Corpus Christi" in Villareal, which was founded by the Venerable Mother Inés de Sisternes OP, in 1639.

The life of this monastery developed itself following the charism of St. Dominic, until 1936, the year in which the nuns were forced to abandon the cloister and take refuge in houses of their families, so as not to lose their lives.

Before leaving, the community gathered in the church, and received Jesus in the Eucharist. From then onwards, the monastery was abandoned, and the tabernacle left empty. Following his arrest, the chaplain was executed on September 29th of that year.

The building became home to refugees who came from other places. The monastery church was used for comedy shows and dances, with the presbytery being used as a stage.

On March 25th, 1939, the nuns resumed their regular life. The period after the war was very hard for the Community, as it was for all the people in Spain.

By 1965, due to lack of proper spiritual care of the monastery, the remoteness from urban centers and the truly ruinous state of the building, it was deemed necessary to transfer the whole Community.

And so, on October 2nd, 1966, the monastery building was finally closed. The community, in the hope of finding the place where God wanted them to be, moved to live in the Monastery of "Our Lady of Consolation" in Játiva, which generously opened its doors and its heart to them.

A convent which was under construction appeared in Gandia (Spain). It belonged to the Jesuits. The negotiations to take over the convent were going well, but shortly after the first offer was made, nothing more came of it.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Father of the Federation of the Immaculate Conception travelled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and learned that the friars of the convent of Mendoza had asked, and wished, for a foundation of Dominican nuns in this Archdiocese, whose patron was precisely the Apostle Saint James.

And so it was that, on the 25th January 1969, with the nuns gathered together, their Mother Prioress read them the letter from Assistant Father, who proposed to them a transfer, to create a Monastery in Mendoza:

"The Church in Argentina needs contemplative souls, foci of prayer which, like Moses, raise prayers and supplications to the Lord, for our Argentine brothers and sisters".



Time was given to the community to think about it before making a decision. They went through anxieties and uncertainties, but finally realized that it was God who asked them to make the transfer and all of them gave their "fiat" with love and faith, hopeful of the future, and leaving behind all human security.

Many friars, priests who were friends of the community, the Federal Mother and Assistant Father of the Federation, showed their love and commitment for the project whose principal author was God. In the farewell Mass

in the Federal House each nun was given a missionary crucifix to wear while the choir sang with enthusiasm " We will announce your kingdom, Lord."

They embarked in Barcelona, heading to the promised land ... and reached the port of Buenos Aires on the 29th of November, 1970.

They were welcomed during the following twenty months by the Community of the Monastery "St. Catherine of Siena", who pledged to build them a monastery in Mendoza and to support them economically until the Community could maintain itself.

The Monastery building in the Archdiocese of Mendoza was inaugurated on July 2, 1972, at a place called "The Borbollón" (meaning: gushing torrent). The Assistant Father of the Federation wrote to them at that time:

"Your establishment in the new Monastery is not merely a local or material transfer, but is a true transplant or true planting of the contemplative life in that land of God which is Christianity in Mendoza ..."

Years later, and due to deficiencies in the construction of the building and because of various problems presented by the site of the original monastery, the new Archbishop of Mendoza, the Prior Provincial, the Federal Prioress, and the new Assistant of the Federation, encouraged and promoted the project of moving the community into a new home,

which would be more suitable for their purposes. It was inaugurated precisely on the hundredth anniversary of its foundation, July 25th, 1988, in Villa Nueva (Guaymallén), in the same Archdiocese of Mendoza and built with the help of the Order and of other Monasteries of the Federation .

In the homily during the final Mass to be celebrated in the Borbollón building, the Archbishop said:

For this community, these have been years of desert, of trial, as it was for the chosen people when they made their pilgrimage from Egypt to the

promised land ... all this has been a cross for you, and the fact that you have lived through it together with the Lord, is a motive of thanksgiving for all of us ... may the new building be an invitation to a new life, a more holy life, so that the image of God, the face of Christ, may always be found in each of you. "

God continued to pour forth His mysterious plans on His daughters. Indeed, in November 1992 our Federation Council decided to move the Argentine Federal Novitiate to the Monastery of Mendoza.

Our community opened its arms and its heart to the Common Novitiate, which it had desired so much and with which it had worked previously in all possible ways. A part of the monastery was given over to the Common Novitiate.

In late 2009, the Lord again set His eyes on our Community to entrust us with a new responsibility: the Federation decides to join the two Common Novitiates of Argentina and Chile into one, which is established in Mendoza.

And so we started this Latin American phase, initiated already by the previous reception of two solemnly professed members of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, from Venezuela, who have come to our community to complete their formation.

We do not know what the future holds, but we abandon ourselves to the Providence of God who has always guided us, holding the hands of Mary, asking her that in all circumstances we may be faithful so that He can carry out His holy will fully, in us.

Sor Mónica M^a Moyano
Mendoza (Argentina)
Original: Spanish

Though dying, they preach: an option for life

The dominican nuns in Nijmegen, Netherlands

I would like to tell you a story which recently has moved me deeply. It is the story of our sisters in the Netherlands. Although these nuns are no longer able to live their life in their old monastic building, they still exist canonically as a monastery. They live as a community in a nursing convent of a

congregation of Dominican Sisters who offered them a separate wing in their convent. Thus the nuns have their privacy, and yet are able to avail themselves of the benefits of the convent's care facilities. Whenever they write to me, I am amazed by their deep sense of commitment as Dominican nuns and by their joy. They are content to be part of the Dominican family in the heart of the 'Holy Preaching'. The Master of the Order visited them and blessed their way of life.

The Monastery of Dominican Nuns in Netherlands was founded in 1881 in Venlo. In its prime years it was a big monastic community living in a beautiful large monastery. During the 99 years of their presence in Venlo they founded a monastery in Bambui, Cameroon. This was in response to the invitation of a Dutch bishop who was a member of the African Bishops' Conference. The monastery in Bambui has since become a flourishing community, with many new vocations.

Slowly, the Dutch community was getting smaller and older. No one new entered after 1965, and many older sisters died. The monastery in Venlo, built for sixty nuns, was far too big for a community of twenty, and too expensive to maintain. Thus they began to think seriously about their future. "Finally", says Sr. Tarcisia, the Prioress, "after many community meetings, facilitated by our Brothers, we moved in 1981 to a smaller monastery in Berg en Dal near Nijmegen." At that time, the sisters' ages were spread evenly between 46 and 87. "In Berg en Dal", Sr. Tarcisia concludes, "we were privileged to live another 15 wonderful years. But there, too, our sisters were growing old and needed more care, which we were not able to offer".

Consequently, in 1994, they decided to look for further possibilities. Sr. Tarcisia says: "Since the Order of Preachers is not only contemplative nuns, and since the whole family of St. Dominic holds contemplation in great esteem," the decision was made to transfer together as a community to a nursing convent of the Dominican Sisters in Nijmegen in 1995. The nuns numbered fifteen at that time. Another sister of the community, Sr. Angela, recalls: "When the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Family

invited us to come to their Rosa House in Nijmegen, it was for us like a response to our desire to be able to live the last period of our lives in communion with the Dominican family." Sr. Tarcisia remembers what preceded the decision to move to the Rosa House: "In our community discussions it became clear to us that our contemplative life is not bound to walls. It is God, and God was with us. So as long as we walk in the ways of God, we walk rightly, though it certainly was not easy to move *again!*" For the last 16 years they have been living in the Rosa House, named after St. Rose of Lima, and they are still convinced it is the best solution for their situation. They need not care about many practical things, and therefore are free to live their contemplative life fully. "Here too, we have found many contemplative sisters with whom we feel associated," says Sr. Tarcisia. And Sr. Angela affirms, "We experience here that we have brought with us what is most precious in monastic life, because this is in our deepest selves. We are glad that we may live with sisters and brothers in a religious environment." The mention of 'brothers' occasioned another question to Sr Mirjam, my 'e-mail contact nun': "Who are these brothers?" She explained that the Rosa House is a big convent where some elderly religious priests also live. Therefore, the nuns have the blessing of daily Mass. "Now we experience that it is a grace to be here," says Sr. Tarcisia. "We celebrate the Eucharist together, as well as common prayer in the choir. We also have our meals together. What is important and nice for us is that we have our own living room where we have our recreation, Bible classes, and where we can celebrate anniversaries, etc. It is good to be here together." The nuns participate in the common liturgy in the large chapel, yet they also like to sing some parts of the Divine Office every day in their own little meditation room, drawing from their tradition as Dominican Nuns.

When I asked the Sisters to share with me some of their history, Sr. Tarcisia sent me a letter from which I drew for this article. In conclusion she wrote: "In this last stage of our lives, we hope to be granted another couple of years, so that our task as Dominican nuns in the

heart of the Order may be completed and fulfilled." I hope that the wish of Sr. Tarcisia and her five sisters will be granted, and I want to thank them for their wonderful example. Of course they have been through their own struggles, but God has been with them, and now they are able to sing their *Nunc dimittis* gracefully.

Sr. Josefa OP, Prague, CIMOP
Original: english

Our elderly sisters:

In early June 2012, Brother Brian Pierce, General Promoter of the Nuns of the Order, visited our monastery. He was pleasantly impressed to see how the old and sick sisters live here, and even though he knows that in all communities they are cared for with great affection, he invited us to write something for *Monialibus*.

The community of contemplative Dominicans, in Vitoria, consists of seven sisters. Soon, in September, two young Spanish women will begin the postulancy, one of them from Levante and the other from Andalusia. Of the seven sisters, two of them are sick: one is 93 years old and the other 88. From the time they get up until they go to bed, they stay with us, living the life of the community as much as they can.

In so far as our economic situation has allowed us, we have been installing ramps so they can access all areas of the convent, and thus participate in community activities. We have arranged the schedule of our daily activities keeping them very much in mind. We celebrate the Eucharist in the evening, from Monday to Friday (we are very fortunate that our chaplain, the judicial vicar of the Diocese and Dean of the Cathedral, works in the Bishopric in the mornings). On Saturdays the Eucharist is at 12 noon so as not to anticipate the Sunday liturgy, and to live the liturgy of the day. And finally, on Sundays we celebrate at 11 am. We have arranged a suitable schedule so that the sick sisters may live the great celebration, which is the essential element of our monastic life, together with the community.

In order to take care of them more adequately, we have hired a lady who looks after getting them up, bathing them, and bringing them in their wheelchairs to wherever the Community is, at that time. Then, that same lady continues to clean their rooms and all their personal belongings. In the morning, she takes them down to the workroom. By that time, all the other sisters have sung Lauds, Office of Readings and Mid-Morning Prayer. We have prayed and have had breakfast.

The nursing sister prepares breakfast and the necessary medications for them, as we want to attend them ourselves in so far as possible, and still not be absent from the community. The sick sisters then feel very integrated and useful, doing some small tasks, even though this often hinders the normal routine. We believe that they are the most important.

It is true that in our life the scale of values at work is based on the following criteria: "simple work" shared by all; something which favors the "atmosphere of prayer" ; and finally, "not overwhelming." How our sick sisters enjoy even something as simple as passing a paper from one to another ! They also love to "pray" the rosary which we put out over the PA every day; in their own way, they also "hear" the talk on spirituality or formation which we listen to each day during work. Similarly, when they can, they attend the classes which are given in our monastery. They attend: sometimes they fall sleep, they snore occasionally everything is beautiful !

Before they eat, we pray Midday prayer and the Angelus, in the same room. Then they are given food, and their medicines which are prepared in advance. When the lady who looks after them returns, she puts them to bed and they have their " holy hour " which is longer and, for them, is heavenly. We ourselves continue with the meal, recreation and lunch break.

In the afternoon, the care-giver gets them up, organizes their rooms and brings them to the choir for Mid-Afternoon Prayer, Lectio divina, and personal prayer. We have personal prayer at that time so that later on, before

supper, you can take care of your own chores, without losing any prayer time.

Finally, at 6:40 pm, we sing Vespers, we pray the rosary, celebrate the Eucharist and, at the end of Holy Mass, we sing the Salve along with the sprinkling of holy water and the Antiphon to our father, Saint Dominic. And so our sisters can go to bed "happy" - as when formerly they went to bed after Salve of Night prayer - while we continue our conventual routine.

To conclude this brief article, it is worth noting that while these two sisters, now sick, were at the peak of their physical powers, they showed a complete dedication to the community, one of them as a nurse for many years, and the other as a procurator and in charge of common stock . Always being with the Community was essential in their life. There was no "personal time" for either of them if, at that moment, another sister needed them. They gave themselves generously without measuring time, minutes.....Every moment was an opportunity to show their generosity.

We consider this attitude of fraternal love to be a valuable legacy of theirs. Hence our determination that our two sisters - sick and elderly – don't see themselves as excluded from the activities of the community, by adjusting our schedule to their personal circumstances. It is really not that hard and, moreover, it is beneficial to all.

The Monastery of Santa Cruz de Vitoria (Spain)
Original: Spanish

The "Joyful Brigade" of St. Catherine of Siena

I am a Dominican nun from an Italian monastery. Recently our community experienced the birth of a new project, the fruit of an experience that the Lord placed in my heart during my novitiate (2002-2004). I have always been very impressed with how our Holy Father Dominic allowed himself to be challenged by the needs, questions, anxieties, and thirsts of his time. At a certain point in his life, he felt that God was calling him to quench the thirst of his

brothers and sisters in new ways, through his preaching.

At the beginning of my religious life, I experienced the cry of humanity echoing in the silence of prayer, reaching through the grills of the monastery. This shook the "peace" and "tranquillity" of my heart. I felt very strongly the ways that the men and women of our time experience division, separation, loneliness and individualism, while at the same time hungering for communion and love. This apparent contradiction between the way they live and what they long for is a hidden, unspoken cry, a dramatic plea for help deep within their hearts. We Dominicans, following the example of our Holy Father Dominic, are called to listen to this cry and to try to respond to the emptiness in their hearts through the Word of God – filled with hope and joy. The common life that we live in the monastery - as we well know - is our first response.

In the Church there are different groups and associations that gather persons who share the same vocation, or who are from the same age-group: religious groups, families, consecrated men and women, groups of young people, adults, the elderly ... But perhaps today what the world needs to see in Christian people is a more effective witness of communion and unity.

In a world experiencing loneliness and individualism, I began to experience in my heart that the Risen Christ was proposing a shared path, bringing together people of different vocations, life experiences, cultures, backgrounds, and ages. We all, in fact, share a common baptism and a unique call to holiness. This does not mean that we should all be "the same." In fact, it is important to be oneself, to live faithfully ones own vocation, while respecting and valuing our differences. Each person has unique gifts and this should not be a cause of division among us. It should, rather, enrich us mutually. As St. Paul says: "Bear one another's burdens."

My community invited me to study theology through a distance learning program in Rome. The Lord used this experience to lead me to meet people who have joined us in this new adventure of communion. With my study companions, we have come to realise that theology enriches us and strengthens our faith, and that one day it would be marvellous to be able to give to others what we have received. Many people, in fact, would like to deepen their faith, but do not have the opportunity to study in a pontifical university or faculty of theology, due to limitations of time, money, and work. The experience of meeting people in our monastic parlour, from the earliest days of my life in the monastery, has given me an occasion to perceive the thirst for knowledge that many people have, urging me toward strengthening my own basic theological formation.

In 2010, our group began to meet regularly in the monastery. About a year later, we decided to take a break for a few months, to pray and ask the Lord to enlighten us. We knew well that if it were truly the Lord's work it would continue, in spite of the obstacles. And if, on the other hand, the initiative had been only ours, it would come to an end.

This period of silence and prayer, seemingly barren, was more fruitful in God's eyes than we had realised. God makes use of our defeats to work His own wonders! After months of silence and prayer, during the novena of Pentecost, the Lord gave us a new light, bringing into existence our group's statutes, born from our experience. With these new guidelines, we began anew, placing our community endeavour in the hands of the Virgin Mary, the guardian of the unity of the disciples gathered in the Upper Room and Mother of the Church.

We gave our group a name, entrusting it to the protection of St. Catherine of Siena, who lived (and died!) for unity, and who deeply loved the Church. We experience

her as our mother and teacher. In fact, we want to live our experience *in* the Church, *with* the Church and *for* the Church! The group of disciples that gathered around St. Catherine was known as the "Joyful Brigade", as many of you know. They were laity, religious, priests, common people, educated people, people of all walks of life, culture and backgrounds who shared Catherine's passion for the Church and for unity. Today we, like them, are persons (men and women) from different vocations, age-groups, cultures, and professions – all united by our baptism and the unique call to holiness.

We cannot witness to what we do not know, do not love and do not live. Therefore, for our "Joyful Brigade" it is essential to live in communion (making the Risen Christ present among us), to share in Word and Eucharist (by which the Risen Christ gives himself to us and makes us one), to know Him by way of experience (in love and unity) and through intellectual pursuit (study and common formation). Our regular meetings (every other month) seek to be an experiences of "paradise." We share times of celebration through song and music, expressing ourselves in praise and in the joy of being together in the Lord. After each meeting we return to our daily lives, where we are called to bear witness to what we have experienced together.

Above all, what unites us the most, beyond time and space, is prayer. It is not by chance that our "Joyful Brigade " was born in a Dominican monastery! It seems to me that it is a kind of "transposing" of our Dominican contemplative life into the world. Through our "Brigade" we are all given the possibility to experience the life of the early Christians who shared the Bread and the Word together in joy, praising the Lord and witnessing daily to his Resurrection.

Sr. Mirella Caterina Soro OP
 Monastero di S. Maria della Neve e San
 Domenico (Pratovecchio – Italia)
 Original: italian

Dominic asked of his Sisters and Brothers: Common Life and Obedience

I would like to share everything I have lived in this year of grace, which the Lord has given me. In May 2011, the Master of the Order, Fr Bruno Cadoré OP, had his first meeting with the nuns of the three Federations of Spain. I did not attend that meeting, but I lived it with much anticipation. He insisted very much that the Order has a mission and we cannot lock ourselves away in our own concerns. He made us see, once again, that a large percentage of Dominican nuns from around the world is concentrated in Spain, and that a projection outwards would be good.

Personally, I not only shared these feelings of the Master, but they also disturbed me deeply, and I sat down to give an answer. Actually this concern was with me for a long time, and I just could not find the correct moment to express what I was feeling. But that meeting, and the situation, made me see that it was the right time. I decided to write to Fr Brian Pierce OP and tell him about my concerns. He encouraged me to pursue my desire to go to a community in need of personnel, outside of Spain.

In late August I talked to the mother prioress about the idea and it seemed to her to be crazy. She told me to pray a lot, and not to tell the community about it. So I did. I prayed a lot and I kept quiet about it, but the more I prayed the more clearly I saw that this was what God was asking of me. I know that she also prayed a lot.

In the following conversation I told her that I was still thinking the same, and with even more eagerness. She strongly opposed the idea and still thought it was madness. She again insisted that I pray, and open myself to the will of God, manifested in the sisters. And that's what we did. In late September we had our retreat. In that climate of greater silence and reflection I continued to see that God was asking me to move. I spoke again with the prioress and she said to me - "what if God was asking something else of the community ?" - I

immediately understood that she was referring to me assisting the Federation in the area of formation, as the Federal Assembly had been held in June, and it had been decided to reopen the common novitiate. For this, a novice mistress was needed, and had not yet been chosen.

My response was quick and negative because, as I told her, there were other candidates for this but for what I wanted to do, and for what the Master had requested, there was nobody. But this time she did not send me to pray, instead she reminded me that Dominic asked of his sisters and brothers common life and obedience, and if the Federal Council elected me, the will of God was clearly there. I asked her to let me talk to the Federal mother in order to express my wishes and that she make them known to her Council, so that they would consider them. She did that, and I just waited for God to speak through the sisters.

They rang me on October 1st to tell me that I had been chosen as Novice Mistress; God manifested His will and I accepted it completely. My appointment included the transfer to the community of Santa Maria de Gracia, in Cordoba, the Federal house. It was difficult, but **Dominic asked of his sisters and brothers, common life and obedience.**

The course began in late January 2012. And truly God is not outdone in generosity, because it has been a very rich experience for all. The small community which we make up in this federal monastery, both the formators and those in formation, have really enjoyed and shared moments of grace and blessing. Also, it has been an injection of life for our federation which has seen how one of its main objectives was taken up again, and driven forward again, by all. At the end of the course, the federal mother told the whole community, including the novitiate, and in the presence of some nuns of the federation that, as all of us had made this effort possible, and God had blessed it, so we had to strive and help each in all the other issues and concerns which affect our federation.

With the course completed on June 28, I went to my home community for the celebration of the profession of the brothers and sisters of

the lay fraternity. It had been six months since my move to Córdoba and you could see the effort which the community had made to move on because, although it is large, it has many members of advanced age, and with many physical limitations. But the reality of the community which I had joined was even worse being, as I said before, small and also with older sisters. I felt bad, affected by the two realities which made me think again what the will of God was in such times: that I should return to my community or continue to give this service to the federation. I said nothing, but I realized that we were all feeling the same at that time. And I know it was so, because of what happened that same afternoon.

As it happened, I arrived on a Friday, the day that the community has Lectio Divina in common, with readings of the following Sunday. And on this occasion, the readings of the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time were being reflected. The second reading (2Co 8,7.9. 13-15) read:

"Since you excel in everything: in faith, in word, in knowledge, in the effort and in the love you have for us, distinguish yourself now by your generosity. You know well how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: being rich, he became poor for our sakes, so that you, through his poverty, become rich. It is not about giving relief to others by making things difficult for yourselves: it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply your own need. That is how we strike a balance: as scripture says, He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little did not go short."

Upon hearing this reading, I burst out in tears and we all understood that this was what the Lord was asking of us at this time. His will was being shown, once again in His Word and in the reception by this community of this Word. It was an experience of grace like so many lived in my community, to which I owe so much and which I love so much.

I spent several days with my sisters before returning to the federal monastery. As we parted, I felt it was the community which was sending me once again to that service, and it

was the community which was with me, so I was not alone. Also I have felt, and feel, the support of the federation. Again, I repeat the words of the Federal mother: "Just as we have all made the reopening of the common novitiate possible, and God has blessed it, so we all have to strive and help each other with the other problems and concerns affecting our federation.

Sr. M. Román Montserrat Sánchez OP,
Federal Monastery, Santa Maria de Gracia, Cordoba.
Original: Spanish

A new book

Sr. Mary of the Sacred Heart Sawicki, O.P. of the Monastery of the Mother of God Monastery in West Springfield, MA USA has published her second book. It is entitled *THE HUMMER AND THE HUMMED: A Contemplative Reflection on the Spiritual Life*. Sister sees this as part of our Dominican charism of giving to others the fruits of our contemplation, and of teaching the truth.

Father Master Bruno Cadoré, O.P. wrote a Foreword for the book, and made mention of how images have been used as symbols in Scripture and in the writings of various saints. Eleanor Dooley, S.S.J., D.U. Paris (Sorbonne) wrote an endorsement for the back cover of the book. Peggy Weber, Catholic Communications writer, columnist and producer has also written a brief endorsement and has promised to help promote it in the diocese through the Catholic media.

In this 76 page full color book, the spiritual life is explained in a brief, easy to understand presentation, using the image of a hummingbird. It is excellent reading for busy people, students, people of all ages and states of life, and includes practical guidance for the spiritual journey.

Juan Vela designed the beautiful cover in memory of his sister-in-law, Margaret Giera. Sister Sawicki photographed some of the pictures in the book. June Jacobsen, a Master Photographer, provided Sister with about a half dozen stunning photos, and other photos were contributed by friends.

Sister dedicated the book to St. Mary Magdalen, Patroness of the Dominican Order, and to her dear brother Al, "a seeker and follower of the Lord." He is somewhat of an evangelist in the workplace by the example of his life, and many workers seek him out for advice. Some of his sharings have inspired Sister in the writing of this book. Just before he took his vacation, he came for a short visit, and Sister gave him a copy of the manuscript at that point in its development, in order to get feedback from him. He politely took the manuscript but Sister wondered if he would read it. But during his vacation he sent her an email, saying that he didn't think he would like the hummingbird book, but that it was terrific. "It is just what people need, and easy to understand." That was probably Sister's biggest endorsement!

Sister became familiar with book trailers through a Dominican friar who had done one to promote a book he had written. As a result she did one along those lines for her first book, *CELEBRATION WITH SURPRISES: Dominican Nuns Celebrate 800 Years*. Her "Hummer" book trailer is even better, and you can view it on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lle9LaSB1IA>

Sister will only consider her book a success if it brings people closer to the Lord. She knows that the prayer of the nuns is at the heart of the "holy preaching", and she counts on the nuns' prayers for God's grace to touch the hearts of those who see and read this book.

The book is available on amazon.com as well as at Barnes & Noble. Its cover price is \$16.95 USD.

Original: english

A Cistercian at the Monastery of Estavayer-le-Lac

During the four years of 2005-2009, day after day, at the Monastery of the Dominican nuns of Estavayer, I enjoyed a warm, sisterly welcome, sharing a life of prayer, a life of work,

appreciating the silence and the joyous encounters.

Cistercian life, Dominican life: at once similar and different

Similar: the same climate of prayer, same seeking of God, same attentiveness to each other, same concern for sick sisters and for the elderly, same openness, same welcoming of guests, of sisters' families.

Different: Horarium, Liturgy, spiritual life, Marian devotion, the role of the Prioress in making decisions.

Horarium: As I have been used to rising and going to bed early for more than forty years, the last office of the day ending close to 9pm was difficult at first...as for the morning rising, Sr. Monica, the Prioress, permitted me to get up before the communal rising for the night prayer that is so dear to me.

Liturgy: In the Roman Office (LH), the psalms are distributed over four weeks, but only over two weeks in the Benedictine-Cistercian monastic office. At Estavayer, the community made the choice not to pray the imprecatory psalms, which I regretted very much. As for the Little Hours (Tierce-Sext-None), only the midday office is prayed in community. The interruption of work for liturgical prayer has always been an aid for me in the laborious acquisition of continual prayer. It was surprising that the office of Vigils of the next day would be prayed at night, and I felt regret that an antiphon to St. Dominic ends the day, after the *Salve Regina* that closes the day in the Cistercian liturgy. Dominican and Franciscan saints have a big place in the liturgy, whereas monastic liturgy is more conservative, the emphasis being placed more on the mystery of Christ. After one of the Rogation Day processions, I voiced my surprise to a sister on the abundance of Dominican saints invoked. Her response clarified for me: "Dominicans are preaching brothers, and so better known by the people of God than monks and nuns who live hidden and therefore unnoticed..."

Spiritual life: The communal spiritual life is nourished by the chaplain's homilies, the Eucharist is celebrated with dignity daily, and

Gregorian chant is sung with dynamism, which was one of my joys. Regular conferences are heard with interest. The numerous passing visits of brothers and sisters of the Order are as much a treasure as the readings in the refectory: regular news from different monasteries of brothers and sisters promote the fraternal communion and unity of the Order. The phrase "ongoing formation" is really taken seriously here.—The way work is organized can promote peace.

Marian devotion: Although each Cistercian monastery is consecrated to the Virgin Mary, a daily chaplet is proper to the Dominican Order.

The Prioress: The fact that she is elected for three years, and cannot be re-elected after nine years in office, colors her manner of governing. The community is much more implicated in decisions. At the beginning, I was surprised by the time spent in meetings and discussions, to decide certain things that were not very important in my eyes, but then I noted how much of this time was not wasted, the sisters having at all times the opportunity to express themselves...and thus to be acknowledged.

My experience of living with the Dominican nuns allowed me to grasp from within, and to appreciate, paths to God that are at once similar and different. That which William of St. Thierry wrote in the twelfth century in the Golden Epistle addressed to the Carthusians seems to me to illustrate well what I lived at Estavayer: "As much as it is permitted (monastics) journey within themselves to **the love of truth**, but as duty calls them, as necessity leads them, they hasten to demonstrate **the truth of love** which it intends to perfect."

Thank you my sisters, I remain deeply impressed by a beautiful experience in my life.

Sr. Anne-Marie
Original: French