

# *Monialibus*

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers  
International Bulletin*



*N° 31 August 2014*



**The Erection of "Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery"**  
**The Dominican Nuns in Vietnam**



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**“With fraternal affection...”**

Dear Sisters,

I am taking advantage of these pages of the bulletin *Monialibus*, and I will continue to do so in the future, in order to send you greetings and assurance of my brotherly nearness to you. It is a good opportunity for contacting all of you in some way, and for sharing with you uncertainties and hopes. It is important for us to make the effort and to act energetically so that all the sisters of all the monasteries of the Order in the world come to know and to enjoy the content of *Monialibus*.

I began writing these lines in Caleruega where our Dominican tree rooted itself. In these places so often traversed by our father St. Dominic, I wanted to listen to him, in order to catch some word, some idea, that could be conveyed to you from him. And I must confess to you that I have been able only to raise within myself my own personal worries and wishes for you, for the life of each one of the monasteries that – little by little – I am coming to know. Two ideas appeared very strongly: the cultivation and care of fraternal communion, and the strength to make known the Dominican life of the contemplative sisters.

How beautiful it has been to discover the joyful and really sisterly life of the sisters in each monastery! A young sister in formation recounted for us the awakening of her vocation and her first steps in the monastery. She summed up in this way the impact the sisters of the house had provided for her: “O dear Lord, how wonderful! I have found a community of normal women!” Yes, sisters,

the normalcy of being ordinary, human, sisterly, welcoming, helpful, joyful. The normalcy of living life each day for others, as St. Paul expressed it so well in his letter to the Galatians: “Be slaves each to the others, in love” (5: 13). To guard communion and sisterly love means being very dependent, each on the others; it means accepting our weaknesses at the same time as we lovingly help each other to grow, and bring out all the good that each one of us carries within. In our concern and attention, the loving detail of small actions must not be lacking. With tiny gestures great achievements are made – above all, the immense gift of the miracle of daily love among ourselves.

And after that, we can always be in search of ways of communing in order to make our dreams into realities, and, above all, God’s dream, the dream of our Father about us. The dream of our unity in Him. The dream of being messengers of His love and His salvation. The dream of continuing His incredibly tender conversation with humanity, especially with those suffering the most – as Fr. Bruno made so clear to us in his letter to the Dominican laity and in his most recent letter on solidarity.

Frequently, and with reason, we find ourselves talking about the falling-off of vocations. It is a reality of our times, and very concrete in definite zones of the world. Anxious alarm about this does not help much. The path for us to travel, as always, is that of confidence and of commitment.

Our confidence is in the action of our Lord Jesus Christ through His Spirit. It is He who touches hearts and the most intimate depths of each person. Our confidence is united with prayer that He may let His voice be heard, and it is united to an active hope.

Our hope-in-action is our commitment. And part of this commitment is not to disappoint whoever calls at our doors. They (women or



men), as Fr. Timothy used to point out to us, “are a gift of God, and we have the obligation to take care of the gifts of God.” The best form of caring for these magnificent gifts of God is to offer them the gift of our life – a life that always insists on solving its problems by pathways of holiness. O that they might feel the joy of love. That they might feel themselves enveloped in the happiness of our faith. That the shade of our confidence in Him might overwhelm them – without any fissure in it, but able to make us hope against hope. That they might be amazed by our passion for the Truth – a passion made up of great silences which refine our capacity of listening before the Mystery, a capacity accumulated in long periods of contemplative and thoughtful study of His Word, times of eagerness and desire to understand; and these times enriched by conversations which have theological, spiritual, apostolic, ecclesial content. May our gentle and compassionate attention to others who suffer have an impact on them and motivate them – an attention to humanity disinherited and abandoned far outside the margins of human dignity.

An active hope, which is also our commitment, restores to our imaginations and creativity some ways of making known, especially to the young, the reality of the Dominican contemplative life. From now on I ask all the sisters to work in community dialogue to see how to make real our response to this great challenge.

Happy feast of our father St. Dominic.

With fraternal affection,

Fr. César Valero Bajo, OP, Promoter General  
of the Nuns

Original: Spanish

## The Erection of “Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery” The Dominican Nuns in Vietnam



On the solemn feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, The Most Reverend Dominic Nguyen Chu Trinh, Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese proclaimed the Decree of the canonical erection of the Dominican Monastery in Xuan Loc Diocese and presided at the Thanksgiving Mass. All took place at Ngu Phuc church, Ho Nai 3 at 9:00 a.m. Together with Bishop Dominic were the Most Reverend Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, OP, Bishop of Vinh Diocese, Fr. Joseph Ngo Si Dinh, OP, Prior Provincial of Dominicans in Vietnam, Cistercian and Benedictine Abbots, and approximately 50 priests who concelebrated the Mass.

Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P., and Sr. Mary Pauline, O.P. representing Sr. Mary Peter, OP, Prioress of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills, MI, USA, which sponsored our Foundation, were also present, along with many Sisters from the Federation of the Dominican Congregations in Vietnam. Superiors and clergy belonging to the Diocesan Congregations and others along with our Lay Dominicans, relatives, benefactors and guests of the Monastery.

Mass began with the procession of the seventeen sisters of the Monastery followed by all the priests, and two Bishops who proceeded to the altar. Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, OP., formally proclaimed the Decree of the Holy See with regard to the approval of the canonical erection of our Dominican Monastery. This was

followed by the proclamation of the Decree of canonical erection in his diocese granted by the Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese. Subsequently, Fr. Joseph Ngo Si Dinh, OP, Prior Provincial of Dominicans in Vietnam and Vicar of Master General of the Order, Fr. Bruno Cadoré, OP, proclaimed the appointment of the first new Prioress of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Dominican Monastery.

Sister Anne-Jeanne Nguyen Thi Hao came forward prostrating on the floor to show her obedience in accepting the responsibility of being Prioress, in accordance to Dominican traditional rite. She will begin her office starting from the date of canonical erection with a 3-year term. As a sign of obedience to their new Prioress, the professed and novitiate sisters bowed their heads; the Prioress, in turn, embraced each of them as a sign of peace and joy.

In his homily, Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, OP (Bishop Dominic was not well enough to preach), talked about the revolution of information, new technologies, internet all over the world nowadays and the consequences it brings. Dating back to more than two thousand years, at the beginning of Christianity, a miraculous and unique event occurred when the angel Gabriel announced the Incarnation of the Son of God so that human beings could be called children of God. With her *"Behold, I am the handmaid of God, be it done unto me according to your word"*, the Son of God was made man. As soon as the angel departed, the Virgin Mary set out to bring Good News of salvation to her cousin Elizabeth and to the whole world.

This year the Feast of the Annunciation is also an outburst of joy for the Dominican family, in particular, and God's people in general, because Bishop Dominic granted the canonical erection of the Dominican Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit at this beloved Ngu Phuc parish within his Diocese. Indeed, the Dominican Family has been preparing for this event to be proclaimed for many years.

"In former times Dominican Monasteries came to existence first, followed by the foundation of the Friars of The Order of Preachers and then the other members of the Dominican family: today in Vietnam, due to the historical circumstances, this Monastery becomes the youngest child in her big family. Our ancient saying says: "the youngest child brings both richness and poverty to the family". So, "the youngest" Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit is rich or poor? Perhaps both. It depends on the outlook and dimension thereof. In regard to the physical facilities, the Monastery is certainly small in size and quantity compared to other units in the Dominican family. Yet in the perspective of solidarity and support they are more fortunate. Truly speaking, no group in the Dominican family upon being established, was attended by as many people as for the Dominican Nuns. It is important to remember that the spiritual dimension is the central point in the Dominican Life whether it comes to existence first or later. Therefore, in the heart of the Church as well as in the Dominican life, the Monastery is always the soul and breath of life. If in the old time the Virgin Mary set out in haste to share Good News of salvation after the Annunciation, hopefully today, the Monastery becomes a "channel" of spirituality to connect the supernatural world with the secular world. May each monastic nun be a spiritual person, living in full her own vocation and thus spread her joy and desire for others' salvation. May this little, humble Monastery, under the influence of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, be a spiritual support for those who are lost or have been seeking the truth. And may those who are suffering under the burdens of life, find here spiritual support and inner peace."

After Communion, before giving the blessing of the Holy See, The Most Reverend Dominic Nguyen Chu Trinh, Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese, as representative for co-celebrants and the community offered a beautiful bouquet of flowers to the new Prioress and gave his teaching in the spirit of a shepherd for the monastic nuns and the whole community. He said, "I'd like to express the great joy of the

Xuan Loc Diocese, the Dominican Province in Vietnam, the clergy and honorable guests. Yes, it is a joy to have the presence of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit as a valuable treasure which has been buried in the ground for 12 years of their devoted lives. What are the Diocese and Dominican family expecting of this valuable “gem”? Their presence is like a channel to pull God’s grace down for our Diocese, the largest one nationwide with 527 priests, more than 2000 religious men and women and one million parishioners. Hopefully the nuns’ prayers and sacrifices will give support to shepherds and clergy by their holy lives, and strengthen our parishioners in their battle of life, as they live fully their great vocation of prayer and praise.

Sr. Jeanne Hao, OP., the new Prioress, expressed her gratitude to the Bishops, priests, clergy and God’s community. The aspirants of the Monastery then offered fresh bouquets of flowers to the Bishops and Superiors as a sign of gratitude.

The Mass ended after the blessing of the Holy See granted by Pope Francis was proclaimed and the presider gave a blessing to the whole community.

Thanks be to God for all the wonderful things He has accomplished for us!

The Nuns of the Dominican Monastery  
of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Viet Nam

Original: English

## Training on the Creed in Peru – Cuzco Our Lady of the Rosary Federation

### Peru - Bolivia



Dear sisters, we, from Peru, want to share with you our experiences regarding the last training of our Federation, which took place from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of July of 2013, during the Year of Faith. The subject was The Creed according to Saint Thomas and it was given by Father Martin Gelabert, who we’re sure many of you will know by his writings and articles, all of great theological depth. One of his phrases on the first day of conferences was: “if we don’t bring to life the Catholic doctrine in ourselves, it is useless; the contents are for us to take them to our hearts”.

This time, the city of Cuzco was the location of our meeting. We started the day with Holy Mass and after having breakfast we headed to the classes, where we were witnesses, for the first time, of the clarity with which Father Martin explains theology. He would leave us some questions for us to discuss in groups, and from those discussions we would come up with new questions that we would pose to Father Martin in the afternoon classes. These were different and pleasant classes, for he would not go forward with the subject that was treated in the morning classes, but he would listen to our questions and answer them instead. All the questions were very interesting and more than once made him smile, but he always answered them with theological depth.

On the penultimate night we celebrated his farewell, and we made a toast to enrich the moment. Federal Mother thanked Father Martin his presence among us, and that he had come



from his beloved Spain to give us his interesting lectures, and, likewise, he also showed us his gratitude and gave us his good wishes for us to continue with our vocation. The last Mass was moving; Father Martin encouraged us to continue going deep into our faith because we, as Dominicans, cannot stop searching for God in the study of his Word and also in the study of theology. He told us: "Theology and prayer always go together, they must never be taken apart from each other; on the contrary, it is possible that neither one nor the other is truthful". This is the message that we take back to our monasteries as a light that shall help us live better.

Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary, Peru-  
Bolivia

Original: Spanish

## The Monastery of Our Lady of Beaufort



The history of the Monastery of Our Lady of Beaufort began when four nuns from Provence set out toward the great western area of the country, to found a monastery in Brittany, near the Atlantic Ocean. A crossing of France - northward from the south.

By Ascension of the year 1963, our first sisters, accompanied by Fr. Charles Mellet, OP, courageously followed the call of the Spirit to found a monastery in Brittany. The beginnings were difficult, the life conditions precarious. Making an old Breton manor habitable as a

monastery was an immense task, but none of the sisters counted the cost for herself in this work. Stage by stage the monastery was built, and the vocations came -- to make of Beaufort a place of intercession and praise in the heart of the Church in the Rennes diocese.

A special feature of our community liturgy is our use of the *kora*, an African harp, to accompany the liturgy, sometimes assisted by other instruments. Breton melodies fit African notes and sounds very well, and show our special link with Africa and our prayer for the Dominican communities of that continent. This is a living memory of a major step in our community's history: the foundation in the eighties of a monastery in the Ivory Coast [Republic], at Daloa. It lasted ten years. It is for us a beloved land where families and friends of ours live.

We believe that the beauty of creation is already preaching to all those who on their way come upon the monastery, so we want to cultivate and beautify the spaces around the monastery, in order to lift hearts toward the Creator and to proclaim the living God to passing visitors.

Among our activities: we give special mention to our making of jams and teas; these are on sale in our store, along with books and religious objects. We also have a workshop where we make liturgical articles: albs, stoles, chasubles, altar cloths, etc. Another recent "local specialty" for us is the building of a henhouse and the raising of a hundred hens.

From its beginnings, Beaufort has been marked by friendships. That fact was woven into the foundation by the interventions of the first benefactors of the community, who rapidly became "the Friends of Our Lady of Beaufort." The monastery learned very quickly to open its doors to all guests who are in search of God and of the "indwelt silence" which is prayer.

If sweet Dominican fraternity is to be lived among ourselves first, it must then be extended to all the people who want to refresh their resources at Beaufort and who find in St.

Dominic an answer to their desire to announce to others the Good News of Salvation.

It is in this spirit that a group of laypeople formed, in the autumn of 1996, "the Pierre Claverie Dominican Lay Fraternity." Thus they placed themselves under the protection of our Dominican brother, Pierre Claverie [bishop in Algeria] who had been assassinated a few months earlier. He had sought the truth in friendship with his Moslem brothers to the point of sealing that friendship with his own blood. The fraternity meets once a month at the monastery and is accompanied by one of our brothers from their convent in Rennes. We benefit from the proximity of the friars, who are much involved in diocesan life (parish, seminary, continuing education). They come to us regularly to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist, to give us a course, or simply to make a brotherly visit.

Another instance of friendship has strengthened our bonds with the laity. It began in the summer of 1995, thanks to a couple from the Netherlands who were passing through France and were providentially directed toward Beaufort. Some months later they confirmed their interest by coming to meet with the community. The call was strong: in the monastery church, Leny had become convinced that the Dominican laity would be reborn in the Netherlands. Their own parish at Utrecht? Surely the church of St. Dominic! One of the mysterious works of the Spirit who breathes where he wills! (Today in the Netherlands there are a hundred lay Dominicans, fifty of whom have made their permanent commitment. They are involved in formation, in liturgy, in the social field... Gathered together by the same apostolic concern, they and we are called by Christ to the common mission of the Order: to praise, to bless, to preach.)

After that first meeting, groups from the Netherlands began to come for retreats at the monastery. We are witnesses, even across the language barriers, to the miracle of communion which has happened among us.

We also respond to various requests from our local church -- groups and parishes for retreat, as well as requests from individuals who find in Dominican life the hope and joy they need to continue on their way. For three years we have been editing meditations on the daily Gospels for the monthly booklet "Panorama," and we receive many prayer-intentions from the readers. That is the occasion of a beautiful communion of prayer with those who entrust their intentions to us. Following Dominic's lead and united to all the branches of the Dominican family, we want to lift toward Christ the Savior our intercession for the world. May we be able in the wonderful complementarity of brothers, sisters, and laity of the Order, "to take our part in proclaiming the Gospel."

Monastery of Beaufort

Original: French

### Monastic Market in Switzerland



In 305 AD, St Mauritius and his Egyptian legion were put to death by the emperor Diocletian in the valley of Agaun in Switzerland because they refused to deny their Christian faith. Very early on, pilgrims came to pray on the place where they were martyred, and as soon as 515, an abbey was built that took the name of St Maurice. It is now peopled by canons under the rule of St Augustine who are preparing a great jubilee for 2015: the 1500th anniversary of the abbey!

The town of St Maurice, after discussing the project with the religious communities of the city, suggested the organization of a "monastic market" that would allow the many religious orders and congregations of Switzerland to display and sell their products. The various superiors of the religious orders thought the idea was good and that's how the first monastic market was born with liturgy included!

The exhibitors are accommodated in the religious communities of the town and surroundings, and that is where they take breakfast and pray lauds. We then go to our tents to sell our merchandise. Cistercian and Trappistine nuns share a common tent, selling wine and mustard while the Capuchin nuns offer a digestive liqueur. The Vietnamese Cistercians (they have a monastery in Fribourg that allows them to accommodate brothers in formation) joyfully mill around their deep-fryer: wearing a kitchen coat over their habit, they make spring rolls and shrimp donuts. They enjoy a huge success because these are the only hot dishes served on the market. French Benedictines sell hand-made baskets or cheese. Last year, another one, who had come from the other side of France, a thousand kilometers away, saw his stock of fruit paste disappear on the first day. It must be said that the attendance at this market is above all our expectations. This year, it was the *Merveilleuse*, the beer of the Belgian Carmelites, that dried up as early as Saturday afternoon. The Dominican nuns sell a perfumed lotion that is guaranteed to heal the ills of the body and the soul. Most of us also offer cookies, jams and marmalades. "The Capuchin friars smash the prices!" noticed the Bernardine prioress with a laugh. She is not afraid of their competition because she came to promote *L'Etoile Sonore* (Sound Star), an audio library that offers books for blind people and she hopes to recruit some new volunteer readers as she did last year. Several of our communities benefit from these recordings that we listen to in refectory when our voices are tired. Various apostolic congregations offer trinkets and ornaments made by their more artistic sisters. There is also a tent devoted to listening to

people who need to talk and another one dedicated to children's activities.

On Saturday evening, we were invited to the abbey for a buffet. It was the occasion to see an old teacher, Canon Rouiller who was a professor of New Testament during many years in the University of Fribourg and also formed several generations of religious and nuns through biblical courses and retreats. He said to me: "You see, I am at the end of my life, but do tell your sisters that I have never been so happy. I attend all the offices and at last I am living my monastic vocation." I was very touched to see how the Lord was rewarding his old and faithful servant.

Then came the time of the solemn vigils of St Mauritius... but the devil was prowling in the town like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. He took the shape of a concert that was scheduled at the same time! Of course the Dominicans nuns triumphed easily over the temptation, but the victory of some monks was less certain... "Actually I am coming to the office because I don't want to make it up!", said one of them. Those who made the wrong choice were chastised because the sound system was very bad and they came back with broken ears.

The feast of St Mauritius is an important day for the Church in Switzerland; there usually is an important number of bishops per square foot and some Church dignitaries from Egypt are invited as well to honor the country of St Mauritius. Some high tech Coptic orthodox bishops with their black headdresses were filming Mass on their tablets. This year, the guest of honor was the new Coptic catholic patriarch of Cairo, HE Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak. The day before he had given a conference on the difficult situation in his country.

The Pontifical Mass is always celebrated with pomp and circumstance. Many colorful delegations lead the procession: *alpinieri* (Italian mountain soldiers), hussars in full battle dress with their sword, students from the St Mauritius school in uniform, Swiss guards and many other. Then followed two young Dominican friars from Fribourg, handsome as angels of God

in their white and black habits, carrying torches, and many celebrants coming from all parts of Switzerland. Cardinal Schwery, one of the two Swiss cardinals, presided the celebration and HE Sidrak gave the homily. He pointed out that this celebration was the occasion to unite the oriental and occidental monastic traditions and allow the Church to breathe with its two lungs. He also spoke of the “great love that god has manifested in the lives of those who gave themselves and God was faithful to them”. And of course he asked us to pray for his suffering country.

Mass was followed by the procession of the relics of the martyrs, carried by the canons. One of them tripped and almost dropped the reliquary. He was heard grumbling: “Good grief, we’ve been doing this for 1500 years and somehow we don’t have it right yet!” We then came back to our tents for the last moment of intense selling. This market is a very moving moment because we see how people are deeply touched by the witness of life that we are giving and want to support us. It also is a moment when we can meet the other religious, contemplatives and apostolic of all orders. God gives us in Switzerland the wonderful grace of knowing each other very well because we have common formations and we contact and help each other very much in our various works. One worry: we have seen a good part of the Swiss Church in this market, and we saw that the young people were almost totally absent, as they are from most religious celebrations. This is one of the great challenges for our future...

Sister Isabelle

Estavayer-le-Lac, Switzerland

Original : French

## New Members of the ICNOP: Sr. Theresa Bui Thi Tam, OP



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to introduce myself. I am Sr. Theresa of the Holy Spirit Bui Thi Tam, OP, born in 1950 in Hung Yen, Viet Nam.

In 1954 when I was four years old, my family and I, together with about one million other Catholic people, fled from the North to the South part of Viet Nam because of civil war.

I entered the Dominican Convent at twelve as an aspirant, began the two year novitiate in 1967 and made first profession of Vows in 1969 in the Apostolic Dominican Congregation of Thanh Tam, Ho Nai, Dong Nai, Viet Nam.

The Dominican Order had been present in Viet Nam for more than 450 years, but there were no nuns! Our Dominican Family had a dream and sought many ways to have a Monastery for nuns in Viet Nam to live the contemplative life and to pray for the mission of the Order.

Under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration and incitement in our innermost hearts, Sr. Maria Huong (in 1999) and I myself (in 2000) had got permission from our Superiors to transfer to the Dominican contemplative life and made our two year-novitiate at the mother Dominican Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills, Michigan, USA.



In 2001 Sr. Maria Huong and in 2002 I returned to Viet Nam to begin the new Foundation in Viet Nam with the presence of Fr. Manuel Merten, OP, General Promotor, Sister Mary Rose, OP, Prioress and the Superiors of the Dominican Brothers and Sisters in Viet Nam. We lived “underground” for 8 years before getting the official permission by a written document from the local authorities in 2010.

In 2005 I came back to the USA to prepare for Solemn Profession of Vows and made my profession in the hands of Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, OP., the Master of the Order in 2006.

I was appointed to be Vicaress for three consecutive terms from 2002 to 2011. Since 2011 I have been the Novice Mistress in the Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, Viet Nam.

The Holy See and Reverend Dominic Nguyen Chu Trinh, Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese approved our petition to be an autonomous Monastery on March 25, 2014.

Fr. Bruno Cadore, OP., Master of the Order, appointed me to be a member of the International Commission of Nuns on March 19, 2014.

Thank you very much for your love and prayers for us in the past difficult yet grace-filled years. Please keep praying for us as we do for all of you always.

Sr. Theresa Bui Thi Tam, OP  
Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit,  
Vietnam

Original: English

## New Members of the ICNOP: Sr. Paola Panneta, OP



My dear sisters,

In Sr. Josefa's very first email to me, she asked if I would write a short text to introduce myself to you all. So here I am with you at the beginning of this adventure.

I am Sr. Paola, and the Master of the Order, at the suggestion of my (and our) Italian sisters, has asked me to be the new representative of Italy in the ICNOP.

I was born in Turin in 1962. For many years I was involved in pastoral work with the young, and was a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. I went to a technical high school and then moved on to study Religious Knowledge. There were Dominican friars among my teachers, but I only came across the Dominican nuns by chance (if there's any such thing as chance!). As I was working and studying hard during the year, I decided to set aside some time during the summer vacation just to be still and to have a period of prolonged silence. So when the opportunity to make a short retreat at the Monastery in Alba arose, I grabbed it. To be honest, I had been struggling with God for some time, resisting Him and trying to avoid getting too involved, but the Lord was waiting for me in that monastery, where I would eventually enter, but not until a few years later, in 1989. I made my solemn profession there in 1995.

At that time, in Italy, thanks to Br. Viktor Hofstetter (who was then Promoter General for the nuns) and Br. Carlo Avagnina (who was the Master's Vicar General for the Italian nuns), there were courses of formation both for young



women (of which I was one at the time!) and for Prioresses and formation Mistresses. For some time, several nuns had felt the need of a new foundation, to help renew the contemplative Dominican life in Italy. A time of ferment, of sharing and of prayer ensued – until the turning point came: it was the moment to dare. With four other Sisters (three from the Alba monastery and one from the monastery in Bergamo) and with the blessing of Br. Timothy and the juridical support of the Bergamo monastery, in 1999, we launched the foundation of a new monastery, dedicated to “Maria di Magdala”, which in 2011 received canonical erection and whose first Prioress I am.

In the past fifteen years, we have moved house three times and we are on the point of a fourth move! We started in a former kindergarten, then, thanks to the hospitality of a Community of Visitation nuns, we took up our abode in a wing of their Monastery, until a generous benefactress gave us the gift of the house in which we are now living. This house has become too small for us, mainly because we have gradually become more inserted in the Diocese and groups and individuals who have gotten to know of us are now coming to us for short breaks, seeking spiritual help and desiring to pray with us. Oh well – another exodus is in the offing!

In these years, what have I been doing? In the community, I’ve been syndic and librarian. For many years, in collaboration with the friars of our Province, I have taught the course on “Initiation into lectio divina” to the novice friars, and I have offered this course to other communities too, at their request. Moreover, with my Sisters, on one Sunday afternoon every month, we share the Word with a group of individuals who have chosen to join us in the experience of Lectio divina. The reality of contemplative prayer, together with the Word, has always been my primary interest, in study too. This led me to publish a book on the “Prayer of the Name” and to go more deeply into the relationship between corporality and prayer. My latest effort (but it’s in Italian) is a

study of LCM: “LCM: a mystagogy for contemplative life?”

With four of my fellow nuns, I am a member of an “economic Commission” set up by the Master: the members were chosen by the Assembly of Italian Prioresses. The initial function of this Commission was to prepare a picture of the Italian situation for the Master; today we collaborate with the Vicar on the administrative problems of monasteries that are being closed or which ask for help.

My community from the first considered part of its “Life project” the commitment to availability towards the mission of the Order, and it is partly for that reason that I find myself today a member of the ICN. I (we!) accepted with all due trepidation, trusting in the help of God and in your sisterly mercy.

As I wrote to the Master: I am at your disposal, as far as in me lies, to do my best for the Commission and for all our sisters, whom I ask from this time on to pray for me.

In our Father Dominic and in the joy of belonging to his Order,

Sr. Paola Panetta OP  
Dominican Monastery of St Mary of Magdala  
Moncalieri, Turin  
Italy

Original: English

**New Members of the ICNOP: Sr. Teresa de  
Jesus Gil, OP**



My name is Sor Teresa de Jesus (Gil), born in Valencia, Spain. Before becoming a nun I studied nursing and worked in a hospital for several years. I entered the Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena in Paterna-Valencia. Some years later I transferred to the Monastery of the Immaculada, the Federal house and novitiate which is associated with twelve other monasteries in Spain, five in Argentina and three in Chile.

I write these lines to express my thanks for the welcome given me by the International Commission of Nuns. I hope to learn from my sisters and collaborate with them “with enthusiasm and joy,” as Father Bruno, Master of the Order, asked me to do, in his letter naming me to the Commission.

I think that when from all sides we hear the word “crisis,” we nuns can give witness – humble and strong at the same time – to what we experience in our communities: love for God, happiness, union and fraternity, in spite of difficulties. Living with faith in love, with hope and joy, helps us to discover new possibilities; joy in our task and a vivid sense of belonging to the Order and the Church rejuvenates our deepest roots. This present time of grace in celebrating the Order’s Jubilee of its 800 years of existence, will no doubt be a continuing blessing.

Sr. Maria Teresa de Jesus (Gil)

Original: Spanish