

Monialibus

Nuns of the Order of Preachers
International Bulletin

N° 32 April 2015

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The **Monialibus** is the official International Bulletin of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers published by the International Commission of Nuns (ICNOP) twice a year in April and October. It is available at the website of the Order – www.op.org
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“With fraternal affection....”:



It is a joy for me, dear sisters, to be once again in relation and contact with all of you, throughout the length and breadth of our world, thanks to your bulletin *Monialibus*. At the most recent meeting of the International Commission of the Nuns – we were at Monasterio Santo Espiritu in Toro (Zamora), Spain - we agreed to publish this bulletin in the month of April, near the feast of St. Catherine of Siena, and in the month of October, near to the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. So here we have the first number in this new publication proposal. I hope and wish that it will be of interest and enjoyment for all of you.

We are living, sisters, in an intense time of grace. We feel that these days of paschal joy are more strongly inhabited by the extraordinary gift of the Love of God the Father who makes us participants of the inexhaustible Life of his Risen Son. And to this overflowing joy are added other events which call us to thanksgiving and to responsible fidelity to the Lord: this year dedicated in the Church to Consecrated Life, the nearness of our Dominican Jubilee for our eight hundred years of history, and the approaching Jubilee of Mercy announced by Pope Francis for the universal Church. These are realities which are bound to submerge us more and more in the contemplative dimension and the coherence of our life in the presence of the Mystery of God's Love for us and the action of his Spirit in our history, in spite of its dark places.

We are always aware of the risk of being confused about what is essential, of losing ourselves in fascinating spectacles, or in verbiage empty of real substance. The Montini Pope, Blessed Paul VI, denounced these dangers decades ago, concluding that the modern world will not listen to teachers unless they be witnesses. By chance a few days ago in my reading, I came upon a paragraph from a letter

that St. John of the Cross wrote to the discaled Carmelite contemplatives of Beas de Segura (a place in the province of Jaén in Spain) which points in the same direction: “My not having written has not been for lack of wanting to, but it seemed to me that more than enough has been said and written about what is important to do, and that what is lacking – if anything is lacking – is not writing or speaking (which usually abounds first), but rather: being silent and acting.”

Perhaps this may be the best way to respond to such great graces as are offered to us: To recollect ourselves and go deeply into grateful contemplation of the Mystery of Love that wraps us round and dwells in us. And to work, making this great love present among us, in our own communities, and from them to offer it to the wider community of the whole human family. This is the Truth which calls us and needs us. It is the time to live deeply this Truth of the Love of the Lord, so that it may be the reason for our intense living. This passion for the Truth and this Truth-become-passion will refresh and increase our ability to love; because certainly, sisters, many of our capacities for loving remain as yet unused.

Just as I am writing this letter, in mid-morning, the sun has hidden itself and some shadows of the predicted eclipse have fallen on Rome, this eternal and holy city; this imperial and worldly city also, which has known for ages about slaveries and violence. Deep shadows search out and fall upon many corners of our world. The violence of wars; the terror which does not cease; the injustice and extortion which continue to be the breeding ground of great evils and suffering; the despising of human life; the rejection of anyone who is not one of “us”; the fear of incurable illness; and the obscuring of the meaning of life in so many hearts... In the midst of these shadows, I begin to think of each one of our monasteries as they make real the Lord's word: “You are the light of the world...shine your light before other human beings so that seeing your good works they may glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 5:14,16). We will be light with the ability to enlighten, only when our life burns with love.

Fr. Bruno, Master of the Order, has been insisting in his recent letters on the fundamental idea of our commitment as persons consecrated to the Lord and preachers of his love for humankind. We must be a constitutive and eloquent part of the Father's dialogue of love with all of humanity. Each moment is the right one for setting out again on the paths of love. First to make love more palpable as the nucleus of our own communities, and afterward to offer it from there to so many sisters and brothers of the great human family who seek it and beg for it everywhere. It is so "Gospel-beautiful" to confirm that the miracle of love becomes real day after day in many of our monasteries!

And joined to love, sisters, there is the joy of being a light which enlightens. The joy of those who know the One in whom they have trusted. The joy of those who keep hope alive, in the certainty that in spite of the destructive force of evil, evil will never have the last word. The calm and eloquent joy of one who makes of one's own life a song, a song of praise and blessing for such great and impressive gifts as we receive at every instant.

In spite of difficulties, of contradictions, of the limitations which affect us; in spite of the deterioration of life – which, when worn out, is thrown away – let us continue radiating the light of the love the Lord offers us. We exist within a history of eight centuries in order to praise, to bless and to preach in this present moment, when it is our turn to live and to take a leading part, as our sisters and brothers did in the history which preceded us. Let us set out daily on the journey in the way suggested by a contemporary Italian writer (with a phrase used for the vestal virgins of ancient Rome) ... let us set out on the journey each day "without sleepiness or distraction."

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

Letter of Fr. Bruno to the ICNOP

Dearest Sisters,

Brother César who will be joining you for the meeting of the International Commission of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers will convey to you my fraternal affection and the promise of my prayer in communion with you. Together with him, whom I thank once more for having taken on this office which is so important for the Order and its mission, I really want to express my profound gratitude to you for the generosity with which you commit yourselves to the service of the nuns throughout the world. I would like to welcome especially those who are just beginning their term of office.

In my view, the Commission of the Nuns is very important, helping to situate the vocation of the nuns at the heart of the life and mission of the Order. Together with you, I am convinced that the presence of communities of nuns, as an intrinsic part of the Order, brings richness and strength to the preaching mission. Indeed, it is important that we be constantly reminded that contemplation is at the very heart of preaching: to contemplate the mystery of the friendship of God for humanity, evidenced by the coming of the Son who made himself a brother to all, invites us to encourage all whom we meet to seek and welcome the truth of God - 'Your Word is Truth'.

Seen in this way, Dominican monastic communities bear witness to this call to awaken the capacity for contemplation in each person. In the Order, they are also the sign that following the example of Jesus, preaching is rooted in withdrawal and silence. This is where human person is born to himself by listening to God, who invites each and every one to enter into conversation with him, thus establishing a covenant of new life, by which grace we are constantly reborn. Again the monasteries remind us that this "new birth" is a birth to communion, of which fraternity is the sacrament as it were, and at the same time, strictly

speaking it is the mode that Dominic chose for his itinerant preaching mission.

Houses of the Word and of Peace, monasteries are themselves a preaching of this communion, preaching in silence and withdrawal. The nuns extend this preaching by their hospitality to so many "seekers of meaning, seekers of God." They extend it further through the compassion they show to so many people who come to find in their presence a sign of the God of all consolation. They also extend the preaching of the Order by their ceaseless intercession for all people, for the brethren and members of the Dominican family, and together with them, for the salvation of the world, which - in the school of Dominic - is the natural extension of the proclamation of the kingdom of God because it is in continuity with our mission in this world to serve the promise of communion. The primary task of your Commission is to ensure, at the heart of the Order, that this precious and specific vocation is always promoted and lived out to the full. The Master of the Order needs your analyses of current situations and your advice and suggestions in order to exercise his responsibility in this regard.

As I had informed you earlier, there has been in the last year a meeting with the Congregation for Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life for the male Superiors General whose Orders or Congregations are in one way or another linked to a monastic female branch. After this first meeting for establishing contact, we were to have a second encounter and begin a process of reflection in common; I had thought then of conveying to you detailed information on this work, and having discussions with you. Alas, the second meeting was cancelled, and we learned that the Congregation had decided to launch the survey in which you have been asked to participate. In a way, we can rejoice that the nuns are thus directly involved in the reflection that concerns them first and foremost, and I hope that it will be possible to really reap the benefits of this investigation. Whatever

happens, I believe that this work of reflection requested by the Congregation should constitute a basis for us to embark together on the task of strengthening and promoting the monastic vocation of women in the Order, and setting it at the heart of the mission as I mentioned above. So therefore your Commission could be a forum through which we could gradually establish a dialogue between the Federations, bringing in also those monasteries which, so far, have chosen not to join a Federation. I would be interested to receive your suggestions as to how to carry out this task. From the perspective of the celebration of the Jubilee of the Order, the guidelines that this reflection might draw up would be a step towards that renewal in the spirit of truth and humility for which the General Chapter of Trogir called. In my opinion, this approach made by the Congregation could be, and if the nuns wish it, a great opportunity to further reinforce the central place of the monastic vocation for the vocation and mission of the Order.

Brother César also told me that you were going to spend a part of your time working on the question of formation. I am greatly delighted, and this aspect of the life of the nuns is itself part of the investigation being undertaken by the Congregation. Lacordaire, so it is told, liked to say to the master of novices of his province that his task in formation was to "found the Order anew every day." It is in this sense, it seems to me, that we should view initial and ongoing formation. We are going to celebrate the Jubilee of the confirmation by the Pope of the intuition of St. Dominic that an Order of Preachers was necessary for the Church. This confirmation must match, today and every day, our own confirmation of this intuition of Dominic: creating fraternal communities anew every day, "like sacraments" of the communion that we wish to preach, following Jesus who "went through towns and villages, preaching and announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8: 1). I know the attention that the nuns bring to this question of formation, and I encourage you to

consider systematically all stages and all dimensions. I also invite you to look at how best to bring about the necessary conditions so that formation may be fruitful and respectful of the new vocations that the Lord favours us with. I encourage you to emphasize the essential link that must exist between the implementation of initial formation and the quality, rigour and obligation of ongoing formation for the whole community. Finally, once again, I venture to insist on the specific, central and indispensable place of study in the heart of the formation of the nuns of the Order, as St Dominic wished it. I will be very interested to pursue this dialogue with your Commission and, through it, with all of the sisters.

During the summer of 2016, we will celebrate a General Chapter of the Order in Bologna. This will be in a sense the "Chapter" of the Jubilee. On this occasion, I invite you to consider the possibility of holding the meeting of the Commission for the year 2016 in Bologna, so that the nuns can be associated, through you, with the celebration of the feast of St Dominic which will close the Chapter. It seems to me that this would be a wonderful sign of "Dominican communion".

In renewing the expression of my gratitude, and entrusting myself to your prayer, I wish you a beautiful and fruitful session, and assure you of my communion in prayer.

Your brother in St Dominic,

fr. Bruno Cadoré,
Master of the Order of Preachers
Original: French

THE PILGRIM ROSARY OF THE JUBILEE

Together!

Many are preparing the celebration of the **800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of Preachers.**

At various meetings at the General Curia in Rome, bro. Bruno Cadoré stressed the importance of launching **concrete initiatives** that can mobilize **all the members of the Dominican family.**

Here is the project of the "**Pilgrim Rosary**" for the Jubilee. Throughout the 8th centenary of the Order, it will travel through all the **monasteries of Dominican nuns.**

Why did we choose our nuns? To do as Our Father Saint Dominic did as he began with them! The whole Dominican family is going to rely on their prayer and will take part in it, of course!



*Fraternal exchange
Monastery in Rweza - Burundi*

Concretely... how will this happen?

A program will be developed for the entire duration of the Jubilee. Two days will be "given" to each monastery that will become in a certain way the center of the world of the Rosary.

During these two days, the sisters, if they wish and if they can, have the freedom to organize a meeting, a time of prayer around the Rosary. And it is possible for them to invite the brothers and the apostolic sisters or the lay people who live around them.

What deadlines?

Of course, all these elements will be posted online on the website Rosarium!

► **June 30th 2015:** the **calendar** of the Jubilee will be established for the Rosary. There we will find the two days for each monastery and, for each month, a day dedicated to a prayer intention that will link liturgy and apostolate.

► **September 1st 2015:** deadline for sending the rosaries. Each monastery, if possible, is invited to make **1 or 2 Rosary(/ies) with 15 mysteries**. Please **send this rosary to Santa Sabina, to the Promoter of the Nuns**. Please do not forget to put **a label on it with the community name**; that will allow the monastery that will receive it to know where the rosary comes from.

► **September 8th:** A **Celebration of the Rosary** will be online. We will find there the 20 mysteries with **Dominican meditations**. It will be easy to use either by taking a series of five mysteries -from the same series or not- or by taking 15 or 20 mysteries. Everyone will be able to adapt it according to the needs or to the circumstances.

► **September 15th:** a letter will be sent to all the monasteries of nuns.

► **From September 16th to 20th:** a letter will be sent to the apostolic sisters, to the provincials, to the provincial Promoters of the Rosary and to the shrines under the responsibility of brothers.

► **November 7th:** Opening of the Jubilee. At the end of the celebration, the rosaries will be blessed by the Master of the Order before being sent to each monastery.

► **During the Jubilee:** the monasteries that wish to send us an **article** on the activities proposed in the context of this pilgrim Rosary are welcome!

Nothing could be simpler: just write a **short article with one or two photographs**. We will gladly put them online ... and that will give visibility to your monastery!

If it is possible to give this article **in the language of the country of the monastery** and in one (or all three!) official language of the Order, it will be highly appreciated by the visitors of the site!

And there will be other... **surprises!**
But we are not going to tell everything today!

The Jubilee year will be a year of the Rosary... together!

Fr. Louis-Marie Ariño-Durand, OP

General Promoter of the Rosary

Original: French

We would like to know your opinion

We would like to open a debate and collect opinions on an important question that we discussed on the last day of our meeting at Toro.

During the evaluation of our meeting, one sister shared the request of several sisters in her region who wished that the commission would meet only every two years, on account of economic circumstances and the precarious situation of many people, so as to bear witness to the world and the Order of a greater simplicity.

Hence a debate on this serious subject ensued. The way forward was not clear to anyone. On the one hand, we are quite aware of the necessity for the work of the Commission in the service of the Master of the Order and of the monasteries worldwide. On the other, we are overwhelmed by the poverty that is the lot of so many human beings around us. What should we do? Shorten the next two meetings (Rome in 2015 and Bologna in 2016) given that we cannot cancel them as they have been programmed by the M.O.? Plan nothing for 2017 while we wait to see things more clearly? At this stage in our reflexion, only sisters from regions that are more privileged from a financial or organisational point of view (e.g. federations) had expressed an opinion.

As it was time for the break, Fr César sent us to pray for half an hour in silence. When we came back, we continued the exchange of views. Sisters belonging to regions which are making a

great effort to organise themselves and to move forward together, despite the absence of federations and the great distances that separate the monasteries said how much the meetings of the commission were a support to them and their region. In fact in our Order, the ICNOP is at the service of communion. Is this not the finest witness we can bear in today's divided world? The hardship that surrounds us should stimulate us to intensify our desire for communion and to work with greater ardour towards achieving it. To work towards communion beyond our monasteries and frontiers, is not that also a way of "founding the Order every day" according to the beautiful expression of Lacordaire on the subject of formation? Thus we are encouraged to intensify our desire for communion, to work with greater ardour, but also to manifest concretely our solidarity. In this sense we could for example organise a collection which would enable the most favoured regions to help those who are less so. The representatives of the ICNOP will bring the fruit of this collection to Rome on the occasion of its next meeting in November 2015.

For the moment we plan to continue as we have done up until now with an annual meeting, but the debate is not closed:

We await your reactions, reflections and comments. You can send them to srisabelle.estavayer@yahoo.fr

The dates of the next ICNOP meeting: 1st – 8th November 2015 in Rome, in order to participate in the opening of the Jubilee of the Order.
Original: French

ICNOP: The Work of the Commission

At the beginning of the meeting, fr. César said that he had three major goals:

- How to be more effective and useful to the Order? Some sisters do not yet understand the mission of the Commission.

- Formation. Try to provide basic contents that are in common at the level of initial and on-going formation.
- Make suggestions for the special jubilee of the Order.

After our usual time of sharing of what we do in our different regions, and how it is done, we reflected on the need to be ever more useful to the Master of the Order and how to achieve that in the Commission. We mostly emphasized the theme of communion. A sign of our communion is that we can work together, understanding who we are, and that we can help each other grow in our contemplative Dominican identity.

Fr. César read to us a letter from the Master who encouraged us to reflect on the issue of formation, geared towards communion and preaching, and ensuring that the initial formation has continuity in a community that is itself in formation, and the desire to seek common methods and criteria. We see how important it is to keep alive the interest in formation and study. Motivating study should be a priority for the contemplative Dominican identity. Because our study is contemplative, its center must be the Word and the study of the Word. The primary and most important responsibility for formation lies with the candidate herself. One morning we were able to reflect with the letter "Rejoice" and shared how important it is that the ICN should be a source of tenderness for our sisters. It is essential to keep listening, docile to the Spirit who inspires us and be a channel for the Word. Joy is a great gift of the Spirit. Father Lacordaire said to the novice master that his mission was "to found the Order every day" in communion and joy.

Proposals for the Jubilee

One possibility would be that our communities offer a prayer workshop with a double content: praying the Psalms, and analysing and sharing the need and the richness of silence to encounter God.

Another proposal would be to hold meetings to promote formation, conversion, preaching and celebration. One could consider the following 4-step sequence covering two or four meetings:

1. Analysis of the social and cultural reality of our own environment (formation).
 2. As Christians, what can we offer to the world that surrounds us? (conversion)
 3. With the participation of all branches of the Dominican Family, we could share how we live and how we want to live the Dominican spirituality today. (Preaching)
 4. A celebration of Thanksgiving: Eucharist, or a celebration of the Word or vespers. (Celebration)
- And we could conclude with a concert ...

Another proposal would be to present the historical roots of our monastery itself, and the fire of our consecration.

Sister Inmaculada Serrano Posadas, op
Monasterio San José
LA SOLANA, (Ciudad Real)
Federation Our Lady of the Rosary - Spain
Original: Spanish

Impressions of a new ICN member



In the beginning I would like to say it was a shock to receive a letter from the Master of the Order appointing me to the ICN. It was not easy for me especially since I had been asked to assist in the novitiate barely two months earlier.

The preparation for my first meeting in Spain had many setbacks; the fear of the Ebola epidemic, the delay, a mistake in my ticket. I felt happy and humbled by the attention and support shown to me by the Promoter in my difficulties. He really wanted me to be present. It made me more aware that it was not I, as Juliette, but the continent of Africa that he was struggling to see present at the meeting.

The help I got all along the way until I arrived at Toro and the warm welcome I received from the ICN made it seem as if we had met before; this gave me the courage to face whatever was ahead of me. Almost all the attention was placed on me, my seat, my room, and now and then I was given a special gift so that when I was leaving Spain, I carried a big suitcase, not the little one I brought. I experienced true love, concern and generosity and I felt very grateful for everything and everyone.

My general impression from the ICN was very good. The Dominican spirit and joy were present as well as the fraternity our Master so insists on. Although my sharing was on a different level from what most of the

participants knew or encountered, I perceived a great interest in what I had to share. I never felt discriminated against or left out. I remember the Promoter would say: let us listen to what Sr. Juliette will tell us from the experience of Africa.

I would like to remark that I experienced the Promoter as a caring and fatherly person. I can still see him carrying the suitcase of a sister who was leaving; he would not let another sister take it from him. In his opening speech he said he was like a learner and we were the ones to speak and take decisions. I found it very challenging and wise, too.

I enjoyed the company of our able and jovial translator, Fr. Mario, very intent, present and attentive as he smoothly switched from Spanish to English and vice versa as if it was a reflex action for him.

I discovered that the Commission members were capable Nuns, open, knowing their work or willing to learn. That was encouraging for the new or timid members. I hope we will really fulfill our duty to be of better service to the Master, our monasteries and the Order.

I enjoyed our visits to places like Zamora, Caleruega, Palencia, Segovia. We are used to reading about these sites in books. Visiting the monasteries existing there now was like re-reading the life of St. Dominic and the Dominican history. What also struck me was that visiting these holy places can look like mere tourism, but for us – children of St. Dominic – these moments can lead to deep spiritual experience through the prayer and reverence accompanying them. On the other hand, though I was aware that those who decorated the shrines were expressing their faith, devotion and sacrifice for the honour of God and saints, I felt that the decorations were so multiple that when you entered a church, sometimes you had to look hard to spot where the tabernacle was, which should be the center of a church.

I congratulate the monastery of Toro, the hosting region and the monastery of Alcalá de

Henares that lodged some of us on our way to and from Toro, for the welcome, care and availability they showed to us. Their love was so genuine that I felt it was just part of them. May God who is never outdone in generosity be their reward and grant all our monasteries growth in number and virtue.

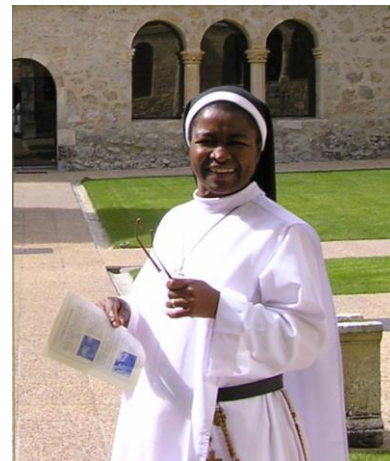
I am happy to be a part of this great family of St. Dominic, and I say: courage to the ICN!

Your Sister,

Sr. Marie-Juliette Kilanir, O.P.

Original: English

Sr. Marie-Juliette Kilanir, O.P.
Monastery of Bambui, Cameroon, Africa



I would like to express my gratitude to my Region of Africa for adding my name to the list which was sent to the Master to choose the representative for the region. I equally thank the Master for daring to choose my name. I am grateful to my Prioress and community for accepting, allowing, challenging and supporting me to embrace this task. I am not forgetting my predecessor in the work, Sr. Monica who is not having it easy trying to initiate me in the work. I hope and pray that by my own efforts, the support and prayers of the monasteries and indeed of the entire Order we will serve the monasteries and the Order.

Grateful for the warm welcome extended to me by the Commission members, I would like to try to respond to their invitation to say a few things about myself. You know it is easy to talk

about other people but when it comes to yourself you become a bit tongue-tied. Yet as a Dominican you have to try to be as honest as you can.

In the Order I am called Sr. Marie-Juliette Kilanir, O.P. of the Divine Providence. Before I entered the Monastery, I was known as Kilanir Secunda Shula. I was born on 6th March 1963 as the first child and the only girl in a family of four children.

After my secondary education, I entered the Monastery of Bambui on 29th December 1984. In August 22nd 1985 together with my two companions we were clothed in the Dominican habit and began our novitiate. On 9th November 1987 we made our first profession and on 8th December 1993 I made my solemn profession in the Order.

On 1st April 2014 I received a letter from the Master of the Order, written on 19th March 2014, appointing me to the International Commission of Nuns of the Order of Preachers. Here I am trying to learn what I am called to and how to fulfill this duty which is not an easy task in the continent of Africa and from the country of Cameroon. I accept this challenge in trust that the faithful God, St. Dominic and Our Lady who are always there will assist me.

Over the years I served my community in different ways: as a sacristan, in the bookbinding, in the host bakery, taking care of the animals, etc. I also served as bursar, sub-prioress, prioress, and presently I had been appointed novice mistress just before the Master appointed me to the International Commission of Nuns.

What else the nuns might want to know is that I am very, very happy to be a Dominican Nun. I enjoy the responsible freedom that exists in the Order. This freedom challenges me to grow out of myself so that I can be present to others. I want to be faithful and fruitful in my life, keeping in mind that everything is God's doing and that I need to be attentive and responsive to his promptings. I have come to realize that God is always leading me where I would not have chosen to go if it were a matter

of my choice. In this vein I have adopted as my "motto" the phrase: **"In God's will is my Peace"**.

I am small in stature, shy by nature and like singing. I treasure the saying of St. Augustine that **if you sing well you pray twice**.

Dear Sisters, let us continue faithfully to serve the Lord who is always faithful. Thank you for listening to me. May St. Dominic our Father, the joyful preacher, continue to intercede for us!

Your sister in St. Dominic,

Sr. Marie-Juliette Kilanir, O.P.

Original: English

Sister Irene Díaz Allauca, O.P. of the Dominican Monastery "Venerable Catalina of Jesus (Herrera)" in Durán, Ecuador



I entered the Order on August 13, 1993. I consider God's call to consecrated life to be His precious gift, and the little push toward belonging to the Dominican family a wonderful kindness on the part of our holy Father Saint Dominic.

I know there is a love story between God and each one of his sons and daughters. All my years within the Order have been and are for me a passionate adventure of fraternal living, of faith, of renewed hope, of amazing providence, of generosity, of profoundly free gift and lived commitment, all of which the Lord goes on

fashioning and polishing – with tenderness, mercy and love – in the clay of my poverty.

I had the opportunity to receive my initial formation in the Common Novitiate at Torrente (in Valencia, Spain), and this enriching experience gave me a broader view of our beloved Order; it was a take-off point for understanding and assimilating what is essential to being a Dominican contemplative nun. I think that with the years God goes on weaving for me an affective and effective bond of communion with the community, the Church, and the Order. Life is a school of continuing learning, teaching me to respond with generosity and joy to the different calls obedience gives us to serve our sisters.

Currently I am serving my community as Prioress and Mistress of Novices because of our present situation.

The four Dominican monasteries of Ecuador are working on a common plan of initial formation. I am grateful to the Order for the confidence and opportunity of service offered me for collaborating with my sisters of the Latin American monasteries. I place myself humbly at their service. In the peace and tenderness of God,

Sister Irene Díaz, O.P.
Original: Spanish

Sr. María del Mar Castro

**Spain – Federation of St. Dominic:
Monastery of St. Catherine – Alcalá de
Henares- (Madrid)**



Dear Sisters: I'm Sr. Maria del Mar Castro Malo, representing the Federation of St. Dominic in Spain.

For thirty years I have been part of the community of the Monastery of St. Catherine in Alcalá de Henares. Presently, I serve my community as prioress.

In my heart, the Dominican Order and the Charismatic Renewal have always been closely united. When I was fifteen years old, I joined a charismatic prayer group. It was there that I had my first encounter with our beloved Order, both the friars and then those, who would later become my Sisters in community, Sisters from whom I am still learning this wonderful experience of covenant of love which makes me a happy woman.

I cannot fail to mention that in my vocation journey, our St. Rose of Lima has had and continues to have a leading role. I wrote my second last book in her honour, as an offering, because I owe almost everything to Rose who has, in a mysterious way, always enriched my inner world.

May the Mother of Mercy, protectress of our Order, comfort your souls.

I am at your service. With my prayer and embrace in St. Dominic,

Sr. Maria del Mar, OP
Original: Spanish

Two meetings in Europa Utriusque

Europa Utriusque is a very diverse region, consisting of twenty monasteries in twelve countries. We speak seven different languages! As a region we only meet from time to time. But there are two sub-regional groups that meet every year. One group consists of eight German-speaking monasteries in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy; and the second group consists of monasteries in Central and Eastern Europe including Ireland. This article brings you reports on the annual meetings of these two groups.

I.

The meeting of the prioresses and novice mistresses of the German-speaking monasteries took place in August 2014 in the ancient monastery of Schwyz, in a mountainous area in the heart of Switzerland. Fr. César gave us talks on the theme: “Word from silence for the man of today”. Thanks to an excellent local interpreter, Mrs Esmeralda Reichmuth, Fr. César was able to speak in Spanish while we listened to a fluent translation in German. Fr. César approached the theme from various angles so it was very thought provoking to listen to him and to discuss the points raised by him. Also present was Fr. Gerfried from Cologne – provincial promotor of the nuns. The following monasteries were represented: Regensburg by Sisters Dominika and Marina; Bamberg by Sr. Berthilla; and Rieste-Lage by Sr. Anna-Maria (all from Germany). From Austria, the monastery of Lienz was represented by Sr. Mechthild. And Switzerland was represented by Sr. Dominique from Weesen and two sisters from Schwyz, Raymunda and Agnes. Also Sr. Josefa from Prague represented the International Commission of Nuns. For the deepening of our life Sr. Raymunda organized a pilgrimage to St. Brother Klaus (Nicolas) to Sachseln and Ranft where we celebrated the Mass. Strengthened and full of joy all returned back to their monasteries.

II.



The Central and Eastern Europe meeting of prioresses and delegates took place in the Polish monastery of Radonie by Warsaw in September 2014. Sisters from all three monasteries in Poland were present: from Krakow (prioress), from St. Anna (prioress and sub-prioress) and Radonie (prioress and sub-prioress); also from the two Czech monasteries: Znojmo (prioress and sub-prioress) and Prague (prioress, sub-prioress and a sister for the ICN); and from Drogheda, Ireland (prioress and sub-prioress).

The theme of the meeting was “Conversion”. Fr. Robert Głubisz (prior from Warsaw) held a moving conference on the sacrament of penance and our promoter Fr. César Valero gave two talks entitled: “In your presence, Lord, to renew our covenant with you. (1) You, Lord, in the centre. (2) In the centre, a human being”. His talks were translated from Spanish to Polish by a Polish student brother who has since become a priest, Fr. Michał Osek. Also present were the Polish socius of the provincial Fr. Jarosław Glodek and the provincial promotor for the nuns, Fr. Jozef Zborzil.

During both meetings we also discussed the questionnaire from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. We hope our answers will be helpful in the process of creating a new document on papal enclosure by the Holy See.

Srs. Raymunda from Schwyz, Bernadeta from Radonie and Josefa from Prague
Original: English

The South American Region of Dominican Nuns

The purpose of this article is to introduce our Region and, once we are better known, to strengthen our sisterhood and interest toward all the others.

Our Region has four monasteries in Colombia, four in Ecuador, one in Brazil, six in Peru, and one in the process of being founded in Bolivia. One of the seven monasteries in Argentina belongs to the Region of South America. (The other six belong to Spanish Federations, as do the three monasteries in Chile.)

Our vocations are young people, most of them between seventeen and twenty years old, but we have nuns of all ages, including some very elderly ones. “Each monastery should be concerned about the continuing education of its nuns,” says our Federation.

In September of 2006, for the first time, all the monasteries of the region had a retreat in Peru

with the Dominican Father Master, Carlos Aspiroz Costa. This served – among other things – to strengthen our fraternal relations. In 2008 we took part in a course for prioresses and novice mistresses.

We do various works, which provide sources of income: making liturgical vestments, and making confectionery. Some communities make wine, altar breads, or natural medicines. Three monasteries have museums, one of them the famous citadel of the Monastery of Santa Catilina [St. Catherine of Siena] of Arequipa.

The founding of our monasteries in South America was closely linked to the arrival of the Dominican Friars in America in 1510, and the founding of the Dominican Province of St. John Baptist in Peru in 1539, for the evangelization of these lands. The nuns could not be absent from this missionary project.

The first monastery founded was the **Monasterio de Santa Catilina** of Arequipa, Peru, on Sept. 10, 1579, according to the wishes of the Council of Arequipa. The Viceroy, Francisco Toledo, brought, in his visit to that city, the necessary licenses for the foundation, the first Prioress being Doña María de Guzman, under whose leadership the community began to grow. Another significant person was Sor Ana de los Angeles [Sister Anna of the Angels] Monteagudo (1604-1686) who became prioress of the community. (She was beatified by John Paul II during his visit to Arequipa on Feb. 2, 1985.)

The **Monasterio of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios** [Our Lady of Remedies], of Santa Catilina of Cusco, is situated in the ancient “Aqlla Wasi” or “House of Women Chosen by the Sun” – a kind of cloister [Tr.: A sister has suggested “spacious tiny space” as a translation of “Aqlla Wasi”] for young girls dedicated to religious service in the days of the Incan Empire. The Bishop of Cusco arranged that a group of nuns should move from Arequipa to Cusco, the seat of his diocese, arriving there on the first of February, 1605. There are eighteen nuns there

now. By reason of its antiquity and prestige the monastery preserves a number of works of art. It is a treasured heritage of the city and place of worship that frequently attracts large crowds. On different occasions the mazapan and aloja sweets made by the nuns are offered to the people for purchase and consumption, a tradition which goes back to the beginning of the foundation.

The origins of the **Monasterio de Santa Catilina de Siena**, in Lima, are closely connected with the life of St. Rose of Lima. Aware of the need for prayer and praise to God, St. Rose predicted the foundation of a monastery, as is clear from a letter she wrote on March 5, 1613: “There must be founded a Dominican Monastery under the patronage of St. Catherine of Siena. It will be inhabited by souls chosen to gather around the Cross, for the glory of God and the salvation of many souls.” The saint did not, however, see her desire realized because she died in 1617. The foundation would be made years later.

The **Monasterio of Santa Rosa de Lima** was inaugurated on Feb. 2, 1708, to welcome the young people who called at the door wanting to follow in the steps of the Peruvian saint. Her recent canonization had awakened in them a great desire to live consecrated to God. Three nuns of the Monastery of Santa Catilina de Siena were transferred in order to begin this work. After nearly a year, on Feb. 2 of 1709, the house in which St. Rose lived and died was offered to the nuns. Today a little chapel is kept there in the room in which she died. The Monastery of St. Rose of Santiago of Chile was founded by three nuns in 1754. When the monastery at Santiago was able to function by itself, the founding madres went back to their original monastery, leaving the other flourishing.

The **Monasterio de Santa Rosa** de Arequipa was founded by four nuns of the Monastery of Santa Catilina of Arequipa. The bishop, Juan Bravo de Rivera, laid the first stone to begin construction of the monastery. The work was finished on June 12, 1747. On the following day the nuns came to begin their regular life.

The **Monasterio de Santa Catilina** de Quito, Ecuador, was founded in 1593 by Señora María de Siliceo. In 1613 it was set up definitively in the place it occupies today, in houses belonging to Don Lorenzo de Cepeda, brother of St. Teresa of Jesus. At the present date the nuns are assisted pastorally and spiritually by Dominican friars, and they maintain catechetical groups with the help of the postulants and the young people of Quito. The nuns receive income from the sale of medicines compounded from ancient recipes, anti-wrinkle creams, condurango as cancer medicine, and concoctions for all kinds of indispositions. They also make pastries and desserts. In this monastery lived the Venerable Catilina de Jesús Herrera (1717-1795), a native of Guayaquil. After a life dedicated to prayer she died at 78 years of age, known for her holiness. Two blood sisters entered this community of Quito: María Imelda and María Angélica Espinoza Vasquez, religious of exemplary life. Their family possessed a beautiful piece of property which, after some years, they donated for the building of a new monastery. On the 14th of August, 1959, the two sisters and three other nuns left their Quito community to begin the **Monasterio del Santísimo Rosario** [Monastery of the Most Holy Rosary], Caranqui, Ibarra, Ecuador.

One hundred eighty-one years after the death of the Venerable Catalina de Jesús Herrera, a relative of hers promoted the moving of her remains to her native city of Guayaquil. During the Solemn Mass, the Cardinal Archbishop of Guayaquil praised the Venerable Mother's virtues and expressed his wish to have a monastery of Dominican women. At once arrangements were begun, and on June 1 of 1977, the Mother Prioress of the Monastery of the Most Holy Rosary, with the agreement of her community, offered help in founding the Guayaquil monastery. On Aug. 8, 1977, seven founding nuns arrived: four from the Monastery of Caranqui and three from the Monastery of Quito. The religious of the "**Monasterio Vble. Catilina de Jesús Herrera**" established themselves provisionally in a villa. On Dec. 3 of the same year the building of the monastery

began on land donated by the Curia of the Dominican Order, and it was canonically erected on May 21, 1979.

In the 17th century in Nueva Granada, the absence of Dominican nuns was keenly felt and the friars needed them in the struggles of their preaching. Thanks to great efforts on the part of the Chavez y Antolinez family, they obtained, after fifteen years, authorization from the King for the foundation of a monastery of Dominican nuns. It would be called **Monasterio de Santa Inés** [St. Agnes], of Bogotá, Colombia, and was inaugurated on July 19, 1645. In this monastery two sisters became famous for their holiness: Sor María Gertrudis Teresa de Santa Inés (1668-1730), on whom were impressed the wounds of Christ, and Sor Gertrudis Rosa de San José (1700-1765), gifted with mystical graces, locutions and prophecies, one of these last referring to the founding of the **Monasterio del Santísimo Rosario de Duitama**, which was inaugurated on Aug. 16, 1960.

The **Monasterio de Cristo Rey** [Christ the King] of Brazil was founded on Aug. 22, 1930. The foundresses came from Prouille; two of them were natives of Brazil who had made their novitiate in France in order to join the foundation.

The **Monasterio San Alberto Magno** [St. Albert the Great] is located in Lavalle, Republic of Argentina. It was born of a request of the first Bishop of the Diocese, Mons. Alberto Devoto, and was founded in 1967. Its first nuns began to follow St. Dominic by making prayer not an isolated act of their lives, but their very life; collaborating in the redemptive and missionary life of Christ.

Unlike other monasteries of the region, the Monasterio Nuestra Señora del Rosario [Our Lady of the Rosary], Quillabamba-Cusco, is located in a mission zone of Peruvian jungle entrusted to Dominican friars. The foundation was the dream of Mons. Javier Aria, OP, and became a reality thanks to the administration and help of his successor, Mons. Juan José Larreñeta, OP. This is the community which has

the most sisters in formation though it has not yet been twenty years since its foundation.

Finally, the Monasterio Santo Domingo [St. Dominic], in Cochabamba, Bolivia, a foundation which was begun by the Federation of Peru on Nov. 21, 2008, has now been taken over by the Monasterio de Santa Catalina of Arequipa. Having just acquired the land, they are repairing the houses so that nuns will be able to transfer there.

Sor Rosa Manrique, Arequipa, Peru
Original: Spanish

The Santa Maria de Guadalupe Federation, Mexico



The Santa Maria de Guadalupe Federation of Dominican Nuns of Mexico took its first steps under the supervision of Rev. Fr. Mariano Antía, O.P., who as Vicar Provincial encouraged our nuns to unite for mutual help and assistance. In late October 1959, he succeeded in bringing together for the first time, in the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, Mixcoac, fourteen nuns representing seven of the eight monasteries then existing. The Prioresses and delegates present approved the establishment of the "Federation of Dominican cloistered women, Santa Maria de Guadalupe of Mexico." On October 29th, Mother Rosa of Santa María Zapán, of the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Lima, Puebla, was elected the first Federal Prioress. A period of experimentation began, preceding the official confirmation, which was granted on December 31st, 1967. Along with this approval of the Federation came the naming of Rev. Fr. Mariano Antía, O.P., as Assistant to the Federation.

The first Federal Assembly took place April 23-28, 1968, in the Monastery of Santa Maria de Gracia, Guadalajara.

Early Accomplishments of the Mexican Federation



These were the concrete realization and fruit of the good understanding and mutual confidence which our elder sisters succeeded in establishing among themselves:

1. A dream which the Federation had even before being officially approved (i.e. ever since the 1959 meeting), had been to create a Center of Common Formation so that young sisters would be formed in Dominican spirituality and in the theological disciplines. This dream became a reality on May 24th, 1982, the date of the opening of the Federal Formation Center.
2. The opening of a Federal Novitiate took place January 16th, 1992, having had as its principal promoter the then Master of the Order, Fr. Damian Byrne, and as its leader, Fr. Orlando Huber. For this project, it was also necessary that one of the monasteries of the Federation take on the task – not an easy one – of hosting the Federal Novitiate. It was the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Lima, Puebla, which took on this task with a great spirit of faith and generosity.
3. Construction of a Federal Monastery. This was a project to which each and every monastery offered whatever it could. The Federal Monastery of Santa

Maria de Guadalupe was canonically erected in 1999, and in the same year the Federal Novitiate was transferred to this site – which is now the place of initial formation, a meeting-place, the common house where Federal Assemblies are held, and where courses and workshops are held for the whole Federation. A monastery devoted to formation has a very particular structure and autonomy. The Federation now has eighteen monasteries in Mexico, and a vicariate in Oaxaca. We also include the monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena in Havana, Cuba, and that of Santa Maria de Guadalupe in Managua, Nicaragua, as members of our Federation.

4. The number of nuns in solemn vows is 290. There are 20 Sisters in various stages of formation, including those who have returned to their monasteries after their time in the Federal Formation Center.

FROM THE FEDERAL MONASTERY OF MEXICO, OUR SISTERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.

From the NOVITIATE:



Dear Sisters:

We are six novices, and we want to share our experience with you, pointing out some aspects of our Dominican life:

Prayer

In the Federal Novitiate we have an Oratory with a tabernacle where the most Blessed Sacrament is kept; we make personal prayer there every day. Once a week we novices prepare a Holy Hour – which we do with creativity and enthusiasm. Being in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament exposed, we receive the strength to live fraternity with mutual respect, seeing each other as sisters. The experience of praying together with sisters from different monasteries is mutually enriching.

Study

Study helps us on our path of contemplation of God: we acquire new knowledge and with it, the desire to continue to progress in both spiritual and human fields. Study has also helped us to gain practice in searching the Sacred Scriptures.

Work



Work is done together and has helped us to journey together; we are motivated, we help each other, and we learn from each other. We experience the satisfaction of doing something for the Community - no one works for herself. We go on trying to acquire good habits and here too we mutually enrich one another.

The Community Life of the novices with their novice mistress

The directress of the novitiate shows us confidence and respect. She is open and patient. Although we are from several different monasteries, we see ourselves as sisters. We share our experiences. Our living-together is easy; there is trust, acceptance and help between us.

From the FORMATION CENTER:



My experience: My name is Sor Lucero López Amador, of the Monastery of Santa Inés de Montepulciano, Puebla. Being a member of the Formation Center of the Federation of Dominican Nuns of Mexico, has been one of the best experiences of my life, allowing me to go more deeply into my vocation and to appreciate even more the Order of Preachers, as the means of the consecration to God which He has granted me. Our Center is a great opportunity for us to be shaped in a Dominican way.

We practice itinerancy when we leave our monasteries of origin in order to come here to prepare ourselves. We move ahead in our search for Truth by means of our study: both in our different classes given in the monastery – classes proper to our religious identity and spirituality – and those given during the three year Diploma program for the Laity at the Diocesan seminary.

We deepen our intimate union with Jesus Christ and the Church by means of the liturgical acts which we celebrate: the Eucharist, and the prayer of the Hours of the Divine Office. We grow in service and preaching by means of our manual work: sewing, confectionery shop, laundry, and so on.

We also draw near to the Mystery of Christ Incarnate by means of contemplative silence and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in our times of personal prayer. We keep the devotions and traditions of our Order, such as the Rosary, the Psalm “De Profundis” (Ps. 130), and the “Salve Regina” chant at the end of Compline. We foster our fraternal life by our living together with sisters of distinct communities – both those who are

our companions in studies and also those who are serving in this federal community. Living thus provides opportunities to practice dialogue, respect, compassion and mercy and has allowed us to broaden our vision of the world, of the Church, and, of course, of the Order. Such a diversity of cultures and customs could present challenges with sisters having diverging opinions or practices. In spite of that possibility, I have seen that in this community the charism has remained united and renewed. Now, through all these means that the Federation offers us, I have come to understand that being a Dominican nun surpasses the limits of one monastery; such is the contemplation that our Father Dominic has given us as an inheritance. We contemplate Christ who became Incarnate in this enormous World in order to give it to men and women to live in, consecrating our lives for their salvation.

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE: My name is Sor Guadalupe Díaz Brito, of the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, Puebla. I am in temporary vows, in my third and last year as a junior in the Formation Center of the Santa María de Guadalupe Federation. Time has passed with great speed; it has been four and a half years since by the mercy of God and of the Order I entered the postulancy with great emotion, in my Puebla monastery. Later, the “Taking of the Habit” with which we began the novitiate set a standard for me, inwardly sowing the desire to persevere in this beautiful calling, in order to know and love Jesus Christ our Savior better, and the Church.

In the midst of inner battles, joys, sadness (including sickness), our Lord has granted me to reach the final stages of this period in the Formation Center. Having made the journey through these three years of the studentate (which have passed in a blink of an eye), I can share with you that the learning and the experiences acquired have been of invaluable richness: both practically in various fields and through systematic study and reflection, and also through growth in community and in spiritual life.

With the help of our Dominican brothers, teachers, priests, sisters of the community, and so on, I can assure you the objectives set out from the beginning have been realized: one of them being, "to assimilate in mind and heart the Dominican spirit." Aware that even though I have much to learn and that we will never leave off doing that, I am sure that there has been engraved in my heart the desire to follow in the footsteps of our holy Father St. Dominic, with the aid and help of our Most Holy Mother, of the Saints of the Church and of our Order, and with the prayers of every and each one of us.

Author of the article: Sor Margarita Canales, O.P.

From the Federation PRESIDENT: *With pleasure we share with all our sisters in the world something of what we are and how we live as their sisters in the Federal Monastery in Mexico. Surely there are many other things that you would like to know. We hope that there may be another opportunity to share with you. Meanwhile we remain united in prayer.*

*Sor Rosa María Lopez Z.,
O.P., President of the Mexican Federation*
Original: Spanish

Formation Course: **Monasteries of Dominican Nuns in** **Ecuador**



*Riobamba, 27th November to 2nd December, 2014.
Retreat Master: Fr. Rafael Colomé Angelats, O.P.*

Dear Sisters,

By means of this chronicle, we want to share with all an account of the initial and ongoing formation course that had been planned to take place from 26th November to 2nd of December. For unexpected reasons, it had to begin a day later, with a very crowded timetable of six lectures each day. The course was divided into two stages. The first part was for the older nuns and the second for Prioresses, Novice Mistresses and the Sisters in formation.

ANOTHER GIFT FROM GOD

Summoned by the Lord, we began to assemble in the Casa de Espiritualidade La Inmaculada Concepción run by our Franciscan Sisters in the city of Riobamba in an atmosphere of natural peace, silence and fraternal warmth characteristic of our charism.

However, we were concerned about the unexpected hitch: the retreat master had not arrived. Fr. Rafael [later] told us that the travel agency was on strike due to a shortage of fuel. We began our course on 27th November at 11 a.m. attended by a large number of people including Franciscan Sisters, Trinitarian Nuns, Poor Clares and the nuns from our own monasteries.

The second group, which began on 29th November was attended by the young people in formation.

FIRST THEME

CONSECRATION AND FRATERNAL LIFE IN COMMUNITY

In order to introduce the theme, the Retreat Master spoke of the change of paradigms used in the concept of consecration, giving details of the differences and characteristics of religious life in the past as compared with today, as things were and as they should be today. He explained in detail the significance of each word (consecration, evangelical counsels, etc.) as the surest means of attaining our goal, "the perfection of charity". In the light of our constitutions, he stressed the importance of the vow of obedience (cf. LCM 17 1- 157.1), explaining clearly the

essence of the vow and the excellence of the virtue.

He spoke too of the theological meaning of a vocation as gift and grace which bubbles forth from the will of God, the God who calls, selects and consecrates in a specific charism.

FRATERNAL LIFE

Called together by the Spirit to live together as sisters, together we endeavour to carry out God's plan of salvation in our life and mission. This ideal will only be accomplished in a healthy and balanced community.

Fraternal sharing is a complex undertaking and requires interpersonal relationships rooted in mutual confidence, recognising that one shares personal responsibility for the life and mission of the community, and possesses a series of evangelical and charismatic values ... An ideal of life which defines us as followers of Jesus! We have been called to share our life with brothers and sisters with different characteristics, both healthy and weak, both lacking in responsibility and hard workers. It presupposes serious effort in order to put up with frustration, cope with diversity, live with difference, not cutting oneself off and living one's own life but on the contrary being fully committed to the tasks of the community, endeavouring to share all that each one feels and lives, giving oneself and serving others, being fully involved in the life of the community.

Fraternal life is created by all together. No one can exempt herself from making her own personal contribution to the common good of all. A shared life based on a vocation and charism that are common to all must be governed by criteria of co-responsibility.

In conclusion, he spoke about one's reasons for following a vocation and being faithful to it; he also gave us various guidelines to enable us to distinguish between what was essential and what was secondary. He urged us to become aware of the fundamental option we had made in responding to God's call, and the important

need to develop a real affective bond of love with God by means of unceasing prayer.

THE SECOND THEME CONSECRATION, AFFECTIVITY AND OBEDIENCE

The various aspects of the theme of vocation were reflected on: how it began, through what means, the first crises, (parental opposition, leaving home, parting with one's possessions, adaptation), the characteristics of baptismal and religious consecration as a process of conforming oneself to Christ, marked by a God-centred spirituality.

The lectures that followed were devoted to the world of the affections as a system enabling a person to be happy.

Our God-centered experience begins to be operative when we discover interiorly, on the basis of our calling/vocation, that human fullness is achieved by following Jesus as Dominican men and women. Without this 'spiritual nucleus', no form of religious life one wishes to undertake will have a solid basis. However, spiritual formation does not consist in a theoretical apprenticeship but rather in the experiencing of the presence of God.

There followed an explanation of the vow of obedience with a wide-ranging treatment of the two theological 'loci': God's plan of salvation and charismatic mediation, looking upon obedience as a mystery which is directed towards God, whose theological paradigm is the Trinity.

In conclusion, Father spoke about the vow of obedience as a sacrifice of love to God, renouncing the need for self-assertiveness; it is important to maintain a vital attitude of listening to God, to have as a life project the obedience of faith, and to make our own the models of faith presented to us by the history of salvation and our charism. It is the Holy Spirit who both helps and brings this project to a successful conclusion.

With all our hearts we thank God who, through Fr Rafael Colomé and all the Sisters who made this formation course possible, have enabled our Dominican Communities in Ecuador to renew our hope, commitment and the joy of living the mission of the Order. The course was a blessing for all. Thank you.

*Sr Carmelina Ibujes, O.P.
Monastery of the Most Holy Rosary
Caranqu, Ecuador*

Original: Spanish

Novices in Znojmo. Report from a common meeting



A second meeting of Dominican nuns took place from 9th to 13th October 2014 in the Southern Moravian town of Znojmo in the Czech Republic. Novices, sisters in formation and their novice mistresses took part. The meeting took place in the ancient Holy Cross Monastery that used to be inhabited by Dominican friars but since the 1990's it has been home to the Dominican nuns.

Our present meeting was very enriching, both as regards the prayer and the programme. Times of prayer in common interchanged with encouraging and edifying lectures. Above all, we had time enough to discuss things together. On Thursday, 9th October, Fr. Damián Němec OP, a canon lawyer, talked about the anchoring of our charism in the Canon Law. During the afternoon we visited the Baroque Holy Cross Church adjacent to the monastery, and the crypt. On Friday, 10th October, we listened to

a talk on the Psalms as Christian prayer held by Sr. Marie from Prague who is a specialist in the Scripture. During the afternoon we occupied ourselves with various handicrafts. The next day and a half (11th and 12th October) were wholly devoted to psychology. We listened to talks on authority and its various aspects (assertivity; relations with other sisters; putting on masks). The speaker – a psychologist and head of the Dominican laity in Poland, Mrs. Małgorzata Mazur – came all the way from Szczecin in Poland. On Sunday evening we had a friendly meeting with the whole community of Znojmo. On Monday, finally, Sr. Růžena (Rose) from Znojmo spoke about the sacrifice in St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Her talk raised much interest.

Participating in the meeting were four novice mistresses and five sisters in formation from four different places. From Krakow there arrived Sr. Weronika with her novice mistress, Sr. Stanisława. From the Polish Radonie the new novice mistress, Sr. Jacka, came together with both junior professed sisters, Sr. Małgorzata (i.e. Margaret) and Sr. Magdalena. The Monastery in Znojmo was represented by the novice mistress, Sr. Raymunda, and Sr. Cecílie who had recently (on 28th September 2014) made her first profession. The main organizer of the meeting was Sr. Marie, former novice mistress but since January 2014 prioress of the monastery in Prague. From Prague there came also the newly appointed novice mistress Sr. Pavla and a new postulant Jana.

The present meeting has brought us many impulses to be developed further as well as the joy of getting to know each other and sharing together. Then and there it was decided that the next meeting would take place in the Polish monastery of Radonie in the end of April 2015.

Jana Maroszová
Monastery of Dominican Nuns,
Prague, the Czech Republic

Original: German

A Blank Page Signed by All the Sisters

So far 2014 has been a special year for our community and we know that it will continue to be a time of blessing for our Monastery of Korea.

As we begin each New Year we are, as it were, a blank page before the Lord. We all sign this page indicating our willingness to allow Him to write on it as He wills, as the days of the calendar go by. We are in the month of July now and this year we have already plenty written on it.

We started the year preparing for the election of Prioress and looking forward to a new three year term. Everything was simple but these things cause a certain tension and take time. We had barely finished the election, when some days later, two of our sisters left us to go to the Monastery of Olmedo – Spain, from where we were founded, to help that Community, who had requested two of our Sisters to go there. They, with great desire to surrender to the Lord and also with great joy to return to the Monastery where they had stayed in their period of formation, set off on this adventure leaving us with a lot of nostalgia. The simple fact of their going was as if the whole Monastery went, because it was a way for all of us to help that beloved Monastery. So it was also a joy for the ones that were left.

Another event for which we had been preparing was the coming, in Lent, of Father Nelson Medina, OP. Some years ago at our Community Chapters we discussed how we could we could best keep up our knowledge of the Spanish language which we had acquired with so much difficulty. Many ideas were presented but although they were very good, it would have been very difficult to implement them. But one of the ideas was liked by all of us. It was the idea of inviting, once a year, a Priest or a Dominican Father who spoke Spanish, to give us a Spanish language course. Last year we invited Father Nelson Medina OP from the Colombia Province. We knew him because we had heard some of his CDs sent to us from the Federation for on-going Formation. We had been in contact with him and he agreed to come for Lent of this year. These

were very profitable days. He talked about initiation into the Christian life and all the concepts were very good, clear and very orthodox.

Our Dominican Fathers from Korea knew of Fr Nelson's coming and wished to make use of his stay here, so they decided to do so in our monastery, by celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation with a meeting of the Dominican Family. The centre of this meeting was a time of Lectio Divina culminating with the Eucharist. The Lectio Divina echoed the invitation which the Master of the Order had made this year in his letter to the Laity, encouraging them to ponder on the Word of God.

Actually, the preparation was beautiful and well done. First, a Korean Father read the Gospel of that day. After a time of silence we all read it again. Then all present, we, the Dominican Sisters and Laity who came, shared the verses of the Gospel. After that we all read the Gospel individually and in silence. After some time we began what Father Brian Pierce calls the "ECHO". Freely, some of us said aloud how the text had inspired us. At the end, Father Nelson op gave a talk in Spanish which was translated into Korean by our Prioress, from the ambo. After that we began the celebration of the Eucharist.

Another event which is being written about on the page we mentioned at the beginning is the preparation for the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order. Here, in Korea, there are four Congregations of Dominican Sisters, one of Priests, a group of lay people who have started recently, a Rosary group and ourselves. The leaders of the Congregations and the Priests have already met twice in our Monastery to see how we will prepare for the event. Everyone is very excited about it. Dominican life here in Korea is less than forty years old. We know that we are small in size but in our smallness we still want to celebrate this great event in the best possible way.

One of the events we have in mind is to invite Father Brian Pierce op to give some conferences. One of our Korean Fathers knows Father Brian. They met in Rome when Fray Juan was studying

there. They became good friends and it was he who was responsible for the arrival and departure of Father Brian when he visited our Monastery.

We do not know yet if it will be possible for him to come in 2016. We leave it all in the hands of the Lord.

Another thing that we are speaking about for 2016 is the possibility of having time for a Spiritual Retreat. For that we will offer our hostel to anyone who would need it, because in external things we cannot help much. We were very impressed because people told us that what they expect from us is prayer.

Another line of the Lord's writing on the blank page is the taking of habit by Sister Agnes that will be, please God, on the first Saturday of September. We ask for prayers for her and that she may persevere in her vocation.

At the moment the last event that we expect and which will be a blessing to the entire Church in Korea is the Pope's visit from 14 to 18 of August. He will preside over the beatification of 124 Korean Martyrs of the nineteenth century and be present at the Asian Youth Days that will take place in the diocese of Daejeong.

In our Monastery, at our recreation times we talk about the possibility of the Pope visiting our house. It would be very difficult, but like the children that we are we get excited with almost impossible things, make fun that it may happen and we go on dreaming. Anyway, we will borrow a television set so we will be able to see the Pope during all the time he will stay in Korea, besides praying for him repeatedly.

There is still half a year to complete the blank page which was begun at the beginning of 2014. What will the Lord wish to write there for the rest of the year? We do not know, but we have the certainty that we are in His hands and, for us, that is sufficient. He wants the best for His spouses. *We are in Your hands, Lord. Do to us what you wish.*

Monastery "Mother of God", Korea

Original: Spanish

The Ministry of Preaching in a Contemplative Monastery

"The brethren of the Order, commissioned entirely to spreading the word of God, fulfill their vocation primarily by preaching. The nuns, while commissioned by God primarily to prayer, are not for this reason excluded from the ministry of the word. They listen to the word, celebrate it and keep it in their hearts, and in this way proclaim the Gospel of God through the example of their life." (LCM 96. & I)

Dear readers of Monialibus, many times we, the nuns, ask ourselves what is specific about our ministry, how can we develop it, which activities are within our scope and which are not.

I think it is an important question, and it is very well treated in the number of our Constitutions with which I have begun this article. A monastery of Dominican nuns should be a prayerful presence that is visible, near, hospitable, open. Our communities and our churches should be known to the world as places of meeting, welcome, listening and prayer, and from there the Dominican charism of the holy preaching can be presented. This is possible for all of us.

Some of you may ask how you can do this. I would like to share with you, humbly and simply, how we do it in our monastery, I am sure all of you do similar things in your communities. Thus we can see which initiatives can be undertaken to carry out the holy preaching, initiatives that are not so difficult or complicated, although it is true that we have to come out of ourselves and be available. But this is nothing more than

living authentically the apostolic zeal of our holy Father St. Dominic.

First of all – the ministry of prayer. In our church we welcome several times a year the following groups or events:

- The prayer vigil for vocations organized by the Confederation for the Religious of Spain;
- Groups of young people who come to pray the Rosary for the mission *ad gentes* in Ukraine and China. They belong to the Neo-catechumenal Way and with them we have had different celebrations such as: Vespers, celebration of the sacrament of Penance, the Eucharist, etc.
- Receiving pilgrims to the World Youth Day who spent a few days in Murcia and came to our church to pray Lauds. We took advantage of this opportunity to pray with them and to share our testimony. I emphasize especially the meeting with the pilgrims who came from Peru in 2011 and who shouted for joy when - welcoming them - we mentioned Saint Martin of Porres and Saint Rose of Lima.
- In 2013 we held a prayer vigil which was part of the annual meeting of seminarians from the minor seminaries of Spain. Our church was filled with young boys preparing to enter the seminary who asked us to pray for them and their vocations.
- During the year 2013 we held a prayer week with the students from the Catholic University of St. Anthony of Murcia (UCAM). We shared with them some thoughts about Liturgy and then we had a time of quiet prayer together before the celebration of Vespers in common. More than 200 young people passed through our church. In 2014 we would like to extend this experience to two weeks and explain to them the sense of religious life nowadays, the meaning of the liturgy,

and close it with a prayer vigil with all the groups.

- Once a year we have an encounter with a youth group related to the Combonian Fathers. We meet with them on a Sunday, share experiences of their mission in Africa and our testimonies, and we conclude the meeting with the Eucharist.

Secondly there is the ministry of hospitality; at all times we try to be present with them, having at least one sister attending to them, able to answer their questions and worries:

- The welcoming of groups of children who are being prepared for their first Communion and of young people who are preparing themselves for the sacrament of Confirmation. We present to them the life of Saint Dominic adapted to their age and then they can ask any question they want.
- We offer our guest house (which is very small) to the religious who come to Murcia to attend to their own groups.
- We host in our church various cultural events, such as: concerts of church music; Christmas concerts; university students of the History of Art; students from the Conservatory of Music who can play our Baroque organ.
- We participate in some recordings with the radio and television programs called “Spaces of Silence”, organized by the regional government.

Thirdly, there is the ministry related directly to the Dominican Family:

- With the Dominican Laity we have various monthly meetings, be it for liturgical prayer or for private prayer, or for talks on formation. We also have together with them retreat days in Advent and Lent. Besides, we share with them the visits of Dominican friars who

come to our community so that they can know better the reality of the Order in Spain and in the world.

- With the Confraternity of the Blessed Rosary we pray the Rosary and have Mass together once a month. In October we celebrate solemnly the Novena in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary.

May our Father St. Dominic encourage us all to live the Holy Preaching from our monasteries, so that we may be today the salt and the light for the world to promote the building of a new humanity.

Monastery of St. Anne, Murcia, Spain

Original: Spanish

The Pratovecchio Monastery



Pratovecchio should say its "mea culpa" for having disregarded the repeated invitations to write news or interesting articles for Monialibus. This time we do it for the pleasure of sharing our lives with all our communities throughout the world.

First of all we ought to thank those who have worked and still work, offering their time and their skills, for the realization of our "International Journal". We also want to thank

all the communities that have helped us to open our eyes to broader horizons of Dominican contemplative life in recent years, with their writings.

Well, this time we would like to share something with you.

We are the community of "St. Mary of the Snows and St. Dominic" in Pratovecchio (Italy). Pratovecchio is a town located in the beautiful Valley of *Casentino*, in the center of Tuscany. There, one can find also the Sacred Convent of *La Verna*, where St. Francis received the stigmata, the Sacred Hermitage of Camaldoli monks, surrounded by a beautiful forest of fir trees, and a few kilometers away is the Dominican convent-sanctuary of "*Santa Maria del Sasso*" (*Bibbiena*) where two Dominican friars and two nuns currently live.

We are 15 sisters in our community. Amongst us is a sister of 100 years and six months, a native of Valladolid (Spain). In 2015, two sisters will make their religious profession: two sisters will make solemn profession and one temporary profession. Thanks be to God, the community has always maintained more or less the same number of sisters by having new young vocations.

Our latest item of good news is the "New Monastery Project" that is currently under way. In fact the new monastery is under construction on a hill in the suburbs of the town. The project was made possible by the union of our community with that of Querceto (Florence) which was suppressed because only two nuns remained. It will be a very functional monastery and less expensive in its maintenance. We hope to be able to have the official opening in the Year of the Jubilee of the Order, but of course it does not depend only on our desire but rather from favorable conditions that allows the work to proceed expediently.

We realize that new walls do not make for a new community: instead, we must be a sign, a visible presence and witness among the people of God.

The year that Pope Francis has dedicated to the Consecrated life is a very precious time for us to reflect about our contemplative life, to go back back to the origins and to be attentive to the novelty of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis has said that those living a consecrated life must wake up this world again, and I think that we nuns, with our specific way of life, should feel involved in this mission. We must dare! Again, the Pope said that "a church [can get] unhealthy from being confined" and we have suffered and still suffer from this disease, perhaps, we have been enclosed within structures fearing to make mistakes or because "the structures give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat'" (Pope Francis, EG 49).

For our part, we go ahead with perseverance and have frequent Community meetings and talks to confront ourselves once again with our Constitutions and other documents trying to read in the light of the signs of the times and to free ourselves possibly from that which foreshadows the true spirit of the Gospel.

We agree, not without difficulty, that the time has come to take bold steps that make us leave some patterns that say nothing either to us or to others. We cannot be bridled by the fear of losing our identity as Dominican contemplatives. How many doors of monasteries were closed painfully behind us in recent years! One night I woke up with a thought: why are the Dominican monasteries getting empty? What's wrong? Is it only a social and cultural reason? Is it only because families have fewer children? Personally I am convinced that God is the one who calls, and we should do our part, but I think very often we clip the wings of the "Dove" so that it does not challenge our certitudes.

For instance, we are thinking of reviewing the stages of the formation of young sisters. Is it possible to keep more or less segregated for seven years in the novitiate graduated girls who

have lived with great freedom in today's society? A postulant before she can actually choose this life should primarily see the people and know how the community lives and what they do.

We feel that, more than sheltering ourselves from the world, we must open ourselves to the world, without losing what is the form and the essential elements of the contemplative life, and be in the world a "school of the Word and of friendship."

We had to look for work in order not to close the economic budget in the red every month. A generous person has given us a small job putting up a *Tomaiificio* (shoe laboratory where the uppers of the shoes and slippers are stitched). Is asking for help from benefactors still synonymous of poverty? "Poverty is to work with our own hands and not that others should maintain our needs, under the pretext of the religious life that we lead (Eph. 4.28) Cenobitic poverty is to help the poor with the fruit of our work..." (E. Bianchi) and for this same reason, in our new monastery we have planned to have a small bedroom with bath, for the reception of a poor or immigrant while awaiting for better accommodation.

If contemplation really lives in us, and God with it, we will not lose our specificity even by removing the grill of the enclosure. It then becomes perceivable that even the enclosure is a necessary "means" to protect the contemplative space that we cannot give up, but can never be a hindrance to charity towards everyone.

A Dominican monastery, where we celebrate, meditate and study the Word of God, has to be a visible sign and place of acceptance and compassion that embraces all in the name of the Lord.

Dear sisters, maybe reading these lines has awakened some perplexity in you. But this is also an act of courage that we wanted to do, opening our hearts to make you participate of our research, our fatigues, our hope, to tell you

that how much we love our Dominican contemplative vocation.

Best wishes and prayers to all our communities spread in all over the world.

The community of "St. Mary of the Snows and
St. Dominic"
Pratovecchio (Italy)
Sr Maria Pia Fragni op – Prioress
Original: Italian