

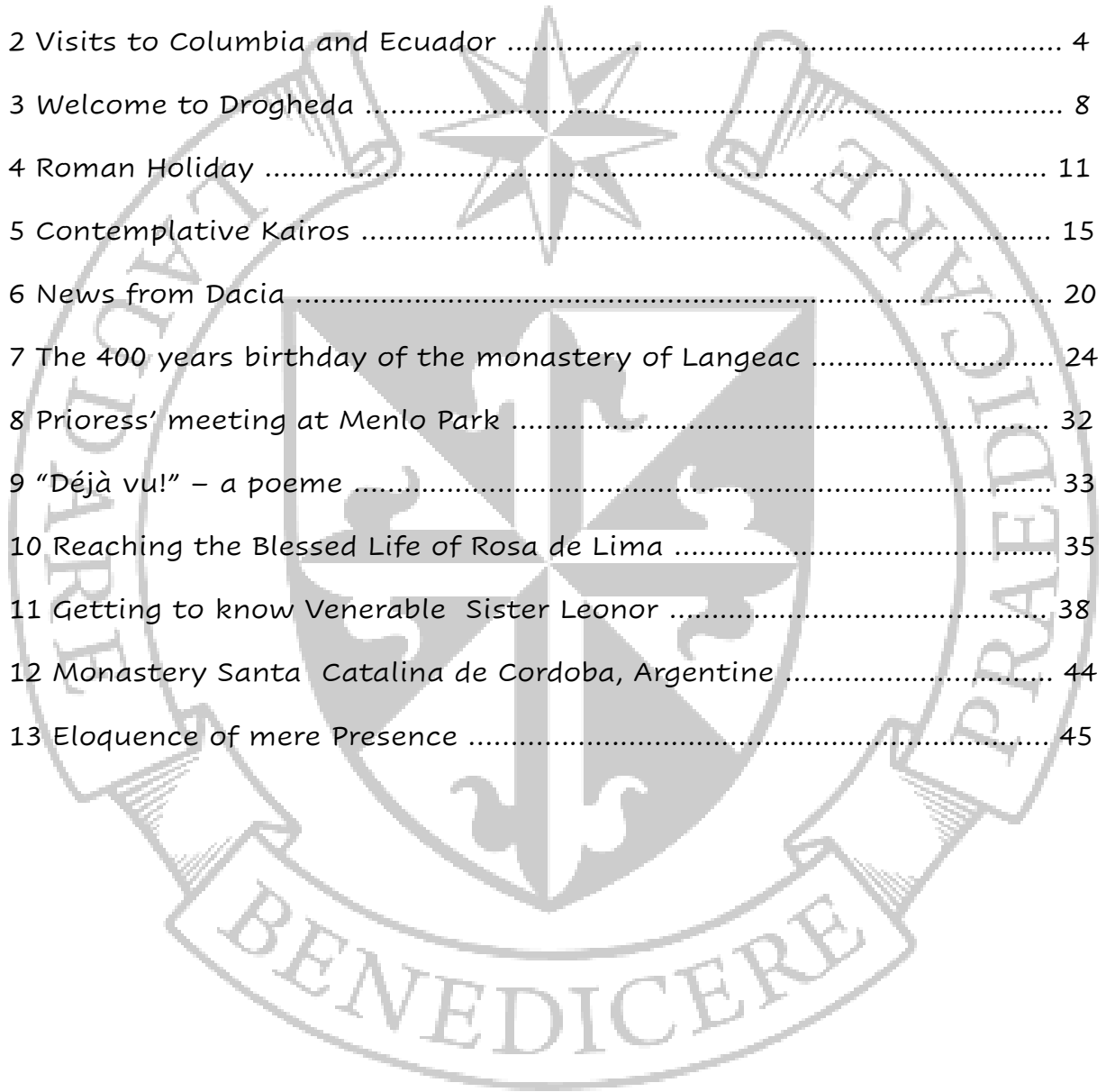


MONIALIBUS 49

Octobre - October - Octubre 2023



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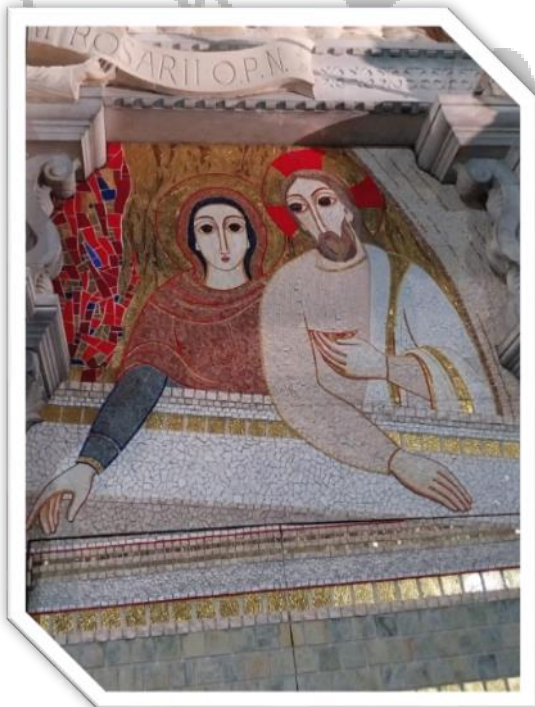
1. "THEY HAVE RUN OUT OF WINE ..!"

During the month of July, I had the opportunity to go on a short pilgrimage to Lourdes. It was still before World Youth Day, a few groups of young people who had come from far away were preparing for it with short days of visits and pilgrimage to the Virgin Mary. In front of the Basilica of the Rosary, a beautiful cross with the WYD motif, illuminated in the evening, invited people to pray for these days when young people were expected in Portugal.

Yes, there were of course pilgrims, young and elder ones, sick people accompanied and helped by their loved ones or volunteers who give their strength and time to the service of the pilgrims. It is always impressive to see people coming and going towards the Blessed Grotto and to participate in this incessant prayer which rises in all languages towards the Virgin Mary.

They all come full of confidence to entrust themselves to the Virgin Mary, very present in this high place of pilgrimage.

In the evening, the torchlight procession brings together a large crowd of pilgrims, of all ages and backgrounds, sick and healthy who raise the *Ave, Ave Maria* up to the One who dwells in this blessed place.



Arriving on the square in front of the Basilica, the procession ends in front of the facade, generously lit and illuminated, with a celebration of the Word during which the intentions of the pilgrims, written down during the day and gathered in large bowls, are solemnly presented to the Virgin Mary.

This October bulletin wants to make the connection with that moment of the evening in Lourdes, when the facade of the Basilica of the Rosary captivated me with these two scenes depicted :

Above, the sculpture of the Virgin Mary who, through the hands of Jesus, presents the Rosary to Saint Dominic – a scene that we

all love, venerate and make particularly our own through the recitation of the Rosary, especially in this month of October.

I took a long look at the facade, especially the set that makes up the “decoration”: the sculpture at the top and the mosaics below, just above the entrance door to the Basilica.



These magnificent mosaics, so finely made and very expressive, present the wedding feast at Cana in two scenes : on the left the young couple, and on the right, the Virgin Mary who looks at Jesus and says to him these single words that we know all too well : *“they have no more wine.”*

Why this scene just below the Rosary given to St Dominic?

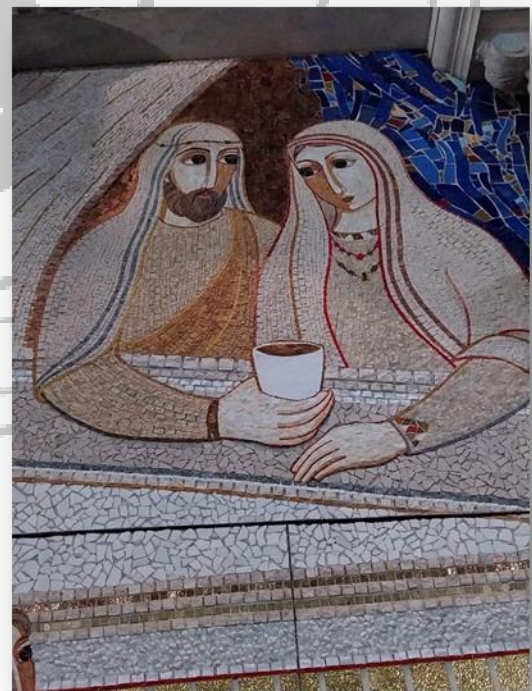
What could possibly be the link between these two scenes, these two representations?

The gospel tells us what happens next. Mary addresses the servants *“do whatever he tells you”* – and the miracle takes place.

What if the miracle were to be accomplished through the Rosary ? What wine can we give ? In our communities, in the Church and in society, where we are, where we live ?

As we pray the Rosary beads so many intentions present themselves to us and invite us to offer the wine of mercy, the wine of compassion, the wine of patience, the wine of forgiveness, the wine of listening, the wine of tenderness and reconciliation where we are, for ourselves, between ourselves, and for all those we carry in our hearts...Yes, the pilgrims in Lourdes teach us *“how to give the wine”* in so many ways... the help given freely, the attention to detail for the well-being of the weakest, the look of kindness and encouragement, for free...

May the Virgin Mary always teach us ever better to be attentive where wine is beginning to run out.





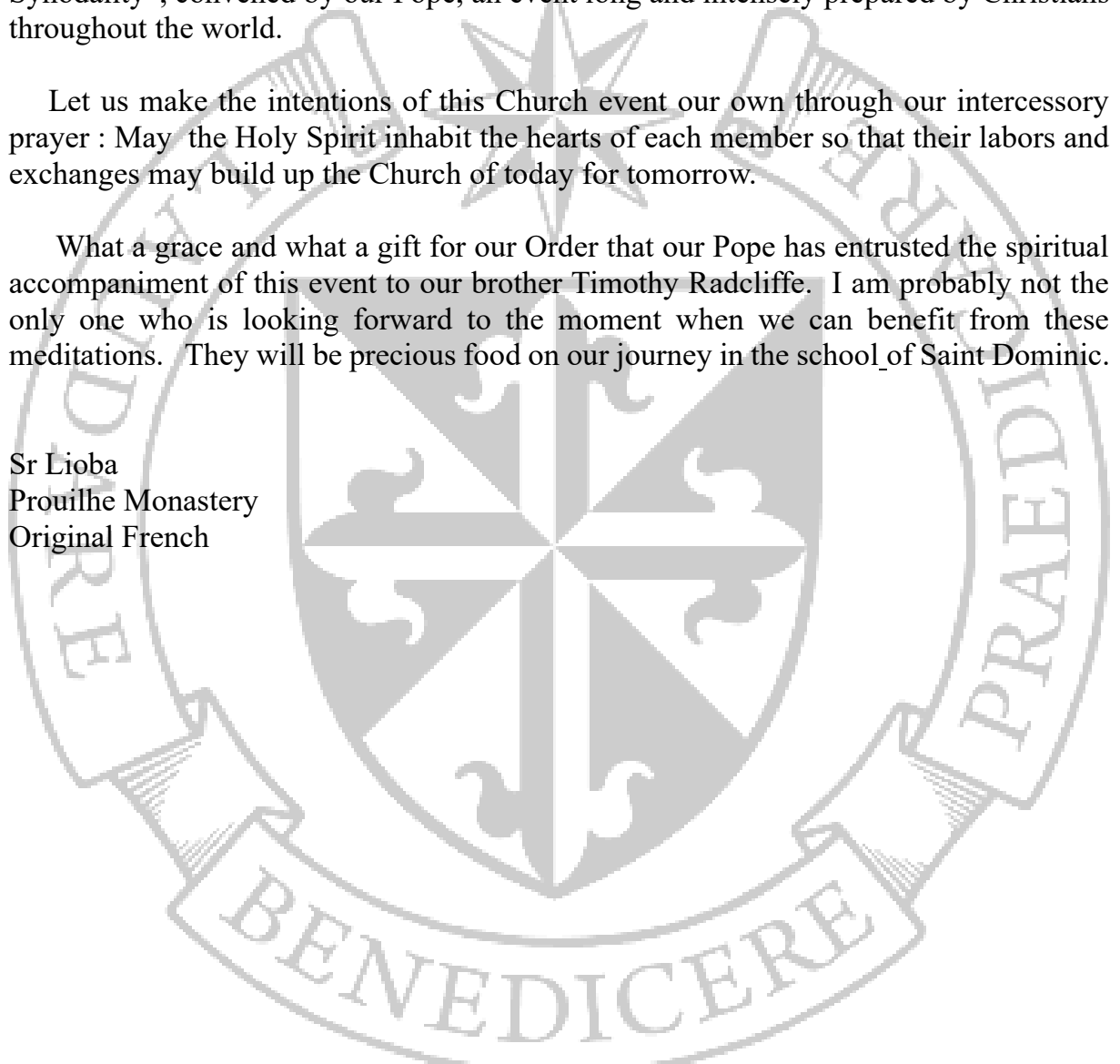
And through the intercession of Blessed Joan of Aza, may the Lord impel us to be generous in remembrance of the barrel that never emptied when wine was served to the poor ; may our faith not fail.

Together with the whole church, this month of October, we are living the “Synod on Synodality”, convened by our Pope, an event long and intensely prepared by Christians throughout the world.

Let us make the intentions of this Church event our own through our intercessory prayer : May the Holy Spirit inhabit the hearts of each member so that their labors and exchanges may build up the Church of today for tomorrow.

What a grace and what a gift for our Order that our Pope has entrusted the spiritual accompaniment of this event to our brother Timothy Radcliffe. I am probably not the only one who is looking forward to the moment when we can benefit from these meditations. They will be precious food on our journey in the school of Saint Dominic.

Sr Lioba
Prouilhe Monastery
Original French





2. VISITS TO THE MONASTERIES OF COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR

After communicating with the Federal Presidents of the Federations of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in Colombia, Sister María del Pilar del Espíritu Santo Gaitán Torres, OP, and the Federation of St. Dominic of Guzmán in Ecuador, Sister Catalina de Jesús Almeida Angulo, OP, I visited the corresponding monasteries in these countries. There was a total of eight visits, and I can say that I was always very well received and welcomed in all the monasteries. The nuns treated me like an older brother (sometimes, and with reference to the younger ones, quite older!) and I was always very happy to get to know the sisters of the communities, the monasteries, their different works, to celebrate mass in my own language and to share everything that we discussed together in dialogue. In general, I exhorted them to know and live more intensely the life of Our Father St. Dominic with the wonderful spirituality of the four pillars: fraternal life, prayer, study and work. All these must be updated to our historical, social and cultural times. I tried to emphasize, above all, fraternal charity, and personal and community study. Finally, although I believe that, even if there is a shortage of vocations, aging in some communities and the Federations are slowly contracting, there is a future because “the Lord Jesus is our hope that does not disappoint” (Rm 5,5).

We begin with the (1.) Monastery of Santa Inés, in Tenjo, Madrid, Cundinamarca, in Colombia. Sister Pilar, the Federal President, lives there. There are 18 nuns, the Prioress is Sister Ana Julia. There is a balanced community in the sense of older, middle-aged, and young sisters. I had a meeting with the Council, and several with the whole community. They used to live in Bogota, but the problems of nearby buildings and a lot of noise, led them to move to the outskirts, to the countryside. They built a very beautiful monastery with excellent spaces and surrounded by nature. There is a small village nearby. But now, they have the challenge of working harder to get ahead in their economy. They hope to be able to expand the guest house to help them better support and survive from day to day. The sisters will undoubtedly succeed.

From there I left for the (2.) Monastery of Nuestra Señora de las Gracias de Torcorama, in Ocaña. It was a long 12-hour bus ride to get there. There are 12 nuns. The Prioress is Sister Clara. I was accompanied by Sister Maricarmen from the monastery of Sogamoso. I am still grateful to her for her pleasant and cheerful company. The road was winding and narrow with overhangs and cliffs, but the pleasant conversation, the night (and prayer!) helped to overcome the nerves. A doctor named Ignacio was kind enough to pick us up at the station and take us to the monastery. There was a brother there, Friar Ivan Fernando, with whom I had a good relationship and talk. After a tasty breakfast and some rest time on the first day, we began to talk about different topics of their Dominican contemplative life. The nuns



pray the Rosary which is transmitted by radio. I collaborated on one occasion by commenting and praying a mystery with them. I had a good meeting with the young and older nuns and made some suggestions to help them in their Dominican life and in their economy. I met with the rosary confraternity of a group of ladies who are very good and dedicated to their work. It was a very pleasant time sharing with the sisters.

On the way back to Tenjo, the good Orlando was waiting for us, who helped them driving a van, as well as Sister Pilar and Sister Ana Julia. I had a good time to check my mails coming from the nuns and we ended the day with a good dialogue about different topics and issues with the prioress. The next day, Sunday, was my 43rd anniversary of religious profession and that made me feel very happy during the whole day. It was a restful day, although in the afternoon I worked again on my mails, which never end! In the evening I packed my suitcase to leave very early the next day for Duitama, to the (3.) Monastery of the Most Holy Rosary. There are 15 sisters. Sister Martha is the Prioress. On this occasion we were taken to the monastery by two siblings, Fray Andres, an Augustinian theology student and his beautiful and professional sister Johanna. We stopped at the famous “Puente de Boyacá” to get to know the place and to honor the hero Simón Bolívar, Liberator of the so-called Bolivarian countries. We arrived at the monastery and immediately, together with the Prioress and a retinue, we went to visit the new monastery that is under construction on the outskirts of Duitama, in the countryside, for the same reasons mentioned above. The first stage of construction is practically finished. It was a very interesting visit guided by the kind engineers. We returned and made a tour of the monastery: they do beautiful embroidery work, liturgical vestments, hosts, sell religious articles, have laying hens and seek, by a thousand ways, to make a living. The next day Sister Martha, Sister Ana, an educated and very kind “policeman” Giovanni and I went to visit the Temple of Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá, run by the Dominican friars. Splendid National Marian Sanctuary. We greeted the Dominican bishop Fray Leonardo Gomez. Fray Árles, a very kind brother, guided us and showed us everything there was to see of the Convent including a delicious coffee. We passed through Raquira, a picturesque and beautiful village where they work a lot with clay and ceramics. We returned at night to rest after so many friendly encounters.

The next day we left for the (4.) Monastery of Espíritu Santo, in Sogamoso-Boyacá. There are 8 nuns who live in a white, illuminated, and magnificent monastery, with very ample, orderly and adequate spaces for the Dominican contemplative life. They have just elected Sister Nohoralba as Prioress. She is cheerful and very well prepared. We had several meetings of dialogue and reflection on different topics of the Dominican contemplative life. We shared our meals with great joy, and we were even able to watch a nice and funny movie. It is a joyful and peaceful monastery, where there is a lot of fraternity. There is an “external” sister whose concept is no longer clear today. Afterwards we went back to Santa Inés in Tenjo, to rest a little and



to leave for Ecuador on the next day, where the sisters were already waiting for me with a certain impatience.

In Quito, Ecuador, I was received by the Federal President, Sister Catalina Almeida, who is also the Prioress and Sister Maricarmen Maila, both from the (5.) Monastery of Sagrada Familia. It was a great joy to meet them again, after having met them at the “Macro-meeting of the OP Nuns”, in 2018. Juan, kind driver of the sisters, took us to the monastery. There are 9 sisters, some of whom are ill. It’s a simple and small monastery, but very warm and pleasant. One sister is doing studies in Salamanca, Spain. As in other monasteries, we had meetings to discuss topics of Dominican contemplative life. We took a tour of the monastery. Impressive work in the preparation of wine, they have a vegetable garden, bees, and chickens. Everything to help support themselves.

After a couple of days, we left for Imbabura, Caranquí-Ibarra, to the (6.) Monastery of Santísimo Rosario. There are also 9 nuns and there is also one other sister who is studying in Salamanca, Spain. The Prioress is Sister Ana María. It is a huge monastery with many farmlands. I met Fray Mauricio, who is engineer, very kind, who helps them in all plumbing and electrical repairs and whatever is needed (!). We had our meetings of dialogue and sharing about Dominican life. They have also a good and big wine production. They have a hostelry with enough rooms to help them in their economy. We shared the food with much joy and cordiality.

The next day I left by plane for Guayaquil, to the (7.) Monastery of the Venerable Catalina de Jesus Herrera. I was picked up by Sister Irene and Sister Beatriz. There are 12 nuns. A very balanced monastery, with elderly, middle-aged, and young sisters, all very cheerful and fraternal. Sister Cecilia, the Prioress, is very kind. There is a Spanish sister, Sister Sagrario, wise and with a good sense of humor. Irene, whom I had met at the meeting of the International Commission of the Nuns in Mexico in 2019. We had the corresponding meetings and interviews with some sisters. There are young people who provide life to the monastery. They have some rents (next to their house “gas station”) and bakery. They live across a river in a dangerous area. At lunch on the last day there were songs, poetry, laughter, jokes, even a “Mariachi”-hat and a lot of joy and fraternity, all very pleasant and fun. I signed their guestbook and said goodbye with a certain nostalgia for the pleasant time we had from the beginning with a very nice welcome.

Then we flew to Quito, to the last convent of the tour, the (8.) Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena. There are 11 nuns. Over a couple of days, we had our usual meetings to talk about their Dominican life. The mother prioress, Sister Mercedes, gave me a couple of tours of the museum they have with very valuable paintings and sculptures, real treasures. They gave me a habit as a gift! The sisters have a very large refectory with beautiful signs in Latin and Spanish referring to the value of food and that “man



shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God". We made a very interesting visit to the "Mitad del Mundo" (Half of the World) and the (winged) Virgin "del Panecillo", to the Basilica del Voto Nacional, dedicated to the Sacred Heart and to the wonderful Convent of San Francisco. We had a farewell lunch in its cloister-pergola with many trees and plants. Afterwards we had a meeting with Sister Catalina Almeida, the Prioress, and other sisters, for a review and comments on the two Federal Assemblies they have held. And the next day I left for Mexico and from there back to Rome. They were days full of fraternity, joy, and mutual knowledge between the nuns of Colombia and Ecuador and the work of the Promoter General of the Nuns.

I have returned to Rome happy and a little tired, but with joy and hope in that the life of the Order has within itself, as much in its roots, as in its history, much to teach us for our present and future. We are, as it has been said, "preachers of grace" and it is the grace of God that lives in the Church, in the Order, in each nun, friar, sister, lay person or priest, that lives in the Lord "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13,8).

May Mary, Mother of the Church, enlighten us and help us to always walk in the footsteps of the Master in the spirit of Dominic.

Fr. Fernando Garcia, op

Original spanish



3. VISIT OF FR FERNANDO GARCIA TO DROGHEDA

In March 2023 and just in time for St Patrick's Day, we were unexpectedly delighted to meet and to welcome our promoter and brother, fr Fernando Garcia OP, for a week-long visit – and despite his lack of confidence in English and none of us having much Spanish, we had a very blessed visit with him and managed – quite well – to understand each other!

Our Prioress, Sr M Breda, had been in Rome in February for the LCM Revision, and had got to know fr Fernando a little while staying in Santa Sabina. There he told her that he would like to come to our community during our jubilee year commemorating 300 years since our foundation. While we were delighted with this news, I don't think we expected him to follow through as soon as he did, but within a very short time, we learned that we could expect him on 13th March and that he would be with us for a week. He was as good as his word.



Our Vicar, fr Joseph Dineen OP, met him at Dublin Airport and brought him to us. That afternoon we had a short recreation in our community room, when he introduced himself to us and spoke briefly of his work as promoter. He was apologetic for his lack of fluency in English, but he is more competent than any of us are in speaking Spanish, and being our brother we already felt we knew and understood him. After a tiring journey from Rome to Dublin, and then on to Drogheda, it is not so easy to concentrate and think in a foreign language - we were impressed by fr Fernando's determination and success.

During fr Fernando's visit, he had the opportunity to meet some of our brothers who celebrate Holy Mass for us each day, one of whom had spent some years after Ordination in San Clemente, a convent of the Irish Province in Rome. Fr Patrick Desmond, who had met fr Fernadno in Rome, very kindly brought him to see some of the countryside close to Drogheda and to meet the community of our brethren in Dundalk – the nearest priory to us now, around 30km north of our monastery. Fr Patrick has a deep appreciation of the nuns' way of life and was very close to the community in Nocera, whom he remembers very affectionately. The two brothers – Irish and Mexican, were able to converse in Italian while they were together, which was surely a restful relief for fr Fernando!



Fr Fernando spent one evening sharing with us a PowerPoint presentation on his mandate as Promoter for the Nuns: the vision he has for his task and how he endeavours to be of service to his Sisters around the world; the challenges he encounters and how he seeks to help and encourage us to be faithful to our vocation. The presentation was interspersed with photographs of communities he has visited while promoter – not as many as he would like to have met

with, because so much of the recent time has been overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was delightful for us to ‘see you,’ and entertaining to see whom we could recognise: ‘spotting’ nuns we knew and remembered ... and how much time has passed since we last met!

Fr Fernando also gave us a little reflective work to do. We met again towards the end of the week, to share the fruits of our reflection on the topic of contemplative life. He asked us to consider how we see ourselves: as monastic or as contemplative nuns? The paper questioned the relevance and value of contemplative life, also its ‘necessity’; and then, in describing it as beautiful, to compare its necessity to the beauty of God and the beauty of the world around us. It was an interesting sharing and very much helped by our study of the paper we had received. Fr Fernando also shared with us his understanding of our life and the conversation was quite lively, stimulating and thought-provoking; we appreciated the time fr Fernando took to listen to us and his interest in our conversation.

St Patrick’s Day was extra-special this year, because of the exalted company. We usually have a more relaxed recreation that day each year with some ‘home-made’ entertainment. This year, with fr Fernando among us, was ever so slightly different. A few shamrocks appeared where they are normally absent, and the national flag to remind us where we are, though not all of us are Irish! The Provincial of the Irish province, fr John Harris, OP came to celebrate the solemn Mass for us. We sang the Common in Irish (a lot of us having to sing phonetically, but well enough nevertheless!) and a few of the hymns, too – to add to fr Fernando’s confusion! The harp came out, together with



the tin whistle and guitar, and so there was some reflective music after Holy Communion.

And later in the afternoon, we danced (those of us who have the energy to jump about and whose hips work well enough!) and sang; and a little more instrumental music. And the highlight of the 'show' was fr Fernando's contribution – he attempted ... almost successfully!!! ... to get us to sing the refrain of a well-known Mexican song, 'Cielito Lindo.' We poor 'Irish' nuns could only – until now! – say 'Ay ay ay ay', but fr Fernando got us to broaden our vocabulary and sing 'canta y no llores'! Our poor dear brother did not realise how challenging it would be to get us all to sing at the same time and on the same note, but we succeeded at last, after much laughter! In the evening, while relaxing and chatting over a festive St Patrick's supper in the community room, we learned about fr Fernando's vocational journey, which we were delighted to hear – he had plenty of opportunity to speak in English!



The day of his departure from our company came on the Sunday following St Patrick's day. One of our brethren from the convent in Newbridge celebrated Holy Mass, after which he took fr Fernando to St Saviour's Priory in Dublin, the convent of our student brothers in the heart of Dublin city. We gathered in our Chapter Room to say our 'goodbyes' and to wish him a good flight and every blessing as he continues to fulfil his mandate; also to take the all-important photograph! It was a cheerful goodbye, plenty of 'canta y no illores'!

The plan was that fr Fernando would stay in St Saviour's overnight and return to Rome next day. But that turned out to be quite adventure – we were all shocked when we heard that he wasn't allowed to board the plane! As it transpired, our dear brother didn't quite have all his papers in order, and shouldn't have come to see us when he did! So in the end, he spent almost an extra week in Dublin until everything was rectified. A blessing in disguise after all, for he received a good welcome from the brethren in Dublin, and we were praying that he would be able to return to Rome without difficulty, which he did at last.

A blessed and joyful week, in which we felt very much connected to our sisters throughout the world, through the time spent with our dear brother Fernando. It was a week we will remember with affection and gratitude and joy.

Sr Niamh OP
Monastery of St Catherine of Siena
The Twenties, Drogheda.
Original english



4. ROMAN HOLIDAY

When the Master of the Order first appointed the commission for the revision of LCM in January 2020, it was simply assumed by all that we would meet in Rome to do our work. In fact, dates had been set and tickets purchased when covid overwhelmed the



world and all plans everywhere ground to a sudden and complete halt. Whether anyone else on the commission was disappointed, I certainly was, for several reasons: I had looked forward to seeing Rome and staying at Santa Sabina; I had looked forward to meeting the other commission members; it's simply easier and more efficient to work together in physical presence. However, none of this

was possible and we had to meet by Zoom, in what seemed like endless sessions over a nearly three-year period.

In the fall of 2022, the commission members were informed that all the responses to the Master's consultation with the monasteries had come in and been collated. Although all the sections of proposed revisions had received a majority approval of the monasteries and nuns, he wanted us to consider the observations and objections that had also been submitted and see if we could revise our proposals accordingly. Yes, we would be meeting in Rome! My heart leapt for joy; it seemed too good to be true. But dates were set again, tickets purchased, and on February 3, 2023, I boarded a plane at Newark, NJ airport, destined for Rome with a stopover in London.

The coordinator and chair of the commission from the beginning was Fr. Benjamin Earl, O.P., procurator general of the Order. He did a heroic job in the midst of all his other work on behalf of the Order. The first potential glitch in our Rome meeting was that there might not be room for all of us to stay at Santa Sabina. But at the last minute, he informed us that the guest master had been able to find enough rooms for all of us. However, because people were arriving at very different times, no one would be picking us up at the airport and we would have to make our own way from Fiumicino to the convent. Fortunately, Sr. M. Breda from Drogheda was arriving only an hour or so ahead of me, so she offered to wait at the airport for me, and we took a taxi together to Santa Sabina, where Fr. Benjamin met us at the door.

Santa Sabina! Although I was too tired to appreciate it at first sight, I quickly learned to love it as the most beautiful basilica I saw in Rome, mostly because it is so simple and chaste, so uncluttered with baroque accretions. Here St. Dominic said Mass, prayed,



exhorted the brethren to sing “Fortiter, fratres!”, gave sermons in the chapter hall and clothed novices including St. Hyacinth, ate in the refectory, and occupied (at least sometimes) a cell with one tiny window overlooking the cloister. Given the age of the basilica, 1600 years, one can also imagine Pope Leo the Great seeing it in its pristine newness and Pope Gregory the Great saying Mass at its altar at the front of the apse facing the nave or sitting in the *cathedra* at the back of the apse when it was less than 200 years old.

The community of brothers at Santa Sabina was friendly and welcoming and even gallant as only gentlemen can be in the presence of ladies. There was a wonderful spirit of fraternity and warmth among the friars that was a joy to experience, not to mention the privilege of sharing Office, Mass, meals and recreation with them every day. We worked in a conference room that was modern to the point of having ports in the middle of the table where laptops could be charged, microphones and headphones connected to rechargeable battery packs, and a translation booth at the back of the room.

The commission [Sr. M. Breda of Drogheda, Ireland; Sr. Paola Panetta of Crea, Italy; Sr. Lola Perez-Mesuro of Toro, Spain; Sr. Lorena Barba Franco of Guadalajara, Mexico; Sr. Jean-Therese of Orbey, France; myself, Fr. Benjamin, Fr. Phillippe Toxe, O.P. and Sr. Delfina Moral, O.P. who teaches canon law at the Angelicum] worked from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM, when we broke for half an hour for the sake of the translator, then from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Lunch was at 1:00 PM. A couple of times we had an afternoon session beginning at 3:00 PM and the other afternoons we did sub-committee work at that time. If one wasn't on a sub-committee on a given day, there was free time in the afternoon to explore the basilica or stroll around the neighborhood.

Local sights included the basilicas of Sant' Alessio and Sant' Anselmo further up the hill and, next to the basilica, the Orange Garden, originally a part of the convent grounds but since the 19th century a public park, including a scenic overlook of the Tiber with the Vatican in the background. Actually, from almost any window in the convent on that side, one had a breathtaking view of Rome with the Vatican in the background.

Monday, February 6 to Thursday, February 9 had been scheduled for our work, but we finished with a sense of satisfaction and relief by the end of Thursday morning. Two of the sisters left for home that very afternoon and the rest disappeared one by one the next day. That left me to begin the second part of my adventure, a no-longer-young cloistered nun traveling alone in a place where she had never been before and where she knew nothing of the language.

I had given myself three full days and was determined to see Rome, if only just the Vatican. Where to go and how to get there? At this point the guardian angels took over and were my constant companions. To begin with, Sr. M. Breda put me in touch with



Fr. Vivian Boland, O.P. at San Clemente. He had given a retreat in Summit in 2016, so remembered me well. He said he would be glad to give me a tour of the basilica and excavations, and I could have lunch with the community after. That was Friday. By Saturday, thanks to one of the sisters in my community, I had an invitation from one of the American friars at the Angelicum to Midday Prayer, lunch and a tour of the University.

In the meantime, I had seen a poster on the outside wall of Santa Sabina, advertising the priestly ordination of one of the young men of the Roman province of the Order, to take place at Santa Maria sopra Minerva on Saturday evening. Thus, I had the wonderful experience of attending an ordination for the first time.

But coming home from the Minerva on a dark, nearly freezing Saturday night after a very long and very beautiful ceremony in an unheated basilica was a bit of a challenge. After some inquiries by one of the friars from San Clemente who I had met the previous day, I was linked up with a lovely young man named Alessandro who is a pre-novice for the Roman province.

He spoke perfect English and gladly escorted me to the nearest taxi stand, since he also was going by taxi. I promised to pray for him! When the taxi arrived at a totally darkened Santa Sabina at 9:30 PM, the driver was reluctant to let me out, but I confidently assured him that I had keys. However, when the taxi vanished, so did my assurance because confronting me was a large and securely locked gate which I had never noticed before because it was always open during the day.

I pulled out my keys and made a brave attempt to open it, fumbling with one key after the other in the dark, but to no avail. Just when I was muttering a last despairing prayer, the figure of one of the friars loomed up out of the dark behind me, crying: "Sister, Sister!" Fr. Florentino had also been at the ordination and had left immediately afterward, walking.

He whipped out his keys, inserted one in a lock slightly lower and to the right of the one I had been working on, and immediately the gate opened and in we went. According to Bl. Cecilia's account, St. Dominic arrived at Santa Sabina late one night and found himself locked out. Being reluctant to wake anyone, he said a prayer and an angel came and let him and his companions in. I was very grateful for the human messenger of God who did the same for me!

Sunday was reserved for the Vatican and all went with blissful smoothness. While I certainly didn't see everything that could be seen, I saw as much as I wanted to see, and stayed for the Angelus as well. Even though Pope Francis was little more than a dot in a faraway window, I was still blessed by the Pope! I was home in time for dinner and spent the afternoon packing for my homeward journey the next day.

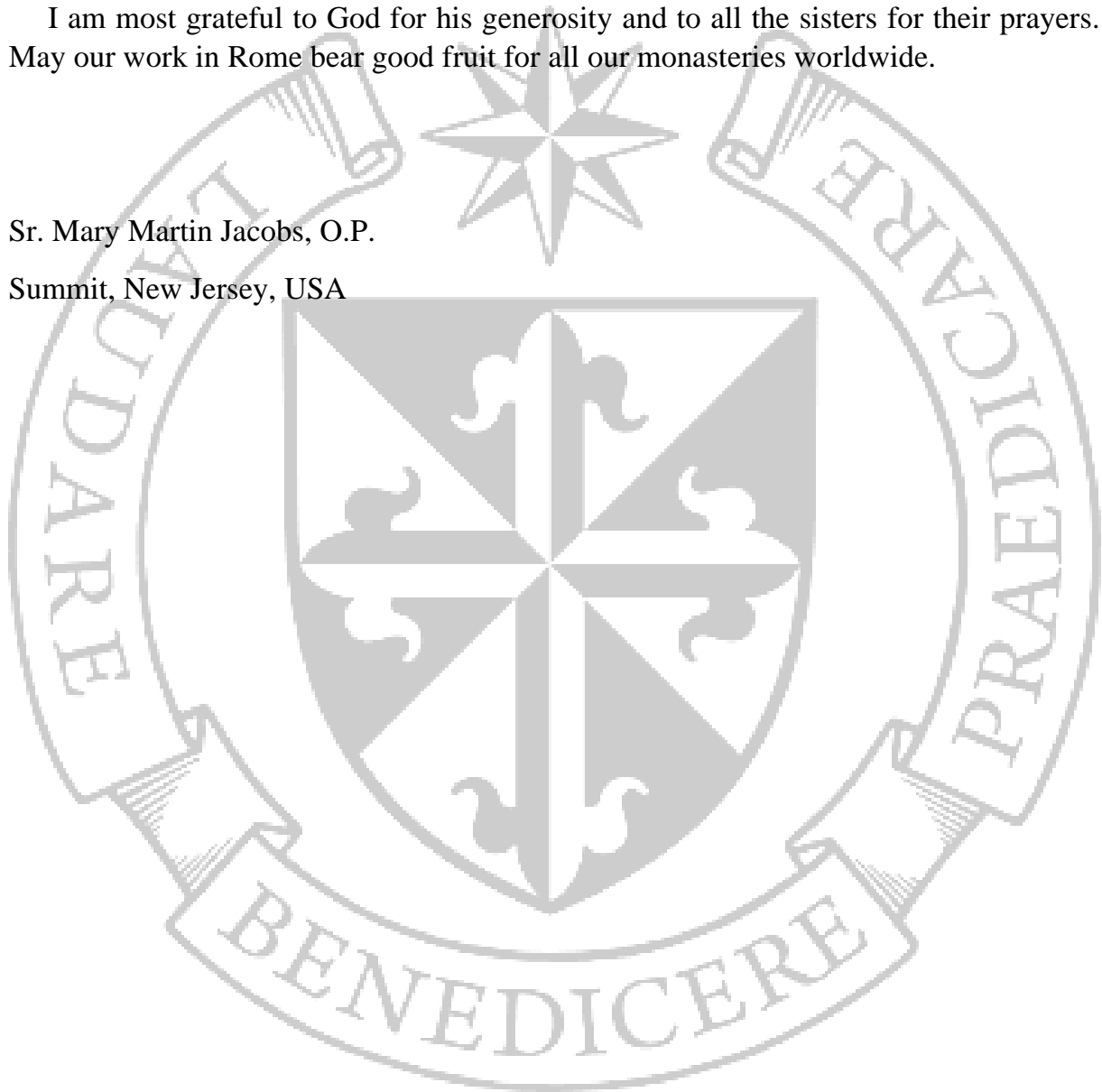


One more angelic intervention was reserved for the return trip. I missed my connection in London, and while that may sound terrible it was actually a stroke of good luck, because the next flight had so few people on it that I got moved up to first class and traveled across the Atlantic in the regal luxury that only British Airways can furnish.

I am most grateful to God for his generosity and to all the sisters for their prayers. May our work in Rome bear good fruit for all our monasteries worldwide.

Sr. Mary Martin Jacobs, O.P.

Summit, New Jersey, USA





5. CONTEMPLATIVE KAIROS

“The need for formation is situated in a broad horizon that crosses the walls of the monasteries, embraces the world, calls to live with intelligence, heart and experience of communion, and exhorts to consider limits and apparent divisions. The Holy Father, aware of the fact that ‘no one builds the future in isolation, nor by his own strength alone’, calls to avoid the ‘sickness of self-referentiality’, and to safeguard the value of communion among the various monasteries as a path that leads to the future, thus updating and renewing the permanent and codified values of autonomy. The constant search for the Face of God, on the personal and community level, makes communion fruitful, which thus becomes the vital and generative climate of formation.” (Pope Francis, *The Art of Seeking the Face of God*, N.3)

I consider this new era that we are going through as a Church, in the contemplative life, as a Kairos, a time of grace in which the Holy Spirit begins to fan its fire where apparently it seemed to be dying out.

As the wise words of Cardinal Henri de Lubac would say about the Church: “...it always seems to be in agony, but in reality, it is always being reborn...”

In recent years, thanks to the new documents and guidelines on the formation of contemplative nuns sent by the Holy See, the importance of human and spiritual formation for an integral development that allows the person to reach full maturity in Christ has been mentioned.

A new challenge? Yes, since in the initial formation the study also implies an academic effort, and it is a real challenge to integrate everything in a harmonious and balanced way.

How did I live it? Just two weeks away from concluding the PREME (Program of Monastic Studies of Ecuador), distance learning program scheduled for five years, I look back and it is inevitable to feel a mixture of emotions when all the experiences that occurred during this time come to my mind.

I will now share with you a little of this experience, but I can't help telling it as a before... during... and after... the event that marked the whole world forever: “The Covid-19 Pandemic”.

PRE - PANDEMIA

Before the pandemic, the modality of this program required two face-to-face meetings per year, that is, every six months we received the tutorials of the subjects that would be developed during the whole





semester. The monastery of Santa Clara in Quito opened its doors to receive these lectures for a week.

With joy come to mind the illusions and expectations of the first meetings; like every first day of school in which there is no lack of care and concern from the mothers, we also experienced it from our Mother Prioress, who with much affection always tried to send us everything we needed for this trip.

I also remember with much gratitude our dear mothers of the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena in Quito, who welcomed us with great joy and kindness at all times. It was not the sisters from Durán who came to their monastery, but their 'little angels' or 'little doves'! They always made us feel at home with their fraternal details. That monastery is very special, it has a unique history for being one of the oldest in Ecuador, and in each visit, we were enriched by everything that the mothers ardently told us, we always discovered something new about its history or its structure (secret passages, doors that led to other doors, hiding places with panoramic views, etc.).



But it also transported me to the life of the nuns who passed through this Monastery of more than 400 years, exemplary lives that were consumed in prayer and contemplation, like the life of Mother Catalina de Jesus Herrera, who died in the odor of sanctity, a story of love that continues in the Monastery of Durán which bears her name. Not to mention the unforgettable moments of prayer in front of the Love of Loves to whom she thanked for this gift and incalculable treasure of the Dominican family.

Something very curious that I keep in my memories of this emblematic place, are the relics of Mother Catalina de Jesus Herrera, which rest in a chest inside a place of the Monastery visible from the community and from the Novitiate. During the week of studies, we could always visit her or see her through a small window, because it seemed that she was also looking at us, as if she was watching over us every day from the end of the main corridor.

And how could I forget the first meeting with the brothers and sisters who were initiating this formation program. For the first time, I was able to experience the dimension of contemplative life in the Church, various orders, various habits, which at that time I could only distinguish between black, white, brown, and blue, but with a single color that distinguished us all: Jesus Christ.

Through the courses I attended during this time I experienced how God spoke to me through study, that is, in a class, in readings, homework, etc. I knew more about His



Mystery but at the same time I felt that I knew nothing because there were times when I stopped reading or writing to just contemplate the inexplicable.

The wisdom that encompasses all the documents of the Church and the history that accompanies her, made me fall more in love with her, really embrace her as Mother, and I let myself be welcomed as a daughter, stripping myself of my mistaken criteria, loving her with her miseries as well as her virtues and finding in her hope for my fragile humanity.

The biblical texts, even though I read them with an academic purpose, did not fail to confront me and bring me closer to the person of Jesus, that is, to CONVERSION because through His Word, God began very subtly to transform my heart, destroying the roughness, healing me and making me feel forgiven, rekindling the joy and happiness of being free and loved by and for Him.

Carrying on with this great adventure, came another moment that would forever mark the contemplative life of the 21st century: a new stage that would be hard to forget...

PANDEMIC COVID-19



Faced with uncertainty and the inevitable threat of a virus that could be deadly, all of humanity prepared to face this new reality that would accompany us for a year or two. Confinement, face masks, alcohol, began to be part of our history. Without ceasing to regret all the massive human losses, we cannot fail to be grateful for all the creativity that also

emerged during this time. An example is the innovation in means of communication, new videoconferencing platforms like Zoom, Skype and Google Meet were much more widely used and became our new virtual classrooms.

From this moment on, technology ceased to be something distant or unknown to the contemplative life. Because of the need we were going through, little by little we started to make incursions into it, even to the point of being surprised by the tools that these programs offered us: raising hands, sharing screens, virtual blackboard, etc. I felt like I was repeating the moment when I first learned to master the computer mouse, something fabulous!

It didn't take long, and what we thought might be impossible, became possible, exceeding our expectations. Very soon, not only did we continue with our distance learning, but also new doors were opened for the formation of our entire community. We began to live a time of grace, opening our minds and hearts to all that the Holy Spirit began to awaken in the contemplative life as an Order and as a Church.

Through these new virtual resources, we had the opportunity to access several training courses, given by valuable lecturers who, had it not been for the unexpected pandemic, we would never have met them, nor would we have been enriched by their wisdom.

The videoconferences also proved to be a space to meet several communities from different countries and even in our own Federation, we learned from their experiences and realities. Feeling that we are part of the Church, counting on their prayers and living fraternity in a virtual space only confirms that the Holy Spirit knows how to break schemes.

POST-PANDEMIC



The long-awaited day to get rid of the uncomfortable masks had arrived, an extreme happiness overflowed our being. Saying goodbye to this stage was like a new beginning that left us with a great learning experience.

In September 2022, one year before the end of this study program, the face-to-face meetings were resumed, but now without excluding the videoconference modality for the sisters and professors who, for various reasons, could not be present.

As a summary of this unforgettable experience, a short video was made with several testimonies of all those who had the grace to participate in this time of formation (students and teachers), motivating more brothers to enroll in the new program 2023 - 2028 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYGo9EoYLFY>).

What was once a distance learning program of monastic studies in Ecuador, whose activities were possibly coming to an end due to the lack of students, is now miraculously resurfacing from its agony with new students not only nationally, but also internationally, doubling the average number of enrolled students.

What did I learn?

In these five years, I consider that I have not only been in a place of study, but also in a place of encounter with exceptional brothers. We are no longer habits of different colors but faces with names and surnames that have learned to live synodality in a fraternal environment, not to mention my teachers, treasures of wisdom, who broadened my horizons and nourished my contemplative life through their testimonies and teachings.

Achieving a balance between study, work, prayer and community life has been a constant arduous exercise that I could not have achieved without the accompaniment and support of my sisters in community, who with their immense patience and love knew

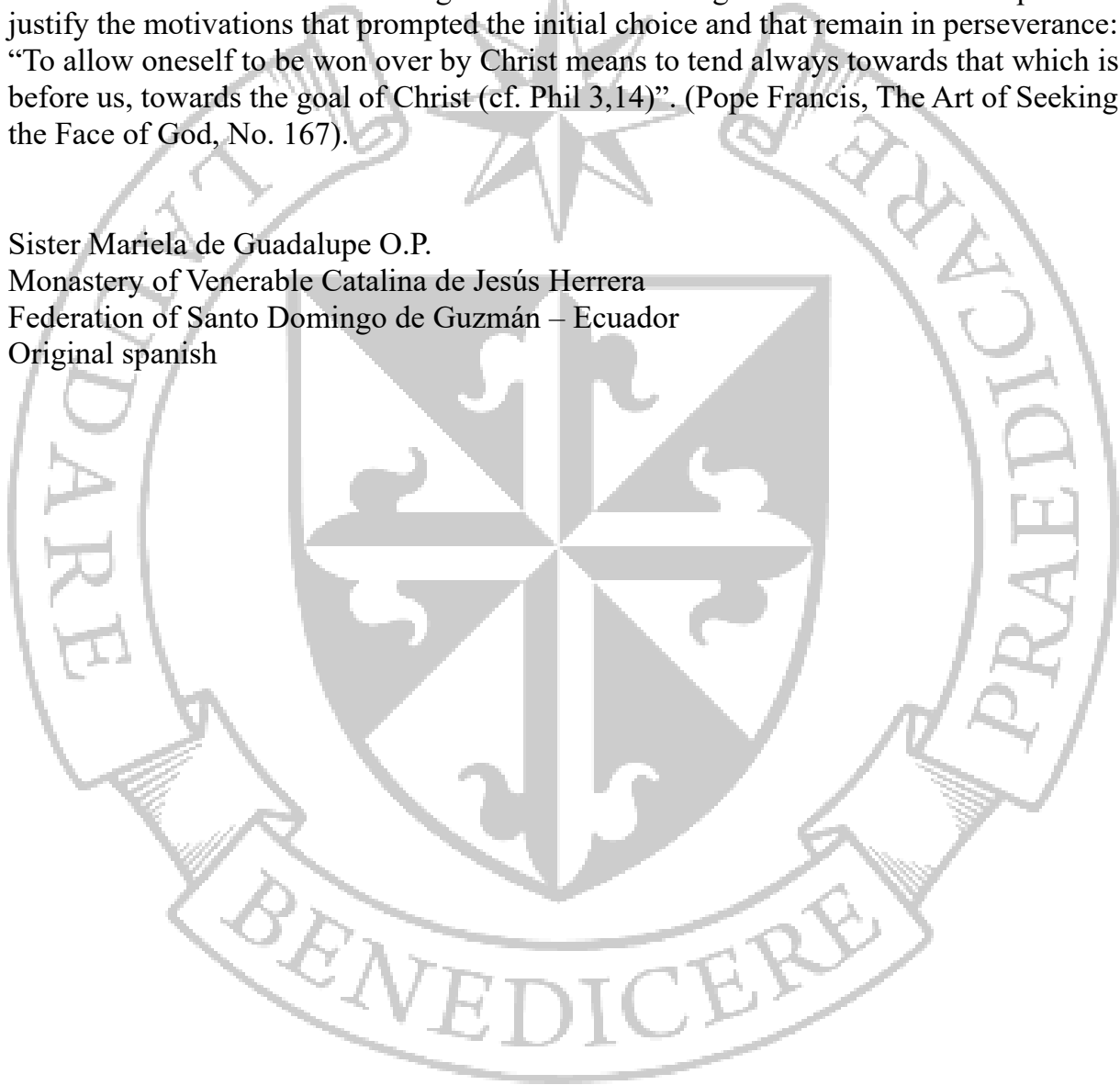


how to guide me, encourage me and sustain me on this path of knowledge of God, a path between lights and shadows, but in the end the sun has shone.

Theologian? NO! In love with Christ? YES!

The relationship with Jesus Christ needs to be nourished by the restlessness of the search. It makes us aware of the gratuitousness of the gift of vocation and helps us to justify the motivations that prompted the initial choice and that remain in perseverance: “To allow oneself to be won over by Christ means to tend always towards that which is before us, towards the goal of Christ (cf. Phil 3,14)”. (Pope Francis, *The Art of Seeking the Face of God*, No. 167).

Sister Mariela de Guadalupe O.P.
Monastery of Venerable Catalina de Jesús Herrera
Federation of Santo Domingo de Guzmán – Ecuador
Original spanish



6. NEWS FROM DACIA

from Jubilee...

On June 30, Lund Cathedral celebrated with great fanfare the 900th anniversary to the day of the blessing of the first altar which is now in the crypt. About ten Swedish and Danish bishops were present, most of them Lutherans, but also the Catholic bishop of Copenhagen and ours from Stockholm (created cardinal in 2017). Even the king and queen honored themselves with their presence!

Some history...

At that time, until 1658, the southern part of Sweden belonged to Denmark. After the first attempts at Christianization from the 9th century by St Ansgar, a French monk and later by a delegation of English monks, these regions were gradually evangelized until the establishment of the Archbishop's Seat of Denmark in 1104, and that of Stockholm in 1164.



Suffice to say that when our Father St Dominic went to Denmark around 1205-1206 with his bishop Diègue d'Osma, and they met Andreas Sunesen, the bishop of Lund from 1201 to 1228, it is not improbable that they celebrated the sacrifice of the mass at this first altar. Sunesen's tomb is now located in the side chapel of the cathedral choir. How can we not be overcome with emotion in front of this altar and the tomb?

...to Jubilee...

The brothers of Lund with the Dominican family of Scandinavia (Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) celebrated last May 20 the 800 years of Dominican presence in Dacia. It should be said more precisely: celebrated the arrival of the first friars 800 years



ago, because the Dominican presence experienced a long period of absence, due to the Protestant reform.

Some more history...

As early as 1223, the first brothers from Scandinavia founded a convent in the small town of Lund, in southern Sweden, under the patronage of St. Mary Magdalene, soon joined by brothers from Paris and Bologna. Even if many documents were lost or destroyed at the time of the reform, we can attest that very early on there were at least 22 convents and monasteries of the Order in Dacia, including ten in Sweden. Sweden therefore also experienced its golden age.



The Protestant reform would put an end to it. It was in a context of political alliances that King Gustav Vasa imposed it on all his subjects from 1527. The dioceses were then dissolved, property confiscated, convents and monasteries suppressed and for the most part demolished. Only a few scattered ruins remain from this period.

...until the first jubilee!



Indeed Sankt Dominikus kloster as a diocesan monastic priorate has just seen the light of day (official recognition on December 8, 2022).

And still some history....



For more than 400 years, Sweden was an almost exclusively Lutheran kingdom, with so-called “revivals” where evangelical movements coming mainly from the United States took their place in the religious landscape. Catholicism was barely tolerated and religious life banned until 1951. The Catholic Diocese of Stockholm was officially established in 1953.

Brothers from the Province of France returned to Lund (university town) in 1947 and run a home for young boys. They will soon be joined by sisters from Montpellier (Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Sainte Marie des Tourelles, originated from the monastery of Prouille) who will begin by working in the brothers' home for young boys, while nourishing the desire to be able to establish a community in the region of Lund, as soon as possible. St. Dominic's convent in Røgle was founded in 1956.

The Dominican Sisters of Tourelles have fulfilled from their origin (1898) in France, then in Lebanon and Sweden, an essentially contemplative life. Gradually, carried by the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, they were also keen to share the fruit of their life of study and to announce the gospel through the spiritual accompaniment of the guests welcomed, the animation of retreats or Bible lessons. In Sweden, given the ecclesial context (1,5% Catholics, a single diocese for the entire country, and a very secularized country), this vocation of openness has resulted, on the one hand, in a contribution to the formation of a Catholic culture in the young diocese through the publication of books, the liturgy, a deeper biblical, spiritual, theological study... and, on the other hand, through meetings in an ecumenical spirit (welcoming of Lutherans or Evangelicals).

This “apostolate” on the spot or elsewhere in the country is however exercised in modest proportions.



In recent years, the community of **Sankt Dominikus kloster** in Røgle has rediscovered the connection with its monastic roots (Prouille) in a cleared and deeper way and has been led to change canonical status, detaching itself from the Congregation of pontifical law to become a diocesan monastic Priorate. We have thereby adopted the



Constitutions of the nuns, while having the possibility of keeping a certain openness which allows us to continue to offer accompaniment or sharing of faith in harmony with the monastic contemplative life.

We experience this change as a new beginning, and receive this beginning as a great grace. Our very fraternal (although not legal) links with the Fédération Notre Dame des Prêcheurs, bringing together the monasteries of the Provinces of France and Toulouse, also give us a lot of joy and hope.

To our joy, we are only 10 km from the convent of our Dominican brothers with whom we have had fraternal ties for 70 years!

There are currently 6 sisters there including a novice (one Norwegian, 3 Swedish and 2 French).

May the Lord accomplish with our little flock what he has started!

At the event on December 8 2023, let us unite in heart and prayer, in thanksgiving, at the first jubilee of Sankt Dominikus kloster!

And if you are tempted to follow in the footsteps of St Dominic to Lund, do not hesitate to wander to our little "Rögleparadiset". You never know, the miracle of wine could well be produced in the form of a miracle of herbal or aronia berry liqueur from Rögle kloster!



Välkomna!

Sr Céline o.p.
Sankt Dominikus kloster, Rögle, Suède
Original French



7. 400 YEARS AGO THE MONASTERY OF ST. CATHERINE AT LANGEAC WAS BORN

The time of the foundation

We are in 1618. The Italian Capuchin, Théodose of Bergamo, who was a friend of Saint Charles Borromeo, came, according to Counter-Reformation custom, to preach a mission at Langeac, the small village of the Auvergne situated at the border of the Allier River. Very devoted to the Virgin Mary, Théodose chose for his theme the mission of the Rosary. He also reorganized the Confraternity of the Rosary and founded the Confraternity of the White Penitents: through his preaching 95 women, of which came the four future foundresses of the monastery, who decided to enter religion to found a monastery in their own village.

On March 15, 1620, the inhabitants of Langeac themselves sent a request to Monseigneur de Noailles, bishop of Saint-Flour to support this foundation. On April 7 of that same year, the Marquis of Langeac, Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, ceded land to the foundresses. And, on the feast of the Ascension, May 20, a cross was planted on the site of the future monastery “with all sorts of solemnity.” A year later, May 31, 1621, the first stone was placed, again by the Marquis de Langeac. Two and a half years later, in the summer of 1623, the new buildings were finally ready to welcome their occupants. The foundresses then approached the sisters of the monastery of the Dominicans of Puy, to help establish the community in the formation of aspirants. Their choice was to fall upon the Dominican Order because it carried on the Marian apostolate of the Rosary with its numerous confraternities to which they belonged. With the agreement of Father Guidy, Provincial of the Dominicans of the reformed Province of Provence, the sisters of Puy welcomed the request.

On September 20, 1623, the four foundresses: Anne-Marie Martinon, widow of Jacques Charretier and her daughter Bonnette, Isabeau Legros, widow of Simon Reboul and his sister Suzanne Legros, daughters of Antoine le Gros, city prosecutor, accompanied by Monsieur Branche, priest of Langeac, and Monsieur Martinon, sacristan and close relative of these ladies, set off for le Puy-en-Velay.

Upon their arrival at Puy, they met the Dominican Father Esprit Panassière, who encouraged them to visit Agnes Galand, a young girl of great merit who has him as her confessor, praying with great fervor that they accept Agnes in the new foundation. The sisters went to visit Agnes’ parents, where they stayed. Having spoken with Agnes and consulted with each other, they decided to suspend judgment (tr. on her acceptance) on the advice of Father Raboly, OP, confessor of the sisters of Puy. However, Father Raboly was very prejudiced against Agnes for reasons that would take too long to recount here.

So, he formally refused Agnes’ request. Father Panassière made one last attempt to bend the uncompromising religious. Similarly, Gabrielle Jacques, a friend of Agnes and penitent of Father Raboly, interceded and begged on her behalf. And the miracle



happened: God spoke to the Father's heart, and he was overjoyed, promising to receive her as a lay sister. Agnes, from a modest family, had no dowry.

It was in the Chapel of the Holy Crucifix of her beloved angelic cathedral, the oldest and most venerable pilgrimage site to the Virgin Mary in the Christian West, where a decade earlier she had "given herself as a slave" to the Virgin Mary, that Agnes spent her last day in Le Puy in prayer.



In brief, on September 24, everything having been resolved for the temporal and spiritual needs of the new monastery, Agnes, having bid farewell to her parents, set off. Then things took a turn for the worse: no sooner had Agnes climbed on her horse than the animal became slack, heavy and sweaty, and could not be made to move forward, no matter how many blows were given to it. The same misadventure happened again with another mount. The journey continued with great difficulty, and several breaks had to be taken... Agnes, overjoyed to be entering the monastery, remained peaceful and happy. When she reached the Cross of Vissaguet, overlooking Langeac and the brand-new monastery, her joy was further heightened when her angel pointed to the monastery and said: "This is your home". But as they passed over the bridge at Langeac, at the entrance to the town, the little group witnessed yet another incident: Agnes, violently stopped by a demon, terrifying and horrible to behold, was this time seized with dread and disgust at the idea of imprisoning herself in a cloister for the rest of her life, and even felt impelled to throw herself into the Allier River. Her angel comes to her aid, overcomes the evil spirit, and they finally enter the city of Langeac in peace.

The group went first to the Collegiate Church of St. Gall to give thanks and adore the Lord, before moving on to the monastery. The official installation of the monastery and the taking of the habit by the foundresses took place on September 26, 1623, presided over by the Provincial. The monastery was named after St. Catherine of Siena, because the 14th century Sienese saint had inspired the first great reform of the Dominican order, and because after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), many Dominican monasteries in France, reformed under the impetus of Fr. Sebastian Michaëlis, placed themselves under the patronage of St. Catherine.

Here is the account of the installation given in our chronicles, which unfortunately postdates the events:

After putting on the priestly vestments, the reverend Father Provincial celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the convent chapel and gave Holy Communion to the four foundresses, who were kneeling before the altar, each holding a lighted candle in her



hand; then having completed the holy sacrifice, in the presence of the town's principal dignitaries and a large number of people, he made an exhortation to the people and the foundresses. He then led them into the new convent and placed them in the hands of the Reverend Mothers, after their parents had given them their blessing.

Reverend Mother Marie Pascal (one of the three nuns on loan from the Le Puy monastery) immediately gave them the holy habit in the manner prescribed by the Order of Saint Dominic. They received it with heartfelt thanksgiving, then



went to the choir singing the *Te Deum*, and approached the grille where the Reverend Father Provincial was waiting to complete the ceremony; He reminded them that the white veil with which they were covered "served as a sure testimony that, if in the year of probation, they found the said rule of Saint Catherine too harsh, they would be permitted and at liberty to withdraw from it". The candidates thanked God a thousand times for the happiness they had received this holy habit, and that they would earnestly pray to God to grant them the grace to persevere in his holy service and to duly observe the rules of Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine of Siena, and to be very obedient to the superior.

Agnes, however, unaware of everything and totally caught up in a rapture, stayed there in the church for three hours longer. The sisters realized her absence and went to look for her in the church. The persons who found her believed her to be asleep not knowing how sweetly her Spouse had told her that she was welcome in his house.

And finally, a few words from an old chronicler:

Such were the four foundresses of this famous monastery of Langeac, and whose crowns will, it is to be hoped, be embellished with as many flowers as this religious House they founded, will raise holy daughters for Heaven, following the example of Agnes, their richest and most illustrious model.

Until the French Revolution

After a beginning marked by the luminous figure of Agnès de Langeac, the life of the monastery seemed to pass peacefully without any major events until its dissolution on Germinal 7, Year 2 (March 27, 1794) following the decree of expulsion. But a closer look reveals a few significant facts "Only twenty years had passed since the death of Mother Agnès, and already the great spirit of fervor that had animated the sisters until then was threatening to weaken." So speaks our chronicle. The bishop of St-Flour, through his vicar general, then asked the Dominican monastery of St. Thomas Aquinas



in Paris to kindly send a few holy nuns to support Langeac. So it was that in 1653, Mother Anne of the Five Wounds and Mother Genevieve of the Assumption arrived to



govern the house for over 20 years, giving our little rural monastery the same customs and directories as their celebrated Parisian monastery. And fervor returned.

The community was also eager to preserve the memory of Mother Agnes.

Monsieur de Lantages, first superior of the seminary in Le Puy and a friend of M. Olier, wrote down her life, reportedly on his knees. This Life was published in 1665, reprinted the following year, translated into Latin, and from Latin into the various languages of Europe at the time. The memory of Agnes was all the more vivid as numerous miracles continued to be attributed to her. In 1697-1698, a Process was held for her canonization. Some twenty witnesses were interviewed, the memoirs of Agnes' confessor Fr. Panassière were transcribed, as were the accounts of Agnes' younger sister and her childhood friend, and a register was drawn up of no fewer than 58 miracles that had been recorded by a commission set up for the purpose in 1675. But such a Process required considerable expense. And the monastery was very poor. It even benefited from subsidies granted by the King of France to indigent religious communities. As a result, the Process was never held.

Poverty did not prevent the sisters' fervor and religious spirit. An 18th-century chronicle describes the monastery as "the Chartreuse of the Dominican Order". It was in this climate of great simplicity and religious spirit that the French Revolution took place. The sisters numbered 34, aged from 20 to 80. Among them were several novices and two external sisters. The Mother Prioress tried in vain to solicit powerful protections from the Assembly so that the monastery could be maintained. But then came the inventory of possessions, followed in 1792 by the decree of expulsion. The story of those dramatic days when the community was dispersed and the building sold is reminiscent of certain pages in Bernanos' Dialogue of the Carmelites:

The sisters, who must have expected to be expelled from their dear and holy monastery any day now, seemed to redouble their confidence as the peril became more imminent. It is said that one of them went to make her complaints to Our Lord; she approached the altar and knocked on the door of the tabernacle, she said to Jesus: "Jesus, you see that if they take us out of here, they'll drive you out as well as us." She couldn't



be dragged away from Our Lord: she absolutely wanted his assurance that they wouldn't leave.

On the eve of the expulsion, the sister gardener was busy grafting trees with a surprising calmness of mind. And when she was told that this work was useless, she replied that something had to be done for those who would come after them.

These nuns were so fond of each other that, on the very eve of their departure, several novices wanted to pronounce their vows, despite all the observations that could be made. They said that, since they had shared the joy of their good Mothers, they also wanted to share their trials.

Finally, the evil hour arrived, and the revolutionaries entered the convent to remove our sisters. None of them would cross the threshold. These invaders were obliged to carry them away on the chairs where they were sitting and to which they were clinging. They deposited them in the middle of the public square. Pious families rushed to collect them...

Only two of the sisters were imprisoned, while the others were taken in and hidden by their families. The monastery building was eventually returned to the Commission of Hospices and became the Hospice of Langeac. As for Mother Agnes' body, it was miraculously preserved. One day, the revolutionaries seized it and threw it into the Allier River. In the midst of the general uproar, one of them boldly stepped forward, brandished a knife and sliced a finger off the still miraculously intact body. Blood gushed from the wound and the knife was stained with it. At this sight, terror seized those present, who left the body behind and fled. The sacristan of the collegiate church of Langeac piously recovered the body and hid it in a vineyard shelter until the end of the revolutionary turmoil. Times and spirits have changed: fifty years later, the people of Langeac would no longer return the relic of "their" Mother Agnes to the nuns who were moving into the new monastery on the banks of the Allier! To avoid a popular riot, the transfer had to be organized secretly and by night.

The re-establishment of the monastery in the 19th century

As soon as calm had returned to France, Mother Rosalie Tuja, sister of the first mayor of Langeac after the Revolution, thought of fulfilling her desire to re-establish her monastery, where she had professed her vows in 1787. With another former nun from the monastery, she asked to return to the convent, which had been converted into a hospice. The hospice commission agreed, but on condition that they would live with the poor and be their servants. This was in 1804-1805.

Fifteen other sisters successively joined them, and for fourteen years, "they fulfilled the arduous duties of caretakers with all the devotion that charity and religion can inspire", as the Prefect of the Haute-Loire put it in a report from 1815.



Throughout this period, the nuns were constantly trying to regain possession of their convent, so that they could return to the contemplative life of yesteryear. But these efforts proved fruitless. Finally, in 1820, tired of waiting in vain, the sisters decided to give up their service to the poor, and bought a house adjoining the old convent. They had it rebuilt and, in return for an annual fee, were granted a passageway between the hospice and this house, so that they could recite their services in their former chapel. The Community of Saint-Sulpice, founded by M. Olier, who considered Agnes de Langeac to be his spiritual mother, and a number of donors helped cover the costs, as they were extremely poor.

In 1829, Mother Rosalie Tuja died, leaving the community quite helpless and fragile. Her successor had been a Dominican for only a short time, having professed her vows in the new congregation of the Presentation of Mary. Lacking firmness, slackness and division grew to the point where the bishop had to intervene. The future Saint Marie Rivier of the Presentation, was even asked to come and help them restore regular observance.

In 1833, Msgr de Bonald appointed Mother of All The Saints Boyer prioress of the monastery, aged just 27. She was to be responsible for restoring the monastery's full Dominican identity and moving it to its present building. Much loved by her sisters, she remained prioress for 38 years. From then on, vocations poured in and the community flourished to such an extent that the convent soon became too small. A beautiful site on the banks of the Allier River was purchased and built in 1840, and the solemn transfer of the community took place on October 27, 1841.

All this was before the Dominican Order was re-established in France by Lacordaire in 1843, and it was the Sulpicians who once again came to the aid of the Langeac nuns. However, the monastery continued to grow, to the point that in 1851 it was asked to re-found the monastery of Prouilhe, cradle of the Dominican order. But the bishop of Le Puy objected on the grounds of the sisters' poverty. For his part, Lacordaire had written to them: If there are enough of you to share, good luck! Otherwise, Langeac is an old, famous house, where the body of the Venerable Agnes de Jésus lies. You can't abandon it without committing some kind of crime.

By 1854, just 13 years after its construction, the new convent had already become too small. Plans were drawn up to enlarge it and build the present church and choir. The plan was provided by Father Aussant, OP, an architect by trade and one of Lacordaire's closest friends. But the community remained extremely poor. It was only by dint of hard work, privation and alms from friends of the monastery that the construction was completed.

Our chronicle tells the story:



Every Saturday evening, the workers would come to the good Mother to receive their wages, and often that very morning she had nothing to give them. Instead of becoming discouraged, she turned with admirable faith and confidence to Providence, which never

failed her. It is said that the sisters, encouraged by this venerated Mother, to spare the expense of laborers, would themselves carry the stones needed for the construction, and do, in the absence of the workmen, whatever was not too much beyond their strength. The nuns' fervor remained undiminished, and the example of Mother Agnes continued to inspire them. It was at this time that M. Lucot, a Sulpician, republished M. de Lantages' Life of Mother Agnes, incorporating all available documentary sources, and his book remains a reference to this day. For their part, the Dominican fathers, who were also expanding rapidly, began to visit the Langeac monastery regularly, asking for its prayers and helping the sisters to rediscover the fullness of their Dominican vocation. The monastery does not seem to have suffered from the war of 1870. The chronicle notes that the number of sisters at one point rose to 52, and that by the turn of the 20th century there were 40.

Contemporary times

According to the chronicle, the sisters had two major concerns at the beginning of the 20th century: recovering full possession of their buildings, which had been expropriated by the Religious Congregations Acts of 1901 and 1904, and hastening the beatification of Agnes of Langeac. It would take sixty years of tedious red tape before full ownership of the site was regained in 1964 and restoration work could begin in earnest. And it was not until 1994 that Agnes was beatified by John Paul II. But both goals were achieved.



In the meantime, the monastery will have lived through the great changes in the Church after World War II. The birth of the two French Federations in 1954-1956 gave the monastery a definite boost, especially as the first federal prioress of the monasteries of Northern France was Mother Marie of the Trinity from Langeac. For ten years, the monastery was a hotbed of life and exchange. Then came the Second Vatican Council, and with as much prudence as resolution, Langeac embarked on the *aggiornamento* work demanded by the Church, which affected its way of life in addition to the revision of the *Constitutions* and the transition to post-conciliar liturgy. This period was not without internal crisis in the community, as seen in the successive departures of several sisters in the mid-1970s. But the spirit of Langeac, having matured over the centuries, a spirit of simplicity and



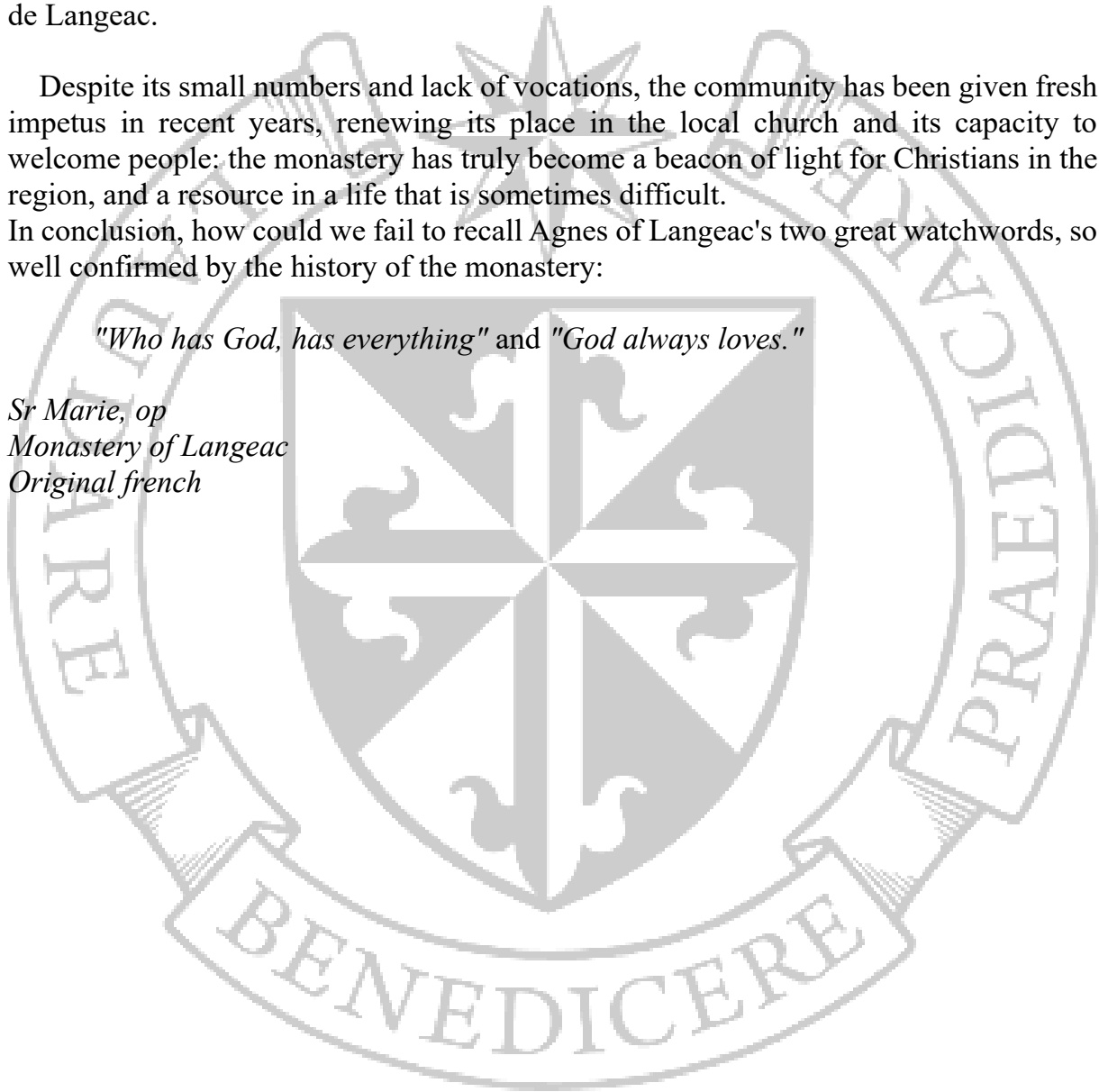
fever as well as good earthly sense, endured. In 1968, the monastery decided to set up a small print shop as a source of income. And despite their poverty, the sisters regularly embellished their chapel. The 1980s and 1990s saw many young sisters enter religious life; their influence could have altered the identity and balance of the monastery had it not been for the wisdom and benevolence of the elders and the vivid memory of Agnes de Langeac.

Despite its small numbers and lack of vocations, the community has been given fresh impetus in recent years, renewing its place in the local church and its capacity to welcome people: the monastery has truly become a beacon of light for Christians in the region, and a resource in a life that is sometimes difficult.

In conclusion, how could we fail to recall Agnes of Langeac's two great watchwords, so well confirmed by the history of the monastery:

"Who has God, has everything" and "God always loves."

*Sr Marie, op
Monastery of Langeac
Original french*





8. MEETING OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION'S PRIORESSES

On May 15, 2023, the Prioresses of the North American Association traveled to Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park, CA for their annual meeting (the first, since the Covid epidemic). Those attending were Sr. Claire Marie from Squamish, BC, Sr. Joseph Maria from Summit, NJ, Sr. Mary Catharine from Bronx, NY, Sr. Mary Isabel from Menlo Park, CA, and Sr. Mary Margaret from Lufkin, TX. Sr. Mary Peter from Farmington Hills, MI joined the meetings by ZOOM. The Monastery in Girard, IL was awaiting approval for their elections and was unable to send anyone. The Prioresses met in the mornings and afternoons. All the references to “prioress” had been gleaned from our Constitutions and were the topic of our discussions. Questions were raised, interpretations were shared, general observations were made and concerns that had been clarified by Fr. Benjamin Earl, O.P. were offered to the others. Fr. Steven Maria Lopez, OP and Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P. co-presented on authority and practical applications,



respectively, at St. Albert's Priory in Oakland and also extended an invitation to tour the Priory, participate in Vespers combined with Mass, eat supper with the friars and end the day with Compline. It was a unique opportunity to get to know our brothers in the Western Province and to bond with them. We returned to our monasteries on May 20, refreshed and grateful for the hospitality shown to us.

Submitted by sr Mary Margaret, op
Lufkin Monastery, Texas USA
Original english



9. "DÉJÀ VU"

It was January, 1957, my Senior year at Pershing Public High School in Detroit, Michigan, USA.

Our teacher in Modern Literature class had given each of us students a copy of Edna St. Vincent Millay's Sonnet, "Epitaph for the Race of Man: X" with the assignment to give a personal interpretation of the poem.

Russia had just invaded Hungary in November of 1956, quelling the uprising by the people that had begun only 12 days before, demanding democracy for their country and protesting Soviet oppression. It didn't take long for the Russian troops to bring the Hungarians to their knees in surrender.

At about the same time, Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt challenging its control of the Suez Canal. The United States had refrained from joining the conflict militarily but strongly sided with Egypt, as did the Soviet Union, which sent in its own troops to assist the Egyptians. In the end, Egypt won and subsequently reopened the Canal to international use, though with some restrictions. This was the milieu in which I found myself as I pondered Millay's work that January so long ago.

Here is the Sonnet that precipitated these memories:

Epitaph for the Race of Man: X **By Edna St. Vincent Millay**

The broken dike, the levee washed away,
The good fields flooded and the cattle drowned,
Estranged and treacherous all the faithful ground,
And nothing left but floating disarray
Of tree and home uprooted, - - was this the day
Man dropped upon his shadow without a sound
And died, having labored well and having found
His burden heavier than a quilt of clay?
No, no, I saw him when the sun had set
In water, leaning on his single oar
Above his garden faintly glimmering yet . . .
There bulked the plough, here washed the updrifted weeds . . .
And scull across his roof and make for shore,
With twisted face and pocket full of seeds.



July 2023

Ukraine has been invaded; thousands have been killed on both sides. It is estimated that 12 million Ukrainians have fled the country as the war continues to go on. Peace is nowhere in sight. The people of Ukraine vow never to give up their sovereignty: Putin vows not to withdraw. When will it end? How will it end? Time will tell, but the faith of the Ukrainian people is unwavering, much like that of the Hungarians in 1956.

January 1957

From the pen of student, Frances Michalek in her Senior year

Many, many interpretations could be given about this poem, but after thinking for a while, I believe it refers to mankind.

I think it is especially adapted for a present-day application. The outbreaks in Israel, the revolts in Hungary; these are the flooded fields and drowned cattle. The dike was broken as was the peace in the two countries I mentioned. The Levee was washed away making a big rift that seems impossible to patch such as does the friendship between the Israelis and the Egyptians.

In Hungary, the passage of “trees and home uprooted” is so very true. And when the Russian tanks moved in; the Hungarians must have felt as if their end had come, but yet they are still living, “with twisted faces” maybe, but also with “a pocket full of seeds.” Seeds full with faith in God and belief that some day He will help them win and they will be forever parted from their misery. Seeds also filled with the will to keep fighting, no matter what. Seeds filled with courage. Seeds filled with prayer for their young ones: “Oh God, spare our children from the sufferings we have witnessed.”

Sr. Mary Thomas Michalek, OP
Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament
Farmington Hills, Michigan USA
Original english



10. REACHING THE BLESSED LIFE: SAINT ROSE OF LIME

On August 24th 1617, at the age of thirty-one, Rose of Saint Mary died in Lima, Peru. For Saint Rose of Lima, death was "going with her Spouse". She was celebrated as the first flower of holiness in America. Endowed with brilliant qualities and gifts of genius even as a child, she had consecrated herself to the Lord with a vow of virginity. For these countries, above all, that day was the beginning of a history of remembrance and veneration of the first canonised saint of the Church in these American lands. Her body is venerated in the Dominican Basilica of the Holy Rosary in Lima. She was beatified by Clement IX in 1668 and canonised by Clement X on April 12th 1671, and since that year all of South America and the Philippines have venerated her as their patron saint.

Isabel Flores de Oliva was born in 1586 in Lima. She was such a beautiful baby that her family decided to call her "Rose". Her father was an army arquebusier and her mother a seamstress. Her home was very close to the convent of Our Lady of the Rosary, so she was associated with the Dominicans from a very early age. As a very young girl, Rosa began to make simple mental prayers, which consisted of meditating on the content of the most common prayers - such as the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Glory - and mentally repeating short ejaculatories. She was a great lover of solitude and devoted a large part of her time to divine contemplation, wishing to introduce others to the arcana (secrets) of "secret prayer". Mostly she was confined to a small hermitage in her parents' garden, she opened her soul to the missionary work of the Church. She had an ardent zeal for the salvation of sinners, like St. Dominic, and of the natives, for whom she wished to give her life, and she gave herself to voluntary and hard penance to win them to Christ, "grieving that as a woman she could not devote herself to the apostolic ministry". She also carried out works of mercy for the needy and oppressed. She burned with a lively love for Jesus in the Eucharist and a deep piety for his most holy Mother, whose rosary she strove to propagate with indefatigable zeal, believing that every Christian "must preach it by word and have it engraved in his heart".

Remembering her 406 years after her passage through this world is an invitation to turn our gaze towards a new world that was born in the midst of convulsions and tears, of exploitation and humanism, of injustice and holiness. Lima was then the city of saints, the city of Rose of Saint Mary, OP, of Martin of Porres, OP, of Toribio of Mogrovejo, priest, and of Francisco Solano, OFM. It was also the city of the poor who knocked at the doors of the convents, of the abandoned sick, of those who saw their lives extinguished in the mines and in the fields.

This world of contrasts was the world in which St. Rose lived. The Christian religion brought by the first missionaries had already flourished in that world. Lima was also the city of churches and chapels, of convents of friars and nuns, of priests, of the faithful and... of the "beatas", the pious women who consecrated themselves to



God by living in their homes where they gave themselves to the hardest penitence and prayer.

These blessed women of St. Rose's time were heirs of ancient Christian movements that tried to return to the spirit and charisms of the first Christian communities. Some of these movements were associated in Spain in the 16th century with the "illuminated or enlightened ones", the converted Jews and the Lutherans. They were movements that denied the hierarchy and the sacraments of the Church. The Inquisition soon saw the danger of these new heretics and persecuted them tenaciously.

However, the blessed women of America were not "enlightened" nor did they deny the hierarchy or the sacraments. The danger for which the Inquisition persecuted them was in the false miracles and revelations they claimed to have. Having a blessed woman in the house was a sign of blessings from God, which is why the ladies of high society came to them, offering them their friendship and gifts to participate in those blessings. To increase the miracles and revelations of these women was to also multiply the gifts they received...

Saint Rose of Lima belonged to that group of women consecrated to God who lived in their homes, but she never fell into the abuses and falsehoods of some of them. Rose was a Dominican tertiary, an imitator of Saint Catherine of Siena, for whom she felt a deep veneration, which later became a surprising affinity for her and, therefore, she decided in 1606 to enroll in the secular Dominican Order, to give herself more fully to perfection evangelical and thus be a follower of the charisma of Saint Dominic. But that world in which she lived explains the way in which the first biographies present her, in which penances, revelations, ecstasies and miracles abound.

It is now a matter of distinguishing legend and reality in these biographies. Legends are like ivy that needs support to grow. The task is not new, it largely began in the time of Saint Rose with the meetings of the Inquisition with the saint herself. Those meetings were called "examination of conscience" and the meeting for a couple of days with Dr. Juan del Castillo is enlightening. This envoy of the Inquisition knew very well the teachings of Saint Teresa of Jesus about the degrees of prayer.

Saint Rose had not read the books of Saint Teresa, but she had walked the path that the Saint of Avila spoke of and had reached the highest peak of contemplation. To the inquisitor's questions about Saint Rose's way of praying, he replied that her prayer had been the path that had led her to union with God. Since she was five years old, she had begun to feel that there is nothing sweeter than thinking and talking with God, and that there is nothing more terrible than his absence, even if it was for a moment. Rose experienced that absence for 15 years. It was the emptiness, the darkness, the supreme pain, and no one could help her during that time. But God returned and then Rose felt immersed in a sea of love, peace and union. The doctor tells her about the purifications



of the soul and the dark night that the saints go through. Saint Rose had gone through that dark night.

She also confesses that in those moments when she feels united to God, visions take place “with the eyes of the soul”, of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary. She saw God as an infinite cloud or the sea, but God was beyond the cloud and the sea. She recognizes that she does not have words to express what she felt at that moment. Only silence remains. It is the difficulty that all mystics experienced when reaching those summits of union with God. Visions and revelations would be the language to communicate an otherwise incommunicable experience. They are the language of the saints.

Four hundred and six years after her death, Saint Rose of Lima teaches us that this is the path by which God calls everyone. It is not the privilege of a select few. She also teaches us that beyond the garden of her house where she lived that experience of God, there is the world of the poor, of those who suffer, of those who do not have faith. And it is not necessary to leave God to go down those paths bringing faith, joy and a little happiness to those who are the face of God.

Fr. Fernando García, OP
Original: Spanish

With sources from: Liturgy of the Hours for the Order of Preachers, fr. Jesús García, OP and fr. Julián de Cos, OP.

11. GETTING TO KNOW VENERABLE

SOR LEONOR DE SANTA MARÍA OCAMPO

Sor Leonor was declared Venerable by Pope Francis on May 19, 2018, when he signed the Decree recognizing the heroic virtues of our sister.

Sister's autobiography, drafted at the request of one of her confessors, is the principal source for our knowledge of her and forms the basis for other recent works which reveal her exemplary figure.

Birth and childhood (1841-1854) in Sañogasta (La Rioja)

Sor Leonor – Isora María Ocampo – was born in Argentina during a time of cruel civil confrontations. Although the provinces of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata had begun their independence from Spain in 1810, the political situation was very unstable. Her family was constrained to take refuge in the Famatina Mountains, in the province of La Rioja. Several close relatives suffered persecution and death. It was a protracted situation of armed conflict. Isora's parents came from well-known and highly esteemed families. They were educated and influential people who occupied a prominent place in the economic, social, political and religious milieu. Her father, Juan Santiago Amaranto Ocampo, had studied law in Córdoba (Argentina) and held various positions in the government of La Rioja and then in San Juan. Her mother, Francisca Solana Dávila-Brizuela y Doria, was heiress of the San Sebastián family estate. Nine children were born to them, Isora being the eighth.



She herself narrates her birth in that dramatic situation with these lines: *"My mother, Doña Solana Dávila de Ocampo, gave birth to me on August 15, 1841, a time of many wars. . . and my mother, being pregnant with me, suffered many great hardships. . . For a home she had a cave in a deserted place with the rest of the family. . . In this critical circumstance they feared from hour to hour that my mother was about to die, and they told me that I cried so much in my mother's womb that all those who were close to her heard me; and when I was born everybody was full of wonder that I was not only born alive but healthy."*



With astonishing memory, she describes interesting features of her childhood that reveal a precocious lucidity. She experienced God's providential protection on several occasions and began to participate in practices of popular piety: Marian processions, the Stations of the Cross and the Holy Rosary. While still a small child, Isora began living these devotions with intense sensitivity, especially towards the Virgin Mary. As she relates, she also venerated St. Dominic and St. Catherine, frequently invoked by her relatives, who had given her some pictures of these saints. She also made dolls – calling them “Catherines” – and played with them.

From her mother she learned to be very charitable with the poorest, and she relates: *"I was the distributor of all the alms that were given"*. Fond memories become very sad when describing the death of her mother, which occurred when Isora was eight. Although she felt supported by her family, she found her greatest consolation in the Virgin Mary. Before an image of the Immaculate Conception, she asked Mary to be her mother. She relates that she felt filled with a sea of sweetness that attracted her to Our Lady, with such tenderness and love, as one who opened her arms and accepted her as a daughter. Meanwhile, she remained in the care of her father, brothers, sisters-in-law and uncles, and recognized that in this way she was learning to be long-suffering and resigned. At the age of nine, she was disposed to fast rigorously throughout Lent.

She learned to read with one of her brothers, and from the age of seven she was so enthusiastic about reading, especially pious books, that she profited well and was very grateful.

Adolescence and youth in the city of La Rioja (1854-1860)

Together with her father, Isora lived in the home of her aunt Concepción, whom she loved as a mother. As there were Dominican friars in the city, she decided to take one of them as her confessor. She continued her devotions and assiduously frequented the Sacraments, meanwhile pursuing her edifying readings. In her aunt she found understanding and companionship, but not so among her numerous cousins. She suffered many trials with which they provoked her: mockeries, offenses, accusations, defamation and even physical ill-treatment. She said nothing either to her confessor or to her aunt; she suffered in silence. Despite all obstacles, she persisted in her practices of piety. On the occasion of a mission preached by a Dominican friar, she made a general confession and fasted rigorously; it was then that God granted her, after receiving communion, the grace of rapture; and later on he would give her other very similar graces.

At the age of fifteen, moved by sincere fervor, she experienced for the first time the desire to give herself entirely to God. Without being carried away by this youthful enthusiasm, Isora acted with remarkable wisdom and decided to wait two years to mature in that calling, without confiding it to anyone yet. She continued with her



practices of devotion, although circumstances were still adverse, and she had to suffer misunderstanding and rejection even from her own father.

In these years, apart from the aforementioned trials, she experienced true friendship and charity towards her neighbors and other unique gifts of grace that God communicated to her during prayer. She recalls in her memoirs that she was very much loved by her friends and in society; she describes the help she gave to poor people, and how the Lord heard her pleas when she interceded for the needs of others, granting her what she asked. Of all the graces she received, the continuous presence of God stands out, although she felt herself an unworthy sinner. In all sincerity Isora admits that she has no words to explain this gift or the raptures that God granted her in prayer, which always left her with feelings of deep humility. At one point she said to her father spontaneously: "Tatita, someday I will be a nun".

In San Juan (1860-1868)

With her father and younger sister, Isora settled in the city of San Juan, where her sister Benjamina lived with her husband and children. A third of her autobiography is dedicated to these few years, which she begins with an account of her risky journey, described as a hymn to providence. This was her style of writing and, above all, of facing life.

During all these years, she received spiritual guidance from the Dominican Fathers; one among them, most frequently mentioned, gave her invaluable help in countless circumstances.

This period was the most intense of Isora's lay life. Her occupations were household tasks, in which she came to bear responsibility for the entire house; numerous works of charity for the poor, sick, afflicted, elderly and dying; an intense spiritual life of deep and continuous prayer, sacramental life, plus the special graces that God poured out upon her.

It is at this time that she received full light regarding her vocation as a Dominican contemplative nun. She asked her father for permission to become a nun and he gladly gave it to her, although she well knew that he could not afford the dowry because they were poor. Isora's vocational journey was marked at every step by devotion to the Virgin Mary, St. Dominic and St. Catherine, whom she came to know in childhood and greatly loved ever after. The rosary was her favorite prayer, and she never stopped praying it.

Already confirmed in her decision to give herself to God as a nun, she undertook numerous works of charity. With a fine memory for detail, she devoted several pages of her writing to describe the material and spiritual care she gave to the sick and afflicted, old and young, always interceding for all of them. Dedication to the home and external works of charity did not interrupt her intense spiritual life but was the source of her self-

sacrificing fraternal charity. Under the continual guidance of her Dominican confessor, she meditated on the Passion of the Lord, confessed and received communion frequently, always enjoying the sweet presence of God.

Isora applied to enter our monastery, and at that time there was space available, since the bishop had ordered that the community should not exceed forty nuns. But she could not take advantage of the occasion as she lacked the money for a dowry. Additionally, several sad events occurred in her family, and this experience, along with the help she gave her family, left her exhausted: the deaths of a nephew and her brother-in-law, the great sorrow of her widowed sister, and the news of the death of her father in La Rioja, where he had returned some time ago. After a while, there was another opening in the community, but she did not find the support from her family which she needed. With renewed determination and courage, she began to ask for alms, which she immediately received from many people who loved her. Then she undertook the journey to Córdoba.



Dominican nun at the Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena (1868-1900)

Isora entered on June 19, 1868, the feast of the Sacred Heart, which she interpreted as a divine gift and the fulfillment of a premonition; she was happy and grateful:

"The nuns opened the doors to me and it was as if Jesus had opened his bosom to me and clasped me to his divine heart; in my soul I experienced the greatest consolation that can be imagined."

At that time the novitiate only lasted one year, at the end of which she made her solemn profession on July 7, 1869, taking the name of Leonor de Santa María. From then on, she recounts very little account of her daily life in the cloister. Her biographical notes generally refer to her spiritual experiences. If her intimate and constant communion with God had been permanent in her secular life, once a nun, her attention was focused entirely on her Dominican contemplative vocation.

During her first stage, and throughout her life in the monastery, she continued to receive special graces, and soon after her entrance, she felt the need to be guided in interpreting them. The confessor granted her by providence for five years, whose name she withholds, was very important for her spiritual growth. This confessor ordered her



to resist the impulses of fervor and to ask the Lord to take away the special and notable favors; he commanded her not to pray in her cell, and even doubted her truthfulness and exacted an oath from her. Praying in the choir was for her a heavenly experience. But in her discernment Sor Leonor was able to formulate a criterion that she described with surprising wisdom and that reassured both herself and her confessor: the good fruits of peace, humility and the desire to practice the virtues that she experienced could not come from the enemy but only from God.

Even while enjoying such a high degree of spiritual and mystical life, Venerable Sor Leonor always kept her feet on the ground. The community was large and industrious, such that they all performed diverse tasks. She had several: she worked in the portress's office, in the sacristy, in the pantry, and above all, in the infirmary. If as a laywoman she had been charitable and attentive to the sick, she was even more so as a nun and so she writes: *"The more I had to do for the sick, so much the more did I feel happiness in my soul; I never omitted any sacrifice in order to relieve and console them."*

In community life she found much joy, but she was not spared setbacks, which she received as coming from on high and which gave her the opportunity to grow in virtue. She felt loved and encouraged by one Prioress, but was publicly humiliated by another. From a nun who was her work companion, she had to tolerate jealousy and envy. She suffered the anger of a bishop when she voted conscientiously against a proposal of that prelate. In helping to procure the needs of the monastery, she endured ill-treatment from a *conversa* and from the lay servants. With many tears she mourned the death of an aunt who was a nun and whom she loved very much. In her writings we read: *"All these things I suffered with much peace and joy in my heart."*

As far as is known, Sor Leonor was a healthy person. The testimonies of the nuns who shared her life state that she fell ill with pneumonia in November 1900, and after an improvement she suffered a relapse that led to her death. She had received communion at Christmas, but was not given the last sacraments because the gravity of her illness escaped notice. The sisters who accompanied her until the end say that she was calm, kind, and resigned, transmitting serenity to all. In the necrology book it was noted: *"She was a religious who possessed the virtues especially recommended by our Lord and God: meekness and humility, and these enabled her to experience the events of life, no matter how adverse, with an edifying peace and serenity. . . . She always looked cheerful and contented. . . ."*

The profound mystical experiences that accompanied her throughout her life were never revealed by her except to her confessors, and she did her best to keep others from noticing them. In her own reflection on these phenomena, she is intuitive and wise in judging whether or not they really came from above. In fact, her companions were



unaware of the depth of her communion with God and her mystical experiences until her memoirs were returned to the community and read, many years after her death.

To her last confessor, Venerable José León Torres, O.de.M., she handed over her autobiography. When he died in 1937, it was returned to the community by the Superior General of the congregation he had founded [Las Hermanas Mercedarias del Niño Jesús]. At that time, some of the nuns were still alive who had shared Sor Leonor's life and who gave written testimony. These testimonies have been collected in the *Positio*, the documentation of the entire process of canonization.

In her autobiography we note, among other things, that she manifested great affection and gratitude towards the Order, and having become a nun, she faithfully fulfilled the Constitutions.

Conclusion

Since the cult of Sor Leonor began to spread, her reputation for holiness has been growing. Those who come to know her admire her life of prayer and charity, of complete fidelity to her Christian and contemplative Dominican vocation. Many people have besought her aid and continue to seek her intercession, to ask for the graces they need, and they have felt that she has heard them. The testimonies are countless. Now, through her intercession, we need God to perform a miracle so that the process of canonization can take its course and she can be declared Blessed. Below is the prayer to entrust her with your intentions and needs:

Our God and Father, who granted to Venerable Sor Leonor de Santa María the gift of contemplative prayer, along with great humility, full trust in your providence and a self-sacrificing love for the poor and sick, we beseech you to grant her the glory of the saints and the grace that we ask of you in faith. By her example and intercession, lead your Church on the path of holiness. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Sr. Maria Nora Diaz Cornejo op
Monastery Santa Catalina de Siena
Córdoba, Argentina
Original spanish

Website: <https://sorleonordesantamaria.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sorleonorok>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dominicas.contemplativas.cba/?hl=es>



12. MONASTERY OF SANTA CATALINA DE SIENA CORDOBA ARGENTINA

Founded on July 2, 1613

Obispo Trejo 44 - Casilla de Correo 791 - X 5000 IYB - Córdoba
Tel.: (0351) 421 6503 - Fax: (0351) 422 6758 - misericordiaop2@gmail.com

A bit of history

The city of Cordoba, founded on July 6, 1573, by Don Jeronimo Luis de Cabrera, was forty years old when the first monastery in the country and the first female religious community in Argentina was founded.

Its founder was Doña Leonor de Tejeda y Mirabal, daughter of Captain Tristán de Tejeda and Doña Leonor Mejía y Mirabal. She was married to General Manuel de Fonseca y Contreras and they had no children. But God put in their minds and hearts the desire to perpetuate themselves spiritually, founding a monastery under the patronage of Saint Catherine of Siena, to whom Leonor was very devoted. When she was widowed, she dedicated herself fully to the task of the foundation. By a decree of King Philip III dated March 6, 1613, they already had the necessary authorization.

And the date of July 2 was chosen, day in which the liturgy celebrated the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin Saint Elizabeth, so that the solemn ceremony of the foundation, so longed for by Doña Leonor and the Bishop, Fray Hernando de Trejo y Sanabria, could take place. He blessed the twelve white habits in a very solemn ceremony, attended by the whole city and at the end, the Te Deum was intoned. They walked towards the door of the cloister, entering the new monastery, the nuns who for the first time will sing the divine praises and intercede for their brothers the friars, the men and women who forged the dawn of our country.

The Monastery was definitively and canonically erected by the Papal Bull of Pope Urban VII dated July 15, 1625, and the life of the nuns was organized according to the charism of Saint Dominic. The ideal that encourages all the nuns, starting from Doña Leonor de Tejeda, is the same: love, encounter, and prayerful dialogue with God. An ideal that invites all the nuns to set out and that gives meaning to this journey of ours; a path that tells us how to make our lives a continuous act of love whose influence reaches, through divine grace and the mystery of the communion of saints, all humanity.

*United in one soul and in one heart, we say with St. Catherine
"Pour out, Lord, my heart over the face of the Church..."*

Sr. Sandra, op
Monastery of Cordoba, Argentina
Original Spanish.



13. ELOQUENCE OF MERE PRESENCE

An unexpected yes brought me to Lourdes. Sometimes, the assent to the circumstances takes you where you do not suspect, to a necessary experience, to complete the view, a step further inside.

The proposal to accompany a sister in a community service allowed me to get to know Lourdes for the first time. To be honest, I was more motivated by the former than the latter. It was not at all a planned visit, not even a desired one, since my relationship with Mary is anchored, in truth, more in what *Lumen Gentium* 8 says and in her silence of which the Gospel speaks than in pilgrimages and shrines. I say this to my detriment and not to the detriment of popular faith.

We arrived in Lourdes on an ordinary weekday afternoon in July. As usual, it was drizzling in the Garonne valley. This did not surprise me because the weather in my homeland is similar, which is a plus point: this atmosphere brought me back to my roots. The spaciousness that surrounds the access to the sanctuary, its neatness, the practical distribution of spaces and services was the first touch of attention. The esplanade leading to the basilica follows the line of the river that leads you without much struggle to the small center of everything: the grotto. I noticed upon arrival and the next morning, that the esplanade, however wide, long, immense it may be, always remains small before the human flow that passes through it. The flow of people is endless in Lourdes, any day, any hour, it is always crowded. This multitude represents a Babel without competition, you hear all the languages known and to be known, all the imaginable human traits, but is a Babel that does not segregate, but becomes a welcoming with a single glance, closeness, complicity without words amid a common search.

The queue to access the grotto is an endless trail, there is no way to find the end. I felt trapped by the density of the environment, by a human gravity that penetrates you, silences you and inclines your heart. I did not want to stop contemplating that tide of wheelchairs with their inseparable companions. Seeing the sanctuary, the different spaces offered by the place, I considered it the least important thing, the attraction was to contemplate the human landscape. You are fascinated to see how the sick enjoy absolute primacy, the first in everything: the liturgical celebrations, the processions with the recitation of the rosary, the access to the Mother's grotto, the ablutions services, in everything I saw, the ill are the protagonists. Among the thousands of people who were there, and I say thousands without exaggeration, I did not witness a negative gesture, nor a disagreement, nor an impatience, nor a complaint, nor anything that could hinder harmony amid so much human weakness and difficulty. The ill allow themselves to be led, to be made, to be served. Volunteers and caregivers bring out the best of themselves in helping them, with joy, with total naturalness. I understood, then, the desire of people to return to Lourdes, the need for the ill to go on pilgrimage to this insignificant little town, lost in the valleys, but with an international airport and where even the buses struggle with the difficulties of mobility. I, who have learned not to surrender easily to

admiration, could not help but glimpse that the reign of God had to be something like what I was perceiving, it was a perfect parable. When we managed to join the long queue waiting to pass through the grotto, listen to the spring that gushes from it and touch that rock that sustains the hope of so many people, my gesture was to place my forehead on it, leave my reasons in its hollow and pray.

The participation in the candlelight procession at sunset was wonderful, I have never seen such a simple organization so incredibly effective. The Mother at the head of the procession, the ill at her side, following her, and behind them, all the others. Among these “others” the majority were young people. Young seminarians, young volunteers, young religious, young couples, young matrimones, young families... in Lourdes there are indeed young people. A huge question arose within me: what attracts them in all



this? That evening and the following morning, I had no answer. St. Mary, in Lourdes, taught me several things, among them, to face uncomfortable questions without looking the other way. The answer came to me over the following days, like a slow sedimentation of what I had experienced.

I believe that young people participate in Lourdes because they feel part of a project, because they are given a leading role, because they feel useful to others, because love engages and in Lourdes it is present with great power, because faith, at times, is put into practice and then perceived. I have seen children as young as 10 years old handing out water to the sick, hundreds of young people pulling wheelchairs,

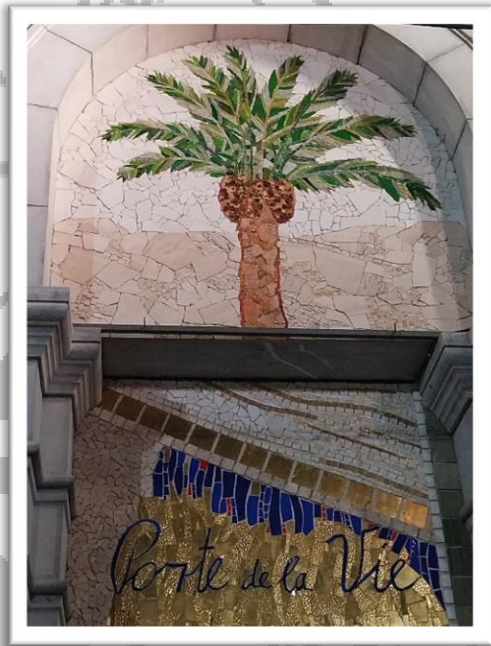
carrying the torches that organize the route of the processions, accompanying groups of pilgrims, singing in the choir that enlivens the liturgies, carrying the offering of intercessions, praying without blushing. In Lourdes no one feels lost, there will always be someone to take care of you. I will never forget the image of the torches spreading disciplined along the esplanade, in the middle of the night and the rain, amid silence and prayer. It seemed like a stream of light in motion. All so different, all so united. I will never forget that precious image. What I am writing may sound excessive, however, I am writing after letting a few months go by. Still, the emotion is very much alive.

The next morning, we participated in the Eucharist in the grotto, it was still raining incessantly, but the grotto was full, I estimated about 300 wheelchairs and trolleys, each volunteer offered a raincoat to his patient, everyone was protected, no chair was moved by the rain, most of them were singing, it seemed to me the most beautiful liturgical assembly in which I have participated, I was distracted by the amazement, I was moved by the concentration of the ill, their stillness, their piety. My prayer was to weep in the



rain. The Eucharist was concelebrated by many priests, so many that they exceeded the space of the grotto, also presided by five bishops. Seeing how the sick greeted their pastors moved me. Seeing how the shepherds greeted and accompanied their ill on the pilgrimage moved me. Listening to the homily that day, so accurate, so true, made me happy.

The little time we had left, we went inside the basilica. On the three levels of the sanctuary, Eucharists were being celebrated, all of them full. The beauty of the interior and exterior mosaics captivates the senses, but what really struck me was to see all the walls of the sanctuary covered with marble plaques with expressions of gratitude to Mary. They are literally covered with thanksgiving to Mary, wherever you looked, you could only find the written echo of the gratitude of the pilgrims.



We crossed to the other side of the river and sitting on a bench, facing the grotto, facing Mary, contemplated through the veil of the ill, I let myself be enveloped by the timeless silence of the place. A silence that no one imposes, that springs from the power of presence, from the depth of being. In that silence resounded the phrase of Pope Francis: “Hagan lio!” “Make a mess” because I understood that Mary's presence alone moves people, continues to lead us to Jesus, continues to be the source of the inexhaustible spring for the search of the meaning of life, of pain, of reality. In Lourdes it is clear that trust puts us on the path of life, that hope moves our thirst towards the search and that miracles happen when we embrace the wounds. (From Prouilhe)

Original Spanish.