

Monialibus

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- The program of the Master of the Order
- A letter from Fr. Manuel Merten the Promoter of the Nuns
- The program of the Promoter
- Earthquake in Japan
- News concerning the construction of the new monastery in Nicaragua
- Report on the meeting of nuns of the African region
- Getting to know the regions – reports from the region of Mexico and South Spain
- Shared experiences: from Vancouver, Canada and Prouilhe, France

Programme of the Master of the Order

May:	plenaria session of the general counsel
7 june - 26 july:	visitation Australia, New Zealand, Salomon Islands, China, Taiwan et Korea
27 july - 22 august:	Rome
23 - 31 august:	rest outside of Rome
1 - 8 september:	visitation - Portugal
9 - 18 september:	retreat preached to the Spanish nuns in Caleruega Caleruega
19 - 30 september:	Rome
1 - 10 october:	Argentina
11 - 18 october:	visitation - Chili
19 - 25 october:	Rome
26 - 28 october:	Budapest (conclusions of the visitation) and Bratislava
29 oct. - 2 déc.:	Rome
3 - 31 décembre:	visitation - Pérou.

A letter from Fr. Manuel Merten the Promoter of the Nuns

Dear Sisters,

After a long silence, I greet you with my whole heart. This issue of *Monialibus* has been delayed for a number of reasons. The most important of them stems from a glitch in modern technology: this letter of greeting was almost completely finished and was ready to be transmitted electronically to Sr. Claire, when a dangerous virus got into my computer and irretrievably destroyed all of my data and the texts I was working on: a heavy blow. It will take a lot of time and work to reconstitute at least the most important documents. Much information will remain lost forever, together with the notes I made on previous visits to monasteries, many homilies, essays and articles.

I should like to share with you something of what I have experienced since the last issue of *Monialibus* came out:

In November and December 2002 I visited all of the monasteries on the African continent. I was accompanied in a very caring and brotherly way by Fr. Roger Hounghedij, the Master of the Order's Assistant for Africa. There are vocations in all of our monasteries of nuns, with the exception of Senegal in South Africa. It was great for me to see this, and it gives hope for the future.

Our first port of call was **Nairobi**. There I met a lively community that expresses African tradition and culture in the liturgy and choir office. This was truly a good starting point, as I had previously read in the newspaper that the most recent results of scientific research on DNA show that the whole of mankind developed from origins in Africa. The sisters were pleased to learn that basically we are all Africans. I think I had found proof of this thesis deep inside myself as I enjoyed the dancing, singing and music making of the sisters.

The journey to **Rweza** in Burundi was a little complicated, and not without danger, as the country is still in the throes of civil war. We made a brief halt on the way to see the bishop of the diocese of Ngozi, in which the monastery of Our Lady of Peace is situated. Our sisters impressed me with their simplicity, their palpable joy and their attentiveness to the people they encounter through the events of the civil war. They live without having a connection to an electricity supply, and even the telephone works only with difficulty.

From Nairobi, where we made another stopover and enjoyed a wonderful evening recreation, we continued on to Johannesburg. There the Fr. Provincial, Albert Nolan met us at the airport; and we celebrated Mass and had lunch with the brethren at the provincialate. From there we drove on together to Bethlehem (South Africa) where Bishop Bucher has his seat. He is the bishop responsible for our sisters in Senegal and takes great care of them and the upkeep of the monastery. Faced with the lack of religious vocations, he wanted to speak to us about his idea of entrusting to an apostolic Dominican sister the mission of making Dominican monastic life better known, and developing, together with our sisters, “a pastoral initiative for the spiritual calling”, in order to build up vocations to religious life, with particular regard, naturally to their own monastery. We spent the night at the bishop’s house and drove on to Senegal the following morning. The visit to our sisters was a real celebration of encounter. Their monastery and garden are in fine shape, inviting close examination, and a suitable venue for a festive meal.

Our next stop was the monastery in **Benguela**. On the way there we had to make a halt with the brethren in Luanda, the capital of Angola. Here we saw traces of the terrible consequences of the many years of war: So many homeless, uprooted people wandering around the outskirts of the town. Hundreds of thousands are living in truly wretched conditions. In contrast, the monastery is an island of peace. Not only does the extensive garden bear witness to freshness and fruitfulness, but also the spiritual life of the sisters seems to share something of the same qualities. Otherwise it would be unimaginable that there should be so many vocations for this community. At the moment, a certain number of sisters are obliged to share a cell, as there is simply not enough room. This situation will change, when an extension and a foundation in perspective become reality. I was deeply moved by the sight of the faithful who come to mass each morning: many of them are severely handicapped on account of accidents with landmines.

Because it was cheaper that way, Fr. Roger and I flew from Angola back to South Africa, and there gave an interview to the radio station Veritas, run by our brother Emil Blaser. We spent the night at the provincialate, and started the following morning for the Cameroon, where there are three monasteries. On arrival and at the end of our visit we stopped at **Douala**. Our monastery there is situated relatively close to the airport. In the conversations there I was aware of a great interest in everything that’s happening in the Order, and above all in the monasteries all over the world. At this time they were preparing for the arrival a few days hence of several sisters coming to the meeting organised by Sr. Joyce Rita on the theme of a more intensive collaboration between the monasteries in Africa.

After a long drive through the ever-changing beauty of the Cameroon landscape, we arrived in **Toumi**. Here too we found coolness and fruitfulness in the monastic garden. As in Bengala, the growth of the Order is not giving cause for concern. Here too the sisters are greatly interested in news of the Order and what is happening in other monasteries. We celebrated the office together and took meals in common, something of a foretaste of the heavenly banquet: joyful eyes and much laughter bore witness to sisters happy in their monastic vocation.

We journeyed on to **Bambui**. The sisters were still visibly under the shock of the two recent burglaries in their guesthouse and in the monastery itself. In conversations with the whole community as with individual sisters, they constantly returned to this frightening experience. They had been saving up to enlarge their chapel. Now they are finding it difficult to invest this money in increased security measures.

On December 11 we were back in Douala. We travelled together with the sisters from Bambui who were attending the above-mentioned meeting (Sr. Joyce Rita is the sister responsible for Africa in the International Commission of Nuns – see IDI, April 2003). We made this journey by bus. One particular feature to note: the bus company was called :Vatican.

On the evening of 12 December I took a flight back to Rome. There was a considerable delay, which made me miss my connecting flight in Paris. There was a lot of time to practice patience and recite the Rosary. I was finally en route for a full 24 hours.

Christmas and the New Year I spent in Germany: the time was filled up with attendance at a long session of the provincial council, an ongoing formation meeting for the Dominican family in my home province of Teutonia, discussions and negotiations concerning the monastery that was closed in Luxembourg, celebration of the liturgy, a meeting with Sr. Claire, newly designated as prioress for Prouilhe, dealing with mail, but also visits to my family and to dear friends, and not least to my mother who had turned 91 in the meantime. Finally I spent a week's holiday in the snow. Skiing is still for me a highly active way of praying: "Praise the Lord dew and snow, praise and glorify him for ever! Praise the Lord ice and cold, praise and bless him forever! Praise the Lord hoarfrost and snow, praise and glorify him for ever! (Dan. 3, 68 – 70)

From 24 until 29 January, I was in Slovakia. The little monastery in **Kosice** is in urgent need of personnel, and the founding monastery at Krakow (Poland) is not in a position to help. Many discussions were held, with, amongst others the Provincial of the Slovakian province, the Master of the Order's Assistant for Central and Eastern Europe, the prioress of the monastery at Krakow, and the promoter of the nuns for Poland. These discussions should be taken further at the gathering of prioresses from the area of the so-called Eastern block. It is to be hoped that a solution can be found, that can ensure the continued existence of this the only Dominican monastery in Slovakia.

February began with the great event of the new beginning in **Prouilhe**. I have already reported on this (see IDI, February 2003).

From 6 till 18 February I was in the Philippines. In a place called Caleruega, there is a large Dominican retreat and conference centre, where the meeting for leadership of various branches of the Dominican family in the Asia Pacific region was held (Asia-Pacific Dominican Major Superior's Conference). It had as its theme: the Dominican family in the Asia Pacific region – "together in mission". Naturally I grasped the opportunity for this journey, and before the meeting I visited our monastery in **Bocau** and afterwards the monastery in Cainta. There was almost not enough time to answer all questions. A wonderful farewell party, with acting and singing preceded my departure and made it more difficult. Sr. Marie Emmanuelle, member of the International Commission of Nuns for the Asia Pacific region is reporting on the meeting in Caleruega, so I can move on straight away to my visit to **Cainta**. First of all, I need to thank the community for putting Sr. Mary Paul of the Cross at the disposal of the International Community in Prouilhe. For most communities it is indeed a

great sacrifice to let a sister go. I also see that such a sacrifice frequently brings blessings to the generous community, and also for the sister concerned and her new community.

At the end of February the crisis in Iraq was becoming ever more intense. The Promoters met together more often and dealt with questions of the Dominican position on Justice and Peace issues in the context of our common commitment. Above all, through Sr. Margaret Ormond, president of Dominican Sisters International, we maintained close contact with our Iraqi sisters. This has intensified even more now since the end of the war: thus I personally had to intervene for a number of grants, and facilitate contacts with support groups, and prepare information for the German speaking area. For a time it happened not infrequently that what I should have been doing or wanted to do got left by the wayside. I trust that given the urgent and pressing nature of these tasks no one will reproach me with "My e-mail, my letter, my request did not get answered".

In March and the first days of April, I was fairly "domesticated". For six weeks I had in Sr. Barbara Offermann, a Dominican sister of the Bethany Congregation, a secretary at my disposal. In accordance with the formation schedule of the Congregation, the novices do several practical work experience sessions during the second year of their novitiate. Sr. Barbara did her first with me. Thanks to her good taste, her assiduity and organisational ability, I now have not only a functional and beautifully arranged office, but also clearly arranged files as well as two well-sorted filing cabinets. Sr. Barbara was able to begin the task of collating the information I had previously gathered from questionnaires concerning the data from all of our monasteries and the sisters who belong to them, and to make an electronically accessible database. Unfortunately she was unable to finish this task. So I can only hope that I'll get a further opportunity for secretarial help.

I spent most of Holy Week and Easter Sunday in our monastery in **Algund / Lagundo** in the North of Italy. Here lives a small community of six nuns, in a marvellous monastery that dates from the mid thirteenth century. No less wonderful is the surrounding area, the Etschtal, on the southern side of the Austrian Alps. A really special feature: Sr. Benvenuta, the prioress, is not only a passionate vintner, who knows how to produce fine wines and liqueurs, she also has knowledge of medicinal herbs and all kinds of recipes for herbal remedies and much more. Together we celebrated the liturgy of the "Great and Holy Week", using the time also for discussions about assuring the future. As in so many places, there is a shortage of vocations. I also paid a visit to the Bishop in Bozen and to his Vicar for religious life. The sisters have invited me in December to prepare for prioral elections, and that I have willingly accepted to do, given the situation.

At the end of April and the beginning of May, more personal reasons brought me to Mauritius. As many of you know, when I was newly ordained, I worked at the children's village run by the Dominican sisters of Bethany. Sr. Veronika Stettner, General Prioress of the Congregation in those days, was "Mother" to a family in the children's village. One of the children who grew up there at that time got to know a young woman from Mauritius. They finally decided to get married and they asked me to celebrate their marriage ceremony, which I gladly did. In the evening we joked: but the Silver Wedding will be celebrated in Mauritius! What was at the time a joke now turned into reality. The couple and their two children who have grown up in the meantime own, besides their apartment in Germany a substantial house in Mauritius. They invited Sr. Veronika and myself to visit. There was a wonderful religious ceremony with renewal of the marriage vows, short speeches of thanks from the children, and

much applause from the large congregation. The celebrations concluded with a family gathering.

I myself used the stay to fly off and spend a few days on the neighbouring island of **La Réunion** in order to visit our sisters. Their most beautiful monastery is situated on a hill overlooking St Denis. From there one enjoys a view over the city and the blue waves of the Indian Ocean. It seems like a dream, but it is pure reality. Even with all of this beauty, such a remote island also has its problems. Our sisters rarely get Dominican visitors, they would like to get greater support for their monastic life, while they are truly grateful to the local Dominicans, who celebrate mass for them and give lectures.

After my travels to Mauritius and La Réunion followed a period of staying put in Santa Sabina. This was filled up with committee meetings, sessions of the General Council, office work, a meeting with the young nuns of several Italian monasteries, who were attending a common formation week in Rome, continued support for our Iraqi sisters and assistance to our Dominican sisters of Bethany in Germany, who were confronted with a case of violent disrespect of asylum on Church property, for they had given shelter to a Kurdish family (for monasteries with Internet, the outcome will be reported and updated as much as possible, with requests for prayer and action).

I would not wish to end this letter without saying a few words concerning the situation of the new monastery being founded in India. As far as Sor Maria Luz of the monastery of Cangas del Narcea in Spain, the driving force behind this work of foundation is concerned, her visa for India was not renewed. She had to return home. Thank God that two other Spanish sisters were immediately found, and they were able to travel out to join Sor Carmen in Kerala before Easter. Together with the Provincial of the Indian province, Fr. Paul Kuruvilla, they are exploring the possibility of founding in a diocese whose bishop would agree to candidates from all of the Christian rites that exist in India (Roman, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankar) being admitted. This is a very specific problem that is not encountered elsewhere.

I send you brotherly greetings and look forward to meeting many of you personally in the coming months; my commitments and travel plans will give you some idea of that.

United in prayer and in love of our Order, of the Church and of mankind

Your brother Manuel

Fraternally yours



Program of the promoter

29.05.03	Working Session Promoters
05. – 07.06.03	Visit to Monastery at Altenstadt (Austria) / Meeting: Bishop K. Küng
23.06. – 28.06.03	Kraków: Meeting Central- and Eastern European Prioresses
28.06. – 01.07.03	Sw. Anna: Visit Monastery
07. – 09.07.03	Prouilhe: Meeting Council of French Federation / Supervision Project
15./16.07.03	Visit Monastery Prague > Jubilee
18.07.03	Priory Worms: Instruction of German Novices > Monastic Life OP
30.07. – 07.08.03	Italy : Visit to Monasteries
11.08. – 28.08.03	Visit monasteries USA
31.08. – 04.09.03	Meeting German speaking prioresses – Landsberg (Germany)
12.09. – 20.09.03	Germany: Retreat for Novices – Garmisch

Earthquake in Japan

By Sr.M.Josephina Daido Hiroko,OP

On 26th May 2003 there was a big earthquake in northern part of Japan where the monastery of Morioka is situated. Bigger than any earthquake that our sisters have ever experienced, it was of a magnitude of 5,0~6,0 in IWATE. Fortunately, the source of earthquake was very deep (60km) but even now (2 weeks later), there are aftershocks. Although nobody died, about 100 were injured and many buildings were damaged, including the monastery.

At the time of the earthquake the community had just finished preparation for supper. Some sick sisters were already in their cells and another sister had descended for an early supper. Suddenly there were rumbling noises and everything was moving, falling, and making a big mess. The fireproofing doors closed automatically and the alarm sounded throughout the whole monastery. All the unlocked windows and doors opened by themselves, furniture and heavy machines seemed to be walking about, and their ten statues, which came from Belgium with their founders, were destroyed.

The morning after the earthquake, an architect came and took photos, but they don't know yet total sum of damages. They are still finding new structural damage to the buildings and the site. They don't know when they will be able to start to restore the building because they will have to wait for constructions workmen since there are 60 other buildings damaged in the city. According to the report of authorities there might be bigger earthquake again in 4 months.

Although the material damages are great, they are thankful that no one died or was physically injured. Sr.Francisca Maria, the prioress of Morioka, thanks us for our sympathy and prayer. And also gives her best wishes to all.

Blessing of the New Monastery – 25th of March 2003

Managua 3^d of February 2003

From our Sisters, the Dominican Nuns in Nicaragua, we want to inform you that they had the blessing of their new monastery on the 25th of March at 5 pm, in the presence of Mgns. Jorge Solórzano, auxiliary bishop, who also has committed himself to come and celebrate the holy mass once per week. After the mass there was a fraternal agape. The Nuns have moved these days from Leon, even though the monastery is not quite finished. It happens like it happened with the inauguration of the previous one and as it always happens : things are half-done, we have to rush and all the inconveniences... but they live with lots of love, with lots of joy and expectation, tired but with a big smile and with enormous hope, because it is '*their*' monastery, *their* house, *their* home... It is located : km 13 on the old-road to León, 1200 meters north of Chiquilistagua, Managua. They still need to build the public chapel, the guesthouse and the noviciate, but the essential is there. As a promising sign, after they had already chosen their site, the Poor-Clares also decided to build in this region; they are less than 1 km away and the two monasteries can see each other... (Dominic and Francis-Claire have always been close). Whenever you like to send a message to them you can send it to us by this medium*)... Thank you for your friendship and your solidarity, especially to those who were able to help economically (at the last minute they were able to sell the old monastery to a Spanish NGO working with abandoned children at a relatively good price).

Greetings. Community of Dominican Friars, Managua.

*) E-Mail : frailesop@tmx.com.ni



**Extracts from a letter from the Dominican Nuns in Nicaragua
León, 29th december 2002**

...May the Lord bless you for all you have done for our community, since at this stage of our construction we need it every day even more.

In a few words I'd like to tell you how the construction of our new monastery is progressing. ...The location is very beautiful. We own about two hectares of land and it was relatively cheap, although because it is volcanic land we had to remove a lot of earth. This began on the 30th of October 2001, three years after the famous hurricane Mitch. On the 2^d of January of the same 2002 the building of the wall surrounding the whole perimeter started and it was finished on the 18th of April. On the 13th of May the first part of the monastery building was began, since we divided the whole in three parts : first the work rooms, the infirmary and 7 cells; secondly the refectory and the laundry and thirdly parlours and guest rooms, the rooms for the chaplain and the chapel.

The workrooms, the infirmary and the cells are ready for living, thanks to God and to the help of so many people. For the second part we only have half of the estimate and we told it to Padre Pablo, Vice-provincial of Central America, who was very helpful and attentive to our community in all aspects and who encouraged us to continue the construction, looking himself for some aid. Since this aid did not arrive, we had to stop the construction ... then one day Padre Pablo communicated to us that he had received the help he had asked for in our favour. And so with what has been sent to us we were able to almost finish the second stage.

For the chapel, the rooms for the chaplain and the parlours the engineer overseeing the construction has given us an estimate of US\$ 87,000. With all this the main buildings of the monastery would be finished... however without the noviciate and a larger guesthouse which for the moment are totally beyond our possibilities.

May God direct some good persons to help us so that we can start with the chapel. Once again I express our gratitude to you and best wishes from each sister of the monastery of León, Nicaragua.

Sor Catalina Valle Delgado OP (Piora)

Meeting of Nuns of the African Region

by: Sister Joyce Rita Mumu, OP, Kenya

From 12th to 18th December 2002, delegates from the five of the 8 Dominican Nuns Monasteries in Africa met in our Monastery in Douala- Cameroon. This was the 4th Meeting since the Chapter of Oakland in 1989 called for the Nuns to seek ways and means of better communication and collaboration for better living and carrying out of our mission as Dominican Contemplative Nuns. Represented at this gathering were three sisters from Douala - Cameroon; and two sisters from Rweza in Burundi, Senekal in South Africa, Bambui in Cameroon and Nairobi in Kenya. The Monasteries of Toumi in Cameroon, Benguela in Angola and Reunion could not come for various reasons but both their prayers and ideas received prior to the meeting made them tangibly present. Special blessings came through the presence of Fr. Manuel Merten, OP promoter for the Nuns of the Order on the First Day at the end of his visit to all our Monasteries in Africa.. From his wide and deep knowledge of the Nuns in the world, he shared with us on the present situation of the monasteries especially in regard to vocations; on the International Commission of the Nuns; International Community of Prouilhe, the cradle of the Order; and insights regarding monasteries in Africa so fresh in mind well salted with challenges and encouragements. More blessings came through the presence of Fr. Roger Hounghbedji, OP assistant for Africa who had so generously availed himself to be with us the whole duration of the meeting as animator, Translator of English/ French/ Spanish and very uniquely as a brother. As co-ordinator of IAOP (Inter Africa Order of Preachers) he had enough to share with us on how

the eight entities of the OP Friars in Africa are structured to be at the service of Fraternal communion and of the mission of the Church as an Order in Africa.

The Meeting had been eagerly anticipated by the monasteries who had well prepared by discussions on a questionnaire sent by Sr. Joyce Rita Mumu, the newly appointed Representative in the international Commission of the Nuns for the African Region. We looked at our past and present experiences within the framework of our vocation in Africa. We saw that collaboration among ourselves was a way to find solutions to the many problems we face especially in regard to Initial and Ongoing Formation, and also Formation of Formators. We need to deal with both Geographical and Language barriers to facilitate communication. Some of our Monasteries face shortage of members, which makes the daily living of the life almost impossible. Still others are materially quite poor and hardly makes ends meet and when disasters befall any monastery so politically unpredictable in Africa, a community finds itself in a helpless situation without even the necessities of life. As a Region we need to seek ways of involvement.

To begin facing these problems, we decided to have a common Formation Program looking forward to setting up a common Formation in the future; to organise common sessions for the Formators and prioresses; to welcome sisters among our Monasteries according to needs and skills; to get resource persons to help our communities in the Region with lectures; to maintain links among our monasteries through letters and cassettes.

To meet these problems and realize our goals, we felt the urgency to build a Common Fund into which each community will send a yearly-specified contribution or more. This will be complimented by requests for donations. A study for the means to sustain this fund is being carried on. Two sisters namely Sr. Judith-Mary Theh of Bambui and Sr. Maria Dolorosa from Senegal Monasteries were chosen to help the Representative in the studying and fulfilment of these resolutions.

Welcome guests in the persons of Cardinal Christian Tumi, Archbishop of Douala, Sr. Bernadette, OP the Central African Zone representative - DSA and Dr. Mrs. Bewunde, all came to share with us the richness of their various ministries with emphasis on our involvement as women with the mission of prayer both in the Church and world at large. An afternoon visit with our Dominican Friars (Central Afrique) in their new convent in Douala was unique that concluded with our praying Vespers together.

A Bank Account has been opened at the General Curia of the Order for "Moniales Dominicaines d'Afrique". For more information, Sr. Joyce Rita Mumu can be contacted at: Dominican Nuns, Corpus Christi Monastery, P.O Box 24636 Karen, 00502 Nairobi- Kenya, E.Africa. E.Mail: monunsopafrika@yahoo.com

INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGIONS

Spain South

by Sister Isabel Marie Gutiérrez Reyes OP of La Laguna

This region includes the southern part of Spain and the Canaries Islands and corresponds to the Federation of Betica. There are 25 monasteries and some 268 nuns.

The Federation has long intended to establish a new monastery in one of the Canary Islands,

the smallest of all, Hierro. It is an ideal site, for a monastery and the presence of contemplative life there, during the stay of the sisters, has been valued and appreciated by the people. It is regrettable not to be able to make this foundation because of a lack of nuns available, since there is not other monastery of nuns of any religious Order at present on the Island.

We recognise that our numbers are decreasing in the region. The communities are aging and vocations are rare. In some monasteries there is renewed hope of new vocations, although this increase is due largely to the influx of foreign vocations. With these vocations have come new questions and difficulties: differences regarding food, language, customs and being far from ones family.

The communities have difficulty considering the possibility of merging with other monasteries because it would mean, "having to leave my home". As a result there are monasteries, which are simply surviving in their attempt to live out some semblance of a Dominican community life. On the other hand, there are some communities who, in spite of the small number of nuns and the multitude of tasks to be accomplished, are still able to live integrally all elements of Dominican monastic life liturgical and personal prayer, study, government,

The Federation has a Federal House, "Every Nun's House", in Cordoba where the Federal Prioress resides. It also houses the Federal Novitiate where the novices of all monasteries go for formation (if their communities wish to send them). In this House there are annual courses for permanent formation open to all the nuns of the Federation. Two or more nuns usually go according to the means of each monastery.

Central America

by Sister Teresa Coronado OP of Mexico City

This Region is composed of 17 monasteries, three foundations, and the monasteries of Cuba and Nicaragua. It corresponds to the Federation of Mexico. There are approximately 400 nuns, with nine novices and 18 sisters in temporary vows. These sisters are now studying in the new Federal Monastery, which is in its first year of existence. The duration of the common novitiate is 4 years.

There has been a slight decline in vocations in the whole Federation. Four years ago, the Federal Novitiate had more than 20 novices; now there are only nine. We now require that the young women who desire to enter the monastic life have at least a primary and secondary education. For that same reason, the Federation has drawn up preparatory studies (pre postulancy) in the Humanities, which can take up to in two years and take place within the monasteries where the postulants are going to enter. The postulancy itself has been lengthened to two years instead of one.

For the moment the Federation has two nuns helping out in Spain; three in Brazil, two in Cuba and nine in Nicaragua.

It has become apparent that the new Convent of the Federation, which on the out-skirts of the city of Mexico, has a disadvantage in that it is more difficult for people to reach it (in particular brothers susceptible to give classes) because of time-consuming travel.

With the permission granted by the Bishop and by the Delegate of the nuns, Father Orlando Huber, O.P. the Federation has taken advantage of the possibility of sending a group of sisters in their first year of formation to the diocesan seminary where they can attend classes once a week for five hours. Other nuns, religious and seculars attend the course of studies. The seminary is eight minutes from the Convent. All the other classes are given in the Convent. This year, a group of Theological Students of our Order will come and give intensive courses on Dominican life.

Because of our great poverty, our monasteries are not able to live according to the norms Instruction Verbi Sponsa. It is necessary to leave the enclosure in order to sell the products we have made so as to have what is needed for our sustenance. Study is of vital importance for our new vocations.

To continue, herewith is the three-year Study Program in our Formation Center:

First Year: Introduction to Church History; Introduction to Sacred Scriptures; Morals; Revelation; Trinity; Old Testament; Theological Anthropology; Theology; Magisterium of the Church; Vows.

Second Year: Sacraments, Mariology; Prophets; Bioethics; John's Gospel; Liturgy; Synoptic Gospels; Spirituality; Basics of Physiology and Anatomy.

Third Year: Introduction to Canon Law; Moral Social; Trinity; Letters of St. John and St. Paul; Theological Synthesis' Sapiential Books; Eschatology.

In general all attend classes in music, chant, arts and crafts, painting, gymnastic, the last being optional.

EXPERIENCE SHARING

It has been suggested that the bulletin Monialibus include a section where nuns can share their experiences. These articles do not necessarily represent any official position of the International Commission nor are they an attempt to promote a certain point of view. It is a simple sharing of lived experiences. This can help us discover and respect the legitimate diversity in the ways of living the Dominican contemplative life around the world. Our intention is to promote understanding and develop links of communion.

VANCOUVER~A NEW FOUNDATION

By Sister Jean Marie, OP

Sister Claire, the editor of Monialibus, asked if one of the sisters who participated in the Vancouver foundation would „share with the world of nuns her experience of the Vancouver foundation. I am the latest member of the foundation, arriving in October 2002. My six months here have been a wonderful Dominican experience as I come to know my sisters and become part of our monastic community. Our small community represents five monasteries; and is truly a collaborative effort of the monasteries in the States. Beginning a new foundation is always exciting, this one especially so because all the branches of the

Dominican Family are beginning together and working together to make the Order present in this tiny corner of a big world.

We are here for three years now. The first five sisters arrived in BC in 1999 and took up residence at Rosemary Heights Retreat Center in Surrey, BC where the sisters lived in very cramped quarters. If there were hardships, there was also a spirit of Dominican joy, and a real determination and commitment to the foundation on the part of each member of the community.

In February 2002 the community of six sisters moved to a beautiful sight in Langley, BC. We began renovations on this family home to make it suitable for a monastic community.

Utilizing every available space within the house, moving walls, putting up new ones, we were able to create eight bedrooms. The two-car garage was renovated to create a small but lovely chapel. Many wonderful friends and benefactors assisted us, donating time and materials to make the renovations possible. In August of 2002 Sister Mary Columba, O.P., joined the new community and in October of 2002, I came to Langley. Our coming makes the number of sisters eight, and we fill all the rooms of the monastery.

We are a monastery on a hilltop. The house is situated on 15 acres of farmland, in the midst of a farming community. Our property is surrounded by distant mountains. The monastery itself is located in the midst of rolling hills, green pastures, and stately cedars. It is truly a beautiful contemplative place of silence and stillness surrounded by God's creation. At present our own little farm boasts twelve sheep and one llama.

The Lord is blessing our community in so many ways and continues to bless us as we surmount new hurdles and take one step at a time in this endeavour here in Langley. Our next great need is to build a more permanent monastery so that the community can accept vocations, grow in membership and flourish. We ask your prayers for this, and we trust all things to the Lord. It has been very wonderful for me to be a part of this new endeavour and to help bring Dominican monastic life here. It is with a heart full of joy, gratitude and hope that I continue to be part of this foundation.

Our community sends greeting and encouragement to all our sisters throughout the world, and we rejoice in the Prouille project and in all the ways our sisters are seeking to renew Dominican monastic life throughout the world.

The New International Community of Prouille

By Sr. Mary Paul op

When I was requested to write for Monialibus about my experience in Prouille, I grappled with my pen not knowing how to start and what to include in my sharing. The experience I have had is so profound that human words are inadequate to express what I wish to convey. Nevertheless, I will try to share in my own little way.

Sometime in February, last year, I had read, prayed for the project of the International Community. I perceived how important this "call" was, its relevance for our Dominican Family and its significance to the Church with its global dimension. I considered it a mission within a mission. At that time, I was convinced that it was not meant for me but for "great people with great minds." As I prayed for this intention, an encouraging thought spurred me

on : "God does not call the qualified; He qualifies those whom He calls.". Trusting in God I began to trust also that my growing desire had come from His inspiration, so I ventured to send a letter to our dear Fr. Manuel Merten, O.P., and to the Sisters in Prouilhe expressing my deep interest to be involved in the proposed project. Within few days, I received a favourable response. Upon hearing about this, a Filipina Sister from the United States, wrote me this moving encouragement: "You will feel at home there. The French Nuns are very open to different races and nationalities..."

True indeed!! Now that I am actually living the life here in Prouilhe, I am convinced of the "precious pearl" hidden in this holy place where our dear father St. Dominic founded his first Contemplative Community. It is edifying to witness how Sisters here are striving to welcome, respect and trust of one another, serving each other in humility and bearing with one another in charity.

My desire to live fully my Dominican Contemplative vocation has intensified and I believe all of us newcomers are experiencing the same thing in this regard. It is amazing to discover that, even though we hail from different corners of the world with different cultures, languages, etc. yet we are happy to live together as one family. Oh, "How good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers (sisters) ... Psalm 133:1. If it is said that blood is thicker than water in matters of relationship, I am experiencing that the spirit is thicker than blood.

In our day-to-day life, almost everyone is trying to learn another language and we are experimenting with ways of integrating the different languages. We still rely on translations during recreations and at community meetings so, sometimes the rhythm is slow, but this also has its advantages. The newcomers, like myself, are already taking an active part in the work and, as much as possible, in the liturgies. The beauty of the Liturgical celebrations during these Lenten and Easter Seasons have nourished me and in addition, we have had some very enriching permanent formation sessions: fr.Elise-Pascal op. opened our understanding of the Nine Ways of Prayer of our Father Dominique, Sister Suzanne Eck op. gave us keys to understanding Jean Tauler and Jean Vanier, did three days of meditations on the Gospel of St. Jean and our becoming instruments of peace.

Pray with us that Prouilhe may be a sign of peace as we try to live together in unity.
Sr. Mary Paul op

Au revoir ! Merci beaucoup ! Gloire a toi Seigneur Jesus !!!