



Monialibus

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers
International Bulletin*



N° 29 July 2013



"Contemplation is the seizing of our entire being by the mystery of this love which simultaneously acts in the world and establishes its home within us".

(MO. fr. Bruno Cadoré, OP)

SUMMARY:

🕯 Letter of fr. Brian, op.....	5
🕯 Echoes from the Italian regions.....	7
🕯 Dominican life in the Indian Ocean	10
🕯 In response to his invitation to fusion.....	12
🕯 Don't be afraid.....	13
🕯 Meeting of the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadore, with the Spanish Dominican nuns.....	13
🕯 "It is in Him that we live, and move, and exist" (Acts 17, 28).....	14
🕯 A Jubilee Gift.....	15
🕯 Sharing experiences of life	17
🕯 The foundation of the first Monasteries of Dominican nuns	18

=====

The **Monialibus** is the official International Bulletin of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers published by the International Commission of Nuns (ICNOP) twice a year in January and July. It is available at the website of the Order – www.op.org

=====

The following sisters have collaborated as translators for this issue of Monialibus:
 fr. Larry Kelli, op (Ireland), Sr M^a Belén de la Inmaculada, OP (Murcia – Spain), Sr M^a del Salvador, OP (EE.UU), Sor Ma Pia,op (Bronx – New York) and Ann Gillian Lenoir

Letter of fr. Brian, op

August 2013
My Dear Sisters in
St. Dominic, Preacher of
God's Mercy,

Greetings!! I began writing this letter from a bus on my way from the federal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe, near Mexico City, to the city of Guadalajara. We had just finished a course on Dominican spirituality and the Mystics, bringing together nuns from about 15 Mexican monasteries (this federation of twenty monasteries includes the monasteries of Cuba and Nicaragua). One of the highlights of this trip to Mexico was my visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. My first visit to Mexico, in 1982, was a very memorable one for me, for it was then – just two months before entering the novitiate – that I entrusted my Dominican vocation to our Lady of Guadalupe. I wanted to thank Our Lady of Guadalupe for her love and protection during these years.

Earlier in June, before heading to Mexico, the Master of the Order and I met in Caleruega with the Councils of the three Spanish federations, along with the three Spanish nuns that serve on the International Commission of Nuns. This meeting was followed by a course similar to the one in Mexico, though in Spain we had the added gift of the presence of Sister Silvia Bara, OP, who has done her doctoral work in the field of the Dominican Mystics. These three Spanish federations represent more than sixty monasteries in Spain, plus sixteen monasteries outside of Spain. Our brother, fr Bruno, continues to encourage the nuns in Spain, Italy, Mexico, the United States and other countries to look towards more collaboration in the areas of initial and ongoing formation, health care, and a common *Ratio* for formation.

Both before and after the course in Spain, I was able to take part in a number of one-day workshops in different monasteries, bringing together nuns from different monasteries. These

gatherings offer marvellous opportunities not only for common prayer and study, but also to deepen our experience of being sisters and brothers in the Order. Following the many visits in Spain and Mexico, I travelled to the United States to join three other Dominicans to offer a week-long retreat for nuns from the monasteries in the United States and Canada. All of these gatherings have been most blessed!

In some of the monasteries that I have visited recently we have spent time reflecting on the Master of the Order's letter *Laudare, Prædicare, Benedicere: Letter on the Liturgical Celebration of the Hours* (Feast of the Visitation, 2012). This is one part of the letter that I find very insightful:

"Into the heart of the community, gathered for and through the [liturgical] celebration, it is not only Christ who comes, *but also the world*. The celebration is, in fact, the moment when love for the world is nourished ... Dare we say that, by singing the story of the people of God in the midst of the world, we can open a breach in our contemporary history? ... We sing of the promise of a Presence and a Coming that does not accept 'dead-ends' from a human point of view, but on the contrary, projects the Light of a promise of eternity onto ordinary situations. To sing the liturgy hour after hour calls us to be convinced that the world is saved and heard, even in the midst of its own noise." (This quote is from the section of fr Bruno's letter, entitled "Celebration of a Unity received for the Salvation of the World")

What does it mean for us to celebrate the liturgy with Christ *and* the world present with us in our chapels and churches? In fact, could we not say that a liturgy that recognizes the presence of Christ, while ignoring the presence of the world, is not a full and faithful celebration of the liturgy? We all remember the powerful opening lines of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Council on the Church in the Modern World: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (#1).

Dominic loved Christ and he loved the

world, and he loved both deeply. In fact, Blessed Jordan reminds us that: "God had given Dominic a special grace to weep for sinners and for the afflicted and oppressed; he bore their distress in the inmost shrine of his compassion, and the warm sympathy he felt for them in his heart spilled over in tears which flowed from his eyes." (*Libellus de Principiis ordinis praedicatorum*, 12 (translation by fr Paul Murray, OP)). Dominic's tears are tears of love *for* the world. There is no disdain, no rejection or condemnation of the world in Dominic's mind or heart – only love and compassion, only the hope that the world will recognize and embrace the mercy and grace of God.

I have shared in a number of monasteries that one of the greatest blessings that I have received during my six years in Santa Sabina in Rome has been that of being able to pray in the same basilica where St. Dominic prayed 800 years ago. In the middle of our conventual choir lies a large marble stone, under which once were buried the remains of Santa Sabina, St. Seraphia and three other martyrs. It was upon this very stone that Dominic would lie prostrate during the night, pouring out his tears "for sinners, the afflicted and the oppressed." Sometimes, as we pray the Office in the basilica of Santa Sabina, I almost feel as though I can see Dominic lying prostrate on the large stone. As we know, the wounds of the world had wounded Dominic's very own heart, uniting him with the sufferings of Christ. His wounds were, as fr Paul Murray, OP has written, "a contemplative wound" – the result of his unconditional love and mercy.

Are our conventual chapels and churches places of welcome for the poor and for sinners? Or do we – perhaps even unconsciously – welcome Christ into our chapel, while shutting out the broken, sinful world? In the first general audience of his pontificate, Pope Francis reminded us:

"Jesus called twelve simple people to remain with him, to share his journey and to continue his mission ... He spoke to everyone, without distinction, to the great and the humble, to the rich young man and the poor widow, to the powerful and the weak; he brought the mercy and forgiveness of God; he healed, he

consoled, he understood; he gave hope; he brought the presence of God to all ... God did not wait for everyone to go to Him, but it was He who moved toward us, without calculating, without measure. God is like this: He always takes the first step, He moves towards us.

Jesus lived the daily realities of the most common people: he was moved before the crowd that seemed like a flock without a shepherd; he cried in front of the suffering of Martha and Mary for the death of their brother Lazarus; he called a tax collector to be his disciple; he suffered the betrayal of a friend. In him God gave us the certainty that He is with us, in our midst. God came out himself [and] ... placed his tent among us to bring us God's mercy that saves and gives hope. We, too, if we want to follow Him and stay with Him, must not be content with staying in the enclosure of the ninety-nine sheep, we must 'come out', to seek out with Him the lost sheep, the farthest ... God thinks like the Samaritan who does not pass near the victim, feeling sorry for him, or looking the other way, but coming to his aid without asking anything in return; without asking whether he was a Jew, or a pagan, or a Samaritan, if he was rich, if he was poor: he doesn't ask anything. He comes to his aid: this is God."

My dear sisters, during this month of August our Dominican communities around the whole world will be celebrating the life of our Holy Father, St. Dominic, the apostle of God's mercy. On August 8th our brothers will be concluding the General Chapter of Diffinitors in Trogir, Croatia, reminding all of us once again of our mission to carry and to "pray" the Good News of Jesus out to the whole world. May we be faithful to this mission by opening our hearts to our neighbours, especially to sinners, the afflicted and the oppressed of the world, in order to communicate to them the mercy and compassion of Jesus and of his apostle, St. Dominic.

Wishing each of you an abundant outpouring of God's mercy in your own lives and communities, I greet you in the loving heart of St. Dominic, thanking you, as always, for your prayers and support.

fraternally in the Holy Preaching,
fr Brian J. Pierce, OP

P.S. I share with you the latest statistics of the monasteries and nuns of the Order. These were prepared a few months ago for the General Chapter of Trogir:

- 219 Dominican Monasteries in the world
- 2773 Professed Nuns
- 8 Federations of Nuns (Spain, Aragón, Bética, Italy [2], France, Mexico, Peru)
- 2 Associations of Nuns (North America, Japan)

Original: English

Echoes from the Italian regions

I thought best to present you the origin of every foundation, rather than describe the living style of the Italian monasteries. It's interesting to discover how the historical changes have influenced the life of the single community. The little plant of St. Dominic has become a tree, that has grown, thanks to the rays of the divine Sun in the Church's garden.

In Italy there are at present 28 monasteries with 280 nuns.



"It was the spring of 1221"! I feel like seeing again that 26th February 1221, when our father St. Dominic planted the first bud of the delicate little plant of Prouille in Rome, gathering the nuns of some monasteries at "S. SISTO" (now "S. MARIA del ROSARIO" in Monte Mario, where 9 nuns joyously keep the memory and perpetuate the received gift). This bud has become a leafy tree. From the center of Christianity it extended its branches and touched the extreme regions of the country: "MARIA STEINACH" Lagundo (1241) and "S. CATERINA V.M." Palermo (1310). Unfortunately these two historical monasteries are now on the brink of extinction.

St. Dominic's charism had a wonderful diffusion in Italy, during the 12th century, at the heart of the Middle Age. The women's monasteries rose near the friars' communities: over them flutters the founder's spirit. "S. AGNESE V. M." monastery was born in Bologna, after "S. SISTO" (1223). We deeply regret to inform you that it has received the Suppression Decree. This monastery was definitely closed on 31st December 2012. The last 7 sisters moved to four different communities. We can only bless the Lord in his inscrutable plans!

"S. DOMENICO" (now "S. CROCE") was founded in Florence in 1242. This monastery is near to extinction too.

Around 1273 "MATRIS DOMINI" monastery opened in Bergamo. According to the legend, the same St. Dominic foresaw this foundation during a visit in that town. This community has been a centre of spirituality and culture, in collaboration with the Dominican friars of the nearby priory, it gave life to other monasteries, now died out, save the Azzano S. Paolo's (BG) one.

"B. COLOMBA da RIETI" monastery was born in Perugia in 1274. This community lived and suffered the political and social events of the town, facing them with courage. Now this community has a few nuns. In the nineties they received, with great charity, a nun with an irreversible coma, who is still living.

In 1282 was the time of "S. ANNA" in Nocera Inferiore (SA), that is still very important

for a lot of people of this town, especially for the young people who share weekly the *Lectio Divina* with the nuns and other good initiatives.

In 1259 "S. AGNESE V. M." was founded in Rieti. This is another community who lived distressful historical events. Now there are 6 nuns, with a novice. The monastery keeps the relics of the Blessed Colomba of Rieti.

The signs of the dissolution of the Christian medieval spirit, which was latent in 12th century, began to spread in 13th century, giving rise to bloody struggles between papacy and empire. Avignon Papacy and Black Death of 1248/50 changed the face of the Church and of Europe. A little renewal was possible only at the end of this dark century. At this time, the Association, "Friends of God", was a reaction to the Avignon Papacy and to the struggle with the empire. This mystical movement was alive in Italy. Thanks to the B. Emilia Bicchieri of the Vercelli's monastery, in St. Agnese Segni of the Montepulciano's monastery and in B. Imelda Lambertini of S. M. Maddalena monastery in Bologna (these three monasteries are now closed). In that century these women were three highlights for our spirituality's history.

The Black Death had as a consequence the decadence of cloistered communities: death and desertion reduced them a lot. When the plague was claiming many victims, a girl was born, who will be the silent soul of the reform: Caterina da Siena (1347). Caterina is truly a Dominican. Two spiritual daughters of hers: the B. Chiara Gambacorta and the B. Maria Mancini, would start the first reformed monastic community - "S. DOMENICO" in Pisa (1484). Unfortunately this community was closed in the nineties.

Then there was the renewal at the end of 14th century, an historical-spiritual reform. Civilization was gradually changing: the anthropocentrism, promoted from Humanism first and from the Renaissance and then follows the medieval teocentrism. A new spirit blew on the Dominican Order: there was division, but the need of renewal was felt by the friars and the nuns.

"S. M. MADDALENA" monastery (now B. MARGHERITA di SAVOIA") in Alba-CN

(1445), was born grace to the B. Margherita di Savoia. This foundation was connected to the preaching of St. Vincenzo Ferrer. Now it is still a centre of prayer and Dominican witness, in spite of the advanced age of the sisters. The town of Alba is preparing to celebrate the ecclesiastical event of the beatification of br. Giuseppe Girotti (September 2014), who was martyred at Dachau.

In 1461 the Church canonized S. Caterina da Siena and in Italy there arose some monasteries dedicated to her. And after Saint Dominic, St. Catherine is a model of Dominican life and spirituality; she has been a point of reference for us until today.

By the end of the 15th century, Gerolamo Savonarola was another great apostle of the cloistered Dominican life. He influenced particularly some Tuscany's communities. The first was "S. M. del SASSO" (it was founded in Lucca in 1502 and then transferred to Bibbiana, near an important Marian shrine. Now there are only 3 nuns and 2 friars who serve that shrine. The second was "S. VINCENZO FERRER, in PRATO (1503) that continues to be a spiritual light, thanks to the memory of the great saint Caterina de Ricci. The third is "S. MARIA DELLA NEVE", in Pratovecchio, founded in 1567, now fused with "S. DOMENICO" of Querceto. This monastery is notable for its flourishing novitiate, for the hospitality offered to those who desire to share the liturgical prayer and the Word of God. For some years, the community has been preaching which has been well participated and spread also by the internet. Finally, in 1575, the "SS. ANNUNZIATA" community was founded in Marradi. Now there are only 5 sisters.

Every 15th century's monastery was a true center of spirituality and art, with internal schools of painters, of miniaturists and sculptors and writers of historical and philosophical works.

As a result of Protestantism and the Reform, the Church endured great suffering. The Council of Trent (1545-1562) made its strong influence felt on the monasteries too. In this time, a Pontifical order disposed that the Dominican monasteries would not be

dependent upon the Order but on the local bishops. As a consequence, they remained Dominican communities in name, but there were great changes in their spirituality. In this period, there were many foundations. The following are still in existence. "S. NICOLO" Cagli-PU (1529) now there are 7 nuns; "SS. ANNUNZIATA" in ROMA (1562) who was founded with the specific aim to welcome young Hebrew and Muslim neophytes. St. Pio V contributed to this foundation. "S. MARIA della GRAZIE" was founded in Sorrento NA (1566) and now has 8 nuns and has become a point of reference to many people, overall for the sharing of the Liturgy. "S. CATERINA V.M." rose in Ripatransone (AP) in 1578. This community now has 4 sisters. In the eighties, they restored some rooms of the monastery to make a house for elderly women. As you can note, these are small communities animated from a great fraternal love, and as Dominican nuns, they have a true apostolic spirit.

The 17th century was the richest in foundations and initiatives. The Baroc style, no schematics and anticonformists, had influenced the monastic life with its multifarious and varied manifestations. In 1613 "SS. TRINITA" was founded, a monastery in Castalbolognese – RA. In this monastery there are great preparations to celebrate the IV foundation's centenary. They have daily adoration to the Most Holy Sacrament and they have been blessed by good vocations. In 1617 "S. ANTONIO" rose in Gubbio - PG. The last 2 nuns of this monastery were received with great love by the Capuchin sisters of that town. In 1629 "S. ROSARIO" founded a monastery in Lettere – NA. This monastery overlooks the Pompei's valley and now it is the seat of the President of St. Caterina's Federation. "S. MARIA del PIEDE" was founded in Gravina di Puglia, in 1677 by Maria Battista Orsini, the mother of the Dominican pope Benedetto XIII. The community now is comprised of 4 sisters.

By the end of 17th century, three communities were founded in the Marches, Italian region which is washed by the Adriatic sea. The founder was the Venerable Giacinta Bassi, who came from a Venetian monastery.

These three monasteries were devoted to "CORPUS DOMINI": Macerata, in 1692; Loro Piceno – MC, in 1693; Montefiore dell' Aso – AP, in 1695. Macerata's community lives in a new and comfortable building. In spite of their small number, the sisters continue the daily adoration (promoted by the local bishop) all through the day and during a good part of the night also.

The Enlightenment influenced the Dominican communities. Consequence of this cultural movement was the need to make amends for the sins of humanity, in union with the suffering Christ which became more and more needed. In 1775, a monastery was founded in Marino Laziale – RM. It is devoted to "S. ROSARIO" and had many nuns in the past, but now it is on the brink of extinction.

At the end of 18th century, the dramatic political events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic dominion seemed to shatter the whole Dominican Order in Italy, including the monasteries. But God's works always keep a seed of resurrection. With the storm's end, the secular tree is renewed with new buds. At the end of 19th century, the "SS. GIACINTO E LIBORIO" monastery was founded in Colorno – PR. In 1817 it moved to Fontanellato, near a well-known sanctuary devoted to Our Lady of the Rosary, and it took the new name "S. GIUSEPPE". In 2007, this community transferred to Cremona. The community is now very young; it's composed of 18 nuns and 1 postulant. This monastery is the only one in this town and it is a point of reference for everyone who is searching for the Lord. It offers a particularly beautiful Liturgy to God and for the Church. This is an opportunity to encounter the Lord for many people.

We're now to the dawning of 20th century. On December 1896, 6 nuns came from century-old "MATRIS DOMINI" BG monastery, giving life to "S. ROSARIO" monastery in Azzano San Paolo - BG. There were many vocations for the entire 20th century. Now we can see a quick loss of number. The 14 sisters of the community live a life of prayer sharing the liturgy and *Lectio divina* with the believers of the parish and the groups of young and adult people who are received in the guest-quarters.

In 1957 the "ARA CRUCIS" monastery was opened in Faenza - RA, which is devoted to prayer and immolation for the sanctification of the priests. The cause of beatification of its founder, br. Domenico Galluzzi o.p. has been recently begun.

Let us speak now of the last monastery, a spring bud. In 1999, 4 sisters from Alba and 1 from Bergamo founded "MARIA di MAGDALA" in Moncalieri - TO, with the aim to receive everyone searching for God, through the Word, sharing of liturgical prayer and spiritual accompanying. Two new vocations joined the community in these last years.

As we can see, there are many communities which are reduced to a few elderly and sick nuns, who are not presently thinking of merging with other monasteries.

The region of Italy has 2 Federations: *S. Domenico* with 6 Monasteries and *S. Caterina*, 9. The other 13 Monasteries do not belong to the Federation.

The "Assembly of Prioresses" has been constituted in 2000 with the aim of acquaintance and mutual help among the communities. It meets every year to program sessions of Initial and Permanent Formation, promoting useful up-to-dates. Ten monasteries or so take part in the assembly.

In May 2011 the Master of Order, br. Bruno Cadore, created two Commissions: the first studies the Italian monasteries' conditions; the second programs the Initial and Permanent Formation.

The first Commission worked out a schedule regarding the following matters: **Statistics, Government, Prayer, Common Life, Economy, Sick sisters**. The schedule has 108 questions and it has been sent to every Community with a letter asking full and true collaboration. 26 out of 29 monasteries answered the questions. The answers gave many details that enlighten the situation of our Communities. Everything has been sent to the Master.

The Formation Commission worked out a schedule regarding the formation needs. This has been sent to every community and the answers revealed the appreciation towards formation, with the desire of good programs. A

good number of nuns participated in the First course of Permanent Formation last year. We preview to repeat the experience this year. For some years, we arranged specific and well organized courses for young nuns in formation. Not every monastery participates in these courses, so there are few participants. Nevertheless, there is a good climate of sharing, so that we consider this initiative very positive.

The educators of the Dominican Family in Italy, set up every year a formative and collation meeting. Some Monasteries' mistresses took part in this meeting.

There is not a connection bulletin among the monasteries, but only those of Federations, so we are not fully aware of the life and the activities of every community.

Dear sisters, this is everything that I thought best to share with you. I bear all of you in my heart and in my prayer. My love to you

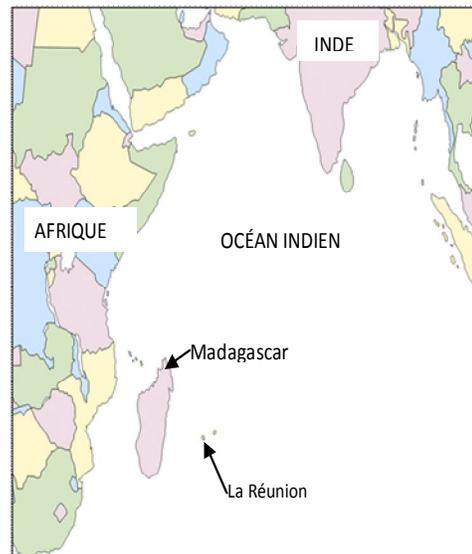
Sr. M. Vincenza Panza, o.p.

Azzano S. Paolo – BG (ITALY)

Original: Italian

Dominican life in the Indian Ocean

In 1951, two young women from the island of La Reunion, who had learned about the Order from a Dominican laywoman, crossed oceans to follow Christ in the steps of St. Dominic in the monastery at Dax.



In 1958, at the request of Msgr Francois Cleret of Langavant, bishop of St-Denis in la Reunion, the monastery at Dax sent eight sisters, among them the two from la Reunion, to that faraway isle to make a foundation.

After years of tribulations, a monastery was canonically erected in 1963, the same year in which the first novices took the Habit and the convent buildings began to rise from the earth.

Today, since other young women continue to knock at our door, we have to begin construction of our fourth wing; our refectory has become too small, and we must also provide rooms for our elderly sisters, since our foundation is now more than fifty years old .We rely on Providence, and on our friends and benefactors, to accomplish these works which have now become urgent.

The heart of our monastery is the chapel, where we come to sing the praises of the Lord. The Celebration of the Eucharist gathers us around the altar and is the peak of our liturgical day.

During Lent, a parish proposed to its faithful that they come to sing Compline and Vigils of Sunday with us. It is a joy for us to welcome them. We honor Mary especially by meditation on a chaplet of the Rosary recited together. For some years now we have offered a Marian celebration on the first Saturday of every month, with a meditative chaplet of the Rosary and spontaneous intercessions between each decade of it.

This prayer is well attended and appreciated by everyone. Following the custom of our Order, we finish each day with Mary by singing the Salve Regina and a hymn to St. Dominic

Hospitality has a large place in our life and sends us back again and again to our prayer of intercession. Our hospitality and our intercession open us to the apostolic dimension of our life on behalf of the Order, the Universal Church and the local Church at Reunion. At the Monastery

Entrance, a house of hospitality is open to everyone who wants to: **SEARCH FOR GOD IN SILENCE AND PEACE and SHARE IN**

THE LITURGICAL PRAYER of the COMMUNITY.



At the beginning of March, 2013, we had a visit from Fr. Brian, promoter of the nuns of the Order. He was accompanied by Fr. Eric Salobir, Promoter for the use of the media.. Fr. Brian encouraged us to continue to respond generously to requests which come from our Dominican brothers and from Diocesan Services, as we have begun to do.

During this season [Lent], every Mass, and on the three Holy Days, the Office of Tenebrae, have been broadcast direct on Rainbow Radio (Radio Arc-en-ciel: diocesan radio) , and we are also in touch with persons who are ill or aged, as well as with numerous other listeners. Once a month, one of the sisters is commissioned to give a short commentary on the Sunday Gospel for the prison newspaper, and a commentary on the Gospel of each day [of the first week] of Lent, on Radio Arc-en-Ciel. For several years within the community we have been sharing our thoughts on the Sunday Gospel. This year we have begun to do *lectio divina* together. The idea of a *lectio divina* open to the laity had been proposed to us, but we were hesitating. Our session with Fr. Brian has encouraged us to continue in our effort and has opened a new horizon for us. Why not share our *lectio-divina* with some of the faithful who frequent our monastery regularly, and then wait for the opportunity for a larger opening.....

After the rich and profound instruction from our visitors, we were able, thanks to Fr. Eric, to develop a question-and-answer exchange on the life of the Order throughout the world, on our monasteries, on communications ("the presence of the Promoter has its

exigencies!") and so on. It was a wonderful session.

The visit of the Promoters was brought to a close in thanksgiving and happiness with the solemn profession of our Sr. Mary of the Angels. It was a celebration full of recollection, prayer and joy. People came, by rented bus, or by car, to surround her –parents, family and friends. With all our parents and friends, the chapel was full.

Three choirs, one from sister's village, one from St-Denis parish, and our own, enlivened the celebration by a deep sharing. There was certainly joy at this meeting. Our Bishop presided and, to our delight, he asked Fr. Eric to give the homily.

No one wanted the "sharing of the glass of friendship" to end. It is always a delight to meet our friends and families for a fraternal exchange, and we have so much thankfulness that we want to share. During this profession celebration the Lord filled with blessings not only the newly professed and our community but all those who came to surround Sister with their prayer and their love.

Many thanks to the Order for this mission to us of the nuns' promoter. It allows us to live closer to our Order and especially to every monastery throughout the world. And of course a great "thank you" to fr. Brian, without forgetting Fr. Eric...real brothers!!

Monastery of the Reunion
Original: French

In response to his invitation to fusion

Two of the four monasteries in Japan decided Fusion two years ago and all of the 12 sisters of the Monastery Mary, Mother of God which was closed moved to St. Joseph Monastery.

I am thankful to have been given an opportunity to share my experience with all of you through *Monialibus* and tell of my experience in the new community of 29 sisters which will shortly celebrate its 2nd birthday.

It may be said that my greatest joy, surprise and gratitude are to have had the experience of His marvellous work, the

experience of the encounter with His merciful look as well as the experience of my actual feeling of being in the joy of the Order with my sisters.

We had lived for 40 years as contemplative nuns in Takamatsu Diocese where there are no other contemplative monasteries and there we were blessed with natural environments and many benefactors. When we thought of all this, we keenly realized the significance of our being there and we felt that we should remain there and continue our mission keeping the candle of a thin wick brighten. This was one possibility for us. But we wished to go back to the starting point of our vocation and make a fresh start to live with all our might for the mission as Dominican contemplative nuns who offered ourselves to God completely. Therefore we chose the way to Fusion.

With the will to adapt myself to the new life I have lived wholeheartedly up to the present day and have just been able to enlarge the field of my vision up to the whole community with a calm heart.

When all of us felt that the real fusion had just begun, we had the grace of the Master's visit on April 11, 2013. At our meeting with the Master, I said to him, "Would you please tell of our wonderful experience of the fusion to the whole world, and particularly to our sisters who struggle in small communities like Seto? And please encourage them to go forward, entrusting themselves to God without being afraid and to live in the joy of the Order."

The Master urged me to write this in *Monialibus* and he gave us encouraging words and the indications to our new life. We gave thanks to God heartily for His timely guidance.

God led us to live in such an experience of faith being supported by the prayer of many people. May God be praised !

Sr. Thérèse Marie de la Trinité, OP
Monastery of St. Joseph
Seto, Japan
Original: English

Don't be afraid

With these words of the Blessed John Paul II, which Pope Benedict XVI has also repeated, I would like to share with you, sisters, an experience that our community of Salamanca (Spain) has lived repeatedly. I am talking about the fusion of two monasteries, firstly the monastery of Lejona (Bilbao) with the monastery of Salamanca nine years ago and secondly a new fusion of the sisters of the monastery of Saint Catherine of Valladolid with our monastery of Salamanca which took place last May in 2013.



Certainly the lack of vocations is widely known, especially in the European continent. These are difficult years. There are a lot of monasteries in Spain; the birth rate has descended so there are less young people. The social secularization has influenced and still influences our viewpoint, the way of thinking and living, frequently leaving religious matters out.

How can we maintain so many monasteries with so few people and with a high number of elderly nuns who have difficulty living the liturgy and the Dominican life? It is very painful to suppress them, especially when the nuns are separated and go to different places. We know through the sisters who came to our monastery that the decision of fusion involves relinquishing many things. The nuns who move to other monasteries have to renounce their environment, the places where they have lived their beautiful lives, their family in some cases and their friends. It is a complete uprooting and distressing rupture, why should we hide it? But the fact of transferring all the sisters to the same place and the motivation that they find when

they prefer Dominican life to the inactive walls of their monasteries clearly shows their good spirit.

On the part of the sisters who are prepared to welcome those who apply, it is a generous gesture that our Father Dominic blesses and encourages without a doubt. With this experience we have lived both fraternally and positively; we have no doubt in repeating the first sentence of this short article, that is, Don't be afraid, to those who have to make a similar decision! Mutual understanding, tolerance and especially fraternal love smooth away the difficulties of life. When there is goodwill on both sides and we let God be in charge of the situation then the way is more bearable and pleasant.

We must never fall into pessimism or depression. We are living arduous times and we should accept it with generosity, optimism and trust. We must be loyal to the Lord who called us and He is guiding history. Contemplative life will not disappear as it is constitutive of the Church.

All together, facing the present situation, we are holding our Father St Dominic's torch high. He wanted to associate us to his Holy Preaching. He will never discourage our hopes because he promised this when he assured us that he would be more useful from Heaven than he was on earth.

Sr M^a Eugenia Maeso, OP
Salamanca (Spain)
Original: Spanish

Meeting of the Master of the Order, fr. Bruno Cadore, with the Spanish Dominican nuns

Looking towards the future, a future where we want to be a living presence, on the 1st of June in Caleruega, the birthplace of St Dominic, we gathered together with the Master of the Order, fr Bruno Cadore, op, the Promoter of the Nuns, fr Brian Pierce, op, and a representation of the nuns in Spain: the Federal Mothers and their Councils, the members of the

International Commission of Nuns (ICNOP) and some sisters, most of whom were from the Federation of Aragón. I would call this meeting “Shaping Our Future with Hope and Enthusiasm”

We reflected on the needs of the nuns at this time in our history and how we can best carry out our mission of preaching through prayer and contemplation. We believe in the fruitfulness that our elder sisters offer us and the necessity of planning together the attention and necessary care they might need. We would like to review the initial formation programme for the novices and temporary professed, at the moment there are 60 more or less, and the ongoing formation programme for all the others nuns. This is a priority for us and it is contained in our regular observances: study which nourishes our contemplation and searching the Scriptures (Lectio Divina) as the main source of our life of prayer. The Federations are the best structure for the nuns and we the nuns work and carry out in communion all which concerns us. For this reason the unity of all the nuns in Spain will help us face our future together with strength and hope.

Fr Bruno encouraged us and reminded us that this is a time of grace and the future of our mission is mystical. As Dominicans, we should be men and women of Spirit. Unlike today’s culture we believe that the grace of God can do everything. Although it seems difficult, our work is to prepare our future together. My identity and my vocation are similar to my sisters’, for this reason it is necessary to think together. Individually, our monasteries do not have the same future but together they have a common future. The grace of God shows its fruit in the Order, especially in contemplative life in Spain and that is why we should consider that the work of grace is something real. We together are glad of this work, of the grace and we must prepare a future that corresponds to the will of God and the mission of the Order. Looking at reality today, the configuration of nuns will certainly change in the future but the grace of God will continue to work in us and through our cooperation it develops its creativity.



Next year, fr Bruno will visit the Provinces of Spain and he will devote one day to the nuns in each Province. Reflecting and deepening in the fruits of this encounter we will prepare ourselves for the next meeting. In the closing Eucharist celebrated in the church of Caleruega, at the feet of our Father Saint Dominic, the last words of the Master give incentive to go on with the work we have started: “Sisters, today more than ever the Order need the nuns to carry out the mission in the world” And we could add: from compassion and mercy, at the service of the Word, as St Dominic always loved his children in the Order.

A member of the International Commission of nuns
(Spain)
Original: Spanish

**“It is in Him that we live, and move,
and exist” (Acts 17, 28)**

*Rhine Mystical, Caleruega from the 4th to 7th of June
2013*

During the first days of the month of June, we were given the opportunity of having a break from our daily monastic life, so that together, as sisters, we could go back to the source which makes us one in the Church, one in God, for God and for our brothers.

We arrived at Fr. Dominic’s from different federations of Spain with the desire of deepening in the experience of God through sisters and brothers who have preceded in the way of faith and the Dominican Family. Accompanied by the Rhine Mystical- men and women such as Eckhart, Henry Seuze, Elsbeth

Stagel, Matilda of Magdeburg- and guided by two Dominican: Sr Silvia Bara, OP and fr. Brian Pierce, OP we worked to deepen our understanding of God, of being happy in Him and for Him. Taking into account Saint Paul's words- as the text is titled- we have discovered that " It is in Him that we live, and move and exist" There is nothing far from God; nothing can live if not by His will and grace. God is natural to us, and St Augustine finely expresses it in the book "Confessions": "Anxiousness will move our heart until it rests in Him"

The profound and vital experience of these brothers takes us to pay attention to how we live the present and unique moment that we have for living and for being able to devote ourselves to He who gives us our being. Freedom in our relationships, freedom in material things, joys and sufferings help us to hold ourselves firm on our Rock who is God. Living in God is living in the eternal towards which every human heart and, of course, every consecrated person strives. This is the Good News proclaimed and preached by our Order, and we, as contemplative nuns, would like to live this experience and make credible our preaching.



We have lived these days intensely sharing our experiences in the countryside of Castile praising and contemplating our Creator as Dominic used to do. Some of us made the Lectio Divina of the readings of the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. We were able to celebrate this feast in such a holy place. That day in the homily each of us were exhorted to feel part of the community as the ninety nine sheep

which stayed praying in the fold so that the shepherd could find the one lost sheep. In this way we pray for the fruits of our brothers and sisters' apostolate as the most direct contact with the people of God. On Thursday evening we were able to experience this in the crypt of the well in the church of the nuns when each one of us was called by name. When each of us went to drink from the well she received the blessing and the fortitude from our father Dominic, meanwhile the rest of sisters were praying for the sister whose name had been called.

We thank God for all the people who made this meeting possible, for the brothers and sisters from Caleruega who make us always feel at home. This house belongs to each and every Dominican and it tends the house of the Father prepared since the creation of the world.

"The fish cannot drown in the water, the bird cannot sink in the air, gold cannot perish in the fire, where it gains its clear and shining worth. God has granted to each creature to cherish its own nature.

How can I withstand my nature? I must go from all things to God, who is my Father by Nature, my Brother through His Humanity, my Bridegroom through Love, and I am His for ever.

Do you think I do not feel my nature? It can burn me intensely and refresh me with His consolation.

My dear friend God, for you I have described the way of love. May God grant it to your heart. Amen" (Matilda de Magdeburg)

Sr Rocío of the Immaculate, op
Monastery Santa María la Real, (Bormujos)
Seville, Spain
Original: Spanish

A Jubilee Gift

"To Him, praise, glory and honor"

On celebrating my 50 years of religious consecration, I asked my superiors if I could do a year - long retreat, and to do it, if possible, in one of the monasteries of our Dominican nuns.

I wanted to share with them: their fraternity, liturgy, prayer, study and work. I was already discussing this idea with Father Brian Pierce OP, General promoter of the Dominican nuns.

I obtained the permission from my superiors, Father Brian made the necessary arrangements, and nuns of the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception, in Concepción, Tucumán, accepted my request, thank God. I arrived at the monastery on September 27th, 2011.

Mother Adriana and all the nuns welcomed me with open arms and hearts, and made me feel at home from the first moment. I felt good with each and every one of them, who were always attentive and sensitive in every detail. I inserted myself, without difficulties, in the life of the community. Without denying that some things cost me more and others less, which is perfectly normal I think, in coming from a very different lifestyle to the monastery.

I was able to participate and enjoy the richness of community life, the life of prayer, study and work.

I enjoyed the great silence of monastic life very much. It disposes the soul to the contemplation of the Mysteries, to the study of the Word, and to reflection.

After 50 years of dedication to God and my brothers and sisters in apostolic and missionary activities, and in the various positions given to me by my superiors, for the common good of the religious family, I strongly felt the need to stop a bit and celebrate the Jubilee Year alone with the Lord and once again to consciously experience the words of the prophet Hosea: "I will take you into the desert and I will speak to your heart. "

How beautiful it is to return there, to the same place where this noble story of love began and to stay and contemplate, without looking at the clock and without measuring the time, the work which God, in His infinite goodness, has been doing in his creature throughout these 50 years of commitment.

Everything has been grace, pure grace of God. To him be the glory and honor forever.

Remembering, contemplating and giving thanks, full time, for a year, was impossible to do in my own community, because of the demands implied in the apostolic life (the brothers and sisters always ask for more), and due to the reduction in community members (because of the lack of vocations). So there was a need to find a favourable place.

Dearest nuns, thank you very much so much life shared in every liturgical celebration, every gesture, word, dialogue, look, act of sensitivity, service, smile and recreation. You really have made me live a time of praise and of gratitude which I will never forget.

The contemplative vocation is truly a great gift of God to his Church, and is for those souls who He calls, to be alone with Him, interceding and praising Him on behalf of all people. To me the Lord has reconfirmed in my contemplative - apostolic vocation. Amen.

My Sisters, I pray to God that the doors of your monastery be always open to share the richness of your life with whoever really values it and to help them recover the energies of the spirit. And so, recreated by the Spirit, may they continue the journey in the footsteps of the Master, to continue sowing seeds of the Kingdom in God's world.

To God in the first instance, and then to all those made it possible for me to live the Jubilee year as I did, my infinite thanks.

May the Lord and His Mother, Our Lady of the Rosary, reward you fully for all the goodness I have received. I will just keep praying for each of you, and will keep you forever in my heart.

May our Holy Father Dominic continue to assist us with his grace, so that we respond to our vocation with fidelity and holiness of life, today and always.

Sister Inés Di Marco, OP
Dominican of St. Catherine
Original: Spanish

Sharing experiences of life

We are happy to be able to share with you the experience lived by our community between September 2011 and September 2012.

Repeatedly we hear from the lips of the former Master of the Order, fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, and also of our Promoter, that monasteries should be places where both the brothers, and the sisters of apostolic life, could recharge their energies, and live days of silence and quietness in order to resume their mission in the church with renewed enthusiasm. In our case the guest house always was, and is, available to them for this purpose, although it is usually occupied more by the friars than by the sisters.

In 2010 Sister Maria Inés Di Marco, of the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine, (better known in Spain as the "Italian Dominican sisters "), passed through here. She stayed almost a week in our guest house, sharing the liturgy and prayer of the nuns from the outside. In a conversation which we had with her before she left us, she expressed the immense desire she had in her heart to live among nuns for a time, sharing everything we were doing. She confessed that she was longing to have an extensive period of fraternal life, prayer, study and silence; elements which she was not being able to really enjoy due to the many tasks in which she found herself immersed and, above all, due to the scarcity of vocations in her congregation. At that time we could not give her an answer.

So a few months passed and she spoke to the Promoter of the Nuns, fr. Brian Pierce, OP. about her needs. And he, at a meeting of the Prioresses of the Dominican monasteries of Argentina, presented the request of Sister Inés. He asked our Prioress, Sister Maria Adriana Colombres, if she had any objection to us receiving this Religious in our community, for one year. After a careful community discernment, we proceeded to ask the opinion of the Mother Provincial and of the Council, of her Congregation. With this support, we put the proposal to a vote of the Council and Chapter of the monastery. Finally, we sought the

permission of the Diocesan Bishop for the reception of Sister Inés into the cloister. Thank God everything went smoothly, a sign of the will of God.

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of her religious profession Sister María Inés had asked her Congregation if she could spend a sabbatical year at the monastery.

The generosity of the Congregation is admirable. With Sister Inés being a very important member of the Congregation, they allowed her to be absent during that time so that she could answer the call which she felt inside her, confident that it would result in the greatest good for all. Moreover, it was also a way to reward her dedication to the various services of leadership which she carried out over many years.

For us it was a completely new experience, which happened providentially when we were in a period of community review, to assess how we are living the essential elements of the contemplative life, that is, everything that this sister and the Church expect of us. Therefore, it was a further stimulus for us to renew ourselves in fidelity to our own vocation. From day one she was one of the community. She is a special religious, with exquisite prudence, who adapted herself quickly to everything. She made the most of the times of prayer, spending practically her afternoons in the choir. She told us that when she entered the Congregation at 14 years of age, the life in the convent was very similar to what we had in the monastery now, so everything was familiar to her. She collaborated enthusiastically in the tasks which were assigned to her, and was available to provide any service which was asked of her. She was always cheerful and helpful. She left us a beautiful example of consecrated life and of fraternal charity.

This exchange was very enriching for both parties. For us, we were able to learn more about the apostolic life and what it involves, since Sister Inés often shared her experiences, and those of her sisters, with us. Also, this knowledge motivated us to pray a lot for the consecrated souls who have to carry out their mission in the world, as they are much more

exposed than us. We found that unfortunately the lack of vocations, and therefore the reduction of the communities are not conducive to the development of the fundamental aspects of the Dominican charism such as: community life, common prayer, study, etc..

It was also wonderful to see the ease with which bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood are created among the members of the Dominican family. Sharing the same charism ensured that we gelled from the beginning.

The presence of an older sister was a valuable contribution to our community which, for the most part, is made up of young nuns.

From this experience our community was left with a commitment to pray more strongly for our brothers and sisters who are dedicated to preaching in the midst of the many changes in our world. We do not know if, in the future, this type of experience will be repeated with other sisters, both in our monastery and in others. It would be nice that we all have that thirst to maintain an intimate encounter with the Lord, without which all preaching is useless. Pope Benedict said to us in one of his general audiences: " Prayer is not time wasted, it is not stealing time from apostolic activities, but it is exactly the opposite: it is only if we are able to have a faithful, constant , and confident prayer life that God himself will give us the ability and the strength to live in a happy and serene way, so that we can overcome our difficulties and bear witness to him with courage. "

We are sure that we will be present to Sister Inés wherever she goes, just as we will always have her present with us in our prayer.

We thank God for the opportunity which has been given to us , and fr. Brian who was the mediator who made it possible.

It was a pleasure to share with you this beautiful time which we lived, as a community. May the Lord, through the intercession of our Mother and St. Dominic grant us the grace to live the mission entrusted to us within the Church, with fidelity and love.

Fraternally, your sisters,

Dominican Nuns
Concepción, Tucumán, Argentina
Original: Spanish

The foundation of the first Monasteries of Dominican nuns

Three monasteries were founded in St Dominic's time, Prouilhe, Madrid and Rome, to which we can add Bologna which admittedly was founded after the death of St. Dominic, but to the beginnings of which he was linked. We will not set out the history of each of these monasteries here, but recall simply and briefly the facts that are known about their foundation. To make things lighter, the references to the principal sources used are set out at the end of the text.

The first of the three monasteries is Prouilhe, situated at the foot of the small town of Fanjeaux, which then belonged to the diocese of Toulouse. It was in this region that St. Dominic encountered the Albigensian heresy, which was at the origin of the Order of Preachers. This first foundation of a monastery raises many questions. Who was the founder? St. Dominic himself or Diego of Osma, the bishop he accompanied? What was the objective of the foundation? Was it a monastic institution designed to accommodate women converted from the heresy? Or a charitable work for girls from the poor nobility compelled to entrust their education to the perfect Cathars? The story of the foundation can be found in the *Libellus de principibus ordinis praedicatorum* by Jordan of Saxony, who succeeded St Dominic and the first historian of the Order. He writes: « He [Diego of Osma] established a monastery to accommodate some noble women whose families, through poverty, entrusted their instruction and education to the heretics. The house, situated between Fanjeaux and Montreal, at a place called Prouilhe still exists. The servants of God continue to offer an agreeable service to their creator and lead, in vigorous holiness and the pure clearness of their innocence, a life which is salutary to them, exemplary to other men, pleasing to the angels and agreeable to God. » How can one understand such a seemingly contradictory text? For Jordan of Saxony talks about noble women, which signifies that they are adult women, at the same time speaking of

instruction and education that would seem rather to apply to young girls. Was Jordan deliberately ambiguous, did he himself not know the exact sense of this foundation? Following his example, people have since, constantly hesitated over the two possible interpretations.

To try to unravel the question, one must return to the Charters given to the monastery. In 1206, Foulque, bishop of Toulouse, gave to Diego the church at Prouilhe: the text indicates: « May it be clear to all, present and future, who will read this charter or who will hear of it, that I, Foulque, by the grace of God humble minister of the seat of Toulouse, give and concede to Lord Diego, bishop of Osma, (...) at the prayer of Lord Dominic of Osma, mainly because it seems to me to be a pious and merciful work (...) the church of the blessed Mary of Prouilhe (...) for the women converted by the preachers delegated to preaching against the heretics and to repelling foul heresy.» This first charter answers the question concerning the founder of the monastery: it was in fact Diego - it is normal that the gift of a church goes from a bishop to another - but it was through the prayer of Dominic, his initiative. As to the expression «a pious and merciful work », this matches the idea that it concerned poor women who had been helped escape from heresy. Diego's intention (and Dominic's) seem to have been to establish a monastery for converted women, who were to live like nuns; the monastery would be a *pietà à terre* for preachers; added to that was the fact that Diego (and Dominic) were moved by these women who had been reduced to poverty, and abandoned by their families.

In another act, dated the 17th April 1207, Bérenger bishop of Narbonne gave the church of St-Martin of Limoux to «the prioress and the nuns, newly converted through the admonitions and the example of brother Dominic of Osma and his companions and who live now and forever in the village of Fanjeaux and in the church of Our Lady of Prouilhe, in the diocese of Toulouse». But does it really mean nuns? At that moment at least, the sisters were not living in Prouilhe but in the village of Fanjeaux, waiting for their monastery to be

built. This could correspond to the remark in the *Libellus*: «Bishop Diego continued preaching for two years. At that time, fearing that people would accuse him of neglecting his own Church in Osma if he stayed longer, he decided to return to Spain. He proposed, having accomplished the visit of his Church to bring back money to be able to complete the women's monastery of which we have just spoken ».

In the meantime, Diego of Osma died, and from 1208 and 1211, St Dominic did not live in Fanjeaux but at Osma. Things resumed again when he returned, but the bishop of Toulouse, confronted by a stable community of ex-converts, seemed to hesitate. But at the end of the year, Foulque had decided: The monastery was built and monastic observance established.

The story of the foundation of the monastery of Madrid is simpler. Once again Jordan of Saxony tells the tale: «The same year [1218], master Dominic took the road to Spain, he established two houses, one in Madrid, now a house for nuns, the other at Segovia, which was the first house of the friars in Spain; returning from there he came in the year of our Lord 1219 to Paris, where he found a community of nearly thirty friars. »

One of the three letters by St Dominic conserved - and which represent all that we have by his hand - is addressed from Bologna to the nuns in Madrid, written probably in May 1220, here is the text:

«Brother Dominic, Master of the Preachers, to the dear prioress, and to all those in the convent of nuns in Madrid, salutations and daily progress. We rejoice greatly and give thanks to God that he has accorded you a saintly life and has liberated you from the ugliness of the world. Strive by your fasts, my daughters, against our old enemy, for only will be crowned they who have legitimately fought.

You have not had, until now, a suitable place for the observance of your religious life; you can no longer invoke that excuse for, by the grace of God, you have buildings sufficiently well adapted to the maintaining of a regular life. I want you therefore to keep silence in all the places where it is forbidden to speak the refectory, the dormitory and the chapel; as to the

others, observe your Rule. May no one go through the door to go out, may no one enter if it not be a bishop or other prelate who is preaching to you or visiting you. Do not spare either discipline or vigils. Obey your prioress. Do not talk together and do not waste your time in gossip.

As we cannot help you financially, we do not wish to burden you by giving the right to a brother to receive or to impose women on the community. Only the prioress and the convent council have that right.

Besides we recommend that our dear brother who has worked hard so that you should be able to embrace this very saintly state, to arrange and to organise everything in a way that seems to him to be useful to you so as you may be able to live in a very saintly and very religious way. Lastly, we give him the right to visit and correct you, and with the consent of the majority of the nuns, to dismiss, if necessary, the prioress, and we concede the right to dispense you on certain points if it seems judicious to him. Farewell in Christ. »

(Continue)

Frère Paul-Bernard Hodel, OP
Original: French

(Frère Paul Bernard Hodel belongs to the Swiss Province and is currently professor of History of the Church in the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) after having spent several years at the Historical Institute in Rome.)