



Monialibus

Nuns of the Order of Preachers International Bulletin

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“With fraternal affection...”:

Dear Sisters,

With joy and thanksgiving we are now well into our twofold Jubilee Year. I trust that your life is becoming enriched by the special experience of God the Father's gift of mercy that our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us so fully by his life and his word. This is a magnificent opportunity for our monasteries and convents to be and to feel penetrated in all our deeds and words by the profound tenderness of God.

With similar happiness and admiration we have learned what has been happening in the prayer celebrations of our Pilgrim Rosary in various monasteries, in this Eight Hundredth Jubilee Year of the Order. It continues to be a very pleasant surprise to receive accounts of how our contemplative sisters have been using their creativity for celebration and their talent for bringing together the People of God. Many thanks, Sisters, for the marvelous results you have achieved. Sometimes you ask me: *how can we preach from a monastery?* The Rosary prayer is being organized in ways which show how that is possible. Perhaps it may be worthwhile to think of having similar prayer celebrations year after year in the future?

Encouraged by the example of our sisters and brothers before us who knew how to live in a wonderful way the essential components of our Dominican charism, I would like to share some thoughts with you:

All of us – members of the great Dominican family – should feel ourselves called, from the very heart of our vocation, to be preachers. As you well know, each of our monasteries, by the fact of its existence, is in itself a preaching. And we must be careful that each component of the contemplative life may be that, a preaching, and in the most eloquent way possible. For example, caring for the liturgy, inviting the faithful who live near us to participate in it at the monastery;

to share with our brothers in the faith our own experience of God, an experience vivid in its silence and listening to his Mystery and Word; paying attention to people's cries, their defeats and hopes; making them sharers in our spiritual, cultural and material goods....any of these could be a realization of true preaching. As I go on my way among the monasteries, with joy and satisfaction I find on the path how all this has really been happening.

In order that our preaching may correspond closely to the mission of the Church and of the Order, don't you think, Sisters, that it is urgent and necessary to go out to meet our challenges in encounter and dialogue with the whole Dominican Family?

May God continue to inspire us so that day after day we may be eloquent witnesses of the love and mercy which have taken on the human condition in his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Our sisters and brothers who have been models for us were women and men of the praise and blessing of God our Father, for the wonders of his Love and his Forgiveness. They knew how to be **singers**, glad and grateful – as was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as was the Virgin Mary, as was our Father St. Dominic – singers of the powerful action of God on behalf of his most vulnerable daughters and sons, on behalf of those most pursued by injustice and by unequal sharing of the goods of the earth and the opportunities of life.

We want to take up again our song of praise and blessing, not only with our voice and our melodies but with our whole lives – enlightened by the Jubilee[s], by simplicity, by serene confidence in God's Love and Mercy.

The double Jubilee we are celebrating with such remarkable intensity is a precious occasion to renew our desire and our commitment to being singers, poets, troubadours of the marvelous benefits we receive from God. So I offer you, Sisters, this poem/prayer in the hope that it may be yet another reason for praise and blessing in our lives.

Make me a Singer of You, Lord

Make me, Lord, a Singer...

...of Your Love hidden in each pulse, in every limpid glance, in those who offer themselves with joy and generosity.

...of Your Power which subdues the influence of evil and puts our existence on its way toward goodness.

...of Your Justice which becomes the voice, the cry, of the humble and oppressed trying to reclaim their dignity.

...of Your Mercy which is a close embrace and unconditioned pardon, which loses you in the midst of us, and makes brotherhood.

...of your Truth which teaches us and sketches paths towards a full humanity made up of peace, celebration, and freedom.

...of your Life which does not wear out, that is always young, without shadows, without the scars of time, without trauma or irreverence.

...of your Hope, hope that only You can give, hope which turns its bright blue eyes and begins to draw sketches of the smile of someone who is beginning to glimpse eternity. AMEN.

With brotherly affection,

Fr. César Valero Bajo, OP

Promoter General of the Nuns

Original: Spanish

ECHOES FROM ROME MEETINGS

ICN meeting in Rome, November 1st to November 7th “DRINKING FROM THE FOUNTAIN”

With a heart grateful for such great goodness from God who allows us experiences which touch our souls and change our lives, I would like to share with you, my dear sisters, some memories from the meeting of the International Commission of Dominican nuns in Rome at Santa Sabina last Fall (2015).

Of course for every Catholic Christian, to name the Holy City activates strong bonds of ecclesial communion. And for a son or daughter of St. Dominic de Guzman, visiting Santa Sabina brings a filial connection, an encounter with one's own roots. In it we draw near with humility to the fountain and drink from it.

By the Providence of God I was the first to arrive at the airport in Rome; I was just telling myself to wait for a few minutes when I heard the welcoming and brotherly voices of Fr. César Valero and Fr. Alejandro—our guardian angels. While I was covering the distance in avenues and streets before arriving at Santa Sabina convent, I was thinking of the times our Holy Father St. Dominic would have passed by these places. They were indicators to me that we were near; my heart swelled. How beautiful Santa Sabina is! The orange garden!

At last I went into the part of the house that is common for everyone, bringing along in my heart and mind all the sisters of the Monasteries of Latin America. It was the warmth of the glances, the friendly, attentive, genuine gestures of the brothers which made me feel immediately at home. Their work was hard and heavy in carrying the luggage of the nun from Ecuador (myself!). Most troublesome was the number of stairways we had to go up to reach the “Palomarcito”—the small area designated for my lodging. It was converted quickly by the sisters who gave us hospitality in this corner of the building, into our “intimate Palomarcito.”

That night and next morning, there was no sleep for the eyes of Fr. César and Fr. Alejandro: they were at the airport early, collecting nuns who had arrived on different flights. (Sr. Margarita from Mexico, for example, had had a long delay.) This is the way St. Paul told about his travels: “days without eating, nights without sleeping”....all for a noble fraternal cause: that the two friars might meet affectionately their sisters who were arriving.

The Commission meetings of the nuns took place in an ambience of punctuality, openness and respect. Thanks to orientation and enlightenment from Fr. César, we were already receiving answers and solutions in matters to which we should be giving our attention. It is always encouraging when we share in communion the lights and shadows we have already met on the way.

Something I can highlight among the items on our schedule was the decision to maintain **annual** meetings of the Nuns' International Commission. We were all helped by hearing the opinion of former members of the Commission who had been consulted on this point. The main

reason for the existence of the ICN is to safeguard the Communion of the monasteries of the Order and to be instruments of direct collaboration with the Master of the Order.

In our period of work days it was a blessing from God to have a Eucharistic celebration in the Cell of our Holy Father St. Dominic. I believe that we all experienced, in that divine moment, a fatherly embrace, living and full of energy, the secure conviction of knowing ourselves to be accompanied, protected and sustained by someone who, in a mysterious way, has engendered us and inserted us into Dominican Life. Every tiredness took on the freshness of a spiritual strength..., one could perceive the sweet fragrance of Dominic de Guzman, the very aroma of Christ himself....

The presence of our beloved Fr. Bruno Cadoré, O.P., Master of the Order, at our morning meeting was very important for the Commission; it was key for us. His simplicity, sincerity and advice brought us light in regard to the topics we needed to consider. The legacy of living in LOVE, conformed to the Gospel, was the basic invitation. It found an echo in the hearts of all of us and we need to pass it on to each of the Monasteries of our Regions in this Jubilee year.

Visiting the Dominican Monasteries in Rome and sharing with those sisters was a wonderful experience of fraternal communion.

The company of Fr. Giovanni (Sacristan at Santa Sabina) during our visit to St. Peter's Basilica opened all doors for us; whoever had the



opportunity to be with him rejoiced in that privilege, a little gift from heaven. We were in admiration at other such wonders; we dared to be

in restricted areas in order to be near those sacred places.

We could participate at various times with the community of Santa Sabina in choir, in the praying of the Rosary, and at other prayer times. And we were in the refectory with the brothers, eating the same bread, drinking the same wine. There were no language difficulties because we have our own Dominican ways of communication.

Then it arrived! The great day awaited by all! Santa Sabina was breathing as with a great feast day. Friars, nuns, young people, laity, sisters, guests.....called together from all eternity to live together in communion the event of the 800 years. Such a gift of God! Everything was right on time; Santa Sabina shone in its splendor, the flowers, the candles, the musical choir..... We have to say that there were also some people nervous about the presentation of the Pilgrim Rosaries! The baskets had been prepared in advance with great care and dedication by our beloved Promoter of the Nuns. What this cost him only he knew! We made moderate efforts to help, but as sometimes happens where there are curious and mischievous little nuns, the only thing we achieved was to make things worse. From that blessed afternoon there remains a delightful treasury of anecdotes!

"To praise, to bless, to preach....." came from our lips, born in our hearts...the Hymn of the sons and daughters of St. Dominic.....he had the dream 800 years ago that by the Mercy of God our Hymn might continue to be alive in each of the members of the Order.

Thank you, Lord, for having given us so much....

*Sr. Irene Diaz, OP
International Commission of Dominican Nuns
Region of Latin America*

Meeting in Rome for the Closing of the Year of Consecrated Life

FROM JANUARY 28TH TO FEBRUARY 2ND, 2016

"CONSECRATED LIFE IN COMMUNION"

Dominican nuns from Argentina, Spain, the United States, France, Italy, Peru and

Switzerland took part in this gathering. The small number of participants (19) in comparison with the big delegations of Carmelites (116) and poor Clares, was not a disadvantage, since we were able to get to know each other and to appreciate the family atmosphere which spread very quickly between us.



1. ORGANISATION

The atmosphere was very fraternal: the officials, the Secretaries and the Prefect of the Congregation were very much available and more than willing to answer the questions of the Assembly or of individual nuns.

On the first day all those who had been invited were in the Paul VI Audience Hall. During the other two days we were divided into sectors: there were about 500 of us representing the nuns of the entire world.

The reports given in these two days were, essentially, a synthesis of everything that had been sent to the Congregation by the monasteries in response to the “famous” Questionnaire. The reports were very interesting and important [those given by Mother Maria Ignazia Angelini (Viboldone) and by Fr Miguel Marquez Calla OCD were really beautiful and the assembly interrupted them several times with prolonged applause.

2. IMPORTANT ELEMENTS THAT EMERGED

All the speakers, each from his or her own point of view, formally and emphatically insisted that the non-federated monasteries should give life to

the Federations/Associations. On the other hand, this cannot be regarded as a new development, as the documents of the Church calling for this go back to the 1950’s of the last century.

In one way or another, all the speakers, strongly emphasized both their readiness for dialogue and their determination to respect the nuns, because “the nuns must think for themselves”.

The report of Fr Paciolla was very important. He clarified unequivocally Canons 614 and 615 of the CIC (for me personally, this confirmed what fr. Toxé had written to me at the time of the rescript for the canonical erection of our monastery); for example, the local Bishop/Ordinary has the authority to conduct the canonical visitation of monasteries under his jurisdiction.

Also important was the report of Mons. Pepe (in charge of the Office for the Nuns) about Federations and their future. In this connection, thought is being given to the idea of entrusting more authority to the Federal President, while always respecting the autonomy of the monasteries, but at the same time also facilitating a common and shared way of doing things that promotes life and the future.

3. NEWS

The Holy Father has received all the information and is preparing the document on the “Contemplative Life”. Only then, and on the



*Switzerland
in the
Vatican*

basis of whatever the Pope writes, will the Congregation produce the document which will

replace *Verbi Sponsa*. There has been no indication of when this might be.

Quite honestly it seemed to me that I perceived a new and different attitude on the part of the Congregation with regard to us, with a great respect, real esteem and attention. It is also true that the various speakers did not hesitate to name the difficulties, fears, and problems that we all know about, without ever ceasing to help in looking creatively towards the future.

Sr. Paola, OP

Dominican Monastery: "Maria dei Magdala",

Moncalieri (Italy)

International Commission of Dominican Nuns

Original: Italian

4. OVERVIEW OF TOPICS DISCUSSED

The lack of initial and continued training, at the root of many departures, was emphasised. Training is not an accumulation of knowledge, which may lead, according to Pope Francis, to producing monsters with enormous heads and rickety hearts, but establishing a climate which encourages the person to allow herself to be transformed by the Holy Spirit to become a perfect image of Christ: the monastic tradition has always taught that man may be healed by healing his thoughts. A person trained in this way will no longer act according to fashion or fear, but his thoughts will be founded and constructed, generated by a solid and firm conscience. To achieve this, we must learn to assume all the dimensions of our personality: training that is too «spiritualising» or, on the contrary, too dependent on humanities to the detriment of spiritual guidance, will not help those who receive it to take part with all their being in Divine Life.

A number of practical orientations were suggested: enable those who dispense training to benefit from further training themselves, particularly as the people they teach often suffer from psychological wounds; restore the role of teaching as a charism of the Order, teach sisters to take their femininity into account, properly assess the admission of nuns from abroad (beware of «trafficking novices» which the Pope, during the audience compared to artificial insemination...).

Another topic was the excessive fear of loss of autonomy among monasteries belonging to federations which exert a certain amount of power. Such fear had already been expressed in 1950 when Pius XII asked nuns to join together in federations in line with *Sponsa Christi*. At the time the Pope presented belonging to a federation as an obligation, but not a strict one. This was not to make it optional, but to allow nuns the time they needed to address the question without stress. Unfortunately, in several areas of the world federations are still not in place today, and where they exist, it seems that a balance has not yet been found between respect for the autonomy of each community and the actual power of the federation in a spirit of communion.

It was recalled that fear linked with the feeling of loss of autonomy is in contradiction with renunciation of autonomy which is a direct consequence of vows. In a religious regime, autonomy can only survive, both on an individual and a community level, if there is real communion.

Moreover, it is a shame that the canonical autonomy of a monastery does not always mean that it has real autonomy. Indeed, a community can only be considered as truly autonomous if it can ensure the perpetuation of its charisma and includes among its members, sisters that are capable of exercising positions of government, training and property management.

A stronger federation could solve problems directly which today are passed on to Rome, or prevent control exerted by a number of bishops or lay people on fragile communities. It could also be envisaged that when there is a temporary loss of autonomy, (for example, a community that is still very much alive, but does not currently have a sister who is capable of being prioress), the monastery in a fragile situation could be «adopted» for a few years by a stronger monastery. A period of time would be fixed for either the adopted monastery to become fully autonomous or closed. Another perspective could be to send novices from a community in precarious circumstances to another monastery for the duration of their training.

The question of healthy observance, in particular with regard to enclosure and the fraternal way of life is also an area of concern for the Dicastery.

❖ The enclosure is fundamental, and in line with a desire to remain in intimacy with the “only thing that is necessary”. To feel at ease with it, nuns must become aware of the greatness of their own vocation. Deformed understanding of the enclosure can lead to two types of excess:

- Laxity, which leads nuns to “walk around with their cloister grille on their backs” as the Pope says. The fine saying of St Francis: “Our cloister is the world” is not applicable to cloistered nuns!
- Legalism which brings some abbesses or prioresses to neglect their own responsibility, and refer to the Holy See: “When you are ill, you don’t make an appointment with the Holy See to ask for your prescription” was the reaction...

To avoid both extremes, and in order for what is professed by cloistered nuns to be coherent with what happens in reality, it seems that the time has come to promote an enclosure with rules that are defined by the nuns themselves, in order for them to be enforced in practice.

- ❖ Another discrepancy to avoid is sterile and dehumanized solitude. If silence does not lead a nun to expect to encounter God and others, it is no more than a deformation of monastic observance. Fraternal relations, “tests” of personal and community union with the Holy Trinity can only be holy if they are humane.
- ❖ Finally, an announcement was made concerning the existence of funding that the Dicastery uses to help communities which need some financial help for expensive medical care, purchasing tools for work or training.

*Sisters: Jean Thérèse, Véronique, Monique and Nathalie de la Miséricorde
Federation Notre-Dame des Prêcheurs, France
Original: French*

ECHOES FROM THE REGIONS

The Federation of Nuestra Señora del Rosario In Spain

HISTORY OF A JOURNEY MADE OF PRESENCE AND COMMUNION

The reality and necessity of Federations was an intuition of Pope Pius XII, who states in the Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi* (November 21, 1950), his wish of adapting to the present times, “that will give the venerable institution of Nuns, not only more brilliance, but also greater and powerful efficiency.” (25). Here I transcribe some specific points whose reading can help us realise the necessity that the Pope noticed 65 years ago and thus appreciate the significance of what has been carried out, especially in our Federations, after this very long time, to value the good things which have been done by fraternal communion, which is much more than our own autonomy, with all the positive aspects it can have. In fact, it is the Church that, through its visible head, watches over us and, like a loving mother, looks after the specific vocation to prayer and contemplation.

Federations of monasteries, although they are not prescribed by any general rule, are nevertheless highly recommended by the Holy See, not only as a safeguard against the evils and inconveniences which can arise from complete separation, but also as a means of promoting regular observance and the contemplative life. Art. VII §2-2.

The principle purpose of a Federation of Monasteries is to give each other fraternal aid, not only in promoting the religious spirit and regular monastic discipline, but also in managing economic matters. Art. VII §8-2.

In approving Statutes, special norms may in a proper case be given to regulate the faculty and moral obligation of mutually asking for and granting to each other such Nuns as may be thought necessary for the government of the Monasteries for the training of novices in a common novitiate to be established for all or several Monasteries, or finally for supplying other moral or material needs of the Monasteries or of the Nuns. Art. VII §8-3.

The Federation of our Lady of the Rosary in Spain was canonically founded by the Decree of

the Sacred Congregation of Monks and Nuns (October 7, 1959) although it began in 1957. Father Pablo del Olmo, OP, as a representative and delegate of the Sacred Congregation, took the initiative, in the rescript of July 2, 1957, to establish the Federation of Monasteries in the Province of Andalusia, recommended by Pope Pius XII and the Sacred Congregation of Monks and Nuns, who insisted on the importance of this matter in the current situation of almost every monastery in the world. “And so it is now the longed-for and desired day for all nuns to lay the foundations of the Federation of Monasteries in the Province” (Letter of Announcement from the Assistant Father). According to the teachings expressed by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi* No. 26, I can state that the Federation began its journey thanks to the friars, and particularly the Provincial of Andalusian Province, Fr. Julián Fernández, Fr. José Plaza, who did well by visiting monasteries and helping the nuns become aware of the federal reality recommended by the Holy See, and Fr. Pablo del Olmo, who was in charge of accomplishing it as soon as possible.

In this first Assembly of 7th November 1957, where the terms of the legal constitution of the Federation were approved, Prioresses and Delegates of monasteries were summoned to a week of prayer previous to laying down the basis of the guiding principle and foundation of the following issues (in line with the Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi*):

1. Papal Enclosure – to a greater or lesser degree.
2. Manual labour.
3. Contemplative Life and Apostolate.
4. Religious Assistant.
5. The Federation of Monasteries.

At this first Assembly of the nuns guided by among others, the Assistant Father, the Provincial Father and several friars, and the Federation of the Betica Province with 31 monasteries, which corresponds to the territory of the southern Spain (Andalusia, Badajoz, Ciudad Real, Murcia and the Canarias Islands).

In Andalucía:

1. Monastery of Santa Florentina, in Écija (Seville). (Foundation 1388)

2. Monastery of Santa María La Real, in Bormujos (Seville). (Foundation 1409)
3. Monastery of Madre de Dios, in Seville. (Foundation 1472)
4. Monastery of Madre de Dios, in Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Cádiz). (Foundation 1480)
5. Monastery of Madre de Dios, in Baena (Córdoba). (Foundation 1511)
6. Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, in Zafra (Granada). (Foundation 1512)
7. Monastery of Santa Ana, in Villanueva del Arzobispo (Jaén). (Foundation 1540)
8. Monastery of Ntra. Sra. de La Piedad, in Torredonjimeno (Jaén). (Foundation 1543)
9. Monastery of Madre de Dios, in Huéscar (Granada). (Foundation 1575)
10. Monastery of La Encarnación, in Alcalá la Real (Jaén). (Foundation 1588)
11. Monastery La Piedad y Santi Espíritu, in Granada. (Foundation 1590)
12. Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, in Antequera (Málaga). (Foundation 1639)
13. Monastery of Purísima Concepción, in Jaén. (Foundation 1663)
14. Monastery of Santísima Trinidad, in Baza (Granada). (Foundation 1927)
15. Monastery of Santa María de Gracia, in Córdoba. (Federal House since 1992)

In Ciudad Real:

1. Monastery of San José, in La Solana (Ciudad Real). (Foundation 1593)
2. Monastery of Nuestra Señora de La Encarnación, in Almagro (Ciudad Real). (Foundation 1571)

In Murcia:

1. Monastery of Santa Ana, in Murcia (Foundation 1490)

In Canary Islands:

1. Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, in La Laguna (Tenerife). (Foundation 1611)

Suppressed monasteries, which were also part of the Federation:

1. Monastery of Jesús y María (suppressed in 1969) Aracena (Huelva)
2. Monastery of Santa María de los Reyes (suppressed in 1975) Seville
3. Monastery of Madre de Dios (suppressed in 1978) Carmona (Sevilla)
4. Monastery of Santa Catalina Virgen y Mártir (Foundation in 1558 - suppressed in 1990) Osuna (Sevilla)
5. Monastery of Santísimo Corpus Christi (Foundation in 1605 - suppressed in 1992) Córdoba
6. Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena (Foundation in 1501 – suppressed in 1999) Zafra (Badajoz)
7. Monastery of Aurora y Divina Providencia (Foundation in 1728 - suppressed in 2007) Málaga
8. Monastery of Espíritu Santo (Foundation in 1324 - suppressed in 2007) Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz)
9. Monastery of Santísimo Rosario (Foundation in 1893 - suppressed in 2009) Jumilla (Murcia)
10. Monastery of Alta Gracia (Foundation in 1435 - suppressed in 2013) Ciudad Real
11. Monastery of Nuestra Señora. del Rosario (Foundation in 1602 - suppressed in 2014) Arahál (Sevilla)
12. Monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena (Realejo) (Foundation in 1514 - suppressed in 2015) Granada

The first Federal Mother, the Federal Council, the Secretary, the Ecclesiastical Administrator and the Mistress of Novices were elected. The first common novitiate of our Federation began at the Monastery of Santa Catalina in Zafra (Granada) with the first group of novices from different monasteries of the Federation. Later on,

due to space problems, the novitiate was held at at the Monastery of Santa Ana in Murcia. Our Federation also shared the common novitiate with our sisters of the Federation of the Immaculate for ten years in Torrente. The common novitiate has been located in the Federal Monastery of Santa María de Gracia in Córdoba since 1992.



Every six years, the Federal Elective Assembly takes place for the election or, if necessary, the re-election of the Federal Mother and the other federal offices. Nowadays, we are in the 10th six-year term.

As is reflected in the Statutes, the aim of the Federation is the mutual support, both spiritual and material, among monasteries. In a particular way, the Federation aims to:

- Intensify more and more the contemplative religious life with the faithful observance of the Rule, the Constitutions and traditions, according to the spirit of the Order.
- Ensure the religious instruction of its members as complete as possible.
- Ensure the transfer of nuns from one to another monastery when necessary.
- Advise on the assistance of constructions, which were required, and on the work according to the Papal Documents.

- Assist, as much as possible, to any serious need that a monastery of the Federation could require at any given moment.

Since the beginning of the Federation, the nuns showed enthusiasm and devotion to the work which could be carried out in communion. It is difficult to summarise in a few pages what has been done in almost 59 years—restoration of buildings and churches, construction of new monasteries in some cases, fraternal assistance of sisters in other communities, singing and liturgy consistency in every community, are some of the specific points which have particularly helped us create communion and unity. As for manual labour, there have been learning exchanges and help, which have been very valuable for the communities that did not have a specific job or wanted to specialise in other things such as embroidery, bookbinding, pastry-baking, etc. There has been much fraternal sharing for years, as most nuns have shared the common novitiate and annual training courses in many different subjects, depending on time and circumstances. At first, when the prayer in Castilian was imposed after Latin in 1964, some sisters moved to the monastery of Blañac in France to improve Gregorian singing. We must briefly stress the fraternal assistance of a group of sisters of the Federation to the sisters in Peru (Arequipa and Lima), and later in Venezuela, because of a desire of the Master of the Order, Fr. Aniceto Fernández. Some of these nuns never returned and stayed there for all their lives. Their help, together with the help of Father Pablo del Olmo, Assistant of our Federation, and Father Marceliano Llamera, Assistant of the Federation of Aragón, was really valuable to lay the foundation of the Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary in Peru. Another important event to be highlighted was the first meeting in April 1987, attended by the Master, Fr. Damian Byrne, where the Inter-Federation, formed by the three Spanish federations, was established. It resulted in the communion of the three federations in Spain: Saint Dominic, the Immaculata and Our Lady of the Rosary. In recent years, we have been sharing some annual training courses.

In addition, apart from the religious instruction planning for novices and temporary professed nuns, or what each monastery organized communally (No. 122 of the *Federation Statutes*

states that religious instruction of novices and nuns at all levels is the main concern of the Federation), the Federation has taken care of ongoing formation for the nuns through courses of liturgy, singing and music, religious life and vows, accounting and economics, nursing, Bible, Constitutions, Psychology, Spirituality, Theology, History of the Order and many more. The Federation has its Statutes, Governing Body, Ceremonial and Regulations of the Common Novitiate, all approved by the Holy See.

Since 1992, we have had the Federal House in the Monastery of Santa María de Gracia in Córdoba, which was built for the purpose of becoming a common house for all monasteries in order to facilitate the federal system, the religious instruction of novices and temporary professed nuns, and the complementation and consolidation of the instruction of the nuns of our Federation in different ways. The common novitiate has its headquarters in the Federal Monastery and there, the community, the Federal Mother, the Mistress of novices and the federal secretary and administrator, live. It is important for us to have this common house where we can meet and feel like sisters in every way, which helps strengthen our communion within the Federation and the Order.



Broadly speaking, today's reality is the achievement of that little seed which was planted on November 7, 1957, and which has been yielding results in each sister, from the present and from the past, thanks to whom we can write this story, those sisters who have been part of the Federation, totally aware of what really matters in life is to give, even at risk of losing. We can also say, here and now, as Our Father Saint

Dominic: “*stacked wheat rots; if it is scattered, it becomes fruitful*”. And so, our answer must be always give, and give ourselves so that Life can sprout.



*Sr. Immaculada Serrano Posadas, OP
Monastery of San José, La Solana, (Ciudad Real)
Federation of Our Lady of the Rosary, Spain
Original: Spanish*

Opening of the Jubilee in Vietnam

On the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the Dominican Order, our Order celebrates a Jubilee Year of this great event. Perhaps each brother and sister in our great Dominican Family has his or her own feeling and driving force in living the graced Jubilee Year. Although I had been told about this event long ago by superiors, firstly to be united with the Dominican family in prayers for the common good of the Order and of the brothers and sisters, and secondly to prepare ourselves for the blessed year, only when I attended the Opening Ceremony of the Jubilee Year with the whole Dominican Family on November 7th 2015 did I really feel I was living this event. Living it, not as a stranger expecting an exciting event, but as a daughter expecting a great event in the family, like the marriage day of my parents, the day Father Dominic was eternally united with the Church in all its mystery; from which we were born, children of pure burning love. Spiritually it was also the day that opened a way leading to the vocation of each of us in the Order.

“The Jubilee Year is the chance for every Dominican individual to bring about a genuine dialogue between history and memory, between the history of the Order and the memory of each of us. That history needs to be made present in every individual, so that it becomes a lively experience which imprints itself on the Dominican life and mission of everyone ...”, said Fr. Vincent Pham Xuan Hung, Vice Provincial

Prior of the Dominican Order in Vietnam, in his address at the Opening Ceremony. Indeed, if the history of the Order is simply put on one hand and our memory on the other, they appear not to be related at all; nevertheless once we put them together, as, in his words, to make present those historical memories, then we are following our forerunners in writing new chapters in the history of the Order by our lives of witness. God Himself invites everyone of us to become a part, a son or daughter of the Order to inherit and develop as best as we can the heritage of the Order from our forerunners, yet in a particular way that has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, thenceforth to serve the Church and others appropriately.

As Dominican nuns, we are assigned the mission by our saintly Father “*to light the tabernacle lamp and keep it alight by the burning oil of sacrifice, ardent love and faith, reaching out to others by the spiritual fire of prayers, preaching the Word of God by a contemplative life in solitude*”, so that whenever they return from their preaching, our brothers and sisters find an ever new fire and warmth in the family. Every member in the Dominican family is invited to carry out God’s will in their lives, whether they are religious or lay people.

Our celebration of the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the Order falls right at the time Pope Francis celebrates the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. This is really a sacred coincidence. Through it, we are called “*to raise our eyes of faith to the infinite love of God, manifested by the merciful face of Jesus Christ, which embodies the mercy of God the Father.*”



God always acts in new ways and we ought to imitate Him. He has chosen each one despite their frailty and sinfulness. He is always there and awaits our discovery of His mercy. It is in

the mercy of God that we are taken out of the destructive misery of sin and given the original holy joy. Like the rain wiping out the difficulties and darkness in our souls, when the rain is over we rejoice in going out to preach God's mercy, indescribable joy amidst hardship and suffering. Perhaps each one of us has his or her own worries, burdens of life and mission. Yet, didn't our Lord say, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." (Mt 11, 30)? Let us therefore run to the infinite mercy of God to feel the lightness of our burdens.

Living the Jubilee of the Order in the Jubilee Year of God's Mercy, we feel more vividly God's providence, the special graces of our own Dominican vocation from past to present and into the future. Hence, we carry out the Pope's call, "Be merciful as God the Father is merciful", not only to our brothers and sisters, but also to everyone, to the whole of humankind without discrimination. That is also a way we carry out the Order's call, "Go out to preach the Gospel", the Gospel of God's mercy.

I would like to end with the quotation of Blessed Reginald "I have no merit in living in this Order as I have found so much joy in it". May everyone of us reap abundant spiritual fruits in the Jubilee Year of the Order and the Jubilee Year of God's Mercy. May the Mercy of God and of the Order envelop all of us with the assurance of God Himself: "I will not reject anyone who comes to me ..." (Jn 65, 37)

"If our Jubilee invites us to return to the origins of the Order, paradoxically it is so that we will remember how St. Dominic sent out his first friars from their house, their family, and their nation so as to discover the joy and freedom of itinerancy." (Trogir 40)

It was in this spirit of communion with the whole Dominican family from all continents in the world celebrating the Great Opening Ceremony of the Jubilee Year for the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the Order, that the Prioress together with some other sisters representing the Dominican Monastery in Vietnam left the enclosure and set off to discover the joy and freedom of itinerancy on the morning of November 7th 2015. They headed to Ba Chuong Church in Ho Chi Minh City to attend the Ceremony and Mass in mutual joy with brothers

and sisters in the big Dominican Family in Vietnam.

The Dominican Nuns in Viet Nam
Original: English

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITIES:

Opening of the Dominican Jubilee at the Korean Monastery

Our dear sisters all over the world—and here in Korea, too—celebrated with great solemnity the opening of the 800th Jubilee of our Dominican Order. We want to share with you what it was like, and also how we carried out our "initiative" of the *Missionary Rosary*.

As in all the monasteries, we were thinking well in advance about on which day we ourselves would celebrate the opening of the Jubilee and how we would go about it; but also of how it always happens at the conclusion of a big plan that there are always piles of things to prepare and ideas that keep accumulating.



We began with setting the Jubilee Opening Day: we decided to make that the first of December; many reasons were pushing us toward it. The Dominican Fathers, Sisters, and Laity of the Order were planning to celebrate in Seoul. It would have been difficult for everyone to come here on Nov. 22. We needed to have our opening afterward so that those who could come, would. We didn't want to send invitations but only to announce the date. Our chapel is so small that only some 150 persons can get in (if well packed), and in the cold weather we didn't want to leave anyone outside.... but at least the event

had to be announced, and this we did in the diocesan weekly.

The Fathers of the diocese told us that even without invitations many would come. Thinking of everyone, we put a screen in the main room of the guesthouse and in the parlor so that if people did not fit into the church they could go into the guesthouse; everything was filmed right from the beginning. In the end not many people came but everything was done as we had prepared it. And so:

We wanted to do the opening ceremony as we had been told from Santa Sabina to do it. While the nuns waited near the Altar of our holy Father in the cloister, the celebrating ministers entered our church in procession at the central door and this was projected in the church on a giant screen which had been put there for the video-musical of the Jubilee hymn. (When the priests had first arrived at the presbytery the Jubilee Hymn was put up on the screen.)... After the Hymn, the screen was used for the video-message from Fr. Bruno which was made for this occasion. One of the sisters translated it and it was projected with sub-titles so that all could understand it.

When the message was finished the celebrants entered the enclosure. In all they were ten priests and a deacon. Then began the "Paraliturgy of the Opening." There were six Dominican priests and a Dominican deacon, and four diocesan priests. The main celebrant was the Prior of the Dominican Convent in Seoul. (We had practiced everything with him on the preceding day!) After the Reading and after the Lighting of the Candle, the procession began again back through the enclosure while we sang the Jubilee Hymn. The Candle was carried by a Vietnamese priest, the book of the Gospels by the deacon, and an image of our Holy Father and a painting of the Virgin

were carried by two sisters. It was all very solemn. When the procession arrived in the church, everything was put down before the altar...which was now beautifully adorned. The Mass continued.

At the end of Mass lighted candles were given out to the representatives of the various branches of the Order. To the faithful present were given smaller candles with a medal; on one side of the candle was represented our Father and on the other, the logo of the Year of Mercy. In closing, Mother Prioress addressed from the ambo all who had participated, explaining again what it was that we had been celebrating and thanking all who were present for their generosity.

After Mass everyone who had come for the event could go to eat in the dining room of a shrine near the monastery: the nuns and the Father Chaplain of the shrine said that they would take care of all that. So the day ended with much thanksgiving on the part of everyone.

Missionary Rosary:

Here we also share with you how we are living the "Missionary Rosary." As you can see in the



photo we have put a calendar near a large map of the world, with every two days marking off the Monastery which is in charge of the Rosary for those two days. This plan is a sister's initiative; it really gives us joy and helps us to be united to all of you, our sisters. One day at the end of last November an e-mail arrived from the Monastery in Jaen-SPAIN telling us that our rosary had arrived and also that they were sending us photos of their community. We answered and we also sent photos—ones in which we had gotten the greatest number of pictures of the sisters.



That same day an envelope arrived from Vietnam from our Asia-Pacific Region representative. In the envelope was a Rosary and a letter from our sisters of Toumi Cameroon. What delight that gave us! That monastery and ourselves are twin foundations: we were born in the same year and we came from the same monastery in Spain. We let them know that. The Rosary that they sent us we put in the hands of the Virgin in the Choir for some weeks, after which each sister who wished to do so could take it and pray with it for several days. In this way it travelled among us all. We pray for our sisters of Cameroon and for all the necessities of the Order. We meet wherever we meet. We thank Fr. Luis Maria for such a wonderful idea.

We would like to know where the many rosaries have gone. If you also are interested, please tell about what you have done or are preparing to do at your monastery. That can help us to be ready, too. Thank you.

We end by wishing you a happy and fruitful year. May our holy Father St. Dominic bless us all from heaven, may he intercede for all his daughters that the Lord may grant holiness and final perseverance to all of us.

Monastery of "the Mother of God"

Korea

Original: Spanish

Tepeyac¹ at the Monastery of St. Catherine of Sienna and of St. Anne of Puebla de los Angeles (Mexico)

It was on the 6th December 1755. Mother Jacinta felt a searing pain in her stomach; she vomited acid vomit and lost two and a half litres of coagulated, fibrous, black blood. Added to that she had a very high temperature which hampered her breathing to such an extent that she could no longer speak.

«All that provoked fainting and loss of consciousness. Her feet were cold, and her chest was tight and hurt her. She could no longer see. Her pulse was weak and irregular. Her colour

was a greenish-grey. Her stomach was hard and distended, and made her suffer both interiorly and externally. She was incapable of any natural movement, to such an extent that her doctors and surgeons feared for her life, and could not find any effective way to combat her ills.»

This is why the last rites were administered urgently. The chaplain and confessor remained close to her to help her die well. That night, however, while both were keeping vigil «she was suddenly cured». What had happened? Her usual doctors and five others met to consider the case. They had thought it better to advance with caution, as her extreme weakness and the remedies that they gave her, had driven her almost to the point of death.

We read in the book of miracles, that in the middle of her agony, at the request of her sister, Mother Maria Antonia del Corazon de Jesus, on the 12th December an image of our Lady of Guadalupe was applied to her body. Mother Jacinta had seized it with love and a particular devotion. Here are the words she said:

«Our Lady, it is not for my personal good that I desire health but for your glory that I wish it. If I die, I shall go to enjoy the promised glory. If I live, I shall have to endure a much harder life. However, I accept this, if it is for your glory. If you give me health, give it to me, not according to my will, but as a miracle to be published, so that your glory be increased, as the devotion and the cult that should be rendered to you».

Having finished speaking «she felt, immediately, both externally and internally rid of all that was weighing her down. She tried to sit up and was able to do so. Then, with a strong, clear and joyful voice, she said she was feeling better and that it was a miracle.»

All the people present were filled with wonder and they started to sing together the «*Te Deum laudamus*», with the Jesuit Father Enrique Alvarez, her director and counsellor.

As Mother Jacinta had promised to publish the miracle to favour the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe, her brother, Dr José Javier de Zembra y Simanes, canonical Lector of the cathedral of Valladolid, asked the bishop of Puebla to give this order: «Receive all authentic information in due form of everything that has been reported and examined on this fact, gathering all the words of the nuns who were ocular witnesses of the evolution of the illness,

¹ Tepeyac: a hill near Mexico City where the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego took place.

and also those of the doctors and theologians who had assisted the prodigy.»

It was examined to see if the witnesses knew the sick person and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who was recognised as the special patron of the Convent of St Catherine in the town, where she had demonstrated her protection full of pity. It was also necessary to «to ask the theologians, doctors and philosophers to study all the information, so as to verify if the prodigy could have taken place by natural or diabolical means, or if it was by the grace of the intercession and imposition of the Holy Virgin Mary.» This was on the 17th December 1755.

Thus, on the 22nd December 1755, Dr Gaspar presented himself at the Convent of St Catherine of Sienna to examine his sister. She, having knelt down, affirmed under oath, that there had been a miracle. The canonical Lector transmitted the result of his enquiry to the bishop.

One can say that the devotion to the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe was introduced to the monastery of St Catherine by the women who entered as cooks to the monasteries of New Spain. Of native origin, these women were responsible for the feast of the 12th December, because the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe was very clear answer to these native people and a special key to raise the courage of a people destroyed by the suffering afflicted on them by the Spanish conquest.

In the 18th century, the cult of the «little brown



Virgin» was not widespread as in the 19th century, when one started to meet many women who had been given the name of Guadalupe.

An ex-voto of the event lived through by Mother Jacinta is in the St Catherine museum in our town of Puebla; this museum owns many works seized from our monastery in 1934. We know that today the sanctuary of Guadalupe, in the Mexican Republic, is one of the most visited in the world, and that the Virgin of Guadalupe is the most important patriotic symbol of our nation. This apparition of the Most Holy Virgin is the first to be recognised by the Church.

*Sister Maria de Cristo Morales OP
(Sister in charge of the Chronicles of the Federation of Santa Maria de Guadalupe – Mexico)
Monasterio de Santa Catalina de Siena y Signora Santa Ana, Puebla.*

A Jubilee Celebration: Rosary Pilgrimage with the Monasteries in the Philippines

The 10th and 11th of March were the days designated to our Community, here, at the Queen of Angels Monastery, Bocaue, Bulacan, to be responsible for the Pilgrim Rosary. The 1st day was celebrated with the Members of the Dominican Family of the Province and the 2nd day with the lay faithful, youth, family and friends of the Monastery. This is part of the continuous celebrations of the Jubilee of the Order. The Nuns are participating by praying the rosary together with and for the brothers and sisters of the Order all over the world. This helps to highlight the fact that the contemplative life of the nuns is of greatest benefit to the apostolate which the Dominican family exercises as a whole.

For the first time in the history of our Monastery, we held this event and were blessed by the visit of the *Pilgrim Image of the Our Lady of La Naval* of the Sto. Domingo Church enthroned in our chapel for five days. On March 9, the day the Image of Our Lady of La Naval arrived in the Monastery, Rev. Fr. Roland Mactal, OP, prior of Sto. Domingo Convent at Quezon City who accompanied the entourage celebrated the Holy

Eucharist. From that day on many people came everyday to visit the Image and to pray the rosary with the community.

In honour of the occasion we had a special Rosary service, praying the Luminous Mysteries with reflections, petitions and periods of silent meditation while listening to Instrumental Marian Hymns accompanied by the invited Bulacan Liturgical Chamber Orchestra. This was followed by a solemn procession carrying the Jubilee Candle and the little Image of Our Lady of the Rosary wearing the “Pilgrim Rosary” from the Monasterio de Santa Cruz in Vitoria, Spain to the chapel for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.



The Rev. Prior Provincial, Fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, OP, presided at the Mass for the Dominican Family and Rev. Fr. Louie Coronel, OP, the parish priest of Santisimo del Rosario Parish of University of Santo Tomas, Manila presided at the Holy Eucharist for the Lay Faithful. The homilies on those three subsequent days were very inspiring reminding us that *“this great Marian devotion of praying the rosary that gets its root from our spirituality and preaching as Dominicans is due to the love of St. Dominic for the church. The rosary is the gift, which we, Dominicans give to the church and share with others. We continue to promote this devotion and the preaching of the Gospel and therefore foster the contemplative life of the faithful that enrich the church and society.”*

We did not only pray together but also celebrated our fraternity in our Dominican Family as we welcomed the different members of the Congregation of Apostolic Sisters, Student Brothers, the Laity, the Youth and the Nuns of the other Monastery in Cainta who joined us. As

the Father Provincial recounted in his homily, *“we constantly nurture our fraternity and relationship as sisters and brothers in the family of St. Dominic. It is something we intend, will and consciously embrace. It is the product of our free choice. Our fraternity extends to each and every member of our Dominican Family and this we celebrate today.”*

On this occasion, our community also prepared several souvenirs of T-shirts, fans and mugs with the Logo of the Jubilee. The frontage of the monastery was decorated with colorful flags and on the 2nd day, there was a display of fireworks. There were also many photographs taken, which



everyone loved! We thank God, the Order, Our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic for all their gifts and for us, as we remain who and what we are to our brothers and sisters! We continue to pray and celebrate!

*Sr. Mary Emmanuelle Cruz, OP
Monastery of Bocaue, Philippines
Original: English*

Shalom - A Poem from the Monastery of Valdoflores - España

Today I lit a candle, adorned it with some flowers, planted some cuttings.

Today I woke up welcoming hope, prayed with gratitude, and shed a few tears in silence.

Today I allowed the Word to resonate deeply; I let the inner jubilation turn into joy.

Today I gathered the echo of the history that our predecessors made in the Order and recalled its wake of kindness.

This memory of the lights and shades strikes me as beautiful, as I recognize the weft of grace interwoven in human history, which neither surrenders nor retreats.

On this day, November 7, 2015, the Feast of All Saints of the Order, takes place the opening of the Dominican Jubilee. The 800th Jubilee year commemorates the moment when the Church recognized us before the whole world as part of herself. In all the places of the world where there is a brother or a sister, there will be joy for these eight centuries of adventure, preaching and testimony. Each is called to a unique and abundant mission to say words of encouragement, fraternity and truth. Each sent freely, each united and free.

Yesterday and today are linked in the reality that we are. Dreams, desires, hopes flowing into this "today", urge us to persevere. Persevere, in this paradox of fidelity and creation that both challenges us and encourages us.

Today my gaze paused and went beyond my horizon; I have taken a step towards tomorrow to honor the inheritance that I received.

**Laudare, benedicere, predicare.
Ascendere semper!**

Sr. Miria

Monastery of Valdoflores (Spain)

Original: Spanish

A Meditation from the Monastery of Salamanca

Eight long centuries have passed since 1216 when Pope Honorius III approved the Order of Preachers.

Eight centuries since Father Dominic, with a sack of seed in your hands, you sowed it so that it would not spoil. Thanks to your decision—criticized and condemned by the prudent of this world—it didn't spoil! They, the prudent ones, those used to seeing in advance how things will

go, kept telling you that at one time or another you would destroy the Order you had worked so hard to found: you could count on sixteen brothers only. Your mild reply was invariably: "You don't want to contradict me; I know very well what I am doing." And it is clear that you did know! God had given you a special light and you always let yourself be guided by it even though it might go against the good sense of many.



There were only seventeen friars including you, Father, and you weren't afraid to use the seed on that Day of the Assumption of the Virgin in August of 1217—only a year after the approval of the Order. But you knew very well what you were "doing"; history has declared you right.

Only four years after the dispersion, when you had left this mortal life to go to help us from heaven, you could count twenty convents filled with friars, and eight Provinces. The General Chapters of 1220 and 1221 had by then established sturdy legislation which put into action the spirit of your Order. It was all a wonderful feat.

Eight centuries have gone by, and the wheat, Father, has continued to fructify. You have friars and nuns on every continent in spite of the way that a "vocation crisis" has affected all religious Orders. There are hard times but "everything is passing away," as St. Teresa used to say. With more or with fewer difficulties, the Order stays alive—full of dreams and preaching the Gospel with joy.

Here we are, Father, wanting to offer you on this jubilee eight roses each symbolic of one of the eight centuries of your—our—Order. The new thing is that we offer you something that is yours: these roses bloomed because of the warmth of your unshod and bleeding feet on the dusty road. Yes, Father, they are yours, but now we place them before you like a hymn of thanks,

of praise and of joy. Gather them with love, protect their perfume so that the night-frost may not wither them and so that we may be able to show their beauty to our brothers and sisters hungry for Truth and for Life.... that Truth and Life that you have sprinkled upon them.



May the celebration of this Jubilee impel us, your sons and daughters, to continue to walk in your footsteps, even though we may not have the courage to go unshod like you. You know that we want to run along your beautiful path and we hope that the warmth of your bleeding feet may soften the hard spots which can appear along our earthly route.

We hope for your help which cannot fail us, because the word of a Spaniard who is faithful and true is always fulfilled. From now on we say, in a voice catching with emotion as we contemplate your inspiring figure: “Thank you Father Dominic!! We are very happy to be Dominicans!!”

Sr. Maria Eugenia Maeso, OP
Salamanca, Spain
Original: Spanish

Opening of the Dominican Jubilee In Japan

On the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order, we prepared for this great event wholeheartedly. We did our best in our own way in various things concerning liturgy and invitation to the celebration.

The ritual of solemn opening was integrated within the Eucharist of the day of All Saints of the Order. At 2:00 p.m. it began with the Hymn “St. Dominic”. The president was Fr. Inage, a

Japanese Dominican of Holy Rosary Province in charge of the members of the Rosary Association, who dedicated himself to the celebration with all his heart and all his strength. The exterior chapel was filled with dozens of men and women of all ages, including non-Christians, young children and the handicapped. Owing to these circumstances about ten people took their seats in the sanctuary. One of our sisters in charge of members of the Rosary Association and the Dominican laity had tried to gather our friends and acquaintances by inviting them, whether Catholic or not. Six Dominican sisters from Okazaki were seated with us in the choir.

The ritual began with the Master’s message in Japanese. All went smoothly according to the program of the Order for the ceremony. The procession by representatives of all the branches carrying a large Jubilee candle advanced solemnly toward the altar while all were singing the Jubilee Hymn *Laudare*. At the stage of sending, the president lighted one by one the candles representing each branch, taking fire from the large candle. While singing the *Te Deum*, representatives of the branches took fire from the candle. After the *Te Deum* all the participants recited the Jubilee prayer strongly and wholeheartedly. We concluded with the final blessing and the *Salve Regina* at 3:30 p.m. After a short break, the entrance ceremony of three new members of the Rosary Association was held. Then recitation of the rosary, including meditative explanation on each mystery by Fr. Inage followed.

And now we would like to share with you the impression of the participants. After the ritual, one of them with no special religious faith said, “800 years! Wow, that’s amazing! The ritual gave me the impression that this Order would exist forever!” Another said, “He (Fr. Inage) looks different today! He is shining!” Another said, “The ritual moved me so much! I’m so glad I came!”

Lastly, we cannot but write about our apostolic sisters’ cooperation and help in various ways. At every opportunity the Sisters of Religious Missionaries of St. Dominic in Okazaki take time in their busy schedule to visit us from far away. On that day we were delighted with the



souvenir of their colored homemade cookies in the shape of the Dominican symbols: the stick, the book, the star, shoes, the Dominican shield etc. They took many pictures of the ritual and put them on the website of their congregation.

Thank God for all things!

The blessing of God send us towards the future.

Monastery of St. Joseph

Seto, Japan

Original: English

Visit of Pope Francis to New York City

When our community learned of the visit of Pope Francis to New York City we immediately contacted a priest who is a good friend of ours and who works for the Vatican's mission at the UN to see if he would be able to secure tickets for us for the visit of Pope Francis with religious at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Because New Jersey is in the "shadow" of New York it often gets overlooked during Papal visits. So much so that in 1995 our then Archbishop Theodore McCarrick actually asked St. John Paul II if he would visit Newark if he gathered all the cloistered religious in the diocese! Pope John Paul agreed and rumour has it that Cardinal O'Connor of New York was chagrined!

Soon we found out that the tickets for the papal events in NYC were going to be given only to

people in New York! Even our Vatican contact who is a friend of Cardinal Dolan couldn't manage to get tickets for us! Oh, well. It was in God's Providence.

Just before the Papal Visit the *New York Times* ran a full feature story on our monastery with photos from a photographer who had spent seven years visiting our community and had just published a book. Wouldn't you know we were in the midst of our annual retreat! Suddenly we were swamped with orders from our online store The Cloister Shoppe. It was Christmas in September!

Archbishop Charles Chaput, archbishop of Philadelphia, saw the article and wrote us a personal letter inviting us to provide soaps for the Holy Father for his stay in Philadelphia during the World Meeting of Families! What an honor! We also found it a bit amusing because soap is well, soap!

At first we thought to make a special soap but then decided that we would prefer to share with the Holy Father something of what we make to sell "for the lowly and great alike". We created a basket with Cloister Shoppe products: soap, hand crème, lip balm, rosary, wood carved pen, a candle and, of course, some information on our monastery! The hardest part was making the card which we all signed. In it we assured the Holy Father of our love and prayers and "reminded" him that we were celebrating the 800th Jubilee of the Order.

Right after we mailed the basket our co-adjutor Archbishop, Bernard Hebda, came for a visit. We told him about Archbishop Chaput's invitation. Archbishop Hebda is also friends with our priest-friend at the UN and he asked why HE hadn't also asked us to provide soaps for the Holy Father's stay in New York City! A quick email and we were providing soap not only for the Holy Father but for the entire entourage!

After the Holy Father's visit to NYC our priest friend went to the papal rooms and took photos of the soaps in the bathroom! Evidence suggests that the Holy Father used our all-natural Milk and Honey Liquid Soap! We were told that the eight members of the Papal entourage all brought their soaps home with them! Unfortunately we can't share the photos with you.

Meanwhile, our Sisters at Corpus Christi Monastery in the Bronx, NY, offered one of their tickets to us so Sr. Judith Miryam joined them for Vespers with Pope Francis at St. Patrick's Cathedral. She even got to touch the Holy Father's arm when he was walking out of the Cathedral.



At the last moment, Kathryn Lopez, a journalist who is a friend of our community offered us a ticket. This would mean travelling into NYC alone and back. Not something any of us were anxious to do. Thankfully, Kathryn was able to secure a second ticket and I, Sr. Mary Catharine, and Sr. Denise Marie were chosen to represent the community at the Mass at Madison Square Garden which is conveniently above Penn Station in New York City.

However, there was a slight catch. Kathryn was in Washington, DC covering the Papal Visit. The tickets were in Philadelphia. The only way Kathryn could get them to us was by meeting Sr. Judith Miryam at St. Patrick's. However, Sr. Judith Miryam was staying with our sisters at Corpus Christi for the week! So, Kathryn met Sr. Judith Miryam inside the cathedral and then Fr. John Devaney, OP, waited outside of St. Patrick's so that Sr. Judith Miryam could hand the tickets to him! Then, HE gave the tickets to Fr. Jonah, OP who is at St. Catherine's Priory a

few blocks from St. Vincent's Priory. He then was supposed to meet us at Madison Square Garden around 1:30 PM.

The plan was great except that Fr. Jonah, who had to offer the 12:30 PM Mass at St. Catherine's, forgot that 20,000 other people were going to Mass with the Holy Father! Slowly, Fr. Jonah made his way through the lines that snaked up and down the streets around Madison Square Garden! Meanwhile, Sr. Denise Marie and I were part of the first group of people that reached the security check before going into the arena! So, we waited. And waited. We smiled. We were in our first selfies. Not once, not twice but well, we forget how many times! We greeted all the Cardinals and Bishops who walked in. For the crowds in line we provided about 15,000 people something to take photos of while they waited!

Finally, we saw Fr. Jonah and the security let him cut ahead and join us. Then it was through the security and the press of the crowds which was a bit scary! By around 5PM we finally made it to our seats.



The Mass with Pope Francis was beautiful and it was a wonderful experience to be with 20,000 Catholics praising and worshipping God. The music was beautiful and we had really great seats, rather high up but still close enough that we could see the altar well. We were also seated right in front of the video screens so we could see what the Sisters were seeing back home. The screens also provided much delayed Google-style translations of the Holy Father's homily. Because of the poor translation and delay and because it was hard to hear the Holy Father who

spoke in Spanish the reaction of the crowd to what the Holy Father had to say was a bit “off”.

After the Mass while waiting for our train to Summit we met a group of Dominican Sisters from Caldwell, NJ and Dominican Laity. Dominicans always seem to like to be together! By 11PM we were home and tucked in bed!

This article is already too long but I was asked to share a brief story about our soaps and candles and how we came to make them.

About 8 years ago we made soap for Christmas presents for the 70+ volunteers who generously serve as receptionists and drive the sisters to appointments, etc. At the same time we were experiencing a big decline in donations. So, we decided to make about 5 different kinds of soap to sell in our gift shop. The soap lasted about six weeks and quickly we had a full line of about 15 different fragrances of soap which we sold here at the monastery and through an online store.

About a year later we developed our own hand crème, lip balm and room sprays. The hand cream formula took about 3 months of testing to get it right. Living in a monastery means we have a “test market” readily available!

Slowly, word got out and our business increased. We are always learning how to make our products better and more efficiently. We started using the small monastery bakery, but that quickly was too small. Fortunately, in 2009 when we renovated our kitchen we needed the bakery as a temporary kitchen. This was a great gift for the soap department and it was moved to the old print shop. Slowly, we have invested in new equipment which has been a big help!

Several years ago we slowly began to make candles and the candle shop is taking on a life of its own!

We are often asked why we call our soaps Seignadou Soaps. As you can imagine most people have no idea of what Seignadou means and when we tell them it means “sign of God” they are even more curious! We chose the name because we started our soap endeavor during the 800th anniversary of the nuns and we wanted to honor our jubilee!

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