

Monialibus

B U L L E T I N I N T E R N A T I O N A L N ° 6

J a n u a r y 2 0 0 3



- The program of the Master of the Order
- A letter from Fr. Manuel Merten the Promoter of the Nuns
- The program of the Promoter
- News concerning the future International Community of Prouilhe
- News concerning the Federation of Dominican monasteries in Belgium
- Getting to know the regions – reports from the new members of the International Commission: Africa, Asia, Italy, South America, 2 federations in the region of Spain
- Shared experiences

Programme of the Master of the Order

February

- 08 Asia Pacific: Manila
- 17 Visit to Viet Nam
- 25 returns to Rome

March

- 01 General Council
- 29 England

April

- 15 returns to Rome

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

Dear Sisters,

As a child, I was always somewhat disappointed that the feast of St Stephen fell on the second day of Christmas. Somehow it spoilt the joy of Christmas for me. I'd only just got used to the idea that the Saviour was born, that angels were singing about peace on earth, and that people even seemed to be believing it, and then barely a day later, comes the news : "They were infuriated when they heard this [about Stephen], and ground their teeth at him. But he, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. "I can see heaven thrown open" he said, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God". At this, all shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they all rushed at him, drove him out of the city and stoned him".¹

In all honesty, I have to admit that even as a grown-up and as a theologian, I am not entirely free of my doubts, as to whether it would not be more meaningful and better liturgically, to celebrate Christmas like Easter, with an octave, in which nothing else intrudes on the unfolding of the mystery of the feast itself. But now I have doubts about my doubts!

As you learnt from the last issue of *Monialibus*, in October I was in Vietnam. One day, together with the Vietnamese provincial, Fr Joseph Nguyễn Cao Luât, the prioress of the Monastery of Farmington Hills, Sr Mary Rose Figura, and the novice mistress of this monastery, Sr Mary of the Holy Trinity, I paid a visit to the Archbishop of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Naturally we chatted to each other on the way about how it might be possible to bring to fruition the plan for the founding of a monastery of the Order in his diocese.

Now as before, there is in Vietnam, despite reassurances about guaranteed freedom of religious practice, a whole load of restrictions that the brethren as well as the sisters come up against. Just one example, typical of many: for every priestly ordination, authorisation must be obtained from the government. Such authorisations are few and far between. Therefore a great number of our brethren are awaiting the day when they will at last be able to be ordained. Many of them have already been deacons for over ten years.

The Archbishop confided to us many of the problems that the Church encounters in its day to day dealings with the state. At one point I expressed my sympathy. But the Archbishop retorted: "No, no, you must not pity us, just the opposite. It's the best thing that could happen to us. Opposition from the state is our capital, the restrictions are like fertiliser for our spiritual vocation and the vitality of our Church".

"Opposition is our capital, restrictions are like fertiliser" – does this mean that there is some way of bringing together angels singing about peace, and people, for whom other people not only place obstacles in their path, but pick up stones and put them to death ? Is there some form of "higher mathematics" going on here? Could the feast of a martyr on the second day of Christmas be a particularly meaningful, liturgical allegory?

In a poem by Henry Vaughan the following verses are to be found:

...the poet, like bad priest,
Is seldom good, but when oppressed.
And wit as well as piety
Doth thrive best in adversity.

¹ Acts, 7, 54-58

I think that at Christmas this year, I shall meditate on which limitations in my life could in some way become fertiliser, and on what capital God puts into my hands with every opposition that I encounter.

It is in this sense that I wish you a blessed feast of Christmas, one in which joy over every, even very little, sign of peace on earth is present, with the hope that "God turns everything to the good of those who love him".²

Fraternally yours



Naturally you would now like to know how things are going with the foundation in Vietnam. I think all is going ahead for the best. But for the moment it seems preferable not to publish details, before everything is "cut and dried". That our brothers and sisters in Vietnam need your prayer goes without saying.

Program of the promoter

22.12.02. – 02.01.03	Church Services: Nuns from Luxembourg / Dominican Sisters Schwalmtal
20.01.03	Province Council Meeting Cologne (Germany)
23.01.03	S. Sabina: meeting promoters
24. – 29.01.03	Kosice (Slovakia) > future of this foundation of Gródek (Poland)
01. – 03.02.03	Prouilhe: Inauguration of International Community
09. – 16.02.03	Manila (Philippines): Dominican Leadership Meeting
25.02.03	Province Council Meeting Cologne (Germany)
03.03.03	Meeting of German members of General Curias in Rome
05.03.03	Station Church Service at S. Sabina (Pope John Paul II)
31.03.03	Province Council Meeting Cologne (Germany)
03.04. – 06.04.03	S.Sabina: meeting promoters
23.04. – 08.05.03	Visit Monastery St. Denis (Reunion)
13.05.03	Province Council Meeting Cologne (Germany)

² Romans 8,28

News concerning the future International Community of Prouilhe

As you know, in August of 2002, sisters gathered from around the world to participate in a time of reflection with regard to a new International Community at Prouilhe.

On the 2nd of February 2003 the International Community of Prouilhe shall be inaugurated. For this new step a prioress is needed and, as with all new communities, the prioress is named by the Master of the Order. In October, the community of Prouilhe and the future members coming from other countries were invited to write to the Master and express themselves with regards to the future prioress. They gave a profile of the desirable qualities and suggested names. The Master of the Order met with his vicar, Fr Dominique Renouard, and the Promoter of the Nuns, fr. Manuel Merten, in November, to discuss the matter and arrive at a proposition. Then in the beginning of December, fr. Dominique Renouard went to Prouilhe to designate Sister Claire Rolf as the choice of the Master under the reserve that the community of Langeac, where she was presently prioress, would accept to free her for this mission. The next day; fr. Dominique and the Master himself went to Langeac to make the request. The Master asked the Chapter to discern and give him the answer before Christmas. Sister Claire, open to accepting this service, left the decision to the Chapter of her community, whom, after reflection and prayer, generously gave their accord. In accordance to n° 199 of L.C.M, Sister Claire has given her demission as prioress of Langeac and the community the will soon elect a new prioress. The nomination of Sister Claire as prioress of the new International Community of Prouilhe will take effect as of the 2nd of February 2003.

Let us pray for the communities of Prouilhe and of Langeac who have made acts of faith for the common good of the Order. May the Lord bless them with the grace of Charity, which will allow them to live together in unity and bare fruit for the Kingdom.

News concerning the Federation of Dominican monasteries in Belgium

On the 6th of November 2002, brother Diethard Zils, O.P. was named the Religious Assistant for the Federation of Belgium Monasteries, “St. Thomas Aquinas”. Let us keep him, and the nuns of Belgium, in our prayer.

The African Region by Sister Joyce-Rita Mumu, Niarobi, Kenya

There are eight Monasteries in the region of Africa. They are scattered within the Continent except for the Reunion (which is an Island in the Indian Ocean). These monasteries are situated in Burundi, Angola, South Africa and Kenya and in Cameroon, where there are three communities. Some of these communities belong to, or have a special relationship, with the Federations connected with their founding monasteries. The oldest monastery in Africa is that of Douala, founded in 1957 in Gabon and which was later transferred to Cameroon.

In spite of it being said that Africans are “contemplative by nature”, most of our monasteries do not have a large number of sisters. This can be attributed to strong cultural values (which at first were seen to be in opposition with the Christian values or monastic tradition), and the constant political unrest. The membership of our monasteries ranges from 30 to 6 solemnly professed nuns. All the monasteries, with the exception of two, have young in formation. In fact, one of the communities has fifteen in formation and another has eight.

The large numbers of new vocations is a great blessing, but has its demands too. We are holding a meeting in Douala from 13th to 18th December 2002 and one of the points on our agendas is to see how we can deal with questions dealing the formation. Please do accompany us in prayer.

For some reason, not all the monasteries have participated in our three meetings, which have been held within the Region. Perhaps God is calling us, to ask why, or if there is something which can be done about this. We have many ideas regarding the working together, but have not been able to put many of them into effect due to lack of organisation. Generally, the financial situations of the Monasteries are a big barrier, and because of the great distances between the monasteries, travelling is very costly. It can be much less expensive to go to Europe than to move within Africa.

Currently, three of our monasteries are either in the process of construction or are planning to do so as soon as the funds are available. Things that many of us take for granted, such as electricity, can be a constant preoccupation and prayer intention. It was very painful for the community in Bambui, Cameroon, when a benefactor was killed in an accident while he was delivering a long waited generator.

The collaboration among the members of the Dominican Family is slowly becoming a reality. Our monasteries in Cameroon have for a long time experienced isolation, but now the Friars have a convent in the country and have regular visits to the Sisters. The Sisters in Bambui began formation of Dominican Laity in 1999 and have about 16 professed members. In East Africa, the four branches of the Order have worked together in studies and celebrations of big special feasts and occasions and are currently working on a joint vocation promotion brochure.

Some of our Monasteries live in very difficult political situations and are often in danger and yet when news comes from them, they are radiant with joy, peace and hope that comes from deep within. They are living witnesses of the resurrection.

A source of great hope and encouragement for us in Africa is the cause for the process of beatification of our Sister Teresa Chikaba. She gives us the practical message that everything is possible for one who places the trust in the Lord.

Asia Pacific Region

by Sister Mary Emmanuelle Cruz OP, of Bocaue, Philippines

To begin, I wish to thank the prioresses and sisters of the monasteries in Asia Pacific Region for their kind response to my letter and the information they gave me concerning their communities.

In the 9 Dominican monasteries of Asia, there are at present 172 nuns, of whom 42 are in their initial formation. The community in Korea has 22 sisters in their novitiate.

By its' nature, the Dominican monastic life requires us to be in formation all our lives. Therefore the communities have given priority on going formation as well as the initial formation by maintaining conferences, community group sharing, having access to both video and audio tapes, the internet, and by having a good library for personal study.

In the Philippines, collaboration regarding initial formation took place last year with the generous support of the prioresses and sisters of the monasteries in Bocaue and Cainta. The novitiate sisters of both monasteries participated in a session (Psychological-Spiritual Integration) of 2 weeks in Bocaue and 1 week in Cainta. The sisters were delighted with this experience and are looking forward for more common study in the future.

In Korea, 4 of their temporary professed sisters are now completing their formation in the Monastery in Olmedo, Spain. One of their solemnly professed sisters has been transferred for 3 years to the Monastery of Toumi in Cameroon to render service to the nuns in Africa.

Two nuns from our region, Sr. Josephina of Seto and Sr. Mary Paul of Cainta will join the project of an International community in Prouilhe.

In one way or another almost every monastery has a direct contact with other members of the Order. The Friars are invited either to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, for spiritual direction, to give lectures, conferences, retreats, to assist on special occasions or just for a friendly visits. Some monasteries have established a community of Dominican Laity that now participate in some activities of the monastery.

Regarding the Association of Dominican Nuns in Japan : after the experience of a trial period of a 'Temporary Association' in February 2001, the Association of Dominican Monasteries in Japan, although not yet officially recognized, made a start in January 2002. At this time they are seeking for a way of cooperation which is adapted to the present condition of the 4 Monasteries in Japan. Sr. Mary Thomas Notohara from Seto is the representative of the Association. When the time is ripe they will ask for the approval of the Holy See.

In the Relatio Magistri Ordinis 6.3.1, regarding new foundations, we read: *"The foundation of monasteries in Asia, the home of half of humanity, is vital for the flourishing of the Order. The religious traditions of Asia especially Buddhism, means that the contemplative life has a special part in the preaching of the gospel. It can be difficult to obtain visas for foreign nuns to enter these countries, and so we are looking for native sisters from congregations who are attracted to the contemplative life, to form them for future foundations. I hope that this will lead before too long to foundations in Vietnam, India and Iraq. "*

The story of the beginning of a new Dominican Monastery in Vietnam began when the Holy Spirit planted in the hearts of Vietnamese Dominican Sisters, Sr. Theresa and Sr. Maria Rose the desire to live the Dominican monastic life. It is now very much a project of the Dominican Family worldwide. These two sisters are very grateful to the Federation of Dominican sisters for their support and to the two Congregations of St. Catherine of Siena at Tam Hiep and Thanh Tam for releasing them to go to the monastery of the Blessed Sacrament, Farmington Hill, Michigan, USA, for two years formation in the monastic way of life.

In November of 2001, Sr. Maria Rose returned to Vietnam to begin laying the groundwork for the new foundation. She has been living with another sister and a lay woman interested in joining them at the small house in Hochiminh City. There are some others who would like to join but there is no room for them at present. In October of this year Sr. Theresa returned to Vietnam accompanied by Sr. Mary Rose, the Prioress of Farmington Hills and Sr. Mary Trinity, the Novice Mistress. Fr. Manuel Merten joined them to help with the first steps of the new foundation. We ask your prayers for this project as they face many difficulties.

In Pakistan, the nuns have a contact with the Kohli workers and their families. The Kohlis are Hindu tribal people living in the borderlands between India and Pakistan. They have 50 Kohli living on the Monastery compound at present. With the help of some generous friends and benefactors they are providing education for the children at the parish schools. The parents are mostly illiterate. On the 4th of June (Peter martyr) 9 Kohli children were baptized and on the feast of the Sacred Heart, 8 received First Holy Communion.

In Taiwan, the majority of people are not Christian but understand very well that our cloistered life is not a barrier, but in the heart of God it brings us closer to their lives. And in order that this type of life may continue to exist among us, they make sacrifices in order to generously help the nuns and they come to the monastery to leave their intentions, trusting with great faith in the power of prayer.

The words of our Holy Father Pope John Paul II, in his post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, best describe our place as Dominican Contemplatives in Asia. *"In the numerous religious traditions of Asia, men and women dedicated to the contemplative and ascetical life enjoy great respect, and their witness has an especially persuasive power. Their lives lived in community, in peaceful and silent testimony, can inspire people to work for greater harmony in society. No less is expected of consecrated men and women in the Christian tradition. Their silent example of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching all people of goodwill and leading to a fruitful dialogue of surrounding cultures and religions, and with the poor and the defenceless. This makes the consecrated life a privileged means of effective evangelization."* (*Ecclesia In Asia* #44)

With the desire to get a closer link to one another, most of the monasteries of the region of Asia agree to the proposal for the establishment of a simple 'news letter'.

Italy

by Sister Vincenza Panza OP of Azzano, San Paolo, Italy

In Italy there are 30 monasteries with 345 solemnly professed nuns, 7 of temporary vows, 6 novices and 2 postulants.

The first monastery, founded by St. Dominic in 1221, was St. Sixtus in Rome and is now the Monastery of the Holy Rosary. The most recent foundation in Italy is, St. Mary Magdala's Monastery in Turin.

There are two federations, both founded in 1959: one in the South with 9 monasteries, whose Federal Seat is the monastery in Lettere (Naples); the other in the North with 7 monasteries, whose Federal Seat is in Azzano San Paolo (Bergamo).

Monastic life continues and, even if there are difficulties because of the lack of new vocations, we are hopeful of future. The intellectual and cultural level of our monasteries has been favoured by Father Carlo Avagnina OP, in the last ten years. Indeed, he has promoted meetings and formative courses for prioresses, educators, novices and juniors. Unfortunately the attendance at meetings has diminished recently. In 2000, when the mandate of the Father Avignina ceased, the nun's assembly gave three of their members the task of attending to meetings and formative courses in order to improve them. The Federations, which had diminished their initiatives in promoting courses, are now planning new session in accordance to the norms established in "Verbi Sponsa", n. 19.

The document of the Chapter in Providence about nuns has been deeply appreciated and we desire to analyse it together so as to adapt to it in order to truly be "the contemplative heart of preaching".

Clearness is required in that which concerns revision of LCM, in particular the necessity to define the authority of the Master and of the General Chapter. The meeting of prioresses, in October 2002, dealt with the importance of LCM.

The communication amongst monasteries is quite good: we meet, we exchange our opinions and, above all, while respecting our diversity, we try to grow together according to the Dominican charisma. Together we try to be the contemplative and praying heart of the holy preaching, which St. Dominic desired us to be.

South America

By Sister Blanca of Lima, Peru

At the occasion of the new millenium, many reflections have been made and still are made on the first evangelization of America. This thinking renews in the Church of our Continent the awareness of the gift of the Christian faith "This is the eternal truth, that they know you the unique true God and the one you have sent Jesus Christ" (Jn 17, 13). At the same time we are moved to remember with gratitude all the brothers and daughters of the Church and the Order, who have accomplished the mandate of Christ Jesus. "Go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creatures" (Mc 16, 15) sowing for the first time the Message of Christ in all the lands.

The Nuns in South America.

Marking the Situation

We know well that ever since the trees of the Family of Saint Dominic, brothers and sisters preachers walked together in history, they also reached together the New World. Together they started their apostolic pilgrimage on the island of Hispaniola, today Santo Domingo. (Central America).

1556. - The Dominican Nuns started their first lap in America. We find them living in a house donated by María de Aranda. The initial group were religious coming from Andalucía. They called the Monastery with the advocacy of "Regina Angelorum"; it was situated very close to their brothers, the friars; in the very heart of the city of Santo Domingo.

In South America :

As the Preachers advanced in their action of evangelization, the Nuns took roots with their Monasteries. So we have :

- 1579 - Perú, in the city of Arequipa. Santa Catalina de Siena. Ecuador (Quito, precisely in the house of Céspedes, brother of Santa Teresa).
- 1599 - Perú, in the city of Cusco (city of the Incas, at the site where the Virgens of the Sun lived) Santa Catalina de Siena.
- 1599 - Venezuela, in the city of Trujillo, (It is the General Capital of the friars, who authorized this fundation).
- 1624 - Perú, in the city of Lima. Santa Catalina de Sena. (initiated by Santa Rosa de Lima in 1615).
- 1645 - Colombia, in the city of Bogotá. Santa Inés de Montepulciano.
- 1688 - Cuba, in the city of La Habana
- 1708 - Perú (Lima, in the same house where Santa Rosa de Lima died)
- 1755 - Argentina (Buenos Aires)
- 1747 - Perú, Arequipa. Santa Rosa
- 1686 - Chile
- 1786 - Venezuela (Caracas)

The 19th century was disastrous, many closed, few were founded. Motives : The Christian formation was neglected in the homes and in the schools. Different ideological currents appeared etc. This weakened the Christian faith. We can see neglect, routine, superficial practise, and therefore lack of vocations. In 20th century, some convents were founded, and monastic observance was again respected.

Actual Panorama of Contemplative Life on the Map of South America

Argentina - 7 Monasteries

- Córdoba, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1613)
- San Justo, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1755)

- Lavalle, M. San Alberto Magno (1967)
- Mendoza, M. Nuestra Señora del Rosario (1970)
- Catamarca, M. de La Inmaculada del Valle (1979)
- Añatuya, M. Madre de Dios (1980)
- Concepción, Tucumán, M. de la Inmaculada (1991)

Brasil - 1 : São Roque : M. De Cristo Rey (1930)

Chile - 3 :

- Santiago, M. Santa Rosa (1686)
- Copiapó, M. de la Inmaculada de Atacama (1986)
- Yerbos Buenas, M. de la Inmaculada del Maule (1994)

Colombia - 4 Monasteries :

- Bogotá, M. Santa Ines Montepulciano (1645)
- Duitama, M. Del Santísimo Rosario (1960)
- Ocaña, M. N. S. de las Gracias de Torcoroma (1977)
- Sogamoso, Bocaya, M. Del Espiritu Santo (1993)

Ecuador - 4 Monasteries :

- Quito, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1579)
- Caranquí, M. del Santísimo Rosario (1959)
- Duran, M. Venerable Catalina (1978)
- Quito, M. de La Sagrada Familia (1980)

Perú - 6 Monasteries

- Arequipa, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1579)
- Cusco, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1599)
- Lima, M. Santa Catalina de Siena (1624)
- Lima, M. Santa Rosa de Lima (1708),
- Arequipa, M. Santa Rosa del Señor S. José.(1747)
- Quillabama, M. N.S. del Rosario (1993)

Venezuela - 1 Monastery : Los Teques, M. N. S. del Rosario (1969)

Of the 10 countries that form South America in 7 we find Monasteries of Dominican Nuns.

There are 26 Monasteries. Of those 16 are members of a Federation.

- Argentina and Chile with 10 Monasteries,
- Peru with 6 Monasteries.

On Other Levels

South America is a continent with a majority of Catholics. As of the social, cultural, political context, each country has its own reality.

Our life has no insurgence of the civil power. At the ecclesiastical level our relations are of mutual understanding, except some special cases.

In all of South America over the last few years our life has been integrated in the Church in a very strong way. The political, economical, social and religious crisis seems to have created stronger bonds of unity and of understanding.

Shared Mission

In South America the Nuns are clearly aware of their belonging to the Order and its mission. And this conscientiousness urges them to find forms how to share the mission with all the members who form the Dominican Family.

Among ourselves we try to share our vocation in our own Monastery. And we are participate in Federations. As of late we are thankful for the reflections presented in the Document "In the Heart of the

Holy Preaching” and in the Bulletin ‘Monialibus’; also for the Letter of Fr Master, of Fr Manuel Merten and of the sisters of the Monastery of Prouilhe. The same for the Documents issued by the Assembly of Manila.

We are asked to make an effort to go further in assuming the priorities the Order has proposed at each moment. Always from that encounter with Christ Jesus that is the base of our life.

As of the actual relations with the Dominican Family, in some places they are brilliant, in others more difficult for different reasons :

We believe it is vital that this formation begins right from the initial formation. It would also help if the Nuns know the projects of the brothers, and adapt them thus as their own, in assuming them in their prayer.

Vocations

No doubt in South America there is a revival of vocations, also not in abundance. Given the lack during many years the situation of vocations has been very difficult. There are many young coming to our monasteries, but they need a long time to enter if we judge them suited for our life. The first we do is instruct them in the faith (Christian life and human formation). This takes a long time. And some of our countries often we have to ask them to return to their families. But remains the joy of having them formed to live their Christian life a little better. We see deficiencies in religious or Christian formation, at home as in the schools, and why not say it also in the Church. (Parishes, Centers of religious formation).

Formation

There are 2 Centers of Commun Formation. In Argentina and Chile.

However in most monasteries there are professors of the Order and other religious institutes or secular priest who come to give courses on the Bible, the Doctrine of Saint Thomas, Dogmatic and Moral Theology, the New Catechism, the Psalms etc., also explanation of Church Documents lately : Vita Consecrata, Fides et Ratio, Verbi Sponsa, Canon Law; professors of music, of organ, etc.

In some monasteries we also use the study by correspondance, theology and other subjects; for this we have the services of the Universidad de Comillas, in Spain; Instituto Fray Martín y Nuestra Señora de la Evangelización in Perú.

For the permanent formation we organize some annual courses that take place in some monastery; others in some retreat center. These courses are mandatory for the young in formation and all the solemn professed who wish to attend are invited with them.

General Information on the number and the age of the Nuns :

70% of the Nuns are young, 30% older

Comunication Media :

- In some monasteries they publish a Bulletin
- Leaflets for vocations,
- Articles for journals,
- Edition of books,
- Website www.
- Internet.

Spain
Torrente-Valencia
by Sister Marie-Inmaculada OP of Torrente, Spain

Our Federation has 375 nuns, 13 sisters in temporary vows, 14 novices and 12 postulants. In response to the invitation of Father Damian Byrne OP, who was then Master General, we have formed an Inter

Federation which is comprised of the three Federations in Spain. In the Federation, we hold annual meetings of the Federal Prioresses, the Secretaries and, in some instances, the members of the Federal Council.

A Dominican Priest-Assistant and the Federal Council assist the Federation with their advice. They meet once or twice a year and whenever there is a need. Every six years, a Federal Assembly (Elective Chapter) is convened for the election of officials of the Federation, the revision of the Directory, and to attend to the important matters affecting our contemplative life.

The Assembly or Chapter is celebrated in the Federal House in Torrente. This house is the residence of the Federal Prioress, Secretary, Bursar, the Common Novitiate, and the community which is composed of the nuns of the Federation. We call it “everyone's home” as it is always open to the prioresses and the nuns who come to consult, rest, recuperate from illness and those who need a change of climate.

There are flourishing relationships among nuns of different communities who have lived together for years in the Federal House, through the Common Novitiate, and mutual sisterly help. Many of those who had experienced formation in the Federal Novitiate are now at the forefront of their own communities, or in other communities where they are called to do serve (prioresses, organists, chantresses, etc.).

The communion that exists among us is one of the aspects that we most cherish as the fruit of our consecrated life. This is achieved by means of initial and permanent formation through the Common Novitiates, the meetings, study programs and sisterly sharing and concord.

Another priority is the mutual assistance in economic administration that aims to unify us in meeting the necessities when they come up. Actually, we are aware of the serious crisis in vocation and the aging of the communities within our Spanish territory. This, however, is not the case in Latin America where we have four monastic foundations and where the young continue in their search for God in the contemplative vocation.

Federation of the Central / Northern District by Sister Flora Maria OP of Olmedo, Spain

We have 36 monasteries with approximately 600 nuns. The median age of the majority of our communities is over 63 years; one monastery the median age is 80.

There are about 40 novices, majority of whom are born in other countries of the world, although, in Lerma, Vitoria, Alcala, Caleruega, Belvis, Corpus Christi and Vivien, there are Spanish novices.

Formation: Twice a year we have an Intensive Course for the temporary professed sisters, with positive results. For permanent formation, the communities study the writings of diverse authors.

Events:

- Solemn Profession of three nuns.
- Opening of a permanent museum within the enclosure.
- Process of beatification of Sister Teresa Chikaba.
- Cooperation with the project of Prouilhe
- A nun has initiated the Cause for the Canonization of Father Merino.
- Steps are being taken for a future foundation in India. On July 28, two nuns were sent, one from the Community of Cangas de Narcea-Asturias (who was the Novice Mistress of the Federal Novitiate), and the other is a native of India, from the Monastery of Jesus and Mary in Toledo.

EXPERIENCE SHARING

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

Sister Mary Sabina of Bludenz Austria moves to Buffalo, U.S.A.

For five months I have been a nun of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Buffalo, New York, USA and I am very happy here. The Sisters love me and I love them. It is a wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. This grace of mercy began 17 years ago when God called me for this precious contemplative life in Bludenz.

In the IDI September 2002 issue one can read that the Monastery of St. Peter at Bludenz in Austria has been dissolved. It is now assimilated by a congregation of active sisters, the Dominican Convent of St. Peter and Paul at Cazis in Switzerland. In 1985 the chapter of Cazis sent three Sisters to Bludenz, so that eleven Sisters could remain in their own motherhouse until death and be buried in their own cemetery.

After the closure of the Monastery of St. Peter at Bludenz, I immediately asked Father Manuel Merten, the general promoter of the Dominican Nuns, to be able to live as a nun in a cloistered monastery. Father Manuel who had previously known the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Buffalo, New York, from an earlier visit there, sent an e-mail to Mother Mary Thomas Noble, Prioress, and asked her if it were possible to have Sister Mary Sabina come for a visit and perhaps later for a three-year-probation period in the Buffalo Monastery. Mother Mary Thomas sent a favourable reply: "we would be very happy to have Sister Sabina come to us". Father Manuel had written to the Sisters that I very much loved the enclosure and Verbi Sponsa. The community was pleased.

For the third time I prepared to leave my home country to serve God as a nun in a Dominican Monastery. Father Manuel was very gratified with the positive answer from Buffalo. He told me to get a ticket for the flight, which I did. My plane was a US-Airways with departure from Munich via Philadelphia to Buffalo and back. The Prioress from Cazis, Sister Christa Wettmer, had paid the costs of travelling and, with her blessing, I left Bludenz on June 2, 2002. My brother took me to the air-port and after 18 hours I arrived at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Buffalo where I was welcomed heartily.

From the very first week I felt at home. It is the same Divine Office as we had in Bludenz, except for the language. We sing a part of it in Latin and a part in English, and my knowledge of it is practicable. The community has 35 nuns and also has an infirmary where I am working joyfully. A great gift is the four novices in the noviciate and the elder sisters. Two sisters in the infirmary are 93 years old, Sister Mary Michael and Sister Mary of the Immaculate Heart.

The most beautiful duty is the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed by day and night, and the Rosary. I love it with all my heart and soul. Every week we have confession, and every day Holy Mass, time for Lectio Divina, study and rest. Retreats are twice a year, one preached and one private. The Chaplain is Father Sam Matarazzo OP. We too have nice recreations and some special feast days with picnic supper, songs etc.

How good is God in his gifts! Trusting in Him, I wrote my request to the two communities and both Buffalo and Cazis voted affirmatively for my stay here. I then obtained my American Visa at Toronto in

Canada for my three-year-probation period. Thanks be to God: I received a new habit and the black veil upon becoming an American Dominican Nun.

Blessed be the Dominican Order and America, my new homeland!

Italy: preaching of nuns

The love that the faithful of Montepulciano feel with regards to their patron, Saint Agnes Segni, pushed the community of Dominican friars in Montepulciano, to renew the traditional novena in her honour. They manifested their trust in nuns and in contemplative life by asking the nuns of Pratovecchio (Arezzo) community to do the preaching which is usually done by a friar, during the liturgy of the popular feast of saint Agnes of Montepulciano which is celebrated on 1st May.

The prioress of Pratovecchio, sister M. Pia Fragni invited sisters from other communities to be present. By involving others, she desired to develop communion and co-operation among Dominican monastic sisters. Her proposal was accepted by Matris Domini community in Bergamo, which was represented by sister Antonella, and by the sisters of the Prato Monastery, represented by Sr. Annalisa and Sr. Anna.

In her meditation, Sr. M. Pia Fragni spoke of theological and moral virtues of Saint Agnes which remind us of our need to follow Christ in day to day living in this new millenium. All are called to adhere to Christ, and in growing awareness that we are loved by Him, be continually purified and renewed in Him. Speaking in the cathedral, Sr. M. Pia challenged the faithful: asking the Dominican friars that Saint Agnes' Sanctuary become, more and more, a place of prayer and contemplation.

Sister Antonella, focussed her meditations on the vital need for Christian faith and contemplation. She proposed these as the primary and fundamental elements for developing Christian holiness, a holiness founded in the Father's love and mercy.

On Sunday 26th May, the celebration moved to Gracciano, where saint Agnes was born. The Mass was celebrated in the presence of the mayors of Montepulciano, Proceno and Pienza. And Sr. Annalisa and sr. Anna, together with other sisters, offered, in the name of all nuns, lamp oil to burn in the room where saint Agnes was born.

During this special mission of announcing God's Word, the citizens showed their enthusiasm as they welcomed the nuns. All sensed the joy: it was as if Saint Agnes sisters had returned to Montepulciano,

What did this experience of preaching mean for us in a land where the faith is still deeply rooted and lived? How did we return to our respective communities after this experience?

Personally speaking, I noted that the persons I met are truly searching God and deeply desire to live in His presence and to search and understand his plan for them. They want to be able and give of themselves and help those who are in need, they recognise Gods presence, His face, in others. I also noticed how people looked at us with such love; they truly listened to us with open hearts. The rich faith of the poor and of the children is such a treasure and I sensed the mystery of God in a simpler and even more humble way. Through the brethren, God gave us the grace to speak of God's mystery revealed in Jesus and, once again I experienced how Christ is alive and present in our secular society today. The brothers call us the Apostles of the Apostles: we all desire to live out this aspect of Dominican contemplative life. This is the reason why we have shared with you this special experience of ours. For us, it has been an experience of being loved and trusted by our brothers.