



Monialibus

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers
International Bulletin N°9
April 2004*



*General Assembly of Prioresses and Formators
of the Italian Monasteries*

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June 6 - 27	Canonical Visitation of the Province of Brazil
July	Rome (preparation of the General Chapter)
July 27 - Aug. 17	Krakow General Chapter
August 27 - Sept. 4	Retreat to Italian Nuns
September 10 - 26	Canonical Visitation of the Province of Aragon
October 2 - 28	Canonical Visitation of the Province of France
November	Plenary session of the General Council
December 4-5	Visit to Barry University (Florida, USA)
December 6-29	Canonical Visitation of the Province of Mexico



Letter of Fr. Manuel Merten, OP

Dear Sisters,

I would love to be able to tell you in detail again about my experiences and activities. Now the General Chapter is drawing nearer, along with the duty to prepare an official report about my activities. I have subjected myself to this task over the course of the last few days. Who would have a greater right to see this report than you? For that reason, the report is included in this issue of “Monialibus” instead of my usual longer letter.

Nevertheless, I should like to share with you a special experience I had a few days ago. Since I was ordained priest in 1970, I have intended, again and again, to take part in the so-called Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday, the Mass which the bishop concelebrates together with the priests of his diocese. I have never managed to do that, because there were always pastoral reasons which prevented me.

This year, I had no other commitments and was in Rome. So I took advantage of this opportunity and celebrated the Chrism Mass with the “bishop of my current diocese”. It was a moving service, celebrated by the Holy Father together with us priests in St. Peter’s Basilica. The

words which he spoke to us in a powerful voice will be with me for a long time; when I administer the sacraments I shall use the holy oils with more inner participation than previously. I shall never forget the sight of the sick and the old people who brought the large jug with the oil of the sick, the catechumens with the oil of the catechumens and the deacons with the chrism.

It is unnecessary to stress that, during this concelebration with the Holy Father, I thought of you all in a special way, and prayed more intensively than usual in your intentions.

With Brotherly Greetings and Best Wishes

Report of the Promoter General for Nuns to the General Chapter 2004 in Krakow, Poland (cf. LCO 430)

General description of duties and term of office

The duties of the Promoter General for Nuns of the Order (Promotor Generalis Monialium) are defined in the constitutions of the brothers of the Order (LCO), not in those of the nuns (LCM). According to LCO 438, it is his duty to assist the Master of the Order and the Procurator General in matters concerning the nuns, to gather information concerning them or for them and to communicate with them and the different provinces (“*informationes circa eas vel pro eis colligere et ipsis ac diversis provinciis communicare*”). The Promoter General is a member of the General Curia, but is not a member of the General Council.

I was appointed Promoter General for nuns by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe on 29th May 2000, and took up my office on 1st November. Fr. Carlos A. Apiroz Costa, the Master of the Order at the time, confirmed me in my office in September 2001 (cf. LCO 431. 2).

Duties in Santa Sabina (Rome)

Like the brothers, the nuns of the Order also promise obedience to the Master of the Order. He is the actual and direct religious superior of all the nuns and monasteries (cf. LCM 238). That is a special feature of the Order of Preachers which is not to be found in this form elsewhere. This implies a special duty of care of the Master of the Order for every sister and every monastery. Accordingly, the communications and correspondence, as well as the administration in connection with all the matters concerning canon law, are voluminous. I have to deal with the majority of this correspondence and communications myself directly. Apart from that, I make every effort to support the work of the Master of the Order, his Vicar and the Procurator General to the best of my ability.

Since the beginning of 2003 I have my own office in addition to my own room. It provides me with all the technical prerequisites to facilitate the handling of the administrative duties, and has sufficient space for meetings and discussions for a small number of people.

Duties outside Santa Sabina

An important part of my task of facilitating communication consists of visiting the monasteries and participating in the meetings which the nuns hold or which are relevant to their lives. So, since the end of the last General Chapter I have visited the following monasteries:

August 2001: Lancaster, Elmira, Buffalo and Farmington Hills (all in the USA)

October 2001: Beaufort, Blagnac, Bouvines, Chalais, Dax, Evry, Langeac, Lourdes, Orbey, Paray-le-Monial, Prouilhe, Saint-Maximin, Saint-Palais-sur-Mer, Taulignan (all in France) and Estavayer-le-Lac (in Switzerland)

December 2001: Bamberg (in Germany)

January 2002: Rieste-Lage (in Germany); Bergamo Matris Domini and Azzano San Paolo (in Italy)

February 2002: Nijmegen (in the Netherlands)

March 2002: Nocera Inferiore and Sorrento (in Italy)

April 2002: Moncalieri (in Italy) and Chalais (in France)

June 2002: Cangas del Narcea (in Spain)

November / December 2002: Nairobi (in Kenya), Senekal (in South Africa), Rweza (in Burundi), Benguela (in Angola), Douala-Akwa, Toumi and Bambui (in Cameroon)

January 2003: Kosice (in Slovakia)

February 2003: Bocaue and Cainta (in the Philippines)

April 2003: Algund/Lagundo (in Italy)

May 2003: St. Denis (in Reunion)

June 2003: St. Anna (in Poland)

July 2003: Prague (in the Czech Republic)

August 2003: Washington DC, Camden, Union City, New York (Bronx), Newark, Syracuse, Menlo Park, Los Angeles (Hollywood), Lufkin, Lockport, Marbury (all in the USA)

September / October 2003: Caleruega, Olmedo, Medina del Campo, Valladolid Santa Catalina, Valladolid Porta Coeli, Valladolid Corpus Christi, Palencia, Mayorga, Lerma (all in Spain), Herne (in Belgium)

November 2003 Fátima (in Portugal)

December 2003: Lienz (in Austria)

March 2004: Fátima and Lisbon (in Portugal), Drogheda (in Ireland).

Since the last General Chapter I have participated in the following meetings, to which I contributed in the form of sermons, lectures or talks:

- Annual meetings of the Prioresses in Eastern Europe (September 2001 in Prague in the Czech Republic; June 2002 in St. Anna near Czestochowa in Poland; June 2003 in Krakow in Poland) – these meetings are a combination of exchange of experience and study days
- Participation in the General Meeting of the Federation of French-speaking Monasteries (April 2002 in Bellefontaine in France)
- Annual meetings of the German-speaking Prioresses (September 2001, 2002 and 2003, each time in Landsberg in Germany)

- Meeting of the Prioresses of the “Conference US” (September 2002 in Northampton in the USA)
- Meetings with Italian “sisters in formation” (in Santa Sabina in May 2003)
- Meetings with Prioresses from Italian monasteries (October 2003 in Rome).

International Commission of the Nuns of the Order the - “Monialibus” Bulletin

The International Commission consists of representatives of 11 federations and regions (Spain 3, France 1; Italy 1; rest of Europe 1; North America 1; Mexico 1; South America 1; Africa 1; Asia-Pacific 1). It plays an important role within the world of the nuns of the Order in terms of promoting communication. The members of the commission are proposed by the respective federations and regions (a list of three names) and appointed by the Master of the Order for a term of office of 6 years, in such a way that every three years half the members of the commission are replaced. In this way, both continuity and change are equally ensured.

The international commission meets annually for a working week together under the chairmanship of the Promoter General. In August 2002 this took place in Schwalmthal-Waldniel and Rieste-Lage in Germany, and in October 2003 in Prouilhe in France. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2004 in Santa Sabina in Rome. Here is a selection of some of the subjects that were dealt with: the Report of the Promoter General and the reports of the respective federations and regions; the bulletin of the nuns of the Order “Monialibus”; the “international monastery in Prouilhe” project; Justice, Peace and protection of the environment as a component of the Dominican contemplative vocation; the utilisation of modern communications media – the benefits and risks for our mission; the worldwide presence of Dominican contemplative life – the foundation of new monasteries (cf. the petition of the General Chapter in Providence, Acts 320); correspondence courses (cf. Providence Acts 317); “Preaching” – the responsibility of the whole Dominican family; etc. On the schedule for this year’s meeting is, amongst other things, work on updating the basis data on the monasteries of nuns of the Order.

The members of the international commission play a special role as regards “Monialibus”. They are primarily responsible for collecting information, news and articles from their federation or region and forwarding them to the editor [up to and including issue no. 7: Sr. M. Claire de Jesus Rolf, OP from (Langeac/Prouilhe, France), from issue no. 8: Sr. Mary Emmanuelle Cruz, OP (Bocau, Philippines)].

The promoter general and the editor are jointly responsible for the publication of each issue in the three official languages of the Order: English, Spanish and French. These are sent electronically to the members of the international commission, who, for their part, are responsible for the distribution (and, if necessary, the translations) in their own region or federation. The distribution is carried out electronically if possible, otherwise using conventional post.

In the meantime, this bulletin enjoys great popularity amongst the nuns of the Order. Its production and distribution is carried out with the lowest imaginable financial expense. “Monialibus” can be found on the website of the Order.

Special projects and duties

Again and again, there arise problems which make it advisable to seek support from outside, whether in this or that monastery or in its relations with third parties, or because of the state of affairs there. I was, therefore, involved in such activities (amongst others) for the monasteries in Altenstadt (in Austria), Prague (in the Czech Republic), Bamberg (in Germany), Algund/Lagundo (in Italy), Kosice (in Slovakia), and Fátima (in Portugal).

The International Monastery in Prouilhe

In accordance with the particular request of the Providence General Chapter (cf. especially nos. 323 to 325), it became my duty to accompany the planning and development of the international monastery in Prouilhe. Alongside multifaceted communications both verbally and in writing, and various short visits to the community in Prouilhe, I was responsible for or participated in the following projects:

- Planning meeting (three weeks) with the volunteer sisters from various countries of the world in August 2002
- The process of choosing and appointing the first prioress of the new community by the Master of the Order in December 2002
- Inaugural celebrations on 1st and 2nd February 2003
- Extensive evaluation of the community life of the new community one year further on, at the end of January and beginning of February 2004
- Preparation, reflection and carrying out of a project discussion on the “future of the Order and the Mission of Prouilhe” with the Master of the Order, Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa, his assistant for apostolate in the Order, the syndic of the Order, and representatives of the “pilot committee” including the prioress and syndic of the monastery of Prouilhe in March 2004.

Administration of the property of the dissolved monastery in Luxembourg and the care of its remaining nuns:

According to LCM 269.2, it is the duty of the Master of the Order to care for the grants made out of the property of dissolved monasteries of nuns in the Order for the benefit of those in need. With effect from 28th December 2001, the monastery of nuns in Luxembourg was canonically dissolved. It proved possible to sell the building, as well as large parts of the lands around it that belonged to the sisters, to the municipality and the state of Luxembourg. However, directly injecting these proceeds into the fund of the nuns would have had the consequence of paying 40% tax. The only legal way to avoid paying tax on these payments was to reinvest the money in house building projects within Luxembourg.

The Master of the Order, together with his council, has decided to choose this method of reinvesting the proceeds of sale, to initiate such a project in cooperation with the Archdiocese of Luxembourg and so to secure the long-term income of the fund for the nuns. The Master of the Order appointed me as his vicar in all matters concerning the handling of this project. Additionally, he instructed me to assist the nun who was appointed as vicar of the remaining nuns of the dissolved monastery in Luxembourg.

New foundations and closures of monasteries of the Order:

New foundations of monasteries have taken place in various places or are in preparation in different phases of readiness:

- **Mexico:** Merida – this new monastery was founded at the request of the Archbishop of Yucatan. The sisters for this monastery came from the monastery “Santa Inés de Montepulciano” in the Archdiocese “Puebla de los Angeles de México”.
- **Spain:** Isla del Hierro (Canary Islands) – This foundation was at the request of Bishop Felipe Fernández of Tenerife, that we should take over an existing old monastery building to preserve it as a place of prayer. The federation of the nuns in Mexico took responsibility for this foundation. The sisters for this foundation come from various monasteries in Mexico.
- **Vietnam:** The responsibility for this foundation was borne in a special way by the monastery in Farmington Hills in the USA. Two former “active” Dominican sisters underwent their formation to nuns of the Order here (novitiate and temporary profession) and are now living in Vietnam again. At the moment there are three further “active sisters” under formation in Farmington Hills. In close cooperation with the brothers, the five congregations of apostolically active Dominican sisters and the laity in Vietnam, we are getting closer and closer to an official foundation. Because of the restrictions which are still in force in this Communist-ruled country, it is not possible to describe the details in this report.
- **India:** The monastery in Cangas del Narcea in Spain is responsible for this foundation. In close cooperation with the brothers of the Order (the vicar of the Master of the Order there is Paul Kuruvilla OP), it was possible to buy some land and begin building the monastery. There are some sisters from Cangas del Narcea there on a rotating principle, who live with the Indian candidates and test their vocation to contemplative Dominican life. The novitiate and further periods of formation take place partly in India and partly in Spain. It has been expressly agreed between the Master of the Order and the community of Cangas del Narcea that this foundation does not have the intention of winning vocations for the monastery in Spain.
- **Belarus:** The monastery in Drogheda in Ireland has “adopted” the idea of the foundation of a new monastery in Belarus. Three sisters from Belarus, who at the moment live in the monastery in Krakow in Poland have been promised that they can live there for a period of intensive formation (two to three years) to look for ways of realising this idea and to carry it out.
- **England:** The latest idea for the foundation of a monastery of nuns is for the re-foundation of such a monastery in England. There is a suitable building for this foundation available at no cost. There are also some candidates from England who are interested. Discussions are in progress with the monastery in Langeac in France, as to whether they can take over the responsibility for this foundation.

I have looked after and continue to look after these projects with differing degrees of intensity. Sometimes I paid a visit “on site”, such as for the foundation in India of Cangas del Narcea in June 2002 and at a meeting in September 2003 with those responsible in Caleruega in Spain. Similar meetings took place concerning the foundation in Vietnam in Ho-Chi-Minh City and other places in that country in October 2002; concerning the proposed foundation in Belarus I visited Krakow in Poland in December 2003 and Drogheda in Ireland in March 2004.

In the period covered by this report, the following monasteries were canonically dissolved or steps were taken to prepare for their dissolution:

- Kloster zum hl. Apostel Petrus, Bludenz (in Austria)
- Monastère de Béthanie, Saint-Palais-sur-Mer (in France)
- Monastery of St. Dominic, Newark (in the USA)
- Monastère du Coeur Immaculé de Marie, Bouvines (in France)
- Monasterio de San Ildefonso, Santillana del Mar (in Spain)
- Monasterio de la Encarnación, Lejona – merger with the “Monasterio de la Consolación” in Salamanca (both in Spain)

I was particularly intensively involved with the closure of the Kloster zum hl. Apostel Petrus in Bludenz. The monastery could finally be taken over by apostolically active Dominican sisters from Cazis in Switzerland, and it is not lost to the Order.

Communities of sisters who are interested in becoming nuns of the Order

There are various places where sisters live together in smaller or larger communities and more or less follow the constitutions of the nuns of the Order. Mostly these have been established canonically as diocesan communities according to CIC 579. They have expressed an interest in becoming recognised as nuns of the Order. This is especially the case for the communities in Ilorin in Nigeria, and Romblon and Leyte in the Philippines. The respective requests will be looked into.

Other activities

Apart from what I have already described, the following individual activities are worthy of mention:

- A visit to the nuns in Hungary who were persecuted under Communism (December 2001)
- Participation in the conference of those responsible for the Dominican Family in the Asia-Pacific region (Caleruega Retreat Center in the Philippines in February 2003)
- Participation in the retreat given by the Master of the Order for nuns in Spain (September 2003 in Caleruega in Spain)
- Retreat for the sisters of the monastery in Prague (December 2003)
- Days of spiritual encouragement for the sisters of the monastery in Fátima (March 2004)
- Efforts to obtain financial support for various monasteries in Central and South America through the assistance fund of the department of the church abroad in the Archdiocese of Cologne and through the relief organisation Adveniat (Germany in December 2003)
- Taking part in the commission for the Dominican Family
- Cooperation with the other assistants and promoters in the general curia.

Particular concerns and problems

The lack of vocations to the contemplative Dominican life

In almost all parts of the world, there has been a noticeable general decline in religious vocations and especially as regards the contemplative enclosed life as Dominican nuns. Many communities, above all in Europe and the USA, either already have or will soon have large and varied problems. It is vital to achieve intensive cooperation. Up to now, only a few initiatives can be seen, which confront the problem together and look for solutions which can show the way and prove their worth in the future. Overwhelmingly, solutions (which are sometimes themselves problematical) are sought for one's own particular monastery. In this process, the mutual search for a future for the Dominican contemplative life often comes to grief. From the brothers' side, and from the apostolically active sisters and the laity, there is sometimes a lack of joint responsibility for promoting the contemplative branch of the Order.

The necessity of cooperation

The General Chapter in Providence urgently recommended cooperation between the monasteries of the Order (cf. nos. 338 and 339). There has been cautious progress in this field. For example, in July of this year I have been invited to visit Japan, in order to, amongst other things, to advise and support the four Japanese monasteries in establishing a federation.

For 2005, a first ever assembly of prioresses of the European monasteries who do not belong to a federation is planned.

The first considerations are being given to the establishment of a federation of some monasteries in South America which until now did not belong to any such federation.

Formation and Study

In many of our monasteries there are, if at all, only "individual examples" in the novitiate or in the years of formation until solemn profession. That is usually an unhealthy situation in terms of human and religious development, and makes it difficult to obtain a good formation and appropriate studies. Close cooperation and an intensive utilisation of the possibilities of correspondence courses are the commandment of the moment! I refer to nos. 315 to 317 of the Acts of the Chapter of Providence.

The worldwide presence of the Dominican Family

No. 320 of the Acts of the General Chapter of Providence commissioned the promoter general of the nuns along with the assistant for the apostolic life and in cooperation with the international commission of nuns and the federations, to prepare a map which makes clear where Dominican contemplative life exists or should exist. On this basis, it was proposed to undertake a coordinated evaluation by the end of 2002, to look at where Dominican life should be strengthened or newly founded.

A map showing the distribution of the existing monasteries is available on the website of the Order. The international commission of the nuns dealt with this question at its meeting in Prouilhe in October 2003, but, as a consequence of the given autonomy of the monasteries, did not get further than describing their wishes. Amongst these wishes were – for various reasons –

countries or regions such as: West Africa, Nigeria, Congo, Bolivia, Haiti, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, Iraq, China, Russia and Australia. Specific foundation projects are de facto obviously only possible if they are implemented as individual projects, which mostly evade the efforts of “general planning from above”. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that a foundation in Bolivia has come within the realms of possibility, according to the discussions on this subject held at the international commission of nuns. A corresponding declaration of readiness to begin the first stages of planning has been received by the Master of the Order from the President of the Federation of Peru, Sr. R. M. Blanca Gómez Cano OP.

Closing remarks

I would not like to end this report without a warm word of thanks for the loyal service which our nuns accomplish, through their continual prayer and sacrifice, for the mission of the Order. Wherever I encounter them, I sense a great interest in the activities of the brothers, in the activities of the apostolically active sisters and the commitment of the laity. Their love is combined with great loyalty, which shows itself particularly where the Order or its members are in difficulties or need. I often ask myself: Do we brothers sufficiently esteem this generous gift of our nuns and repay their service with our brotherly interest and our attentiveness to their special vocation?

Personally, I should like to express my thanks for the enrichment, especially spiritually, which has been given to me in the past years through my service as promoter general.

Santa Sabina, Easter 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr. Lucio Luciani OP". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent vertical stroke at the beginning.

PROGRAM OF THE GENERAL PROMOTER

Year 2004

April 2	Rome: Delegates Meeting with Carlos on Prouille Project
April 17- May 1	Croatia: Canonical Visitation with Raymund Klepanec
June 4 - 12	Marienkron, Austria: Retreat
June 13	Cologne, Germany: Province Council Meeting
June 14	Walberberg, Germany: Preparatory-Day > Provincial Chapter
June 21 - 25	Radonie, Poland: Prioresses Meeting of Eastern Europe
July 1 - 6	Fátima, Portugal: Preparatory process > Prioral Election
July 12 – August 4	Asia: Visit to the Monasteries in Japan, Taiwan, Korea & Pakistan
August 12 - 14	Bracciano: Dominican Sisters of Bethany
August 16 - 22	Italy: Visiting Italian Monasteries
August 29 – Sept. 2	Landsberg, Germany: Meeting of German speaking Prioresses of European Monasteries
September 2 - 6	Landsberg/Lech, Germany: Retreat for Dominican Sisters of LL
September 6 - 14	USA / CANADA – Visiting Monasteries
September 14 - 24	Northampton, USA: General Assembly < Conference of US Monasteries
September 25 - 26	Schlehdorf: Jubilee >100 years Dominican Missionary Sisters
October 10 - 18	Santa Sabina, Rome: Meeting of the International Commission of Nuns
October 23 – 27	Tours, France: Promoters Meeting

General Assembly Prioresses and Formators of the Italian Monasteries 13th – 18th October, 2003 Sr. M. Chiara, OP, Sr. M. Margherita, OP, Sr. M. Vincenza., OP

The Annual Course for the Formation of Prioresses and Formators with the theme *The Fundamental Constitution of the Order and of the Nuns* was successfully held last October 13-18, 2003 at the Generalate House of The Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine at Rome.

A total of twenty five nuns from fifteen Monasteries attended the course and assured its success. Due to varied but valid reasons, representatives from the following monasteries were unable to attend: SS. Annunziata in Rome, St. Agnes in Bologna, St. Antony in Gubbio, B. Colomba in Perugia, SS. Annunziata in Marradi, S. Nicolò in Cagli, Corpus Domini in Montefiore Dell’Aso, S. Maria in Gravina Di Puglia and Holy Rosary in Marino. Unfortunately, the Prioress of the Monastery of Monte Mario had to cut short her participation as she needed to attend to some urgent health concerns of some members of her community.

The course was opened with a Eucharistic celebration presided by Fr. Manuel Merten OP, General Promoter for the Nuns. After supper on the opening day, he spent meaningful

moments with participants as he shared about the unique mode of preaching with which the nuns serve the Dominican Family and the Church. He referred to the program of work of the International Commission of the Nuns as he emphasized the unique role and gift of the nuns. Each monastery is called to realize and nurture its gift in ways that are appropriate to their identity. It is only then that each nun becomes a living witness of the monastery's gift and mission. He also informed the participants about the thoughts of the Master concerning the revision of the LCM. At the moment, the discussion concerning the said revision is temporarily suspended. After responding to the questions from the participants, Fr. Manuel expressed his regrets for being unable to be present for the whole duration of the course as he also needs to attend to other commitments.

October 14th was a work day for the whole Assembly. The following were discussed: the Spiritual Exercises that the Master of the Order will be giving to the Italian Nuns from 27th August to 3rd September 2004; the Course of "permanent Formation" for the Formators and the nuns in formation. The Assembly also discussed plans for the solemn celebration of the 8th centenary of the Foundation of the Nuns in the year 2006. The final discussion of the initial plans was reserved for the last day of the conference.

Sr. Vincenza Panza, of the International Commission, read the report of the Italian Monasteries. This will be presented to the meeting of the Commission of the Nuns to be held at Prouille from 19th to 26th October 2003. In the afternoon, Sr. Elvira, of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Catherine, shared with the group the procedures they have employed in the intensive work of revising their constitution. The nuns have gained important insights from her sharing.

On October 15th, with the expert guidance of Fr. Dalmazio Mongillo OP, the nuns were able to deepen once again their knowledge and appreciation for the Fundamental Constitution of the Order (CFO). This was done with a conference given by Fr. Dalmazio and then followed by group work. The afternoon was devoted to the clarification of some questions and issues through a free-flowing discussion and sharing of reflection and insights.

On the 16th and 17th, Fr. Bernardino Prella, OP delved on the Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns (CFM). The same methodology of the previous day was followed.

In the last meeting the Assembly reviewed the proposals presented on the first day about the planning of the next meetings. The following decisions were made:

- 1) The Course on the Spiritual Exercises to be preached by the Master on 27th August to 3rd September 2004 will be held at the House of the Divine Teacher of the Sons of St. Paul in Ariccia-Rome.
- 2) The course of the nuns in formation on "The Redemption in St. Catherine" will be held at Villa Imelda, Idice-Bologna on the 24th till the 31st of May 2004.
- 3) The Annual Course on Formation for Prioresses and Formators shall be suspended for the next year.

- 4) The Formators have asked to have a five-day course on Psycho-Educational formation in a Monastery. They wish to attend this course in the place of the Spiritual Exercises to be conducted by the Master.
- 5) In preparation for the solemn celebration of the Octave Centenary of the foundation of the Nuns, the assembly nominated four Nuns to collect the materials regarding each Italian Monastery which will be published in “Unique Number” and on an internet website. The nuns who were nominated for this task were: Sr. Annalisa of Prato, Sr. Giovanna of Pratovecchio, Sr. Emanuela of Faenza and Sr. Cecilia of Nocera.

Towards the end of the meeting, the financial report was presented to the assembly.

On Saturday, 18th October, the Course was graciously concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist.

Our sincere thanks to the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Catherine for their hospitality and for their warm sorority. A heart-felt thanks to all the participants for their fruitful collaboration.

IN CALERUEGA:

The Master Fr. Carlos Azpiroz conducted the Spiritual Retreat for the three Federations of Dominican Nuns.

Probably for the first time in recent Dominican history, the Master of the Order, in the person of Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, dedicated 10 days to conduct Spiritual Retreat for the Contemplative Dominican Nuns of all Monasteries of Spain. It seemed like a dream at first that happily turned into a reality that surpassed everyone’s expectations.

Monasteries’ response

The invitation addressed to Federations and Monasteries was enthusiastically welcomed. The overwhelming response can be seen in the very high number of participants, ninety five (95) nuns. The House of Spirituality of the Dominican Friars of Caleruega provided accommodations for the retreatants. Since the number of participants exceeded the earlier



estimates, the bedrooms in the house were not sufficient to accommodate everyone. Fortunately, the community of nuns of the Caleruega Monastery offered the extra space needed by the participants.

The rest of the retreat activities took place inside the Monastery of the nuns. All places, including the Cloister Museum and the Orchard, were made available for the participants. For practical considerations, Night Prayer after dinner was held at the Choir of the Friars. The Liturgy was celebrated in the church and in the Cryptal which had been closed to the public during the ten-day retreat.

The Choir was big enough to accommodate the Assembly for the talks of the Master. The earlier plan to use the Chapter Hall with individual tables was deemed impossible due to the large number of participants. Thus, the venue for the talks of the Master was transferred to the Choir.

Indeed, in the house of the Father there is always a place for all his Daughters and Sons coming from all over Spain. For some or for many of us it was our first time to be in Caleruega. Our hearts were strongly beating as we catch a glimpse from afar, under a neat blue sky, the Guzman's Tower and the medieval monastic complex, cradle of St. Dominic and Home of the entire Holy Family of Caleruega. Upon arrival, the participants felt a strong familial atmosphere: words of welcome, kisses, embraces of old friends or sisters who meet each other for the first time. How familiar, how large and wide is the Family of St. Dominic that came to in Caleruega!

The Master of the Order was the first to arrive, accompanied by his Socius for the Iberian Peninsula, Fr Pedro Luis Gonzalez, OP. Some days later, Fr. Manuel Merten, OP, Promoter to the Dominican Nuns, came and joined the group.

The Master came to the waiting assembly in the Choir. Many have known him only in his picture and not many have met him before in person. Thus, those who met him for the first time were amazed at his simplicity and approachability.

After the warm welcome, the Master invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit by using the words of Paul VI: "Give us a new heart that revives in us the gifts received, a heart trained in the love of God, open to your silent, powerful and inspiring Word.., which only delights to beat in unison with the heart of God..."

The Master emphasized, among other things, the purpose of the Retreat which is purely spiritual. He recommended to keep silence, and invited us to listen to the Word like Mary (the sculpture we contemplate in the choir of the Friars reminded us of it). After the schedule was discussed and the first meeting was finished, he led for two hours a festive recreation aimed at making everybody get to know each other better. Snacks were served soon after. Once again we saw the general joy and enthusiasm shared by everyone with the Master in this privileged place of Caleruega. This was one of the many great and joyous moments shared by all as the days went on. It was an evidence of the unity among the nuns and the great appreciation and warm reverence towards the Master of the Order. Surely these grew in the hearts of the nuns as the days went by.

The schedule for the solemn chant of Vespers is 7:30 PM. However, the first day was an exception. The Eucharist was celebrated for the sake of the Sisters who were unable to participate in the mass for the day due to the long trip.

Everyday, from 7 a.m., the activities were done one after the other with flexibility: 7:30 a.m. Lauds, Eucharist and Terce then Breakfast. At 10:30 morning talk, followed by free time

where each one could do what she wanted: walking in the orchard among flowers, trees or under the shadow of the high walls were some of the favorite free-time activities especially because the weather was splendid. The Tabernacle of the interior chapel was well accompanied even at night. The Crypt was the ideal place to commune with our Father St. Dominic and his holy Mother, Jane of Aza.

The Cloister-Museum and its Garden as well as the high Cloister were also places where the peaceful and meditative nuns often stay. Silence was kept during the entire retreat. A wonderful sunset could be contemplated from the top of the Tower! After the Vespers the nuns went there in haste so as not to lose a single minute of the few minutes that this spectacle lasted. There they contemplated the scenery, the far horizon seen by St. Dominic during his infancy, the cellar of St Jane of Aza and other emblematic pieces. We could go freely in all the spaces of both buildings through the door of the garden from both sides which were closed to visitors during the ten-day retreat.

The talks of the Master on the central nucleus of the Retreat caught the attention of the Nuns. His words were full of wisdom with very deep insights and profoundly related to daily life. Unfortunately, the time was too short for our delighted ears and opened hearts.

He reflected on very well chosen biblical themes: Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles..., holy Women, and the Virgin Mary. This is not a place for comments about the themes. His talks will surely reach you by other means. The recorders did not stop working.



In the Museum of Antiques, beside the well of Bl. Jane of Aza, the Master shared on important symbols: the yoke of Jeremiah, the jar of the Samaritan woman, the alabastrine vessel of Magdalene that was filled with genuine nard, the staff of Peter and the keys or for Paul, the sword (centenarian remembrance of a Guzman). With his talks, the Master heightened the enthusiasm of the listeners. The familial bond and communion has truly been enriched in so many ways.

We highlight some small interesting events that were not part of the program:

One day the Master graciously joined the Nuns of the Monastery of Caleruega in their own Refectory for lunch. He was also joined by some of the participants and by Fr. Merten and Fr. Pedro Luis. For a couple of hours, silence was dispensed. They were very thankful to him for this gesture.

Historical memory of our Ancestors

Upon the suggestion of the Master, all the participants and the Assistants to the Master joined in procession from the Choir to the cemetery while praying the Holy Rosary. This was done during the typical impressive sunset in Caleruega. Upon arriving at the cemetery, the

Master remembered and thanked our Sisters and Brothers of our respective communities who preceded us, as he said the appropriate prayers.

Day 14 - Adoration of the Holy Cross

After Vespers, with the Cross on the Altar, the Master used the same text used by the Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Jubilee Year 2000 in the Vatican, for the prayers of the faithful and Penitential Celebration. Seven nuns lighted two candles each from the fifteen candles arranged in the shape of a triangle at the presbyterium. The last one was lighted by Fr. Carlos. At the end he let the Cross which was laid on the Altar to be kissed by the participants.

The celebration of the Liturgy

It is worthy to mention the enthusiasm of the singers and the collaboration of every one in the liturgical activities as well as in the practice of songs. Indeed the liturgy of these days of retreat had been brilliant.

The Master not only joined the choir in singing but sometimes even sang as a soloist. He also gave thanks and congratulated the singers. With humor he would say: “Sr. Esther of Toledo and Sr. Rosa of Caleruega, I hope to obtain all the necessary permissions for you to accompany me in all my trips as Itinerant Choir”.

The last day of the retreat, during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after Vespers and while the choir was singing, each nun bowed adoringly before the Blessed Sacrament while saying aloud her prayer from the bottom of her heart, talking “face to face” to the Lord, but only herself could hear it.

We were given a holy card with a personal dedication by the Master with a blank space so that each one could write the leitmotif of her own life.

If some things have to be highlighted as very important, these are the communion, joy and happiness experienced by the nuns coming from all over Spain who actively participated in the retreat.

We have much to thank for the total self giving of the Master to the nuns. He did not even give himself enough time to rest. We are also grateful to our Father St. Dominic because at every moment his spirit was moving among his Daughters and Sons coming from many kilometers far away yet attracted by his mysterious energy.

The Parish Church

As farewell activity, after the Eucharist in the morning, the nuns and the Master went out of the convent church, singing with enthusiasm in a long procession to the Parish church. It was a highly emotional activity. The Parish Priest welcomed the sisters with love and enthusiasm. His explanation satisfied the great interest and devotion of the Sisters.

From then on the saying of goodbyes started, though at the heart of everyone is the assurance that the communion they shared remains permanent even as they go back to



different monasteries. Infinite thanks, Father Master!

On September 19 after the morning liturgy, Sr. Carmen Rosales, from the Monastery of Alcalá la Real (Jaén), dedicated a beautiful goodbye to the Master. In it she synthesized the meaning of the Retreat for us. We wish this poem be published in MONIALIBUS, with the author's permission.

*Dear Master and brother, with your life and your voice
you have showed us the way wrought in love.
You have come from afar, without sandals or staff
and revived the memory when Dominic dispersed
the first brothers to the world
carrying just the fire burning in their hearts.
With open hearts we depart to sow in our communities
the love for truth.
With Abraham's faith, the passion of Elijah, David's heart
with the strength of the Word and forgetting oneself.
Without resisting being a prophet, with a motto in the heart, experience of God's gift,
carrying the perfume without fear or doubts.
You will see, Father and brother that the Order burns with the seed of love
you have sown in Caleruega, fruit of your intensive love.
You are self giving, tenderness, caressing, perfume, song,
you are remembrance, you are life, you are God's announcement, good friar preacher.
You are leaving but you remain in the heart of each and every one of your sisters
that brings you to their prayers.
Your life is also our life, and your love our love,
in Christ we are already one
and of Dominic all of us.
Thank you, Father Carlos, thank you for your concern.
We will never forget your memory and affection.
WE LOVE YOU*

**By the Nuns of Caleruega
September 2003**

REGIONAL REPORT

NORTH AMERICAN REGION **Sr. Mary Thomas Michalek, OP**



As you know, the North American Region is composed of all the Monasteries in the United States, 16 now, after the closing of our beloved Newark, New Jersey Monastery, plus the 2 in Canada and 1 in Trinidad. There are approximately 300 nuns in the U.S.A. around 30 in Canada between Berthierville and the new foundation in Langley, British Columbia. The Trinidadian Monastery numbers about 10 sisters.

Most, if not all, of these Monasteries belong to the **Conference of Nuns of the Order of Preachers United States of America** either as full fledged or affiliate members. Since the last meeting of the International Commission, the Conference Leadership has sent out a questionnaire to the member monasteries in view of changing our status from a “Conference” to an “Association” whose Statutes would then be submitted to the Holy See for its endorsement. The majority of monasteries voted in favor of this change with the provision that new and simplified Statutes be drawn up and submitted to the Monasteries for approval at the next General Assembly which is to be held in 2004. A Committee has been set up and is currently working on this revision.

In the meantime, various meetings have taken place, including those of the Conference Council, the Prioresses, the Novice Mistresses, the Bursars and finally, the meeting of the young professed in the Theological Formation Program (TFP).

This year 12 Mistresses from the States and Canada participated in the Novice Mistresses Meeting plus our guest participant from Drogheda, Sr. Mairead. Sr. Therese Claire, the Novice Mistress from the Cameroon was also here, but she chose to take part in the Theological Formation Program this time along with the nine American sister students. Sister will receive the materials and course plans from the Novice Mistress Meeting since she remains part of that program, too. We are most grateful to the Friars from the House of Studies in Washington DC as well as to their collaborators who either teach or serve as on-going tutors for the nuns enrolled in the TFP Program.

Vocations in the States, as in other parts of the world, are few and far between, as evidenced by the closing of the Monastery of St. Dominic in Newark, New Jersey. The community tried in vain to attract new members and after much prayer and honest evaluation of their situation, decided to sell the building and disperse themselves among the other monasteries of the region. Each of the 13 sisters was free to choose where she would like to transfer and each

one has been warmly welcomed wherever she has or will go as the closure comes to its conclusion. We see this sacrifice of the very first monastery of Dominican Nuns founded in the United States as a sowing of seeds for future growth.

The new foundation in British Columbia is doing very well. The nuns have purchased new property, including a large house, which has been remodeled to meet their needs. At present it is filled to capacity with the 8 Solemnly Professed Sisters there. They are waiting for the day when they will have room to receive suitable candidates, which we hope will be forthcoming.

AFRICAN REGION
Sr. Joyce Rita Mumu, OP



The Report given last year had ended with the Africa Monasteries looking forward to the 4th Meeting as a Region in Douala - Cameroon Dec. 2002. This meeting was very successfully realized and the summary of its outcome shared in Monialibus No.7.

Currently we are working on the ideas that came up in that last Meeting as a preparation for our next meeting in April 2005. The monasteries in Africa are very much in the same situation as last reported and so will here share something of interest.

The Monastery in Benguela in Angola, which is a foundation of Olmedo in 1972, is in the process of founding a new Monastery in the same country in the Diocese of Kuito-Bie. The Community sees this as an important foundation for peace in a Country that has a long history of war. Through the generosity of benefactors, the sisters are currently in a small house and can thus oversee the construction of the New Monastery.

The African Region is young and we are just getting into some kind of organization. There are different degrees of interest and participation. At the same time we are very aware of our needs and the direction that we want to take. Yet to be able to face the problems and enjoy the blessings, a certain amount of serious involvement is necessary. In our last meeting we were challenged to start thinking of our Region and to foster more binding ties as in a Federation or Association or Union or whatever name we may come out with. That left our minds rolling. By the end of the meeting the representative with her two sister assistants were left to look for more information in this regard. With the Internet we have information even from Peru and are thankful to Sr. Blanca, the representative of that Region. We do not know the future decision yet but request your prayers as we look forward to its discussion in 2005.

ASIA PACIFIC REGION
Sr. Mary Emmanuelle Cruz, OP



DomNunsAsia

The 1st issue of the regional bulletin DomNunsAsia (Dominican Nuns in Asia Pacific Region) was published in February 2003. The bulletin is the fruit of the nun's cooperation in the region to develop a closer link with one another and exchange information on matters concerning our Dominican Monastic Life. It will be published annually. In the region we intend to produce simple materials for the promotion of vocations. We also hope to create a DomNunsAsia web site in the future.

Japan

The prioresses of the Association of the four monasteries in Japan had their meeting in February 2003. They revised their directory and had it approved in June.

Foundation in India

The new foundation in India is a project of the Dominican Nuns of Cangas del Narcea, Spain. They are in the state of Kerala, the southern tip of India, in the diocese of Quilon. The church in Kerala is diverse and very complex, since it has three rites – the Latin, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankar, the latter two, being Oriental rites. And yet, young women from all three rites show interest in becoming Dominican contemplative nuns and the new community of two Spaniards and two Indians welcome them all gladly. They live with the hope that the Dominican Contemplative life becomes a reality and will flourish in India.

Proposed Assembly for the Nuns of Asia

A proposal was made to have an Assembly for the near future. The matter is being discerned as to whether necessity requires it. Some suggested that it would be helpful for our region to have its own assembly composed of Prioresses and Delegates. As a body, we can discuss our Constitutions, formation, and mutual help in fostering vocations, government and leadership. We also perceived the difficulty of having an assembly in the region due to different cultures, languages, political, social and economic aspects of each nation. We are aware that pursuing this plan requires great love, time, effort and perseverance to gain a good result.

Dominican Family Leaders Conference in Asia Pacific

In February 2003, the Dominican Family Leaders Conference in Asia Pacific (DFLC-AP) was held in the Philippines. The purpose of the Conference is to serve as an Association for collaborative leadership among elected leaders of the Dominican Family in Asia. Three nuns

participated in the said Conference. All the monasteries are included in the membership of the Conference and Sr. Mary Emmanuelle is a member of the Executive Committee at present, representing the nuns in the region for a 3-year term. The Executive Committee had their 1st annual meeting last July 2003, according to the approved Guidelines of the Conference. The next General Assembly of the Conference will be held on February 6-13, 2006 at Lahore, Pakistan.

SHARED EXPERIENCES

*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.*

**“Homecoming”
Poland, June 2003
Sr. Mary Rose Figura, OP
Farmington Hills, USA**



It was a great surprise and a joy when I received Sr. Stanislaw’s invitation to come to her monastery in Krakow, Poland for the meeting of the prioresses of Eastern and Central Europe.

I had often dreamed of making a pilgrimage to the country where my parents were born. I had heard so much about Poland in my youth both at home and in school. In fact, my first spoken words were Polish. Later, I learned my first prayers in Polish and had to study Polish history taught by the Franciscan Sisters in our parish school. However, I never realized just how much of the Polish culture I had absorbed until I arrived in Krakow.

I thought that the best way to prepare for this would be to get Polish lessons from one of the sisters here in our Archdiocese. After all, I did not have the opportunity to speak it since I had entered the Monastery in 1960! Fortunately, with the lessons, the language was slowly becoming familiar again.

I was warmly greeted at the airport in Krakow by Sr. Bernadette, an extern sister, and a Dominican student brother. As we drove to the center of Krakow, my heart beat faster and faster

with excitement as we passed so many historic sites. Somehow, it felt as though I was coming home. An energetic Prioress, Sr. Stanislawa opened the enclosure door and welcomed me with such gracious and warm Polish hospitality. I was here, standing on Polish soil, and in a monastery that existed since the seventeenth century. I could hardly believe it!

The meeting began the next morning with the nuns from Lithuania, Czech Republic, Kosice, Sw. Anna's and Radonie. It was a privilege to be among them and the Dominican Friars, for all of the three very fruitful days.

I enjoyed the delightful evening recreations with the Krakow community and their warm sisterly sharing. It was apparent that the joyful spirit of St. Dominic was alive and well in Poland.

Before I returned to the States, Sr. Stanislawa, thoughtfully arrange for me to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. I have been devoted to Our Lady under that title since my early childhood.

I was also very fortunate to visit the Community of Dominican Nuns at St. Anna's in Pszyrow. Even though my stay was short, the beauty and warmth of the Sisters impressed me.

The grace of being in Poland is something that I will always remember. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Fr. Manuel Merten and Sr. Stanislawa for inviting me to participate in this wonderful experience of Dominican collaboration.

ANNOUNCEMENT

BOOK

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Sr. Mary of the Cross Reilly, OP / Queen of Angels Monastery Bulacan, Philippines 2004

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