



Monialibus

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers
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Letter fr. Brian Pierce, op

My Dear Sisters,

Greetings in the Risen Christ! I write these lines of paschal joy from Spain, where the Master of the Order, a couple of other friars and I, and a large group of nuns from all three of the Spanish Federations, recently gathered in Caleruega to reflect on the future of Dominican contemplative life in Spain, by using a model of communal *Lectio Divina*. It was truly an experience of allowing ourselves to be led by the Word of Life, the very same Word who spoke to Mary Magdalene early in the morning on the first day of the week! And just as was the case with Mary Magdalene, so too did we hear a voice calling us to renewed hope and radical trust in God's faithful love.

A few weeks before Lent (around the time that fr Manuel Merten and I were celebrating Epiphany and the ending of the Jubilee Year with the nuns of Prouilhe), the editor of *Celebration*, a liturgical journal published in the United States, asked me to write a reflection based on what I have learned about the paschal mystery from my years of ministry among the poor in Latin America. It occurs to me – as I send my first "Promoter's Greeting" to you for *Monialibus* – that maybe these words would be of interest to you, as well. So, I humbly and gratefully share a small piece of the gift that God's people in Latin America have given me over these many years. I pray that all of us may experience that Paschal Light that is more real than death, and be renewed by the Pentecost fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our hearts and on our tongues!

A light more real than death

The bus finally came to a stop in a cloud of dust in the small town of La Jutosa, at the foot of the magnificently-forested Merendón mountain range in northern Honduras. I grabbed my backpack, climbed off the bus, and began to wind my way up the dirt road, headed for a week of pastoral visits to several of the mountain villages. I suddenly noticed a small group of people that I knew well, gathered on the side of the road, quietly talking. As I drew near and could see their faces, I immediately knew that something was wrong. It wasn't the usual open-armed welcome that I was so accustomed to.

Magdalena, one of the women of the community, looked at me and asked, "Padre, did you know that Jose Antonio and Sara's baby boy has been very sick?" Jose Antonio and Sara were a young couple that I had married a little over a year before. He was a delegate of the Word and she a catechist in one of the most remote villages.

"No, I didn't know he was sick," I responded. "I haven't seen them since the baptisms a couple months ago. Is he OK?"

"We're not sure," continued Don Petronilo, "They came down the mountain last night to take him to the clinic in Choloma. Someone just arrived on the bus and told us that they had heard that he had died. We're here waiting for news." I took a deep breath, familiar with this scenario, and knowing that it frequently ended in tragedy. I decided to wait awhile before heading up the mountain. If there was one thing that I was learning from the Honduran people it was that sometimes you just have to set aside your own agenda and learn to *be present*. I set my backpack

down, and entered into the quiet waiting. We stood there for more than an hour, looking towards the bend in the road.

And then we saw them, mother and father, coming up the dusty road, carrying little Rubén José in their arms. A little hope danced in my heart – until I saw their faces. I knew that the news was not good.

The young parents looked at all of us without saying a word. Then, holding their son in their arms, Sara lifted the soft, white blanket from the tiny infant face. They took a couple steps toward me, and then Jose Antonio spoke, in words that caught me completely by surprise, “Padre, will you bless our son? We need to get up to our village to bury him, but first we want to give thanks to God for the short time that He let us enjoy him.”

I took another long breath of air, wondering if I could ever manage to speak a blessing. How does one pray at a time like this? All my sophisticated theological categories went completely blank. In some remote corner of my mind I wondered why they weren't screaming at God and cursing the corrupt politicians that get fat and rich why two-month-old-babies die of simple, curable illnesses. But no, here they were, certainly broken-hearted, yet deeply grounded in their faith, and conscious that all of life, every second of it, is a gift from God.

I motioned for the small group of friends to draw near and together we prayed, thanking God for the short, beautiful life of Rubén José, and commending his tiny, innocent soul to God's infinite mercy. I guess that some words came, but I do not remember them. All I can remember is that here were these two young parents, whose first-born son had just died, and yet they had enough inner calm and clarity to want to give thanks to God for a tiny spark of life and joy in the midst of lives so often overwhelmed with suffering. And I remember the beautiful, faithful faces of the small community of friends who gathered around them in prayer. I knew all these people, their problems, even the quarrels among them, and yet at this moment none of that mattered. As we stood there in prayer, giving thanks, the essentials of life and faith seemed ever so clear.

Yes, there is a time to denounce the unjust policies of a world that constantly turns its back on the poor, but on that day José Antonio and Sara helped me glimpse the resurrection of Christ in a way that I had never glimpsed it. They showed me God's light shining in the darkness. I saw it in their faces, in their hearts of faith, in their gratitude, and in the community gathered in prayerful, silent solidarity.

I understood that the resurrection is not some fairy tale promise of a life free of suffering and death. It is not *cheap grace*, to use Bonhoeffer's phrase. Nor is it a *victory* in the way that world leaders and mighty armies speak of. Resurrection is life and love and faithfulness. It is a community – marked with the wounds of the crucified Christ – that stands in solidarity and faith, leaning into a Light that is more powerful than death. It is love overcoming all the petty obstacles that keep us separated.

What I have learned from the poor and those who suffer is that, though the cross frequently seems much more tangible than the resurrection in their daily lives, there is a presence that stands beneath and beside life's sufferings that reveals itself as pure faithfulness, as Light that shines in the midst of darkness. It is the faithful love of a mother and a father. It is Mary standing at the foot of the cross. The risen Christ does not magically erase suffering from our lives. He is present *in it*, as Light is present in darkness, enfleshing for us the faithfulness and solidarity of God. In the words of Gustavo Gutiérrez, in his book on Job's experience of suffering: “The greatness of God, more that showing itself in power, is found in the freedom and gratuitousness of God's love, God's tenderness.”

Resurrection seeps into our lives like the light of a flickering candle that bleeds through a slightly cracked door in the middle of the night. Because the darkness is so great, the candlelight is refreshingly bright, illuminating more than one would think possible. The darkness does not

disappear, but in a very real sense, it loses its power. The fragile light of the candle, so small and vulnerable, is actually more *real* than the darkness.

Is this not what the disciples experienced in the Upper Room on the evening of the first day of the week (Jn 20: 19-23)? Jesus' risen presence did not come to them like a great *victory* over an approaching army. In fact, the powers of evil and violence were still lurking just outside the door, waiting to destroy the community that had just touched the body of Christ. Jesus' resurrection did not mean that it would be easy sailing from here on out. What it did mean, though, and what it still means today, is summed up in the words Jesus spoke to the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel, "And remember, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (28:20).

What the disciples experienced in the hours and days and weeks following their encounter with the risen Christ was that his presence was much more *real* than any power of death and violence. The Light that showed itself that evening in the Upper Room, in spite of the closed windows and doors, cannot be extinguished by any earthly power.

At the same time, though – and this is perhaps the great insight that the poor have taught me time and time again – the Light does not crush or extinguish the worldly powers either. Evil is still with us. We are still pilgrims in a world that has not fully awakened to the presence of God, the presence of the Light that stands beneath and beside us each and every moment. "Though the light has come into the world, people have preferred darkness to the light" (Jn 3:19).

What the disciples discovered after the resurrection, though, was that the Light of the risen Christ was more *real*, more *faithful* than the powers of death. I think this is what St. Paul was trying to say as he taunted, in the light of Christ's resurrection, the *powerless power* of death.

Now I am going to tell you a mystery... After this perishable nature has put on imperishability and this mortal nature has put on immortality, then will the words of scripture come true: Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?...So, my dear brothers and sisters, keep firm and immovable, always abounding in energy for the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord none of your labors is wasted (1 Cor 15:51-58).

Paul is not talking about something that happens to us after we die. That is why he ends with words of encouragement, urging us on to a firm and immovable faith as we live our Christian discipleship in the Light of the risen Christ, yet in a world still marked by war, injustice and death.

When I saw the faces of José Antonio and Sara that day, I knew that they had been through the dark night. I knew that they had cried every tear possible in their vigil of supplication to God. In one sense it seemed that death *had* been victorious. But no, it was the Light that had the final word. It was the prophetic gesture of simple gratitude, that very same gratitude that Jesus and his community of friends celebrated at the Last Supper, that finally broke the stranglehold of death.

The resurrection of Christ is not something that *happened* once upon a time. It is the Light that shines in the darkness; it is the victory of gratitude and love, grounded in faithfulness. It is living each moment of our daily lives mindful of the presence of Jesus, "firm and immovable, always abounding in energy for the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord none of [our] labors is wasted."

In May of 2006, one of our Iraqi Dominican brothers, Fr. Yousif Thomas, OP, wrote a letter to a friend who had been living in Baghdad as part of the Christian Peacemaker Teams. Though writing from a veritable hell, his words echo the gentle faith of one who lives the resurrection as part of daily life: "Yes we are in the middle of the storm, and the Lord seems to sleep, but he is here with us...It is so sweet to live as he suggests, in the foolish way of love...It is not our choice but his."

Resurrection is the gift of faithful presence, and not a fairy tale that takes place in some distant heaven. The risen Christ is the very ground upon which we walk, the one in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). To live the resurrection is to be *grounded* in Christ, grounded in gratitude and justice and peace. It is to choose "the foolish way of love." We

live the resurrection when we inhale the Light that Jesus breathed into his disciples in the Upper Room, and know that this Light is more *real* than anything else, more *real* than death itself.

fr Brian J. Pierce, OP

Greetings of the editor.

Dear Sisters,

Joyful Paschal greetings from Jumilla (Spain). Christ has risen from the dead Alleluia! Let us rise with Him!

This is the first issue of Monialibus that I have prepared and I am very happy to be handling the special issue of the Jubilee Year. My main work has consisted in receiving and sending mails of reports and articles and organizing all the material needed for this special issue. The most demanding work has been done by the translators, and for this I am very grateful. Without their collaboration publishing Monialibus would not be possible. I am also very grateful to all the Sisters who have shared their Jubilee experiences through this issue. All of them have made my work easy and pleasant. I hope I can count on the same collaboration in the future.

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Original: Spanish

The fruit of the Jubilee Year

The Dominican jubilee year has gone by with the swiftness with which beautiful things pass away from us. Eight hundred years since our Father St. Dominic founded the first « house of the Holy Preaching », here, at Prouilhe!

Our experience during this year has been meeting, praying and living with members of the Dominican Family from many different countries and cultures – as in a mosaic. We have been enriched with the many colors of different ways of living the Dominican charism.

All our jubilee experience has allowed us to admire and to live the universality and unity of our Order. At the same time our experience has grown of being sisters to all, and the horizons of our prayer have been opened to a perspective that is more truly universal. For and with the Dominican Family throughout the world, every one we met lives more truly in our hearts at the time of prayer, with all their many names, faces, lives, apostolates, and countries. What a grace!

Another gift which enriched us this year was the arrival of eight new Sisters to join our community: in April, two from Peru; in August, two from Mexico; in October, three from France and one from the Philippines. Besides that, we had the joy of the entrance of three postulants into our noviciate. This too contributed a more universal tone to our community and increased the sisterly joy which we had already known.

But there has been a more delicate fruit growing -- in a quiet, secret way -- through all the events of the jubilee year: HOPE is the fruit I mean. It has been a little light increasing, until now it lights up the whole house, inside and out. There has been a widening of our joy. I would even say it is something like God's rejoicing as we experience in our littleness the dizzying strength of his Incarnation which sustains us; his mercy in our poverty. As he saw us abandoning ourselves more and more to faith in his love, he guided and supported us the more more, with his light and strength.

God's peace now covers our community and brings distinct characters and cultures onward in the unity of sisterly love. Like the sun, it makes everything lovely and makes it possible to transcend the obstacles inherent in community life, in order to follow our beautiful international Dominican vocation at Prouilhe.

Situated on a plain where the harvest undulates like waves of the sea, Prouilhe seems to me like a boat in the immense world, advancing with confidence, guided by the wind of the Spirit, bearing us forward with our mission of preaching at the very heart of our existence.

We are a community more conscious now of a responsibility to live a life of prayer for the Dominican Family. The Hope which has grown during the jubilee year reassures us, in the Lord who leads our lives and makes our history into a history of salvation. He takes up our projects and guides them according to his will toward their best realization.

With the strength and light of the Spirit, we hope to be -- here and now -- a humble fulfillment of St. Dominic's wish that we be at the heart of his Order. In this place where he founded us, at a crossroads, we want to be a place for the meeting of cultures. The simple light of a life spent in prayer, in chant, in work for our daily bread, in discreet and warm welcome to others, may shine from the fraternal charity which make us bearers of the pain and the hopes of the world. May this desire of ours become a reality: that Prouilhe be home for every Dominican, a place where anyone can come: to drink at a source, to receive the imprint of dominican spirituality, or to replenish his or her strength for continuing on the way of the Holy Preaching. The seed that is this desire, must be watered by a life of prayer.

When we began the jubilee year and saw the program, with all the work it would take to realize it, we said, like the Virgin Mary, « How can this be done ? » ! One of the fruits of the jubilee has been our experience of the strength and joy of the Holy Spirit, which enabled us to welcome each group who came, each sister, each brother, as someone unique, thinking all the while that perhaps this would be that person's only occasion to come to Prouilhe. Every group which cast a positive glance toward our community stimulated us in the way we have to live day after day. Our tiredness was always changed into joy as we saw the good that was shared and received.

Still another fruit of the jubilee was the beginning of the restoration of the Basilica. On February fifth, the first phase of the work began. The goal at this stage is to restore the ancient choir and the sanctuary.

We take the occasion of this note to make an appeal to all our brothers and sisters, to all those who want to continue cooperating in our work. The money that is still needed is more than



half again of what we actually have. Your gifts will be inscribed on the stones with which the sanctuary is reconstructed, as well as in our hearts and - even better – in the heart of our God.

We remain in close communion with you, in the One who is our life, in the same service to the Church and to the Order -- for the life of the world.

*Your sisters at Prouilhe.
Original: French*

*Homily of the closing of the Jubilee Year Mass in St. Dominic El Real
(Madrid)*

On this feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, we are celebrating the closing of the Dominican Jubilee Year marking the 800th year since the foundation of the first monastery of Dominican contemplative nuns by St Dominic de Guzmán. The feast of the Epiphany, in its evangelical account of the adoration of the Three Wise Men, helps us to understand the meaning of contemplative life and also invites us to give thanks to God for this gift to the Order, to the Church, to the world.

Christmas {The Epiphany} – which in Spain we call the Feast of the Kings – has become the feast of gifts in imitation of God who gave Himself. Among so many presents that we buy and we receive, we should not forget the True Present: to give to one another something of ourselves. Most times the best present is to give to others some of our time, to dedicate to them something of our life. When we live with so much agitation and stress, the first thing that we notice is that our contemplative Sisters have given their time to God, to seek Him with all their heart in prayer, in silence, in meditation of His word, in study and in contemplation. Those who devote their time to the things of God for the whole of their lives remind us how decisive it is to make time for God in our lives so that our burden and agitation can be transformed into serenity, worry into trust, boredom and the emptiness of the hours into meaning and service to others, sadness into joy.

The Three Wise Men left their past life and their known land to embark on a new way, led by the mysterious sign of the star. They are anxious and searchers. This is the essence of the religious and contemplative vocation: to consecrate oneself to the search for God, trusting in His signs, in the sign of the star which is Jesus Christ. “Seek truly for God”, was what St Benedict asked of those who enter the monastic life. A Sister in the monastery does not have any other desire than to seek for God. The monastery is a sign of this search. The most profound search of a human being is: the burning desire for the living God. Monasteries are places that arouse and make it possible to cultivate this search. Those who are anxious and those who are searchers are always welcome in a Dominican Monastery.

The account of the Three Wise Men also speaks to us of another basic attitude for those who wish to get closer to God. When the Magi arrived at the place where the Baby Jesus was, they offered Him their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Children who are being taught their catechism usually ask what the Baby Jesus needed gold, frankincense and myrrh for. Some of them think also that they are the toys of that time. It is well known, that these gifts do not tell us what the Baby Jesus needed but who He is: king, priest and true man. Nowadays, most gifts do not tell us what others need but who they are: they are our beloved friends and we show them by our gifts that they are very important for us.

It is presumed that when the Magi gave the Baby Jesus their gifts, their hands remained empty, because we can only receive God with empty hands. When they give Him their gifts, with

the emptiness of having given everything, only then can they, and we all, receive the gift of God; only with empty hands can one receive the God Child in one's arms. Herod's attitude was the reverse. He had so many things in his hands that they were not free to receive the Child. We can only receive the presence of God if we are able to give Him what we are and what we possess; if we are able to offer Him, as a gift, our life, our work and efforts, if we put our gifts and qualities at His feet and we live our personal history as a service for the Kingdom and for humanity and humanization. The small and humble God of Christmas can only be born in the emptiness of those who live by giving.

Certainly, we are scared of this emptiness and so we remain outside. We do not find God in spectacular things but in the humility of a poor family, nor do we find Him in the greatness of His Majesty but in the littleness of a Child. Like the Magi, we may need years of pilgrimage and much searching in order to be able to recognize the presence of God. But one thing is certain: without detachment, without leaving our hands empty not only of obstacles but also empty of having given ourselves to others, without this attitude, the simple and great God Child cannot be born in our lives. We must empty our hands in order to receive the Epiphany gift.

Our contemplative Sisters have put all their life, their personal gifts, their time, at God's feet. At times it might seem that their life is empty of content because they do not enjoy many things that we think are good gifts for life. But the contemplative life reminds us of the message of this feast: It is necessary to empty ourselves to receive God and to receive the gift of His presence and His grace. In fact, a Dominican mystical tradition defines our spiritual efforts as an "emptiness" so that God can be made present. "Emptiness" means to recognize that God is our most profound desire, our most intense search, and that God is the authentic plenitude that can fill our hands and our life. The contemplative life is a way of life that seeks to make a space to receive this gift of the plenitude of the life of God. And in this way contemplative life becomes a sign that reminds us that we must make a place in our life to receive the gift of God. They are called to be, in a way, the Magi of today: with their search, their surrender and the gift of their lives with their "emptiness" and the adoration of the God Child who is born in an empty hand. The "Herods" of this world cannot receive this gift unless they renounce their self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction. For them, the defenceless Child will always be a menace. For the defenceless, the Child is the gift of the plenitude of the life of God.

Christmas is the feast of gifts so that we can imitate God. As we close the Dominican Jubilee Year, we thank God for this gift to the Order which is our Dominican contemplative Sisters. They lay us too before the Manger and the needs of so many people, so that the God Child may receive them. Like our Christmas gifts, with our presence we want to express to them how important they are to our life and to the Order. Although, nowadays, the monasteries are becoming empty and this worries us, the Word of God invites us to strengthen our faith and believe that all emptiness offered to God will be given back to us as the best present which will surprise us. May God continue to give to our Order these wise women who are the contemplative nuns, so that they can help us to discover the God of Christmas, the little, simple, poor and tender God, the great gift for hands that give to others and themselves remain empty.

fr. Javier Carballo, OP
Original: Spanish

*Monastery of St Dominic and St Sixtus
in St Mary of the Rosary*

I believe that the external and internal celebration of the Jubilee of our Monastery began on 9th June, 2006. It was on this day that the Father Master asked us if we were willing to part with our relic of our Holy Father St Dominic in order to make it possible for each of the Italian Monasteries to have the relic for a week, during which they could organise their Jubilee celebrations.

It was certainly a painful moment when the Vice Postulator came to remove the blessed Relic from the old reliquary into order to take it away and place it in the new one that was being designed. However, we accepted this painful separation with joy, as it was done with love for all our Sisters.



The arrival in our Community of the new reliquary was a very joyful occasion! The old one was very beautiful and majestic, but very heavy to carry ... hence the decision to make a second lighter one, which arrived in the Monastery in time for 3rd December, 2006, the day on which there was a solemn Concelebration at which the Father Master presided, with 6 other Brethren and a few diocesan priests, in the presence of many Sisters from various Dominican congregations, 2 Co-operator Brothers and many of the laypeople who come to Mass in our church every Sunday.

The Master of the Order, Fr Carlos, expressed his joy and astonishment at finding himself in the midst of such a large congregation in which all branches of the Dominican Family were represented. Addressing himself to all, he declared that every monastery, convent, and private home must become a 'Holy Preaching', but most especially the Nuns, since it was St Dominic's wish that each monastery should be a HOUSE OF PRAYER,

HOUSE OF PREACHING.

Turning then to the theme of Advent, the Master said that we are embarking on a period of waiting, waiting for a Child: every birth is awaited, but it is awaited with joy, it is a period consisting of preparation and welcome which changes the rhythm of every family.

For us too, the period of waiting for Christmas, for the God who wishes to be born a Child, poor and in need of everything, should induce us to live in our spiritual life the same attitude of the poor Christ: a real lived poverty, causing us to reflect on our vow How do we live our poverty?

Today even in our houses, we lack nothing. The Lord never goes back on his word, and his promises are the reality that we touch every day. (Anyone who leaves mother, father, sister and brother will receive a hundredfoldetc) I am sure we will live our poverty if we open ourselves once more to the spirit of dependence, asking for permission, asking for what we need, putting whatever we receive in common without wanting that particular thing to be given back to me when I do not need it ...to live detachment from everything.....

To live poverty of spirit: to feel ourselves poor beggars in the presence of God ... needing everything every day, every moment, to stand before God with our hands open, and saying to Him: "Father, here I am, give me my daily bread, what I need today, because tomorrow I will be back to ask for what I need then and You will give it to me."

St Dominic's preaching was convincing only when he preached with his life as well as with his words.

The same will be true of us if we live the 'Holy Preaching' in our Communities. Such preaching will reach out to the whole world like a refreshing dew falling on the soul of each one in need of grace and light, and bearing the fruit of conversion.

Fr Carlos ended his homily by explaining the meaning of the Jubilee Year.

In the course of this Jubilee Year we have endeavoured to celebrate the memories and feasts of our Saints and Blesseds with greater solemnity.

On the feast day of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, on 13th February, we celebrated with a large group of Dominican Sisters and Lay Dominicans. Vespers, which were sung together with the faithful and Fr Antonio Cocolicchio O.P., were followed by a wonderful conference, given by Fr. Cocolicchio, on the exchange of letters between Blessed Jordan and the enclosed Dominican Nun Blessed Diana, whose autograph letters are preserved in a case in our Monastery of St Dominic and St Sixtus in St Mary of the Rosary in Rome. Then followed the presentation of the little book 'L'arancio fiorisce ancora' which had been prepared in collaboration with all the Dominican Monasteries in Italy.

At the invitation of the Mother General of the Dominican Sisters of St Sixtus, some members of our Community went in pilgrimage to St Sixtus in order to commemorate, in this Jubilee Year, the 788th anniversary of the founding of our very first Monastery of Nuns in Italy by our Holy Father St Dominic in 1219.

We all felt the presence of our Holy Father St Dominic as we walked where he himself had walked so many times. After visiting the various places where our Sisters had lived, prayed and suffered, we made our way to the Church for the concelebrated Mass at which Rev. Fr Dominique Renouard O.P., Vicar of the Master of the Order and Vicar of our Community presided, with Fr Antonio Cocolicchio O.P. and Fr Patrik of the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Confessor of the St Sixtus Community). In his homily, Fr Antonio reviewed the various stages of the foundation of the first Community, recalling how St Dominic had written the rule for the nuns of St Sixtus, a Rule and Constitutions which would thereafter be used by all the future Monasteries.

We experienced a moment of deep emotion in the Refectory of the Miracle of the bread distributed by Angels after St Dominic had prayed. The table of the miracle is preserved in our own monastery.



For the feast of St Catherine of Siena, our Mass was celebrated by Fr Daniele Cara, O.P., Prior Provincial.

As we have done for many years, at First Vespers on the eve of the Solemnity of St. Dominic, we celebrated the Commemoration of the Transitus of our Holy Founder in conjunction with many Sisters from the various Congregations of Dominican Sisters and lay Dominicans. This celebration was promoted and desired by Fr Antonio Cocolicchio when he was Vicar of the Master of the Order for our Monastery.

On 21st November, "DAY PRO ORANTIBUS", Fr. Antonio wished to promote a solemn celebration by inviting the Fathers from his Priory on the Minerva to celebrate this particularly significant day in this Jubilee Year which was by now coming to an end.

On January 6th, we celebrated the closure of this Jubilee Year with a solemn Con-celebration at which the Procurator General, Fr Roberto Ombres O.P. presided, together with Fr Antonio Cocolicchio and an Opus Dei priest who is a friend of the Community.

We thank the Lord and the Master of the Order for giving us the possibility of experiencing this great grace and gift of the Jubilee Year which has certainly filled us with renewed spiritual energy and new enthusiasm to continue our journey in joy and total dedication. May our loving Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompany us on our way.

Original: Italian

2007 In Caleruega
the Jubilee Year for the 800th Anniversary of the Nuns

In Caleruega we are living this year of grace with great joy and thanksgiving because of all those who came to the home of Saint Dominic, up till now about 10,000 persons. Even though the majority of them belong to the Order, many other members of the Church came to the monastery in order to gain the jubilee indulgences and to honour our father Saint Dominic. During these months various bishops paid us a visit: among them the bishops of Burgos, of Huesca, of Tarragon and that of Osma-Soria came with three buses full of faithful from their dioceses. The auxiliary bishop of Jerusalem also came. There were also a few Dominican bishops among whom Larrañeta OP from Puerto Maldonado (Peru), and the bishop of Norfolk (England), accompanied by priests from their dioceses.

Many groups of Dominicans came. I can recall the Provincials of Spain, Aragon and Portugal accompanied by brothers from their provinces, a group of friars from Korea, the Philippines, Poland, Germany, France and Italy. Big groups of Dominican sisters of apostolic life came from the USA (Sinsinawa, Parable), and also several groups from the Dominican Family of Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Canada.

Some contemplative nuns also came. Although in smaller numbers, some nuns wanted to celebrate their 800th anniversary by visiting Caleruega. The first ones were the nuns of Prouilhe, together with a nun from Dax (France) and another one from Salamanca, who were invited by the friars in Caleruega to participate in the opening days of this year. Later, five nuns from Bergamo (Italy), among others, visited us for some days.

There were also many visits by other religious Orders and Congregations, such as the Benedictines of Silos, with whom we celebrated solemn Vespers dedicated to Our Father, or the Augustinians from La Vid, the Sisters of the Poor from Aranda de Duero, or groups of nuns and friars of the Sacred Heart, who came on several occasions from different parts of Spain and from other countries.

Many persons belonging to different Church groups, such as some Communities and many families from the Neocatechumenal Way from Burgos, Madrid, Santander, Oviedo, Castellón, Murcia ... came, as also «Amigos de Tierra Santa» (friends of the Holy Land) from Madrid, the Fraternity of the «Adoración Nocturna» (Nocturnal Adoration) from Aranda de Duero, «Cristianos sin fronteras» (Christians without frontiers) and «Famisión» and a big group of Christian committed families from many parts of Spain.

Many persons, in parish groups or groups of friends came to visit us. Many came in coaches from different localities accompanied by their parish priests and sometimes by their mayors too. We mention only some of them: La Coruña, Trijueque (Guadalajara), Concentaina (Alicante), Alcalá de Henares and Fanjeaux (France).

Professors from Dominican Colleges from all over Spain deserve a special mention. They met here in the Choir of the nuns of Caleruega. They came accompanied by some friars who had previously asked us to prepare a short presentation about the history of the nuns and also a warm welcome in our Father's home. We assured them of our prayers of support for the education work they carry out among young people, which is so important for our immediate future and, also, prayers for the youngsters and the colleges. They participated with pleasure in a celebration that was very pleasant and brought closer to each other.

If the celebration I have just mentioned deserves a special mention, the one I am going to mention now deserves to be qualified as amazing, unique and marvellous: the unforgettable

experience we had with the «Dominican Youths». The initiative came from Bro Oscar Jesús OP and Sr Pilar del Barrio OP, who had been preparing this meeting for a whole year and it turned out to be such a positive and unforgettable experience for us all who lived it. Several adult members of the Dominican Family also participated in the organization as well as some Dominican sisters from several Congregations and some friars.

430 young people aged between 15 and 30 years, from different parts of the country, were attracted mainly by this message «Caleruega 2007. 24 hours of meeting, feast and prayers, to celebrate 800 years. History has not ended – it is now your turn». These young people had 19 workshops to choose from. In a big hall, we were in charge of one of them: «Preaching through silence», which was not one of the most frequented. However we could say that those who participated showed great interest and were impressed, for they knew nearly nothing about the life of contemplative nuns.

Two moments were very emotional. First, prayers at midnight on Saturday in the cloister garden, which proved a time of great beauty, in an atmosphere of organized brotherly joy, with a very suggestive and evocative illumination, music, dances, songs, projections, readings and prayers of thanksgiving and petitions. Everything was so Dominican, that Saint Dominic must have been happy to see so many young people in Caleruega, and they felt happy in his home.

The other moment was that of the Eucharist on Sunday morning, in which the Prior Provincials of the friars in Spain and Portugal were present, as well as Provincials and Mothers General of several Congregations of Sisters accompanied by so many young people. It was beautiful, participated and very emotional for all those present. It was a jubilee gained with great collective enthusiasm.

Surely, there shall be many other visits during such a special year and we shall be happy to welcome all those who come here.

The opportunities we had all year long were also very important and, we could say, were providential, and which we accepted, one after the other, with enthusiasm. The first one was the restoration of the Medieval Hall or the Palace of the Guzman family, which was inaugurated in time for the opening of this year and which is being visited and valued by many. Others were: the publication of two books about the Community and the Monastery, a DVD on St. Dominic and a report about our way of life for the «Pueblo de Dios» program on RTVE. All of these were carried out because of this big celebration and they are being greatly accepted by everybody. We want to give greater exposure to an extraordinary event for the nuns and for the Order. We hope that Saint Dominic's life and work will reach the greatest possible number of people.

Ever since the beginning of the Jubilee Year, we wished to have a private celebration for the community as a thanksgiving for these 800 years of life, for St Dominic, for the Order, for our vocation, for all the graces we have received during this year.... We considered it very important to have this celebration privately, renewing our consecration to the Lord through prayer, silence and purest contemplation.

For this special celebration, we chose the last day of our annual retreat which was preached by Fr Juan José Lastra, OP. During the retreat, he spoke deeply about the Beatitudes. Before the Eucharistic Celebration, we had a penitential service in order to obtain the Jubilee grace once more.

Our courage and spirit were renewed with great desires to catch the fire that St Dominic had lit 800 years ago. "Fulfil, oh Father, your promise and help us with your prayers!"

*Real Monasterio de Santo Domingo,
Caleruega, Spain.
Original: Spanish*

News from Lage at the end of the Jubilee Year

Sr Susanna OP. Prioress

We would like to share a short synopsis of how our jubilee year went. It was in the end nothing spectacular and it won't make history, but it can provide material for some reflection.

We opened the year with great joy on December 2nd, 2006. Our Bishop took part and celebrated a festive Eucharist to mark the beginning of this year, Some 75 other invited guests also attended, members of the diocesan chancery office, other Orders within our diocese, Dominican brothers and sisters, neighbours and benefactors. The gathering was one of high spirits and very enjoyable. The noon meal was served in our refectory and in a large adjoining space and there was good conversation and exchange of thought.

In the afternoon our brothers, Fr. Dr. Karl Meyer und Fr. Dr. Tiemo-Rainer Peters spoke respectively on the topics of: "The Nuns at the heart of the Order of Preachers" and "What is contemplation". No one wanted to miss either of these excellent talks. And they gave us sisters enough to think about and to go into depth on for at least a whole year!

We entered the jubilee year, highly motivated and with a good programme which we wanted to realize in the course of this year. Friends of the community, who have worked with us in the course of past years on a variety of theological and historical themes, were ready and willing to continue work with us to develop these further. We set the goal to have "community days" more regularly giving special attention to our vocation to the Dominican Order as well as and above all with an emphasis on our communal life and the relationships within the community. Beyond that, we had planned to conduct a special programme with the theme of "What does the community chapter mean for us, spiritually as well as structurally?"

And then everything took a completely different course. God had an alternative "study plan", which he initiated right from the beginning of the year and there was to be no way to get around it. It involved the entire community, which in effect means seven able and healthy sisters along with three who need constant care.

Two of the latter became severely ill at the beginning of the year and had to be cared for around the clock. That brought our small community close to the brink of its abilities. And so it became a different type of "study" and "celebration" than that which we had planned and which has avidly accompanied us right up to the closing of the year. One of these sisters passed away toward the end of September, and the other at the end of November - peacefully and ready to give their lives back into the hands of their Lord, to whom they had offered themselves at profession.

One might query: was this an existential study and celebration for our community? We think so. Many of those who visited us and the severely ill stated quite clearly that they experienced our activity as a preaching for our time – one which cannot be ignored at a time when old and ill people are often seen as a burden and are shoved off and left alone.

That is how our jubilee year went – differently than planned, but certainly nonetheless fruitful.

Summing up the experience of our jubilee year it seems important to include that the secretary for culture in our diocese wrote a long article for the regional newspaper about our 800 years of existence as an Order. In it he spoke very concretely and realistically about our community. The result: many readers reacted extremely positive and told us how impressed they were with this article. That is an encouragement that lets us continue to start anew.

With best wishes to all who read this article,

*The Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of the Crucified Redeemer
Lage, Germany.
Original: English*

The 800th Centenary celebrations in Portugal

Here in Portugal, the celebration of the 800th centenary of the founding of the first monastery of Nuns by St Dominic began in Fatima, where the Dominican Family was holding what are known as the 'Dominican Days'. They take place every two years, and, this year, were timed to coincide with the beginning of the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Nuns. They began on the afternoon of Friday, 1st December, with a talk, given by one of the nuns, describing the life of the Nuns, backed up by a Power Point made previously with photographs taken in the three monasteries to illustrate the way they lived, worked and prayed. It was the nuns, too, who planned and organized the liturgy for these three days while the entire programme was built around the theme of the foundation of the Nuns, a copy of Sr Barbara Beaumont's conference on the early days of the Nuns in Prouilhe having been distributed beforehand to the entire Dominican Family. The 'Days' ended with the Mass of the First Sunday of Advent. As it was this Mass which was to mark the solemn opening of the Jubilee, it was celebrated in the chapel of the Pius XII Monastery, with the 100 or so members of the Dominican Family who had been attending the Days in the congregation. The chief celebrant was a retired Bishop who lives in Fatima and has been, and is, a great friend of many of the Dominican Friars who filled the sanctuary. It was a great occasion.

However, a feeling was growing among the nuns themselves that, in this Jubilee Year, something should be done to bring together the three communities of nuns in Portugal, each so very different from one another in both origin and spirituality. The idea presented problems of various kinds, not least the remoteness of one of the monasteries, and the fact that another is English-speaking, not to mention the scruples of many Sisters about whether or not such meetings justified leaving our monastic enclosure. Nevertheless, after much telephoning and persuasive talking, the idea took on, so to speak, dates were suggested, and in due course, one of the Brethren called for us with a mini-van early on the morning of Tuesday, June 5th in order to take us to the furthest away monastery in Lamego.

As it was to be a long journey, the plan was for us all to breakfast at the Monastery in Fatima where we were due to pick up three of the Sisters. That proved to be a very good idea as it meant a welcome break after the hour drive (on a gloriously fine day) to Fatima. We were on the road again by 9.30 a.m. driving north on splendidly traffic-free roads and driving steadily into ever more scenic and hilly country. It was a wonderful drive, though a long one, as it was 12.40 p.m. before we were close enough to the Lamego monastery to be able to phone and announce our imminent arrival.

The Lamego monastery was built only a few years ago and is in a magnificent setting, but very remote from all the other Dominican Houses in Portugal, as well as being isolated even from the nearby town of Lamego. We got a great welcome, and began with Mass concelebrated by the Brethren who had accompanied us. The Sisters had arranged for all, Brethren and Sisters, to have lunch in their cloister — a beautiful open space filled with light — after which there was a tour of the monastery and grounds. There was also an exchange of gifts between the Sisters and the presentation of the Power Point about the three monasteries. It was close on 6 p.m. before we finally said farewell to the Lamego Sisters and set off on the homeward journey. The roads on the way back were as clear as they had been on the way up, so we made good time all the way, allowing for a break for supper (a truly delicious supper in a restaurant perched on the side of a hill looking down onto a river). By the time we had delivered the Fatima Sisters back to their Monastery in Fatima and made it to our own little monastery here in Lisbon it was, of course, quite late. It had been a long day, but a very satisfactory one in every way. Thanks be to God.

In bidding farewell to the Nuns in Lamego, we all said cheerfully, and to some extent hopefully: 'See you all in Fatima'. Quite a few more telephone calls were needed to make such a wish become reality, but to good effect, so much so that, in granting permission for the Sisters to leave their enclosure, the Bishop of Lamego himself undertook to arrange transport for them. Thus it was that, on 26th October, it was Fatima's turn to open its doors to five of the Sisters from Lamego, and also to the group from Lisbon, accompanied by Father Provincial and several of the Brethren.

Once again, the meeting began with Mass which was concelebrated by the Bishop of Fatima with several of the Brethren from both Fatima and Lisbon. Lunch followed, and it was a delight to see all the Sisters intermingled and chatting happily in the Refectory. There was then a grand tour of the monastery and grounds. The Bishop then suggested that the Sisters might like to pay a visit to the Shrine, including the new Church of the Blessed Trinity, which had been opened on October 13th, the 90th anniversary of the Fatima apparitions. This idea was promptly acted on by all, including the Brethren. In due course, all returned to the Pius XII monastery for a welcome cup of tea before once again bidding one another farewell, with some saying, perhaps a little doubtfully: 'See you in Lisbon'.

This had been our own dream all along: to have the joy of welcoming the Sisters from the other two Monasteries to our own little Monastery here in Lisbon. The very next day, however, the dream began to become reality when a phone call from the Prioress of Lamego insisted that the visit must take place before the onset of winter and within the Jubilee Year. Of course!

So it was that, on 23rd November, it was our turn to open our doors to our Sisters from Lamego and Fatima. Once again the Provincial graced the occasion with his presence, together with the Prior and another of the Brethren from the nearby Studium. As before, the meeting began with concelebrated Mass in our little Chapel, followed by a very happy Agape for all in our refectory. Our Sisters from Lamego had brought a beautiful cake with the following inscription: VIVA A UNIÃO FRATERNA, ALLELUIA! and many other presents.

The house and grounds were duly explored, and it was lovely to see little groups of Sisters all over the place and chatting away, whether they actually knew each other, or indeed each other's language, or not. However, the distances between the monasteries being what they were, and with the shorter winter days in mind, it was still relatively early when the visitors departed for the journey home. All seemed truly delighted with their visit to our little monastery, which had in some ways served to restore old friendships and seal new ones. We hope, and pray, that this unprecedented bringing together of the three communities augurs well for the future growth and prosperity of all three Monasteries, so very different from one another in many ways and yet all joyfully united in following in the steps of our beloved Father and Founder, St Dominic.

*Sr M. John O.P.
Mosteiro de S. Maria, Lumiar, Lisbon.
Original: English*

A testimony of the Primacy of God

1. To start, could you tell us what contemplative life means for you?

"Contemplative life, as it is exclusively for God, is a Eucharistic existence and a prophecy of the eschatological life of the Church". Jesus Christ alive, "He is the same yesterday, today and always". The "follow me" that He said to St. Dominic of Guzmán in the 12th century and in the 16th

to the sisters of the Monastery of Skaros in Santorín, continues resounding today, sprouting from His tender look and from His lips, newly coming out from His heart. That is why the contemplative life in Santorín continues with the same enthusiasm and happiness as if it started today for the first time.

2. What characterizes your community?

At present, the community is made up of 14 sisters of different nationalities which is a testimony of the universal reconciliation "in Christ". Within the enclosure, by the silence and prayer, the nuns seek for God, calling upon Him (in solitude) so that the word proceeding from the mouth of God may not return to Him without fruit. With their hidden life and their total dedication to prayer, the nuns give testimony of the primacy of God. The solemn celebration of the divine praise is the main occupation of a monastic journey. The divine worship is a foretaste of the celestial liturgy. To sum up we would say: the divine praise that the nuns do day and night, is a grateful response to God in the name of creation and the entire humanity.

3. The Dominican Family, in its different aspects such as: priestly, religious and laity, is at the service of the Divine Word. It is a testimony of life and existence...

You are right, Father. The Dominican nuns, listening to the word of God and fulfilling it, proclaim the Gospel by the examples of their lives. All the regular observances, especially the enclosure and the silence, help the word of God to dwell abundantly in the monastery. The Dominican nuns carry in the depth of their hearts adoration, thanksgiving and praise and the anguish, the sufferings and the expectations of the present man. Each day in the dialogue with Christ they can tell Him: " I seek for You, because my brothers are calling up me" In the heart of each Dominican nun there is room for all and everyone find refuge thanks to their compassion.

4. And, how do you see the community life? All of you are aware that your life will be developed in the same place and with other few sisters...

The main objective of our community life is fraternity, having one mind and heart in God. The "sweet Dominican Fraternity", with the profound joy that springs out of the Beatitudes and of the union with the crucified Christ, is a happy and festive experience of life. The nuns being of one mind through obedience, chastity and poverty, build in their monasteries the Church of God which they help to spread throughout the world by the offering of themselves.

5. Looking at your daily timetable, one immediately realizes that your time is divided between prayer and work. Is this right? And with what spirit do you live these two realities?

After the personal prayer, the Divine praise and the hours of study, the sisters devote their time to the different works in the monastery. Work is not only demanded by the religious poverty but that it promotes the common good and it builds up charity through cooperation. Work is subordinated to contemplation according to the spirit of the Beatitudes. It is not so important what one does than the love that one puts in all that is done.

6. All that you have told me are elements of the Dominican spirituality. How do you live them in that corner of Greece, in an island of the Cícladas, since 400 years ago...?

The presence of the Dominican Monastery in this small island, a point of meeting between East and West, North and South, a junction of all the races and religions, is a call to a deep relation with God and a universal fraternity. The nuns in one mind dedicated to prayer with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, ardently long the plenitude of the Holy Spirit so that He may illumine all men and make them discover that they are very close to each other despite the

diversity and the distance. What unites them is much more than what separates them. The common march of men takes us to something more important: "Through Christ, in the one Spirit all have a way to come to the Father" According to St Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 2, 18).

7. To conclude, what would you say to our readers?

We invite you to the celebration of the 800th years of existence of the Dominican nuns: join us in our thanksgiving to God. "Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands; the Word, who is life...we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us...and your joy be complete" (1st Jon 1, 1-4).

Jesus Christ is alive, "He is the same yesterday, today and always". He is our past, our present and our future. "To Him be glory and honour for ever and ever. Amen"

Sister of the community, Firá, Santorín
The interview was made by Father Gabriel Marangós S.I.
Original: Spanish

Our sharing

Sr. Jozefa, OP and Sr. Miriam, OP, St Anna, Poland

Sr. Miriam: At the end of the Jubilee Year of our 800th anniversary could you single out the most outstanding event in our common celebrations?

Sr. Jozefa: Well, it was a year... so a number of such events come to my mind. Yet, for me, one was exceptional. When invited to Krakow by our Prior Provincial Krzysztof Poplawski, delegates of our three communities of nuns experienced so many tastes in one day.

Sr. M.: What do you mean?

Sr. J.: For instance, the fact that we met at the tomb of St Hyacinth, which was our participation in the Provincial celebration of the Jubilee of the 750th anniversary of his death. At the same time the date of our meeting bore a hidden message... October the 1st – St Theresa of the Infant Jesus – life in the enclosure and the mission... and the first day of the month of the Rosary.

Sr. M.: What was that day like?

Sr. J.: For us it had a nature of a pilgrimage – setting off on a journey. Obviously for the sisters from Radonie and for ourselves from St Anna it was a longer journey, by car while the sisters from Grodek covered the whole distance on foot – just a few streets to the friars' convent! The day had a definite programme, but it was interlaced with surprises.

Sr. M.: Tell me more about it, please.

Sr. J.: The most profound moment of communion was the Eucharist celebrated by our Prior Provincial and the Promoter as well as our chaplains and friends. The homily of fr. Krzysztof

echoes in my head today when I read the latest letter of the Master on the Rosary. It was about binding the most important moments of our life with Mother of God in each NOW – the only moment we truly possess, and at the hour of our death. That moment of our death is also our little dying... when we are getting open to being sent, when we are available.

The brothers of the Holy Trinity convent set the tables for us with exceptional hospitality. First there was the table of intellectual nourishment – in the form of an excellent lecture in history, concerning the life of St Hyacinth. We had an opportunity to see the parchment called ‘the passport of St Hyacinth’. And then they invited us to their refectory. The details of the beautifully and generously covered tables did not escape our feminine sensitivity. After a short prayer the lunch changed into a casual and lively family gathering – so pleasant that we lost the sense of time. Only the thought of the invitation to a sisterly meeting at the hospitable Grodek monastery sobered us up.

Sr. M.: And what was the most special moment for you personally?

Sr. J.: Well, I think it was that very recreation. It worked as a doormat, where we left all our everyday concerns, the awareness of difficulties and differences. You could simply feel that we enjoyed each other. Moving and deeply uniting was the moment of singing together, when so sincerely sounded out all the stanzas of the song ‘Oh when the saints go marching in’ and ‘How good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity’. By the end of the recreation our Prior Provincial joined us again. He got so much enchanted with the charm of the moment – clearly the good quality of the meeting was easy to grasp – that he suggested that they become our tradition. A symbolic cup of wine recalled St Dominic’s dropping in to the sisters.

At the beautiful sunset, on that warm and bright day, on the way back we visited the Sanctuary in Lagiewniki (Krakow) where with renewed hope and joy we entrusted to the Divine Mercy our communities and all our brothers and sisters called to the mission of preaching the TRUTH.

Sr. M.: So now I know I was there as well. Thank you.

Original: English

Community on the Way – Pilgrimage in thanksgiving for 750 years of Dominican life in Weesen, Switzerland

For 750 years the Sisters in Weesen have been walking their spiritual journey in the Order of St. Dominic. From the 30th of April until 4th of May 2007 the whole community, 11 sisters between the ages of 29 and 72 years, went on a pilgrimage to give outer expression to this inner journey and to strengthen our unity with the Church and the Pope.

Our pilgrimage had an expressly Dominican accent; Bologna and Santa Sabina were important stations. Even the small white bus, which was driven by two of our sisters, was decorated in front with a great Dominican emblem. Each of us was moved by the personal and common prayer at the tomb of St. Dominic and in his cell in Bologna. To pray, where St. Dominic himself had prayed and lived, to sing there together the “O Lumen” brought us nearer to him and will remain unforgettable as will the generous hospitality of the Dominican Brothers in Bologna.

The Prior, P. Angelo Piagno took his time to explain in detail the tomb and cell of St. Dominic. Before our eyes Saint Dominic and the history of the convent in Bologna became alive. It

was a great privilege to participate at Vespers and the Salve Procession of the brothers, even if the tempo of the Salve procession was rather quick for our elderly Sisters. During dinner we had plenty of time to talk to each other in German or Italian or with hands and feet when there was no one who could translate. In any case the experienced hospitality itself did not need any translation. It was tangible.

On the second day of our pilgrimage we arrived in Rome and could visit Santa Sabina late in the afternoon. Fr. Christophe Holzer, the secretary of the Master of the Order greeted us. He is from Switzerland - so no translation was necessary when he explained to us about the Church and Convent. The cloister fascinated us; our Prioress took one photo after the other and we admired the view over Rome. But the most lasting experience was the Holy Mass with Fr Christophe in the cell of St. Dominic.

A kind benefactor gave our Prioress the means to invite the whole community for dinner in the small restaurant "Quattro Mori", where Pope Benedict XVI sometimes ate during his time as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. We spent a joyful evening in a typical Roman atmosphere with good and plentiful food and with much talk and laughter. We were not surprised that the other guests - coming mostly from Germany - approached us in German. At the General Audience the next day we met some of them again.

The third day, May 2nd, was the highlight of our pilgrimage with the General Audience at St Peter's Square in the morning and Holy Mass with Archbishop Marini in the afternoon.

At 8.15 plenty of people were already waiting at the security check point and entrance to the General Audience.

We had our places at the tribune but even then we could only see the Pope in the distance and from the side. But the atmosphere was great. Young people from Brazil, Italy and France were around us singing while paying no attention to the rain which was beginning to fall. We were well prepared with transparent raincoats - protected but still recognizable as Dominican Sisters. The rain became heavier and heavier. By the time that the General Audience started at 10.30 many people were already soaked! During the Audience we could hear even thunder, but gradually the rain became softer and stopped. When our group was announced: "Aus der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft sind zugegen: die Dominikanerinnen von Weesen anlässlich ihres 750 jährigen Bestehens", the sun shone out. We lifted our banner with the Dominican emblem and the words: "Benedict XVI, we love you!"



The whole audience - with rain and sun, with singing and praying, with the deep words of Pope Benedict about the importance of prayer - was a great blessing!

More private but very intense was the Holy Mass for our community in the Polish Chapel below St. Peter's with Archbishop Piero Marini. He celebrated in German, we sang Gregorian Chant in Latin and the short homily was in Italian, translated by our Sr. Consiglia - all this before the Polish Madonna from Czestochowa! Our church is really Catholic and universal.

After the Holy Mass we could go directly to the tomb of Pope John Paul II, without having to stand in queue for hours. We were privileged to pray there in a separated area. It was moving to see all these people coming to visit this place and who had to pass by without delay as others are waiting already.

On the next day, we left early in the morning for Manoppello and the "Volto Santo". The trip through Abruzzo showed us the beauty of nature, with green mountains and narrow valleys, shrouded in mist. We arrived late for our scheduled Holy Mass in Manoppello, so we joined the

Eucharistic celebration of Italian children in preparation for their First Communion. The "Volto Santo" - the Holy Face - is indeed very impressive. You never tire of looking at it.

For the remainder of the day we were "on the road". Our bus served as chapel for praying the Divine Office and rosary, as refectory for our meals, and of course as recreation room. Some of us even tried to use it as a dormitory - with different results.



We arrived later than expected in Bergamo, where our Sisters from the Monastery "Matris Domini" waited for us. We quickly splashed some water on our faces, changed from the blue working or travelling habit to proper white habits and we were ready to sing Vespers together with the nuns of Bergamo.

At dinner we enjoyed the delicious food and the lively sharing with our Italian Sisters. Sr. Consiglia, our most versed interpreter, was very busy that evening.

On the next day after Office of Readings, Lauds and Holy Mass together the Sisters showed us their whole monastery, from the cellar (very impressive with its medieval look and vast dimensions!) to the top. We were very much impressed by the frescos from the 13th century but also by the liveliness of the community today. They cared nicely for us, providing snacks for our way home that could feed more than 11 ascetic Sisters! The farewell was hearty with embraces and kisses and more than one group photo was taken. We left with the blessing and prayers of the Sisters and found a small gift for each one in the bus: a very nice surprise.

We left around 11 a.m. After a strenuous and rainy trip over the Alps we saw again our beloved monastery at 7.p.m. Our hearts were filled with gratitude for all the joys and blessings of our pilgrimage. A healthy vegetable soup then filled our stomach, provided by the two ladies who volunteered to care for the house in our absence.

This 750-year-jubilee pilgrimage deepened the union among us as a community but also the union with our Dominican Brothers and Sisters and with the whole Church.

We are very grateful for this unique experience and for all those who made it possible. Yes, we would like to go again – for the next jubilee after another 750 years.

Original: English

Jubilee Year of Many Graces Corpus Christi Monastery
Menlo Park, California USA

Eight hundred years is a twinkle of time in the eyes of God. The Jubilee Year produced the stunning realization that we too are only a twinkle of time in the history of the nuns of the Order. The foundation of our monastery and mere eighty-seven years of existence often feels like an eternity but when the grace of embracing our universality invaded our aspirations, our often fatigued bones were rejuvenated with new enthusiasm and vitality. We were able to reach out to the world around us and share in a more intensified way the story of Dominic, the needs that nurtured birth to the first foundation of nuns in Prouilhe and the growing pains of the church 800 years ago.



We prepared for the Jubilee Year by physically abandoning the security of our own monastery and becoming modern jet flying itinerant pilgrim travelers that crossed the country to attend the first ever USA inter-community retreat preached by our Master Carlos and his attending friars. This was like being in the presence of Dominic as he visited the nuns and gave fully of himself, passing on the many spiritual treasures that he wanted the

nuns to hear and pray over. We were there, at the feet of the master, drinking in the waters of new life.

To set in motion this gifted year of Jubilee celebration, was the news of our assigned "twin" monastery". When the name arrived we scrambled for the atlas because the words Dominikanerinnenkloster St. Katharina Wil made no sense to us. Where are they, who are they? Again the universality of our Order was reinforced in our minds. Our "twin" was ancient in comparison to us and their history prolific. By twinning we soon touched and felt their truly amazing stories of four hundred years of endurance, survival and accomplishment.



The presence of the nuns was never lost in Kil and this rekindled our commitment to remain positive and always move forward with a faith-filled hope and courage through both the difficult and prosperous times. Within our two communities we individually "adopted" another nun as our "prayer partner" for the Jubilee year. We shared photos, followed via our web pages the Jubilee ceremonies and celebration. We could span the ocean with only a click of the mouse! How grateful we are to be living in the twenty-first century.



The special Indulgence granted for the Jubilee was another moment of pure spiritual gift for both ourselves and for those who came to our chapel of Adoration. Each celebration was concluded with the prayer for the Jubilee indulgence and together with our guests we could interiorly feel the stirring of the Spirit in our hearts. During this year Dominic was alive in our midst and his words "Behold my children the heritage I leave you, have charity one for another, guard humility, make your treasure out of voluntary poverty" rekindled our fervor to be ongoing living examples of the commitment we profess.

Original: English

800 Jubille Year Celebrations - Monasteries In Africa

The Jubilee Year in Africa was indeed a time of grace not only for us Nuns but for the people of God. Participation in the celebrations depended on different arrangement of different communities, their locations and the presence of the other Dominican families. I will allow the communities to speak not in all details:

Bambui – Cameroon: "Opening of the Jubilee celebration: As one family we all gathered on Dec. 2nd, eve of the opening of the jubilee of the 8th centenary of the Order of Preachers: Friars, members of our Dominican Laity Fraternity and friends of the community. At 6 pm the prolonged bells invited us to assemble around the statue of St. Dominic with lighted candles. Joyfully we

sang hymns in his honour, after which our Prioress, welcomed and greeted everyone present. We then prayed the jubilee prayer and processed to the chapel chanting: "We shall go up with joy to the house of God..." The celebration concluded with evening prayer.

Sunday Dec. 3rd began with a solemn Eucharistic gathering at 9 am. Many people from within and outside our Archdiocese came to grace the occasion. Worth mentioning are the Soeur Dominicaines Missionaire from the Franco-phone diocese of Bafoussam, priests, religious men and women and the lay faithful. Fr. Gabriel Samba, promoter of the Dominican Family in Cameroon was the main celebrant at the Mass.

After the opening prayer, Fr. Samba welcomed the congregation, introduced the purpose for our gathering and then proceeded to read the Master's letter for the Jubilee. During the Mass the lay Dominicans did the general intercessory prayers, using different symbols for each intention, while the nuns took the offertory procession. Before the final blessing all Dominicans present and any who wanted to, were invited to light their candles from the jubilee candle and to carry these to share the light with all we meet.

The rest of the festivities, after warm words of welcome from the prioress the nuns then sang the jubilee song composed, by one of our sisters, thereafter giving the floor to the Dominican Laity. The latter dramatized so wonderfully some aspects of the life of St. Dominic as well as other Dominican saints. They also took this opportunity to share with all present their apostolate and encounters. The day finally closed with light refreshments and the cutting of the eight-steps (each step representing a century) Jubilee Cake, baked and decorated by one of the nuns"

October 7th celebration: We had invited quite a number of people, the Dominican Laity, etc. In planning the liturgy we had tried to incorporate the suggestions sent for the liturgy as a family. We intend to begin the Mass with a procession from the statue of St. Dominic situated at the front of the Monastery. After Mass we will share our charism with the guests. We have also asked the Capuchins friars to share with the visitors on the relationship between Francis and Dominic and the sons and daughters.

Pilgrimages: A few individuals did make the pilgrimage to our chapel but generally it has been quiet; may be because we are not used to the idea of pilgrimages.

On June 30th we witnessed the wedding of two of our workers, Loveline and Richard in our chapel. This, we count as one of the fruits of the jubilee year. Also gracing the year was the final commitment of four members of our Lay Dominican Fraternity, fondly referred to as the "Jubilee batch" "

Douala-Cameroon: Together, we have received this year as a grace from the Lord. And we are grateful to our Brothers and Sisters who expended so much energy in order to help us to live these important moments in the history of our Dominican Order. During the Procession towards the Chapel, the icon of St Dominic was carried by a friar and a nun while the bells rang. We joined together all present, ending with the hymn for First Vespers of Advent. Also we drew in the chapel a genealogical tree to explain the origins of where we have come from, and a panorama of photographs of the different members of Dominican Family.

On Sunday, the 3rd of December, during the opening Solemn-Mass of the year, we had with us many representatives of the Dominican Family from Cameroon, as well as many priests from the various dioceses. The vicar general, representing the Archbishop, presided at the Eucharistic celebration. Fr. Richard gave the homily. After this, a nun gave a brief account of the history of the Order. Each branch and Congregation deposited its candle before the icon of St. Dominic with a word of presentation.

Our Chapel, a place of pilgrimage: Some parishes from the cities of Ima organized themselves for the pilgrimages. There were also pilgrims who came on their own. The first pilgrim after the opening of the Jubilee Year was a priest from the neighbouring diocese.

The Community opened the novena of the Holy Rosary with a pilgrimage, along with some Christians of our parish. A conference was given to us by a Dominican friar to prepare us for the Feast and then we started the novena.

For practical reasons we celebrated the feast of the Holy Rosary on Saturday morning. As a monument, to remember the Jubilee Year, we have constructed a magnificent BOUKAROUS to welcome the statue of St Dominic now being carved.

Rweza – Burundi: The opening Jubilee was during mass celebrated by our Bishop Gervais and some Dominican Friars. A group of Dominican Lay, and other worshippers filled up the chapel. First of July was a special Day of Pilgrimage for our monastery friends, but also all who were interested.. We asked a priest to prepare a conference on St Dominic and the mission of the order of Preachers. After the conference, there was a time for confessions ending the Pilgrimage with the Eucharist celebration.

Instead of October, our celebration was on the 8th of August, Solemnity of our Father St. Dominic so we were together with all our Dominican friars in vicariate.

Not only that, all along the year, each month has a special intention's prayer.

January: Prayer for peace in the world.

February: Thanks giving for the grace of consecrated life in the church

March: Prayer for families

April: Prayer for young

May: Prayer for our Bishop and the Diocese

June: Prayer for our country

July: Prayer for the Synode of reconciliation in our country

August: Prayer for the Master of the order and vocations

Twining up: For us, it has been a wonderful experience with our Twin sister Monastery Taulignan. Firstly, Taulignan Monastery invited two of us. They went to France where the sisters visited some tourist places of our order like Prouille, Fanjeaux (Signadou), Montreal: the miracle of the fire, the well of St Dominic, etc. Carcassonne, Toulouse: Pierre Scilha's house convent's Jacobins, etc. The same monastery (Taulignan) helped us to reach Beaufort monastery, that we call our left twin. Friendship was more reinforced.

Senekal- South Africa: The Jubilee announcement was by the ringing of the 1st Vespers Bell endlessly on 2nd December 2006. Next Day saw a huge number of Dominican friars, 5 different Dominican Sisters Congregations in South and the friends and benefactors of the community join us for the real opening. The Mass was presided by the Vicar Provincial Fr. Mark James assisted by our local Bishop Hubert Bucher. Very touching was the presence of the sisters having come from a thousands plus Kilometres. One a Sister Phillip at 93 years young had made this long drive to be with us. We had a wonderful celebration. 6th October once more saw, this time only the Dominican family come together. South Africa is a big country yet sisters, brothers Laity came from every corner of it, hours of driving back and forth. It was our Day! One brother Fr. Martin Badenhorst,OP gave us a Talk on the history, Charism and Spirituality plus challenges that faced Dominic and face us today. The President of the Lay Dominicans Mr. Shane Goodman shared on the Laity in the country and the recent International Meeting of the Laity in Argentina. The Mass again presided by the Vicar Provincial concelebrated with seven Friars. Over 70 were present. It was full participation. Liturgy was prepared by the novices of the different Congregations.

For the offertory different symbols were brought forth – incense, Constitutions, lighted candles, Bread and wine. Mass was followed by Delicious Meal after which once again we came together to share Family events and happenings.

Pilgrimage Chapel: Hardly any came. The Women of St. Anne came twice for the renewal of their commitment. We also had two Baptisms of a Lady who later became mother of the second Baptism. She also married in our Chapel since our chapel also acts as a Parish Church. Otherwise pilgrimages seemed hardly known and less still the aspect of Indulgence.

For us, the Jubilee celebration stood out as an event that brought the Dominican Family to know the new Nuns who were hardly two years in the country and vice versa. Our Daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was very powerful experience.

Compiled by: Sr. Joyce Rita Mumu, OP
Original: English

Pilgrimage to the three Monasteries of the Order of Preachers in Chile

"I rejoiced when I heard them say: Let us go to God's house!" (Psalm 121, 1)

In our country, Chile, there are 3 Monasteries of contemplative nuns of the Order of Preachers: one in the Capital, Santiago; one in the desert of the North, Copiapó; and the other one in the central valley in the South, Yervas Buenas of Linares.

Following the invitation of the Master of the Order in Prouilhe 2006, the laity, the sisters and the brothers of our religious Family decided to go on a pilgrimage to the 3 Monasteries of contemplative nuns in Chile in order to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order.

In December 2006 the different groups of the Order went to the monastery of St. Rose in Santiago in Chile. Among fraternal songs, we meditated on the Beatitudes, we remembered how St. Dominic founded the Order and we read the letter of the Master of the Order for the Jubilee Year. It was an initial celebration whose significance was increasing through the year 2007.

For the month of October this year we scheduled to visit, in a simultaneous way dividing ourselves into groups, the monastery which was situated in the North, in Copiapó, and the one in the South in Yervas Buenas. For this we had to divide the Dominican laity into groups. These monasteries are physically isolated because there are no Dominican laity in their regions. Two commissions were appointed to organize the pilgrimage, one for the North and another one for the South. They were in charge of arranging all the things such as: transport, food, lodgings and our meeting with the nuns.

Although the organization of these last two pilgrimages was a bit tiring because of the long distances, however we were filled with joy and we were able to experience how communion in the Dominican Family increases when we wish to reach a common objective.

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21, 1)

These two simple monasteries were like Sanctuaries for us. Thirty-five pilgrims went to Copiapó and one hundred and fifty to Yervas Buenas. Among these pilgrims there was an outstanding group of young people who came from Chillán. We were received by the nuns at midday prayer. In Copiapó the Subprioress in cápite welcomed the pilgrims, and in Linares the Prioress. In the North we went to have lunch in the town and in the South we shared a frugal lunch with the nuns.

Although both groups were separated by a distance of 1100 Km, at Vespers time on 13th of November 2007 we celebrated the Eucharist with the nuns. It was a moving experience. After the Gospel among songs of prayer and joy, some texts of the letter of the General Chapter in Bogotá to the contemplative nuns of the Order were inserted. Everything invited to thanksgiving.

As a lay Dominican, I wondered: Why did St Dominic of Guzmán start his magisterial work of Evangelization with a group of women who cultivate contemplation? In Copiapó and in Yerbas Buenas we felt the Contemplative nuns of the Order of Preachers sent us to evangelize. Below are the words which were said in this wonderful meeting of the Dominican Family:

"Permit me to express on behalf of the Dominican laity the great joy we feel for being gathered together here in this monastery, a place of prayer, meditation and study. After a joyful pilgrimage from our different communities of origin, we are gathered together here in this sacred place to pray and to share our sorrows and joys. A warm greeting to the Dominican Family: friars, nuns, religious sisters, laity and young people."

"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News", said Jesus to his apostles. The Master of the Order, in the last world Congress of the laity celebrated last March in Buenos Aires (Argentina), incited us to be the light of the world and preachers of the Word.

Today in this long pilgrimage to reach the Eternal City, the Dominican Family is gathering together again to renew its spirit and fill ourselves with new energy to carry out our mission of being the announcers of the Good News with our work, our testimony, correcting our faults, opening our heart and extending our hands to our brothers in need.

May this meeting be useful for all of us; may we share fraternally our sorrows and joys and, at the end of this day, may we retain the peace that only the Lord can give.

Thanks to our sisters of the monasteries for their attention. Thanks to the friars who have accompanied us, thanks to the Congregations of religious sisters and to the laity from other communities, but above all thanks to God and to our father St Dominic for giving us the opportunity of sharing such a pleasant journey.

"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good New to all creation" (Mk 16, 15)

As a lay person, I realize how much the contemplative nuns of the Order could help us in our formation: teaching us their way of reading the Bible, meditating, praying and contemplating. Couldn't they share with us how they cultivate their wonderful silence? Why don't we use the technical means of communication to share in the abundance of wisdom flowing from our monasteries?

We have started the novena to celebrate 800 years since the approval of the Order (2016). Why don't we go on a pilgrimage to the monasteries once a year? Wouldn't this be a way of getting to know better the different branches of the Dominican Family? Wouldn't this be a good way to strengthen our foundation charisma and to open our evangelization mission to other cultures? We hope that in the future the number of pilgrims increases.

We finished our meeting sharing a fraternal banquet with our contemplative nuns. In the desert of the North at the end of the Mass, the nuns presided at the Liturgy of the Sending. After this we went back to our respective cities and towns. In our hearts echoed the phrase "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News". The experience was wonderful: sharing the spiritual wealth of our nuns, being witnesses of their way of communicating with the God of Jesus Christ, feeling their hearty welcome. Everything was a gift of God.

Miguel Soria C.
President of the Dominican Laity (Chile)
Original: Spanish

Celebration of the Jubilee Year in Cuba

Throughout this Jubilee Year our community has received many graces. We were invaded and flooded by the torrent of God's graces, which, in their fullness, always overwhelms our lives. All this has helped us to grow in knowledge, in gratitude and in love for Our Lord, for His Blessed Mother and our Father St. Dominic.

The waves of His love urged us to communicate all the graces we had received to our Brothers: the Dominican friars, the Sisters of apostolic life, who reside in the city (Dominican Sisters from Granada and the Canaries- Spain) and the faithful who are close to our monastery. Together with them, we celebrated this spiritual feast. Sometimes it included having a simple banquet or snack. In every moment we have felt them very united to our community.

The external obstacles that at times we experienced as sandy grounds of indifference or as rocky walls which prevented us from relaxing, gave way to other initiatives and we were very surprised at all the publicity that the Lord granted to us.

The flame of the Holy Spirit lit in our hearts by the Lord wants to continue operating in an insatiable eagerness to be, each day, more faithful spouses of Jesus Crucified and collaborators in His redeeming work, like our Father St Dominic.

May the joy of His Divine Mercy, lived liturgically in each moment, make of our lives a perennial Jubilee.

Monastery of St Catherine of Siena.
La Habana (Cuba)
Original: Spanish

Preparing ourselves for another Jubilee

The countdown to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the approval of the Order in 2016 has already begun. The Master of the Order, in a letter addressed to the Dominican Family, has proposed that this first year of preparation for this event should be a year dedicated to the Rosary, urging us to rediscover the Rosary as a means of contemplation and as an instrument of prophetic preaching. Fr Carlos asks us an interesting question: "Can we Dominicans recover this popular religiosity in terms of something that is peculiarly ours: the Rosary?" And for that he encourages us with this beautiful image: "to hold, and to grasp the rosary at difficult moments of our life, is like grasping the hand of Mary herself"

As members of the Dominican Family we should respond to this invitation from our own way of life.

The Dominican International Sisters, DSI, have addressed the following appeal to the Order; it can be a good means of promoting devotion to the Rosary and at the same time of solidarity with the Christians of Holy Land.

2008 Year of the Rosary: Dominican Jubilee and Palestinian rosaries

The lives of Palestinians, especially Christians, in the Bethlehem and Jerusalem areas are severely disrupted. They are kept prisoners in their homes or villages. They are unable to work and provide the basic necessities of life for their families. These daily events are not only destroying lives and property and hope, but they are crippling "human hearts and their capacity to

love." It is essential that the world recognize the plight of both peoples caught up in this conflict, but the need is far greater among Palestinians, and especially Palestinian Christians. Truly, they are among the most neglected. They represent less than 5% of the population of the Holy Land

During the Dominican Jubilee 2008 we can send a message of solidarity and hope. Some families in the Bethlehem and Jerusalem areas make olive wood rosaries for sale. We can help them sell their work. We ask for a donation of € 2 (two Euro) or \$2 (two dollars) for every rosary ordered. This covers the cost of making and mailing the beads. All the money donated will go directly to the rosary makers, who are all friends of the Dominicans there.

The Dominican Family circulated approximately 250,000 rosaries around the world. This Rosary Project continues and hopes to expand through your support. Can you think of ways to spread this worthy project among your friends and be a source of solidarity for our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers?

For further information and orders please contact: DSI - Dominican Sisters International (dsi@curia.op.org) and visit the page www.dsiop.org (Justice and Peace section)