



Monialibus

*Nuns of the Order of Preachers
International Bulletin*



Nº 19 - August 2008



**Meeting of the Master of the Order
with more than one hundred nuns from the three Federations of Spain, in Caleruega.**

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Letter of the Promoter

My Dear Sisters in the 'Holy Preaching,'

I greet you from Rome, during these days of "Ordinary Time" – hoping that all of us might find God hidden in the ordinary things of daily life. I have been reading some writings from the American (though French-born) Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, of the Monastery of Gethsemani, who died in 1968. Merton often spoke of daily life as the place where we touch God's infinite, loving presence. I share a quote from him, in which he seems to be learning again that he is in the very place where God wants him to be:

"Gethsemani – the place and the community – *locus et fratres* – is the spring where I am to drink the waters of life, and if I look somewhere else, it is to a broken cistern as far as I am concerned, because no matter how excellent it may be in itself, *another place is not God's will for me!*" (*A Year with Thomas Merton*, ed. Jonathan Montaldo, 2004).

May we all experience this liberating will of God in our daily lives!

My "daily, ordinary life" today means that I am packing for another trip, so I take a few moments to send you these words for the upcoming *Monialibus*. I leave tomorrow for Brazil, the beginning of a long, three-month trip. Over these three months I will have the opportunity to be with the nuns on three different continents: South America (Brazil), North America (the Assembly of the North American Association of Nuns and a visit to the monasteries in Langley, Canada, Menlo Park and Los Angeles, California), and Europe. In Europe I will be with the Europe-Utriusque group of monasteries. This region of the Order includes all of the European monasteries (East and West) that are not in Spain, Italy or France. I will be with the prioresses and delegates of this region for a retreat and meeting in Strahfeld, Germany. The theme of the retreat will be "A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden" (Mt. 5:14): *The hidden life of the nuns and their outreach to the world*. It will be especially enjoyable to be with our brother, fr. Manuel Merten, at this retreat. I will be sure to give him greetings from all of you!

During these months, I would ask that you keep the nuns of the Federation of Peru in your prayers, as they will send the first group of nuns, from several Peruvian monasteries, to Bolivia on October 7, the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary, to begin the first monastery of the nuns of the Order in Bolivia. Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, so please pray that the sisters can preach the Good News and the Hope of Jesus Christ through their ministry of contemplative presence and prayer. I am sure that once the sisters are settled in their new home they will write to give us some news on the foundation. We send you, dear missionary sisters, with our prayers and blessing!

In November of this year the International Commission of the Nuns will meet in Santa Sabina in Rome, where they will have a chance to share on different topics with the Master of the Order. We will be welcoming several new sisters to the Commission this year; it will be great to begin the work of the new commission here, at the place where Dominic prayed day and night for the birth of the new Order of Preachers. The International Commission's main purpose is to serve as a consultative body for the Master of the Order, allowing him a chance to be in contact with the nuns in the different regions of the world. Though not a governing body, it helps the Master maintain a close dialogue with the nuns worldwide. Please feel free to share with your regional representative any hopes and concerns you may have. Sister Isabel María, OP, the editor for *Monialibus*, will be giving us a chance to meet the new members of the Commission in this issue.

The Master of the Order, who recently returned from Japan, left yesterday for Brazil, and one of the last things he said to me before leaving was to please convey his greetings and prayers to all of the nuns. So know that he carries all of you in his heart during his next few months of travel.

With Mary's prayer, "Do unto me according to your Word," I pray that this year, dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary, will be a time in which the Word of God will dwell deeply in our hearts and be proclaimed in all that we say and do. In living our daily lives immersed in the Word of God, we live the life that St. Dominic envisioned for the Order. Happy Feast of our Holy Father, St. Dominic!

Your brother in the Word-made-flesh,
fr Brian Joseph Pierce, OP

Original: English

Report on the meeting of the Master of the Order with the nuns of the three Federations of Spain in Caleruega

On the 15th and 16th of March 2008 a meeting of all the nuns, under 60, from the three federations of Spain with the Master of the Order Fray Carlos Azpiroz Costa, took place in Caleruega. This meeting was called because of the situation that the monasteries of Spain are undergoing and for the problems derived from this situation. Over one hundred nuns attended this meeting.

Other participants in this meeting were: fr. Brian Pierce, op, Promoter of the Nuns, fr. Bernardino Prella, op, Socius of the Master for Italy and Malta, fr. Antonio García, op, Socius, of the Master for the Iberian Peninsula, fr. Adriano Stambré, trustee of Santa Sabina, fr. Vito Tomás Gómez García, op, assistant of the Federation of the Immaculate Concepción, fr. Luis García Matamoro, op, assistant for the Federations of St. Dominic and Our Lady of the Rosary and our Federal Prioresses: Sr Josefina Morales, op, Federation of Betic, Sr M^a Luz Franco, op, Federation of Spain and Sr M^a Teresa Gil Martínez, op, Federation of the Immaculate.

On Saturday the 15th of March, the Church celebrated the Solemnity of St. Joseph. Fr. Vito who presided at the Eucharist gave a beautiful and deep reflection on St. Joseph.



The introductory session was presented by fr. Carlos, Master of the Order. He began by greeting all and introducing his companions. He made a brief summary explaining the reason why this meeting was taking place. He mentioned some of the problems which were affecting the three federations of Spain. Then he reminded us of the previous consultations he made to the different communities about the vitality and difficulties that the monasteries are facing.

He began by reminding us of the invitation made to the nuns to attend the General Chapters in 1971. He pointed out that in 1989 the International Commission of Nuns was born at the General Chapter celebrated in Oakland: fr. Damian Byrne who organized the International Commission of Nuns (ICNOP) wrote a letter to the nuns of the Order in May 1992. The Master also mentioned the letter that fr. Timothy Radcliffe wrote to the Order concerning the nuns in April 2001.

In 2003 fr. Carlos commenced the experience of giving a retreat to the nuns of Spain in Caleruega. This first retreat has given rise to organizing other retreats in different countries and regions. In the context of the Jubilee Year, on the 27th and 28th of March 2007 an interfederal

meeting was held in Caleruega, The fruit of this meeting was the letter that the Master wrote to the nuns called: "...so that they may have life".

The Master said that he was invited to the triennial meeting celebrated by the Congregation for Religious life. He had voice but no vote. It was said that the third part of the contemplative life is in Spain but sometimes held by a lot of foreign vocations. He remarked that at a meeting of bishops and Superiors of the Orders, the Spanish Episcopal Conference asked the Holy See to legislate directly. But our Master and other Superiors said that it would be better to convince and to make the nuns understand rather than to legislate. Fr. Carlos informed us about his conversations with the Pope. In November 2005 he had his first personal audience with the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, at which the Pope especially insisted on the ongoing formation for the nuns and encouraged him to continue to preach the retreats to the nuns.

"If St. Dominic founded the Order first with you, the nuns, - said the Master- renewal should also begin from you, the nuns. This must be through different ways; history has faced different challenges, for example, through the Reform made by St Catherine, the Restoration of the Order made by Blessed Cormier, the Council Renewal or through a Refoundation of the Order: go back to the sources. The Master insisted on the four main prerequisites for an authentic Dominican Contemplative life: regular observance, study, liturgy and work. He challenged us to be linked to the evangelization carried out by our friars, so that together we could follow the path of holiness of the man of God, St. Dominic of Guzman.

It was Brian's turn to speak, the new General Promoter of the nuns. He explained how he had organized the work based on the word which was very rich because the Spirit of the Lord was there. He advised us not to lose sight of the Word of God but we should even put it under our pillow when we are sleeping.

In the first session we were given to work on the Gospel text Jn 13, 1-15 - Jesus washes his disciples' feet. After sharing this word in different groups, we gathered together in the assembly room. There we could communicate what we had already shared in groups. All the opinions, of course, referred to the current problems of the monasteries which were mentioned in the letter: "...so that they may have life".

Fr. Carlos was present at all the plenary sessions but he occupied a discreet place in the last row. Depending on the circumstances sometimes he went to the stage to clarify some point or to share. Here are some of the highlights we shared in this first session.

- What paralyzes us?
- Have we lost the capacity to listen, obedience and docility to faith?
- Why do we feel blocked? We might have lost our identity (four main points: Regular Observance, Common Life, Prayer and Work)
- If we once had the experience of a "Paschal death" when we left our family why can we not have it again?
- We have to value two aspects of the actual reality. On one hand the youngest nuns have the challenge of building the present, on the other hand the excessive work in the monasteries impede them from doing this.

On Saturday evening we were surprised by a double text: Jn 18, 15-27 and Jn 21, 15-18 - Peter disciple of Jesus. The dynamic was similar to the morning. After sharing all together in the assembly room, the Master said: "Peter doesn't respond by himself nor does he decide for himself.... The problems of the community have to be dealt with in the Chapter in a prudent and gentle dialogue for it is not only your personal problem. This problem can help to light the light of solidarity. Firstly we need to begin a process of discernment in the Chapter: listening to everybody

in order to discover in a contemplative rhythm the pros and cons not in a hurry nor with an imprudent slowness, because urgent things don't accept delay. We have to dare to dream of new communities. Saying "no" to the Lord is saying "no" to our future. Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary, whose feast is celebrated today, feels disappointed when he realizes something unexpected - Mary was pregnant. He doesn't understand why his life has been changed, however he doesn't feel resentment even when he thinks there is another man in his fiancée's heart. For love, he respects the time of God and "the dreams beyond his control" and this turns into fertility because the power of God is revealed there.

To the concrete question: "Do we need a change in the contemplative life?", the Master didn't answer directly but he remarked: "the fear of the tensions has to disappear, there are tensions which are not destructive, these are the tensions which don't supplant or annul one another, it is like "bringing out from the store room things both new and old, like the tension between lectio and study or ora et labora... It is necessary to listen to everything and integrate it harmoniously ...He said that we should not look for a balance without having tensions, discussing questions which worry, disturb or unbalance us.

Palm Sunday morning that leads us to the Paschal light, day of freedom and plenitude. The procession and the Eucharist were presided over by fr. Carlos, Master of the Order. Can you imagine that medieval cloister filled with nuns holding the branches of the olive tree and singing to the Lord whose faithful love for us led him to death.



The preacher was fr. Luis García Matamoro, op. In this beautiful homily he talked about the Cross as a saving event which is between the human triumph (Palm Sunday) and the definitive triumph of Resurrection, but between these triumphs there is not a cross but LOVE"... he said that the Cross is LOVE accepted by someone who showed how perfect his love was. Without this love, the Cross would be a monument to the absurd. It is truth that love takes us to the Cross but only for love and through love.

After breakfast the session continued in the morning. The text to work on was: Jn 20, 11-18 – Jesus and Mary Magdalena in the garden of Gethsemane. You can imagine what a richness and diversity it was to share this text in groups and later shared in the assembly room. Here are some comments:

- Jesus asks us: "Why are you weeping? Who are you seeking? In whom do we place our hope? Is it in surviving? The Lord is calling us to live and give our life.
- Our life responds to our ideal. Sadness doesn't let us see the Risen Lord.
- We are asked to love and not to cling to anything. We should value what we have and live our vocation, the Lord will take care of the rest.
- We should go back to the source. If we do, things in the communities would change. We could revive the real meaning of some values such as: the enclosure, silence and the other observances.
- The fear disappears when we have an encounter with the Risen Jesus.
- Jesus calls Mary by her name. We shouldn't hold on to him but let go of securities and give ourselves to our brethren to rise from death with Him.
- This is a Paschal moment filled with grace. We are accompanied by the Order and the Church.
- Now we are a bit confused and we don't want to follow a mere gardener. We are sure we will be able to leave everything again for the Lord when we discover Him when we listen to Him calling us by our name.

On Palm Sunday evening, the experience of the Passover was put forward and we met the community that prays, waits, and practises the manner of government according to the Acts 1, 12-26.



The text was worked in groups and later the conclusions were shared in the plenary. Here are some of the conclusions:

- When we first entered the monastery we had a different availability, we didn't demand so much!
 - What stops us? Is it our autonomy? Is it the power we have over our monasteries?
 - We shouldn't solve the situation with foreign vocations if we are not able to accommodate them.
- We are paralyzed by fear. The word "fear" has been mentioned several times. A text which can illuminate us is: "...those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death" (Hb 2, 15). What are we scared of? We should be scared of not having a tabernacle as the centre of the community or not having the pillars which uphold our Dominican life.
- Why are there so many problems in amalgamating communities or carrying out new projects? Is it a sign of not feeling we are a family? Will we be able to cry like St Dominic: "Lord, what will become of sinners?" When our sisters who need us are knocking at our door and we say to them like the innkeeper "come back later"?
- We should recognize that God is passing by at this moment but it is not a moment of death and darkness but of life and resurrection with hope and joy which is so typical in our Dominican life.
- Many sisters felt that it is not negotiable to live half of our 4 pillars: Regular Observance, Common Life, Prayer and Work.
 - The monastery is not for ever and ever
 - It is not right to let a nun go to be the prioress of another monastery which cannot live the four mentioned pillars.

In the evening plenary fr. Vito was asked to talk about the autonomy of the monasteries. It was a very interesting talk which will be published in the next issue of Monialibus.

The Master concluded this meeting addressing some words to the nuns, his main message was: "Nuns, show us the Order".

After having dinner, once the work was finished, suddenly in the cloister of the House of Spirituality, a big group of nuns with guitars and castanets filled the house with joy and singing. Little by little the group got bigger and bigger and all together went to the monastery of the nuns where we spent the evening recreation. The room was filled with happiness, singing and dancing. It was great to see so much joy but time imposed itself and we had to say goodbye. See you soon, sisters!

The farewell was on Monday morning. None of us left Caleruega like the day we arrived. We took in our heart what we had lived together in Caleruega. We had a task to fulfil, a mission to accomplish.

This day, very early, we had the Eucharist and lauds in the nun's chapel. Fr. Brian, our Promoter, presided at the Eucharist. He preached an excellent homily rich in ideas in which he talked about Mary's lavish love at Jesus' feet. The complete homily can be read in this issue of Monialibus.



Thanks to all who made possible this meeting: the Master, our friars, the Federal Prioresses and, of course, thanks to the nuns of Caleruega.

Sr M^a Cristina Buendía, OP
Monastery of our Lady of Consolation, Xátiva (Valencia)
Sr M^a Rosario Botella, OP
Monastery of St Catherine of Siena, Palma de Mallorca.
Original: Spanish

*Meeting of the Union of African Monasteries of the Order of Preachers
(U.M.A.O.P.) in Rweza, Burundi*

Two and a half years have passed since our previous meeting in Senegal, South Africa, in 2005. This time we met in Rweza, Burundi, from the sixth to the twelfth of December (2007).

We had planned that this meeting would be at Mother of God Monastery in Benguela, Angola, but because of difficulties in obtaining visas into Angola, we needed to change the location, and we were generously welcomed by the Monastery of Our Lady of Peace in Rweza, Burundi. Although there was little time for preparation, representatives were present from all the member monasteries of the UMA.

By the fifth of December, everyone had arrived: two from Senegal, one of them being our [International Commission] Representative for Africa, Sr. Joyce Rita, two from Karen-Nairobi, two from Douala-Cameroon, two from Bambui-Cameroon, two from Angola, and three from Rweza, the community which received us all. On the sixth of December, our three brothers arrived to help us: Fr. Manuel Merten, at that time still serving as Promoter for the Nuns, Fr. Brian Pierce, soon to be his successor in that role, who served as translator for Spanish, and Fr. Cletus, Assistant to the Master of the Order for Africa, who was our translator for English and French. Also participating in the meeting was Sr. Rosemary from Nigeria, Prioress of a new congregation developing in Africa for contemplative life. Founded by a Dominican priest who is now a Bishop, the congregation is taking steps toward union with the Order and wishes to be yet another monastery of contemplative Dominican nuns. Time will tell. Sr. Rosemary gave us their history from its beginning. God seems to be leading them under the protection of our holy father St. Dominic.

Meeting our sisters again was a great joy. Some were participating for the first time, but for others it was the second or third time that they were together.

The Rweza sisters were happy to see their own community enlarged for a few days, and they did everything for us, down to the last detail.

On the 7th of December we began our first session with a presentation by each member in which she/he shared her or his own story right up to the time of entering the great Dominican family. It was impressive to hear how God has been leading the history of each one. The days developed around goals which, two and a half years ago, we had agreed upon for our experiment of a union of African monasteries. We had given this union the name: Union of the Monasteries of Africa of the Order of Preachers, U.M.A.O.P. As we shared our experiences of the union, we came to the conclusion that continuing to go forward would be worth the effort, since we had all been pleased with the richness of the mutual help among the monasteries, the communication which we had tried to make accessible to all, and the greater collaboration which had occurred according to the possibilities of each monastery.

We dedicated our fourth day to a visit to Project "Hagakura" (a word meaning "help," in a native language) which our Dominican Brothers are carrying on in Bujumbura, Burundi, for

children and adolescents who have been abandoned or who would have no possibility of education. They have much land sown with a diversity of fruit trees, vegetables, and medicinal plants from which natural medicines are prepared for various illnesses. We also saw the project of a hospital for mothers, from early pregnancy until the first months of lactation. This project also has been very successful.

We finished our visit with a pleasant meal offered us by the Center, and we returned to the monastery happy to have had the rich experience of seeing what love has done for the very needy.

In the following days we continued with our various themes, planning more concretely the future of the UMAOP. For this planning, we asked ourselves these three questions: How do we view the UMA? Are we satisfied or dissatisfied? What would we like to change or add?

Each of the participants responded from her or his personal and communitarian experience. We were all in agreement that there are three areas in which we still have a great deal of difficulty: language, communication, and common formation themes.

Three communities shared their experience of the kind of mutual help which is still going on among African monasteries. Two sisters from the monastery of Bambui were helping in the monastery at Douala for three years; they learned French and could teach English, thus enriching both communities. Three sisters from Rweza had been for a time in the monastery in Karen-Nairobi, for various purposes, and they benefited from learning English and teaching French. The third community, Senegal, is the "fruit of this Union of monasteries," as Fr. Brian said.

We took the occasion of the meeting of the Union to choose three names, as the Father Master had asked, for his choice of the next Sister to be appointed to the International Commission, succeeding Sr. Joyce Rita who would in March end her term as representative of our Africa region. We also elected the Coordinator of the UMAOP. In the years when we were beginning the Union, Sr. Joyce Rita served in both roles. It was proposed to the assembly that we decide whether to continue thus, or take a new option. We unanimously agreed to have the same sister for the two functions, since as coordinator she would know the monasteries well, and as member of the Commission she would be well informed about our region. Therefore when the Father Master names the International Commission representative, the same person will become, ipso facto, the Coordinator of the UMAOP, continuing in this role for the same period as her term on the Commission.

We agreed to have the next meeting of the Union in 2010, in the Karen-Nairobi monastery.

On December thirteenth the dispersion began, each one leaving with the joy of having shared life with sisters from other places, all of them daughters of St. Dominic. As we left, there was certain nostalgia in our hearts, and that could be seen on all our faces.

We extend special thanks to our brother Fr. Manuel Merten for all the years in which he helped us as Promoter, and great gratitude also for his collaboration in the forming of what is today the UMAOP.

Our thanks go also to Sr. Languida and to all the sisters of Rweza for having made it possible for us to meet in their monastery.

To all the sons and daughters of St. Dominic greetings from Benguela-Angola.

Sor Maria Aurora de Fátima, O.P.
Original: Spanish

Presentation of the new members of the Commission

ASIA-PACIFIC: Sr. Mary Augustine Cruz, OP (Monastery of the Queen of Angels, Bocaue, Philippines)



My name is Sr. Mary Augustine Godoy Cruz, OP. Before joining the Dominicans, I worked as a hospital pharmacist for two years. I entered the Queen of Angels Monastery in Bocaue, Bulacan, Philippines in December 8, 1990, and now on my nearly 18 years of continual learning on my religious life.

I served my community as an Assistant Novice Mistress for 3 years, a Novice Mistress for 6 years, for 9 years as the formator of our Dominican Laity and presently serve as the community Bursar. Just for the record, I am 41 years old and turning 42 this coming August 31. I am a jolly person and loves singing as our Father St. Dominic (a joyful friar!) I do some music compositions especially for our Divine Office. Maybe, someday I could also share with you some of my compositions.

Just like what I had written to Fr. Brian regarding my appointment to the commission representing the monasteries in Asia- Pacific region, with trustful spirit in God, I humbly accepted it and " I am all set for the job".

Original: English

SPAIN (Federation of the Immaculate): Sr María Aurea Sanjuan Miro, OP (Xátiva, Valencia, Spain)



I belong to the Federation of the Immaculate in the Province of Aragón, Spain. I became a nun when I was very young and I understand the religious life as the passion of following Jesus, and the contemplative life as looking through the eyes of Jesus, always wearing His glasses and, through them and with their colour, watching all things, events and situations.

We are called to follow Jesus, looking with Him and with his eyes, through the charisma of prayer and mercy. Jesus "went about doing good". In my opinion this is our primary task whatever the concrete details which change according to the circumstances of time and place: "going about doing good".

Doing good to the Sisters and to all the people who come to our monastery. This readiness can complicate life, our personal life and the life in the Monastery. People who live like "sheep without a shepherd" come to our door with their hands held out asking for the material bread of each day and the bread of the Word, for guidance and for consolation. In fact, they do not allow us to sleep at siesta time – metaphorically speaking - and they prevent us from "vegetating". This calls for constant and merciful prayer and demands a serious formation.

A deep and rigorous formation is essential for a Dominican nun. In this field my ally is the UNED –National Remote-Learning University - with its strict and demanding syllabus. The subject for my permanent formation is philosophy, and specifically the philosophy of religion, in other words to know what people have thought and think of God, how He has been "loved", how God has been attacked and how He is ignored nowadays. Everything suggests and helps. It helps to manage oneself in life and in the difficulties of our consecrated life, with the aim of avoiding superficiality and routine. It also helps to give meaning to the simplicity of our daily regular life and not to complicate it with small-mindedness, helping us to make relative what can be relativized and tolerate what can be tolerated.

It also helps one to realize that our way of living seeks a form of adaptation not for the sake of opportunism or for any desire to fill our monasteries [which are nearly empty!] nor yet for

despising what is ours, but with a view to "going back to the sources", to the inspired intuition and fidelity of St Dominic who knew how to adapt the message of Jesus to the signs of his time, in order to make visible and recognizable the light which cannot be hidden under a tub and the salt which is so very much needed in the flavourless lives of so many of our contemporaries.

Speaking in more concrete terms, I can also tell you that that I am the Prioress of a community of 16 sisters, all very much alive and excellent in their desire of following the path marked out by Jesus. Between us, each one making her special contribution, we have created our web which you can see in: www.monjasdominicasxativa.org

Sr Aurea Sanjuán Miró, op
Original: Spanish

SOUTH AMERICA: Sr Rosa Luz Manrique, OP (Monastery of St Rose, Arequipa, Peru)



Dear Sisters,

Fraternal greetings to all from this beautiful Peruvian land. The Master of the Order appointed me to be a member of the International Commission of Nuns and for this reason Sr Isabel M^a asked me to write a brief introduction of myself through Monialibus and I do it with great pleasure.

I was born in Arequipa (Peru) on the 23rd of May 1962. I am the sixth of eight children. I entered the Monastery of St Rose Arequipa on the 30th of September 1979. I received the habit on the 6th of April 1980. I made my Simple Profession on the 26th of April 1981 and made my Solemn Profession on the 24th of March 1985. I am very grateful to God for the gift of a vocation to this beautiful Dominican Family whose special characteristic is fraternity and joy. As a Dominican nun, I feel really happy because, by penetrating deeper into prayer, I am discovering a God with a human face, a God very close, merciful and compassionate, a God that doesn't take pleasure in the death of a wicked man but prefers to see him renounce his wickedness and live. It is only in this way that I can contemplate the way of God through my life and through those of each one of my brothers and sisters. I accept with humility and availability this appointment and put myself at the service of all my sisters.

Sr Rosa Luz of the SS.CC. Manrique, op
Original: Spanish

ITALY: Sr. M. Vincenza Panza, OP (Monastery of the Holy Rosary, Azzano S. Paolo, Bergamo, Italy)



I was born in 1948 and I entered the Monastery in 1969. In 1971 I had my First Profession and the Solemn one in 1974.

I entered the Order without knowing very well the spirituality. When I chose the cloistered life (that's how it was called at that time), I had only one desire: to give my life to the Lord for salvation of souls through my love for Him and the Church. Immediately I became fond of the Dominican ideal. Having been called to serve the Word of God through the liturgical and personal prayer, contemplation and community life, was for me a big gift freely received. I remember that in my first years of religious life I often asked myself: Am I really here, or I'm dreaming?

In my Community I have been in charge of various offices among which Mistress of Novices and Prioress.

In the year 2000 I was elected Secretary of the Assembly of Prioresses of the Italian Dominican Monasteries and re-elected in 2004. Last June, my small *Federation of St Dominic* which includes 7 Monasteries, elected me Federal President. I feel embarrassed to list all this; I feel so

small in front of God and the Sisters and this is for me a reason of continuous praise to the Lord. I only wish to continue in my daily and humble work to promote the Dominican Contemplative life.

In the International Commission of the Nuns I am in my second mandate. When I was at the General Curia last May and the Master of the Order gave me the letter in which he *re-nominated me*, I was a bit perplexed, but his strong and secure word gave me the certainty that I could say yes without fear. " *The Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want* .

From the Ark of our Father Saint Dominic which I had the grace to visit in these days 26th of June 2008, I said a particular prayer for all my contemplative Sisters.

Original: English

SPAIN (Federation of St Dominic): Sr María Dolores (Lola) Pérez Mesuro, OP (Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Toro, Zamora, Spain)



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you see, I am the new member of the International Commission of Nuns for the Federation of Spain. I am very happy to be with you and to be able to work and journey together with you in this path of ours which started many years ago.

I know that I am not alone, apart from you; all the nuns are with me through their prayer and its strength makes the Holy Spirit be present inside us.

I have belonged to the Community of Toro (Zamora) Spain for 29 years. I came from Madrid. I didn't know the nuns, I only knew the Friars. Since then I can say that I am very happy despite the ups and downs during this period. It is not vanity, but I feel privileged to live the contemplative life which is what I desired. What more? We will get to know little by little. I thank you, in advance, for your fraternal welcome. I hope you will not hesitate to ask me for whatever you need. I am at the service of each one of my sisters of the Commission and of the Order.

United in Jesus Christ, with the Virgin Mary and our Father St Dominic.

Greetings from Sr M^a Dolores (Sr Lola) Pérez Mesuro,op

Original: Spanish

AFRICA: Sr. Monica Nzilani Mutua, OP (Corpus Christi, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya)

(Due to the problems with the Internet we could not receive the presentation of Sr Monica. It will come out in the next issue of Monialibus)

Through this Monialibus, we welcome the new members of the Commission who will share their service with Sr Mary Lucy, OP (Northamerica), Sr Breda, OP (Europe Utriusque), Sr Jean- Thérèse, OP (France), Sr Rosa M^a, op (Mexico) and Sr Isabel M^a de la Trinidad, OP (Federation of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Spain) until the year 2011.

Verbal of the formation course for the Prioresses and Formators

From 19th to 23rd May in the retreat house of SS. Giovanni and Paolo at Celio in Rome took place the formation course for prioresses of 12 monasteries, a delegate of the Prioress, 4 sisters who participated at the meetings and 6 mistresses were present. Sr. Dominique Lenenberger op of the community of Weesen (Switzerland) was also present.

Fr. Fiorenzo Forani op was absent because of some health problem. We convey our loving regards to him and assure our prayers.

The meeting began with the Eucharistic celebration and vespers. After the supper, Sr. Vincenza Panza gathered the participants in the assembly to give some communications about the organisation of the days.

Besides this, she read the letter of the Master General with regards to the nomination of the new Italian representative for the nun's commission: Sr Vincenza Panza has been nominated for a second mandatory. We thank her and also wish her a fruitful work for the service that she will be giving again for the contemplative life.

May 20th

Morning: Fr. Vito Gómez García op proposed to the Assembly a talk on Dominican Contemplative Life.

Fr. Vito spoke about the foundation of the first convents of nuns (Prouilhe and San Sixto) done by the works of St. Dominic. To understand the passages taken place and the historical motivations which brought about these passages can help to retake contact with the fonts.

Afternoon. The participants divided themselves into three groups to reflect on topics emerged in the talk. After the breakfast the participants shared among themselves some news of different communities.

21st May

Morning. Fr. Brian Pierce op, the new Promoter of the nuns proposed and guided an experience of a community *Lectio Divina* with a weekly rhythm: "a Dominican way" to live the *Lectio* in the community. Afterwards the participants divided themselves in groups for the experience of the *meditatio* (meditation), preparing also three brief moments of preaching to be shared during the Vespers.

Afternoon. We had a moment of meeting and dialogue with Fr. Brian for a mutual knowledge and sharing about the reality of the contemplative life in Italy in this time. It has been also discussed about the problem of convocations of these meetings, because there perceives a certain tiredness. After some reflections Fr. Brian reminded us that in this moment may be it is necessary to ask ourselves some questions: *Where are we going? What is our dream? What does the Spirit asks us today?* During the debate there emerged the need to involve also other sisters in the reflections about the future of the communities. Thus it was decided to formulate a small questionnaire addressed to each nun so that one can express the proper reflections and proper thoughts about the opportunity and the desire that it could be possible to organize a meeting with sisters of other monasteries in order to reflect together about our future.

In the evening after the supper the prioresses had a get together for a first encounter from which it emerged the renewed decision to continue to meet among themselves as "Assembly of the prioresses".

22nd May

Morning. The Master of the Order, Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, met the assembly of the nuns in a fraternal dialogue. Fr. Brian e Fr. Bernardino Prella, Assistant for Italy and Malta were also present for the meeting.

The Master gave some explanations about the nomination of the representative of the Commission and about the duty of the Commission of the nuns. He solicited our reflections proposing some questions which can help us to reflect about our life and to understand better what it means our "belonging to the Order".

Then together we celebrated the Eucharist followed by the lunch lived in joyful fraternity.



Afternoon

a) Fr. Bernardino met a group of formators giving a talk on: «*How to form and how to be formed to belong to the Order?*».

b) The prioresses met together in assembly to speak about the following points

1) Renewal of the secretary

It has been renewed the secretary for another quadrennial 2008-2011.

The Assembly of the Prioresses elected the new secretaries: Sr. M. Pia Fragni (Pratovecchio): 7 votes; Sr. Teresa Olivari (Nocera Inferiore): 7 votes; Sr. Gabriella Mauri (Moncalieri): 8 votes.

2) Programme for the next year

From next year the Assembly of the Prioresses and the course of formators will take place separately. The meetings of the prioresses will be 18-22 May 2009 in the Retreat house of the Passionists Fathers. In this meeting other nuns can also participate. That is up to each Prioress.

Besides, it has been decided that the formators of interested monasteries would programme the Formation course in accordance with the respective prioresses

At the same time, the Prioresses and the Mistresses of the interested monasteries together will be deciding the common formation courses for the youngsters. When it will be organised surely it will be made known to all the communities.

3) Financial report

The cashier gave a report on the account of "monastery fund" and of the budget 2007/2008.

4) Indications about the questions

There has been formed a questionnaire to send to all the nuns.

After supper, in a joyful recreation and at the end singing the hymn salve Regina we concluded the meeting

A special thanks to Sr Vincenza and Sr.Lucía for their precious service given to all of us.

Loving regards and best wishes to all

Sr. M. Pia op, Sr. Teresa op, Sr. Gabriella op

Original: English

Course about the History of the Order

Under the guide lines: "Why should we study the history of the Order?, St Dominic, Prouilhe, the history of the Constitutions and the expansion of the Order, Sr Barbara Beaumont gave a course in the Federation of Our lady of the Rosary in Peru from the 16th to the 20th of June. More than 40 nuns attended the course. With wisdom and interest she introduced us to the topics mentioned above. Day after day she revealed the mysteries of our history.

Premises for the development of the course:

- We should facilitate the transmission of the history so that all of us could experience it.
- If we are not rooted in the past we cannot have a present.
- The memory, the remembrances are important for the formation of our identity.
- The collective identity of the Order adds something to my own personal identity.
- Knowing the history makes us efficient for preaching.
- It is very important to know how St. Dominic and the first nuns lived.

What is a historian? A historian is someone who wonders about something and looks for the answer.

Our history has really been successful. We have survived 800 years which shows the quality of the Institutions that St. Dominic left.

We have first hand sources, (important people involved in the history, who have written about St. Dominic and his environment).

Dominic responded to the necessities of the moment. The women whom St. Dominic and Diego gathered together, in a short time became the first nuns. How? In history it is said that these women already had religious formation and lived a pious life among the Cathars. This was something very important and it helped them to respond to the project offered by St. Dominic. Who is the medieval reporter or chronicler or historian who will be in charge of writing about Dominic and the nuns? Well, it won't be a friar but a Cistercian monk who wrote down everything referring to the crusade against the Albigenses where fr. Dominic is involved.

The foundation of Prouilhe dates from 1211, after six months it is called the "Holy Preaching".

The Constitutions of St. Sixto are the oldest (1221).

The Constitutions elaborated by the Master of the Order, fr. Humbert of Romans, in 1259 remained without changes until 1930.

Fr. Guillet calls the nuns for the first time: Preachers/Contemplative Sisters.

The three traditional means which lead us to contemplation are regular observance, liturgy and doctrinal study.

Regarding the spread of the Order, its high point might have been at the dawn of the XIV Century. The nuns have suffered the suppression and the destruction of their monasteries but like the Phoenix Bird they have risen from their ashes with the help of God and as a prophetic strength founded in Christ: the firm Rock.

We have been willing to share succinctly part of the lavish knowledge that our dear Sister gave us each day. In our heart there remains a feeling of joy and gratitude to our God who associates us with such a large and wonderful Order and so holy through its sons and daughters since its foundation.

Our gratitude: to fr. Brian Pierce, op, Promoter of the nuns, who was an excellent translator from English into Spanish for his sister in Peru during the course. He showed his deep affection. Every day he celebrated the Eucharist.

We greet Sr. Barbara with gratitude for her serious and solid formation because she had an answer to each one of our questions.

Monastery of St Catherine of Siena, Lima (Peru)

Original: Spanish

The life-story of a group of Dominican Nuns in Greece (1595-2007)

In the sixteenth century, on the island of Santorin as on other Greek isles, the inhabitants lived together in strongholds called forts which protected them from the incursion of pirates. The Catholics lived in Skaros in the center of the island, a very elevated place. Skaros was the principal fort on the island, even though the Catholics numbered only ten percent of the population. On the promontory of Skaros there was a monastery of Dominican nuns, under the patronage of St. Catherine of Siena. It was founded on the fifth of August, 1596, by the bishop of Thira, Anthony De Markis, a Dominican who came from Chios. It was the only monastery of nuns in what was then the immense territory of the Turkish-Ottoman Empire. It had a prehistory: From 1423 to 1611, eight bishops of the Catholic church of Santorin were Dominicans. The tradition of the Order on the island had been handed on by the Laity as well. In the Bull of incorporation into the Order (Jan 20, 1600), written by the Master General, Fr. Hippolytus Beccaria, we learn that Bishop De Markis, even before the canonical establishment of the monastery, had given the Habit of Dominican sisters to many devout women, some of whom later transferred to the community life of the new monastery.

The great love of St. Catherine of Siena for the Church was well known; she worked hard for its internal peace and unity. Under her patronage the mission of the Santorin Monastery also was marked by an ecumenical and vivid sense of the Church. Before the monastery's canonical erection, its first candidates went to the monastery in Crete for their formation. Then seven young women, all from Santorin, some of them belonging to aristocratic families, began a life of prayer and sacrifice which was in harmony with the spirit the holy Founder had instilled in the first nuns of his Order. The little house where the sisters gathered was the gift of Marino Dargenta, two of whose daughters were among the group, one of them becoming the first prioress. That house became the Dominican monastery.

After St. Dominic's death in 1221, monasteries of nuns had extended rapidly throughout Europe. They arrived in Greece also. By the 16th century there were two monasteries in Crete: St. Catherine, in Heracleon, and St. Mary of Miracles, in Jania. To this same epoch belongs the monastery of Santorin, which still exists today.

The monastery was a great comfort to everyone in Skaros. The sisters were loved by the people, who respected and valued their holy life. Everyone approached them to ask the Lord for the graces they so much needed. The inhabitants appreciated also the cotton that was made by the sisters.

Sister Rose D'Antrechaux is a good example of the sisters' lives. She died in 1768, esteemed as a saint. She was the daughter of Jean-Joseph D'Antrechaux, a French aristocrat and Knight of Malta, and of a Greek woman named Kalitsa, from the island of Astipalea. Catherine D'Antrechaux, later "Sister Rose," was brought to the monastery of Skaros when she was six years old. There she decided to embrace monastic life and made her profession at age of sixteen. Until her death at 89 years of age, she led an edifying life of prayer and was favored with unusual gifts. As mistress of novices and prioress for many years, she gave great impetus to the monastery. At the time of her death the community numbered thirty-two nuns. Bishop K. Krispi ordered a verbal process to be made in regard to her virtues and reputation for holiness. Another sister, Sister Crucified, who dies about 1899, had come from Arabia and had been rescued from slavery.

The history of Santorin is marked by the constant eruptions of its volcanoes and by the accompanying earthquakes. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the pinnacle of Skaros began to crumble and this obliged the Catholic population to move to Fira, capitol of the island. The nuns were slow in abandoning Skaros. When they did, they went to the fortress of Gula where, though well received by the Sirigos family, they nevertheless endured seven difficult years of intense poverty. In 1818 they left the castle of Gula and moved to Fira where they live now.

The history of the community is the history of a paschal journey -- full of trials and tribulations but sign of the marvels of God. In that era, the Sisters experienced the special protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his saving power. For this reason they began to foster devotion to the Sacred Heart, and they made a promise to celebrate that feast very solemnly to express their recognition "that the Lord is good and his love is eternal"(Ps. 117).

Life in Fira was a new stage for the monastery. A church and monastic edifice were built and the church was consecrated by Bishop Gaspar Delenda in 1818. He dedicated it to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Together with the physical restoration there was also an important spiritual renewal, complete with new vocations and the restoration of common life, which had been lost in the castle at Gula because of the extreme poverty there.



When the Dominican Bishop De Markis founded the monastery, he taught the first sisters to hear and to live the word of God, and this had strengthened them spiritually.

In the 17th century, the Jesuit Fathers who had remained in Santorin were good confessors and spiritual directors for the sisters. Father Richard, S.J., who was one of their confessors wrote the following in 1650: "On the island, this monastery is like a rose among thorns, like a diamond in rock, like the moon on a dark night. It is, to put it briefly, the most beautiful jewel and the richest treasure of the island." Later, when the Jesuits left the island at the beginning of the 18th century, there was something of a decline in the spiritual help available to the nuns. They saw no Dominican friars, a major lament of theirs, and their only relationship with the Order was their correspondence with the friars in Constantinople.

In 1852 the community went through a crisis, during which the nuns showed their love for the spirit of the Order. The Bishop of Santorin, Kukulas, helped them during his apostolic visit to overcome this trial; above all, he understood their need for a Dominican chaplain located at the monastery. In 1850, the presence of a chaplain played an important part in the passage of the monastery from the jurisdiction of the local bishop to the direct jurisdiction of the Order. It was incorporated into the Province of St. Peter Martyr, centered in northern Italy. Fr. Moro, O.P., involved himself in the work of restoring the community. He constructed a new building for them

while the old one became the residence of the confessor and the cooperator brothers who were with him. The consecration took place in October of 1864.

From 1857 to 1928, twelve Dominican fathers were in turn resident at the monastery of Santorin as spiritual directors, and they were always accompanied by co-operator brothers. Their presence provided great spiritual and material help for the sisters, and left its mark on the Catholic community of the island. The Fathers renewed the Confraternities of the Rosary and of the Holy Name of Jesus, which had been founded by Bishop De Markis, and they gave a great impulse to the Fraternity of Lay Dominicans (the "tertiaries," as they were then called). When the Dominican Fathers left Santorin, the monastery returned to the jurisdiction of the local Bishop.

From its beginnings, the community attracted young people from the island. For three centuries the vocations were Greek exclusively. From the 20th century on, members were received from other countries also. In 1904 and 1905, two sisters from Sicily joined them, and in 1932, one from Lombardy in Italy. During the Second World War, their building suffered no extensive material damage but the three Italian sisters were taken off to concentration camps in Athens, where they remained for several months of the year 1940. Fortunately they were treated there with much respect.

In 1956, a strong earthquake caused serious damage to some house in Santorin and also to the monastery, especially to its paintings in the church. During the earthquake and afterward, the four sisters of the community gave admirable witness of faith and serenity, remaining in the monastery in spite of the continual quakes, and thus assuring the continued presence of the Blessed Sacrament. When all the inhabitants of Fira left the city and camped out in tents, the nuns stayed on, trusting in the Lord's protection.

In later times, the numbers of the community began to diminish. This drew the attention of some of the Dominican Fathers who had visited the monastery and who concerned themselves with drawing to it sisters from various monasteries in Italy. In 1952 the Monastery of the Holy Rosary near Rome and in 1961 that of St. Margaret of Savoy (in Alba, northern Italy), helped by sending sisters.

One of these sisters was Sr. Reginald Gho, who undertook the restoration of the church. Another, Sr. Tomasina, gave eight years of loving service to the community before her death there. Sr. Ludovico, prioress for many years, was the last of these sisters to leave the island and return to Alba (1981). In the 'seventies, the island began to be an affluent tourist area. The sisters considered making an effort to receive guests. Dominican nuns from the French monasteries of Orbey, Lourdes, and Prouilhe came temporarily to help the Santorin community. With their work of Byzantine iconography, their contacts with many Orthodox monasteries and their correspondence with their sisters in France, these French nuns contributed to the ecumenical thrust of the monastery, both in Greece and beyond it.

Certainly the temporary presence of more sisters was not the ideal solution for the monastery. The bishop of Syros, Msgr. Francis Papamanolis, presented persistently to the Order the need of a stable community "such that it could be a reference point as a life of prayer and a living witness of total consecration to the Lord, on an island where, because of affluent tourism, people of every race, language and religion were coming together. In a special way the nuns of this place, paying personally for the consequences of the scandal of division among Christians, would intercede for the soonest possible realization of Jesus' desire 'that all be one' (John 17, 11)."

In his turn, the Master of the Order, Fr. Vincent de Couesnongle, considered it a necessity to maintain the single monastery that the Order has in Orthodox territory. In 1979, Fr. de Couesnongle asked the Mother of God Monastery in Olmedo (Valladolid, Spain) which has founded five monasteries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, to take responsibility for the Monastery of Santorin. The Fraternal Union "Mother of God" (Federation of St. Dominic, Province

of Spain) accepted the proposal of the Master in 1980. It was the very year in which theological dialogue began between Catholics and Orthodox, and the year when the seventh centenary of the death of St. Catherine of Siena was celebrated.



Today in the Santorin Monastery there are Sisters from Greece and from various other countries of the world. The unity of these sisters constitutes a sign of universal reconciliation in Christ. The monastery is again under the jurisdiction of the Order. The bishop's Vicar, Fr. Nikolaus Kokkalis, is very close to the sisters and offers them great help and collaboration.

Together with the Dominican friars who live in Athens, the nuns of the monastery constitute the Dominican family in Greece: the Fathers are the apostles of the Truth which is Jesus Christ, and proclaim the Word of God; the nuns sustain them with their uninterrupted prayer so that the Word of God may not fall away to nothing but may bear fruit in human hearts.

The Order and the monastery, after many years of history, continue to have a profound ecclesial and ecumenical mission. In an outstanding tourist area, and with universal significance, the nuns want to be a place of encounter with God, a place of fraternity and peace for all persons of good will.

From the work "The luminous face of St. Dominic" –
Fr. Rosario Sconamiglio, O.P.
Original: Spanish

A Jubilee celebrated while travelling

For our Community of Dominican Nuns, the eight hundredth Centenary of foundation of the Monastery of Prouille was really "a time of grace to celebrate with joy". For us, the Jubilee Year was marked by the moving of our Monastery from Fontanellato, Diocese of Parma, to the City of Cremona. A transfer decided and matured in prayer, prepared and desired for quite some time, carried out with joy, dedication and also – it's useless to hide it – with a lot of hard work.

Some History

Our Community, composed by 17 Nuns, was founded 210 years ago, in the year 1797. Our Foundress, Mother Giacinta Domenica Borbone, together with other fervent Sisters, founded a Dominican Monastery in Colorno (Parma). The first twenty years were particularly full of suffering caused by the political situation of that time. The Nuns had to undergo through laws of suppression, they had to do without their religious habit and leave the Monastery. In 1817 the Community was reunited in Fontanellato (Parma) where, since 1512 there was an ex-convent of the Order of Preachers. In this convent, the Nuns found the cloister, the chapter, the rooms, the refectory, the dormitory... which needed refurbishing but fit for their regular life. Only the choir, situated in the Church, was not suitable to the needs of a cloistered life. For this reason the sacresty, the only part of the building communicating directly with the Church, was transformed in a choir for the Nuns. From here the religious could receive the Eucharist through a window. The work was completed when the Nuns succeeded in having spiritual help from their Dominican Confreres.

In those times and up to some years ago, an enclosed life could be briefly summarized by the expression “not seen and no seeing” and in this way of thinking the layout of the choir did not present any particular problems. Already in 1817, the Sanctuary next to the Monastery, where for centuries the image of Our Lady of the Rosary was venerated, was reached by numerous pilgrimages which at that time were done on foot and only in the Summer months, while rarely visited during the cold months. Besides this the Eucharistic celebrations were held only in the mornings. In this way the Cloistered Community had the possibility of using the Church of the Monastery which since 1817, when the Nuns went to live there, had a triple pastoral function: Church of the Monastery of the Nuns, Church for the Convent of the Fathers and a Marian Sanctuary for the pilgrims.

Along the years

As years slowly passed by, they brought with them many changes of mentality and in the environment. First of all road conditions improved a lot. Nowadays the Sanctuary is a daily destination of pilgrimages. Every year thousands of people go to pray Our Lady of the Rosary of Fontanellato expressing their faith and popular devotion. According to the liturgical reform evening Masses can be celebrated and today besides the various Eucharistic celebrations other expressions of Marian cult take place in a continuous succession of prayers, hymns, processions...

The three Fathers assigned for the spiritual assistance of the Nuns and pilgrims in 1817, later became four, six, eight... and their convent became priory and their common prayer was more often celebrated in the choir of the Church in ways and times different than those of the Community of the Nuns. In fact at Fontanellato for many years we find a situation of a ‘double Convent’, similar to the first years at Prouilhe, with all the positive and negative aspects pointed out in some interesting studies of P. H. Vicaire, op, and summarized in some short and realistic hints in n° 26 of the “Verbi Sponsa”. Also Vatican II Council brought about new demands in the life of the Monastery.

A long and peaceful community discernment

After Vatican Council II the old rule of “not seen and no seeing” was no longer in conformity with our Constitutions. These demand that the Nuns should be able to see the altar and those other persons can share in our celebrations. In the old sacristy, transformed in a cloistered choir in 1817, it was impossible to carry out the necessary changes according to the new liturgical needs. What could be done?

For our Community, a slow process of attentive listening and attention to any revealing sign of the will of God, began. The road of discernment was followed in a progressive way, unanimously, sometimes urged by external events, but above all done in wishing to be faithful to our vocation.

We asked ourselves: what does it mean for us today being faithful to the initial love, which one day made us leave our family, our home, our studies or our job, to follow Christ according to Saint Dominic’s ideal?

Can’t the ecclesiastical service of praise and of intercession which we live hidden behind the stream of pilgrimages arriving at the Sanctuary be expressed in a way more adequate to our vocation of “Preachers”, without eliminating anything strictly belonging to our form of cloistered life?

Can the full and hearty communion with the Order and our vital association to the apostolic ministry of our Fathers be maintained even if we are not physically near the “double Convent” of Fontanellato, or must this neighbourhood – now very rare and perhaps unique in the Order - be continued at all costs?

We were not in a hurry to give an answer, waiting patiently to understand the Lord's project for us. Slowly the way to follow became clearer and clearer. The peaceful unanimity of the Community, the approval of the Superiors of the Order and of the Church, the unexpected and providential help which the Lord permitted us to find along our way, made us understand that the road we were following was the right one and according to the Divine will.

In fact our need of a place where we could better express our charisma met with the desire of the Diocese of Cremona and its Bishop who wished to restore life in an old Monastery which for many years, in the past, had been used as a diocesan centre of spirituality and a place for spiritual exercises for the young members of 'Azione Cattolica', but now unused for more than thirty years and in a state of neglect.

A transfer lived in the Grace of the Jubilee

Our transfer was carried out in a period of particular grace for the Order and for the Diocese which welcomed us. The year 2007 was for us the Eighth Centenary of Prouilhe. During the same year Cremona celebrated the Ninth Centenary of the foundation of the Cathedral. The double jubilee celebration accompanied our 'house moving'.

We cannot hide the fact that the hard work, which this change brought with it, has helped us to be more merciful and comprehensive towards those Communities composed by few, old Sisters who hesitate in taking decisions for their present and future life.

The closing up of a Monastery and its transfer does not imply only affective separation. Moving far away from the places and dear persons, from an environment in which one has lived, joyed, suffered and prayed for many years does not entail only the 'sacrifice of the heart' which by itself is not to be underestimated. But it means unending bureaucracy with the Office of monuments and fine arts, with the Prefecture and with the Holy See. It implies worries for the use and/or selling of the Monastery one is leaving from, for the layout and settlement of the Monastery in which one is moving and also for all the expenses. It involves physical energy to fill up and empty boxes, to dismantle and reassemble wardrobes, beds, choir stalls..., to organise the moving of the kitchen, the infirmary, the linen room, the library, the archives..., to replace each other in the various duties. It means 'living like in a camping' both in the 'old' Monastery as in the 'new' one for quite some time. In a word it's an adventure which needs young energy, health and sacrifice. Can our old Sisters worry about all these things when for them it is a daily hardship to cope with life?

Nevertheless, all this work united us even more and it did not hinder us from accomplishing an intense spiritual preparation. The Jubilee was for us a favourable time to remember with gratitude the past, to live with passion the present and to look forward to our future. The various laps were high lightened by particular celebrations and moments of prayer.

Finally we arrived to the 8th December, 2007 day of our official entry in Cremona. The Bishop, Priests, Seminarians and many Christians welcomed us in the Cathedral in a very affectionate a cordial way. To represent the Order there were, Father Angelo Urru, op, Vicar of the Master of the Order for our Community, the Vicar of Italy – Father Fiorenzo Forani, op and various Fathers from the Province San Domenico in Italy. The local Bishop, in his homely, immediately placed us in the heart of the 'Saintly Preaching' by entrusting to us, right from the beginning the commitment of uniting ourselves with our prayer and sacrifice to a particular initiative of evangelization: the mission for the youth of this City. "*We are convinced* – he said - *that the success of this mission, its spiritual effectiveness that will touch the heart of many youngsters, depends on you. Certainly, it depends from the prayer of everybody, from the ability of proposing of the young missionaries, certainly from the willingness to listening of those who will be met, but we are sure that none of our words can reach the heart of someone if before that, your payer has not entered in that heart*".

On the 6th January, 2008 – end of the Jubilee – the papal cloistered was put in our new Monastery. We felt as if said to us the words of the Letter of Saint Dominic to the Nuns of Madrid: "*Till now you did not have a place suitable to your life. Now this excuse no longer exists, because, thank God, you have appropriate premises...*" and with a renewed impulse we repropose to live as "apostles of the Apostles".

In these first month of our stay in Cremona we have already experienced the Lord repays a hundredfold every sacrifice done for His love and with the psalmist we sing: "Celebrate the Lord for he is good, eternal is his mercy!".

Dominican Nuns - Monastero San Giuseppe
CREMONA (ITALIA)
Original: English

Pro Orantibus 2007

21st November

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wanted to highlight this concelebration by inviting the Fathers of my Minerva community on this particularly significant day in the Dominican Jubilee Year which is now drawing to a close so that, with the entire Order, we can thank the Lord for the gift of the contemplative life which, in the Church, constantly displays the praying attitude of Jesus alone on the mountain. In this year, in which we recall the beginnings of our history as sons and daughters of St Dominic, we wish to thank the one who chose to associate his 'Holy Preaching' with our sisters, the nuns. They came into being when St Dominic gathered together in Prouilhe, in France, the women who had been assisting him in his holy preaching, in order to make them apostles of the apostles, by their life of intimate communion with God. St Dominic wished them to nourish the apostolic life of the Friars and of the other members of the great Dominican family, thus making them effectively the heart of this family. Our Father Master has asked us to live intensely this time of grace, sharing with our contemplative communities the joy of consecration, the fruitfulness of their silence, the beauty of their liturgy, their special love for the Word. We, the Friars of Rome and of the Roman Province of St Catherine of Siena, should be particularly grateful to the Lord because we have no less than 11 monasteries within the territory of the Province, even though some of them are not exactly flourishing. Here in Rome, we have this community where we have come together in order to give thanks. It is a true sanctuary of the Order, since it was St Dominic himself who formed, instructed and completed his foundation of the nuns when he founded this Community in the heart of the Church and here in Rome, the headquarters of the Vicar of Christ to whom St Dominic went to secure the approval of his Order and who ordered him to make this foundation as a model for the city of Rome and for the world.

The Order was approved in 1216, and this community was founded in 1219 with the Rule known as that of St Sixtus, [which is normative for all the monasteries including that of Prouilhe].and also with the vow of obedience to St Dominic and his successors, which was to be the custom thereafter for all the other communities even when the spiritual and material care of the other communities differed somewhat. From the time of its foundation, however, this community has remained ever faithful to the spirit of the Rule given to them by St Dominic, and has benefited always from the material and spiritual care of the Order, never deviating from this in the course of the nearly 800 years of its existence.

The first reading for today's Mass, in which we recall the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple, is taken from the prophet Zechariah. It begins with a summons to joy: «Sing, rejoice, Daughter of Zion». These words were addressed originally to a peripheral area of the city of Jerusalem, the centre of which was Zion with the Temple. Here they are attributed to Mary, who is identified as the daughter of Zion. It was to her that Gabriel at the Annunciation addressed the same words: "Jaire Kekaritomene", that is 'explode with joy, O full of grace', words which are translated as 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee' in the prayer which is so dear to our Christian people. Zechariah gave as the reason for his invitation to rejoice the fact that 'the Lord is coming to live in the midst of you'. How can we not see in this the manifest parallelism with the opening words of the Hail Mary?

The responsorial psalm with its refrain: 'I shall rejoice in the presence of the Lord' picks up the theme of the joy of being in the presence of the Lord in his house, dedicating oneself to his worship, as we are reminded in the Marian Memory that we keep today. In fact, Mary is the icon and model of consecration to God, above all for Christian women. In what does this consecration consist? It consists in praising God unceasingly in his House instead of loitering in the tents of the wicked, as the idea is so well expressed in many of the psalms. It is to dedicate oneself to Him with an undivided heart. This is shown forth most especially in the lives of consecrated women whose entire lives are devoted to contemplation, which is nothing other than savouring the things of God. And the purpose of enclosure is to avoid being distracted, to protect oneself with a view to attaining this aim, a form of protection in this sense. Obviously, anyone who is not open to the absolute cannot understand this life or the magnificent service that the nuns provide for the Church and for society, when, by their very essence, they provide a constant reminder of the primacy of God and the ultimate destiny of each and all.

In defining the Mother as She who does the will of God, Jesus clearly shows that it is this will of God that is the one thing necessary. Blessed Jordan used to say to Blessed Diana that they both served the same God and shared the same destiny, Diana in the monastery and Jordan in preaching the good news throughout the world. Which is more important? Neither one nor the other. Each must remain joyfully in the place assigned to him or her by God himself. The Lord does not take things away from us. On the contrary, He gives us more and better than anything we may have turned away from for his sake.

Dear Sisters, my love for this community and monastery is well known, and I have no problem in manifesting it, as Blessed Jordan manifested his love for the Community in Bologna, which he described as the House of his heart since it was the house of God. Our heart must be where God is, so why not admit that this Community is where not only God is present but where the spirit of St Dominic, too, makes itself felt within its walls. Simply to be here fills one with joy because everything speaks of our Holy Father St Dominic: his relics, his breviary, and above all the icon of the so-called Virgin of St Luke, which we can also describe as the icon of St Dominic, since it was with the support of the Virgin that this icon represents that St Dominic was able to establish this community. Trustingly, we all continue to nourish the same hope as our Father, because to Mary we entrust the future of this venerable Community and of the Dominican monastic life and, all together, we beg Our Lady to turn her merciful eyes on us and to ensure the continuation, perseverance and new growth of our Order.

Original: Italian

HOMILY OF FR BRIAN PIERCE, OP, IN CALERUEGA

I cannot imagine a better Gospel to close these days. I came from Latin America a few days ago where I took part in two Dominican Family workshops on Preaching. The first was a workshop in Peru with people from South America and the other one in Honduras with people from Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. In both workshops we were talking about the charism which unites us as a family.

We reflected on the image of the Preacher who sits before the Word, begging the bread of the Word of God. The preacher who begins the process of preparing to preach from his mendicant poverty: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening". What am I going to say? It is from that moment that the preacher begins, when he is both empty and mendicant. He starts to perceive that word which the Lord wants to communicate him. And this process ends when the preacher finishes transmitting to other people what he has received. In other words, the preacher begins like a poor person and ends like a poor person, because everything we receive, the word that is given to us, we pass on to others. So at the end, we are again empty, poor and mendicant, ready to start all over again.

I think, brothers and sisters, that this is the rhythm of our life, there is no other. This is the rhythm of a preacher's life: to beg, to receive without charge, to give and again to beg. This beautiful Gospel puts Mary of Bethany in the centre beside Jesus, with her lovely gesture. But I think it is important for our Dominican Family to remember that it is St Luke who gives us the first part of this story; it is St Luke who reminds us that Mary began to tread the way of a disciple seated at the feet of Jesus, begging a word: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening". In the Gospel according to St John, we again see Mary but it is not the first time that she has sat at the feet of Jesus. She had already sat at his feet as a poor person asking, begging, hoping, hungry and thirsty, like the deer that yearns for running streams of water, and Jesus had given it to her. Jesus was faithful, He spoke to her and she received His word, this word which was like perfume. Now, we don't know exactly how much time passed between the first time when she sat in silence at the feet of Jesus as a disciple to listen, but the relationship has continued, and now we again find Mary, on the eve of her Master's Passover. This time, however, she is rich, filled. The word has matured in her heart and now she just has to preach. Now she has to give the fruitful word that she received once, as seed, from her Master.

I think that it is good that we speak about Mary of Bethany as a contemplative but we must not stop there. We have to say that she is a contemplative preacher because one day she received the word of her Master, and today she pours her faith on His feet and this is a gesture that has something to say to us who belong to the Order of Preachers. In other words, we would be inclined to stop half if we only remember Mary of Bethany begging. We who belong to this Order founded by Dominic of Caleruega, would be incomplete if we did not remember that, at the end, she preached, poured out the word which she had received at the feet of Jesus.

In the synoptic Gospels, the same word "pour out" is used with different nuances. Mary poured out the perfume on Jesus. It is striking that this woman disciple, who had received the word one day, now pours it out, and later on we find this verb used in the account in the synoptic Gospels' of the Last Supper where Jesus says: "This is the cup of my blood which will be poured out..." Mary of Bethany, the preacher, pours out what she has, she doesn't keep anything for herself, it is a perfume which is the result of a working life. She pours out everything and at the end this contemplative woman preacher remains empty again, she kept nothing.

Isn't this what we have been talking about during these days? I have to confess that when I listened yesterday evening to the story of the Aragón nuns who have lived the religious life for 50 years, and are now ready to pour it all out..." Yes, we have received a lot, now we are going to

pour it out, we are going to take the risk again..." I see Mary of Bethany, who seems to be the only one who sees what Jesus is doing. The disciples are talking as they walk about how to invest the

money, how to get something new. She sees what Jesus is doing and says to Him: "Courage, Master, I will also do it with you! Wherever you put your hand I will also put mine too. Courage!" Sisters, when Carlos, our brother reminds us of these words: "Show us the Order", he is saying to the nuns: "Do, and we (the friars) will do too." Mary of Bethany did, so that Jesus could also do. Mary of Bethany, by intuition, already knew what Jesus was about to do and in some way, she goes ahead pouring out her life to say: "I am going with you, you won't go alone"...

If you don't pour out your lives, we (the friars) won't be able to pour out ours. Jesus was strengthened by the Paschal gesture of Mary of Bethany. That day the house of Bethany was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. We are going to find again that same fragrance in the Supper. The perfume of a life is poured out again. And Jesus, from the cross, as Mary in Bethany, pours out His perfume so that our house could be filled with the fragrance of His total self-giving in this, his very last preaching.

Original: Spanish

In the hands of every Christian, a Rosary!



Did you say "anniversary"?

We all like anniversaries. We prepare for them a long time ahead, and we never want to neglect them. Look, dear nuns of the Order, at our celebration of your jubilee last year: it became the pretext - an excellent pretext! - for recalling what our specific Dominican vocation has been throughout all the eight hundred years, what makes us live, what our beautiful Dominican family can call its own.

There are many ways of celebrating anniversaries. Often they give us an occasion for re-visiting the past, shaking off for a few moments the dust which photos have collected as the years have passed. But an anniversary is not the time to add one more number to the years, or to count the additional wrinkles that have come with another year. Nor is it a time just to look back with a sigh, telling ourselves that the "good old times" were better times...because that is not clearly true!

A Marian anniversary

For the past seven years I have been living in Toulouse. This year I was especially touched by an anniversary: the 150th year since the apparitions of our Lady to Bernadette at Lourdes. Our convent is less than two hours away from the Marian city, and we gave special attention to all the celebrations going on there during this great jubilee year.

Since the beginning of 2008, Lourdes has been full. On February 11, the anniversary of the first apparition, tens of thousands of pilgrims converged on the Grotto of Massabielle. Dominican Friars from some ten provinces of the Order were present. What could they all have come to look for at this Grotto?

They came joyful and ready to celebrate, certainly. Thanks to God for having given us Mary. Thanks to Mary for deigning to come toward her children at the foot of the mountains, to lead them to God. They came not only to look back at the past, but also, and even more, to go ahead toward Mary. They were on their way "to Jesus through Mary."

And here is where the anniversary had its power: We were at the edge of the Gave, remembering the little Bernadette who crossed the icy current on this very date, the eleventh of

February - in 1858. She took off her shoes. She heard a rush of wind, but the trees were not moving. It was at that moment that she saw a beautiful lady. And she was afraid. What did our little Lourdes girl do then? Her hand moved instinctively to her pocket and she took hold of her rosary. It was a spontaneous movement. The Rosary is "anti-fear"!

The Rosary, an aid against fear

Our societies are deeply marked by fear. The nonchalance we sometimes show scarcely hides our real terror in the face of death -- the death we wish neither to see nor to name, the face of the suffering that we do not wish to encounter. Especially in the western world, incessant attacks against the family and against life are weakening the social fabric. The young are not serene as they face the future. Fear seems to lead the world: fear of oneself, fear of others, fear of the devil, sometimes also fear of God.

So we can profit from the anniversary of the apparitions of the holy Virgin Mary at Lourdes, as well as from the anniversary of our Order, by looking toward this little saint -- the smallest God could find. We can learn from her example about how to conduct ourselves, and that can be summed up in these words: *in the hands of every Christian, a rosary!* Every Christian should have a rosary in his/her pocket, so that it can be grasped when we are dominated by fear. Grasping her rosary was what Bernadette did. Why not we too?

If the rosary banishes fear, it is not because it is like a charm or an amulet but because it is a bond linking us to the good God. It is a sweet chain which keeps us in the hands of the Virgin Mary as she surrounds us with her solicitude. Mary had many reasons to be afraid; yet she was not afraid, because she lived the Gospel fully. Mary knows very well that real love drives out fear and is stronger than death.

In the hands of every Christian, a Rosary!

A conviction was born beside the Gave, at the grotto of Massabielle, on February 11th in 2008: every Christian must be given the means to live the prayer which pleases Our Lady so much. Besides, did she not herself appear with her rosary at Fatima and at Lourdes?

This conviction was re-enforced some days later during a tour of the Holy Land, the land of the Rosary! A land where fear causes impenetrable walls to be built, concrete walls, walls of hate and of incomprehension, walls which entrap hearts in a desire for vengeance.

This is how two projects met -- that of a friar who wants to put into everyone's hands (and hearts!) the prayer which has been confided to our Order, and that of Dominican Sisters International who have bought more than two hundred thousand rosaries to circulate throughout the world so that Christians of the Holy Land may live.

A meeting of two projects. A meeting of two dreams.

We commend all this to your prayers, dear nuns, our sisters.

Pray that the two projects may mature, that the dreams may growand we will tell you more about them in the Fall.

Ask that the prayer of the holy Rosary may always be known and loved, beginning in our monasteries!

Pray that Christians in the Land of the Rosary, the land of Christ and of Mary may live!

Fr. Louis-Marie Ariño-Durand, o.p.,
Promoter-General of the Rosary for the Order of Preachers

Original: French