



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters

*A Newsletter for the Dominican Family in Australia,
New Zealand, Solomons and Papua New Guinea*

Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!

Motto for the years leading up to 800th celebration in 2016;

12th July 2011

**“We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the marvellous acts of God” (Acts 2:11):
Preaching and Culture / Community Preaching**

Dominican Thought For the Week

I believe that Dominican spirituality wants to give us back an identity so we can return to where we came from and take some decisions for our life. To be converted means making some choices, i.e. to replace ourselves inside of life in order to see how we can continue to live in history. We have to make these choices in remembrance of so many people who accompany our life day and night, in our diverse works, in our people (if we live with different peoples). The invitation is to not forget but, as the term ‘Retreat’ says, “make room.” Retreat. Let’s retreat in order to make space, not to forget reality. In Dominican spirituality the idea doesn’t exist that contemplation comes first and is followed by action. Our spirituality is precisely a delicate and special contribution to God’s Church, a profoundly harmonious contribution. Whether or not we’re successful in living it harmoniously is another thing. *Antonietta Potente OP in “Great Joy: Dominican Spirituality as a Daily Life Style”, Preface by Fr Dalmazio Mongillo OP*

“The Canticle of the Universe” – an Art Exhibition

An internationally acclaimed artwork created by HIV AIDS affected women will be exhibited at Australian Catholic University’s (ACU) **Brisbane** Campus, opening 29 August at 6.30pm, and at **Strathfield** Campus, McGlade Gallery, opening 12th August.

The ‘Canticle of the Universe’, created by women from the Kopanang Community Trust in South Africa, depicts the story of cosmic evolution on 31 embroidered textile panels with the entire work being over 32 metres in length.

The exhibition will be opened by Dominican sister and former art academic **Sheila Flynn OP**, who inspired the work by sharing ideas inspired by cultural historian and geologist Thomas Berry, and mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, both passionate advocates for environmental awareness. “The Kopanang women have discovered a new creative employment which uses their artistic talents, as well as building relationships of faith, care and support in their day-to-day struggles. Their meticulous embroidery work is now in collections all over the world,” she said. “Many of these women have suffered incredible trials they found their souls in the embroidery, when they saw the final product they shed tears at the stories they were able to make.”

The ‘Canticle of the Universe’, stitched by seventeen women in three months, begins with the depiction of the Big Bang and moves to the advent of humans and finally to contemporary questions about endangered species and our responsibility for the earth. “What is remarkable is that these questions were voiced years before the language of the environment became common parlance in our streets, and from women whose living conditions are seriously compromised, “Rarely do students, especially students of science, have an opportunity to enjoy such a powerful call to honour the environment and perhaps to contemplate the climatic perils of failing to identify with the wonders of our Earth story.”

Established in 2001, the Kopanang Community Trust provides sustainable skills and training for women affected or infected by HIV AIDS, allowing them to support themselves and their families. Affiliated with the Trust is the Sithandizingane Care Centre which provides services for young children, most of whom are orphans.

The Exhibition will run in **BRISBANE** from 30th August – 17th September, with free entry, continues from 9am till 5pm on week days. And in **SYDNEY** from 12th -24th August

World Youth Day in Madrid August 2011

Readers will be interested to know that 15 students from Siena College, Melbourne and 15 students from Santa Sabina, Sydney will be travelling, along with 5 teachers, to Madrid for World Youth Day. While they are in Madrid they will also be visiting their Dominican counterparts in that city. At the conclusion of World Youth Day activities, the girls will continue on to Caleruega, Aza and Osma, and then on to Toulouse, Fanjeaux and Prouilhe, before returning home.

In preparation for this wonderful opportunity, the girls have been having a series of meetings in their respective colleges, and are in touch by email.

We wish them every blessing and pray that they will have a safe, stimulating and enjoyable journey as they visit these places so sacred to the Dominican Family.

A Prayer for Those Not Going to Madrid

Lord, we pray for those going to WYD in Madrid
that they will be enriched and energised in their faith!
We pray for those of us who stay at home
that we too will use this time to journey forward in our love for you,
in our openness to your Word,
and in becoming the people you want us to be. Amen.

Oecussi, East Timor: *Marcela Zamora Cisternas OP Dominican Missionary of the Rosary*

How and when did the mission in Timor Oecussi start?

The Oecusse mission started in the year 1953, with the arrival of the first Dominican Missionaries of the Rosary. These were Portuguese and Spanish sisters. They started by opening a boarding school and college for girls, especially the ones from the mountains.

In 1975, at the time of the Indonesian invasion, the sisters had to leave. For many years there was a genocide policy which resulted in a great massacre of Timorese nationals. Later the College and Boarding School was completely burnt down, along with many other buildings and homes in the District.

As years went by, through a referendum sponsored by the UN, East Timor obtained its independence on May 20, 2002. Sister Maria Jesus, a Spaniard, then returned. Then the Portuguese mission rebuilt part of the boarding school and at the end of 2004, the mission was reopened with 8 little girls. I arrived in 2005. We started from scratch. But it was clear to us that the educational task is one of the most appropriate means of human promotion, through the formation of children. We presently have 56 girls, most of them from the mountains, from poor families and some are orphans from the massacre of 1999.

In Oecusse, we not only work at the boarding school; we also have other missions. We visit the sick at the hospital, visit the families, especially the aged who are left to live on their own. In other words, we are in contact with the poor people of the town and with the lepers who live with their families and with the same population. Because herein Oecusse we are all equal.

What is the reality of the town?

Oecusse, is an island within an island. It is a District located on Indonesian territory but it belongs to East Timor. In order to get out of the town we must take a boat. Since Oecusse is far from the centre of the Government, its development is very slow.

I am a Dominican Missionary of the Rosary. I was born in Vallenar, Chile, in a traditionally catholic family. I am the youngest of eight siblings, many years apart from my older brother. My parents conceived me in their old age. My main teacher as I grew up as a child and adolescent was my family; as part of it, I learned to love deeply, to serve, to dialogue, respect, understand, experience a sense of justice and to know how to face difficulties. I also learned to enjoy life and enjoy parties and nature: animals and plants.

My vocational calling started to take shape through the encounter with the Lord through the intermediation of people and concrete events. One of them was the school I attended of the Sisters of the Santa Marta High School who, along with my mother, taught me to walk in faith. Later on, I entered the Congregation where the sisters offered me a good formation and everything that is implied in a community life that is GIFT and TASK; they awakened in me a critical spirit in front of the national reality. I learned to listen to reality; thereby, I was able to listen to God and to start

reformulating my missionary spirit since it was clear to me that consecrating my life to God meant announcing and risking, strengthening and ingraining the kingdom of God in the people and populations, according to the spirituality of our Constitutions.

After taking my first vows I was assigned to Bolivia. As I lived with the people of the Plateau, unexpected realities became manifest in my life. I perceived in the Aymara culture that faith in God is the source of its dignity and the sacrament of its hope. We had no drinking water; we extracted it from a well and it was salty. During the day, the sun was scorching, with all its strength; at night the temperature dropped sometimes as much as 15 or more below zero.

I later continued my professional and theological studies in Chile while I also worked in some schools of our Congregation. After several years I returned to Bolivia to live in the city of Alto de la Paz, at 4100 metres of altitude. There I had to face many educational, pastoral and other experiences, among which the most painful one was to face a massacre among the Aymara people, called the "gas" After spending five years in the Bolivian heights, I came to the missions in the Asian world, to Oecusse, East Timor. A large percentage of the population is illiterate, especially women. The few schools lack resources and teachers have not received any training. There are large numbers of people affected by infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, AIDS and hepatitis. There is also an incidence of malaria and dengue fever. At the family level, we notice a strong degree of severe malnutrition. Similarly, there is a high incidence of people with psychological trouble (traumas, phobias or depressive symptoms). However, at the same time, there are very beautiful things such as the nature and landscape of Oecusse. There are beautiful beaches and mountains; sunsets that elevate the spirit to express gratitude to God for such beauty. It is a population that has initial trouble in welcoming foreigners (not surprising in light of what they experienced in times of war), but after knowing them, they are very hospitable. Their traditional dances and chants are very pretty.

What makes you happy in this mission?

Everything makes me happy even though I must say that there have been times when the mission has been difficult, but that doesn't take the joy away. What makes me rejoice the most is to see our girls from the boarding school progressing in their education, values and spirituality.

Another thing that makes me happy is to see that we are establishing an International and multicultural community in our Community and boarding school. We know well, also based on our experience that interculturality becomes an unlimited richness since we can all contribute something; it represents an asset for the poorest people. There are five nationalities and cultures cohabitating in our Community (Spanish, Portuguese, Timorese, Philippines, Chileans). Three Continents coexisting together. At some time we noticed that among all the people in the Community and Boarding School, we speak 21 languages. There are also lay volunteers living with us.

Our house is visited by people of all races, languages, nations, social status and colour. Over some Christmas celebrations, we sat at the same table and had dinner with Hindus, Muslims, Orthodox, Adventists, Jews, nonbelievers and us with the girls of catholic religion. All showed great solidarity and respected religions, beliefs and differences.

Our table has also welcomed literate or professional people as well as poor and disabled (physically or mentally) people; all together.

What concerns you and makes you suffer?

Hunger and diseases of the people. One thing is to live at the boarding school; outside is a different story. Every morning and afternoon we bring food to people we had found starving. Others come to our house and to others we give food, especially the ones coming down from the mountain.

There are also other human situations that are impossible to understand, for instance when there is a lack of VALUE OF LIFE, but we have to keep moving forward because in time we see the small outbreaks of Evangelical values timidly emerging among the people.

How can an institution such as Dominican Sisters International help your mission?

As we know, there are many Dominican Congregations in the world. Some live in countries or places with the poorest people others in slightly more comfortable places, which does not mean there are no poor people, if not financially, there may be poverty as far as values. I think that Congregations or Communities in better financial conditions could give support or help to the missions in greater need. As for instance, sponsor children. In other words, live the value of solidarity.

What have you learned so far from the people and the mission?

Firstly, I had to let myself be involved and enriched by the reality and the culture of the people of Oecusse. From there, I learned to retake, recreate the biblical God, the one passionate about the

poor, the orphan and the widow, the God that is not deaf to the clamour of the marginalized and oppressed by the present social and economic systems. When, on a daily basis, we must face extreme human situations such as seeing children die because of a lack of food, the questions run deep and we wonder about our presence, whether we are responding to the essential needs.

One thing I have learned day by day is to awaken the hope in the small ones and the marginalized, where their human existence is crushed. I have also learned to not let myself be absolutized by my own culture, nor judge the others based on my Chilean culture, nor to think that the western world is better than the eastern one, or the other way around. We just must understand that we are different.

Where do you find the face of God in people?

Mainly on the faces of those who survive, because solidarity and strengths grow among them. Our God is not a God who is distant in the skies or just on images and liturgical rituals, he is rather a God who walks with us. He is a sensitive God whom you can hear, feel, see, touch, and embrace through the marginalized, in the smile or sadness of a child, in the sick, in nature; that is where I find the face of the LIVE AND REAL GOD. This can only be understood based on an experience of contemplation of the Jesus who is poor, Crucified and Resurrected. *Newsletter DSI | June 2011*

150 years of mission in Hong Kong

Hong Kong – On Saturday July 9, the liturgy recalled St. Augustine Zhao Rong and his fellow martyrs in China. On that day His Exc. Mgr. John Tong, Bishop of Hong Kong, presided at Mass for the ordination of a priest and a deacon, both Dominicans: Christopher Chor, a native from Hong Kong, and the Korean Hong Seung Kook. With the ordination of Christopher Chor, the Chinese province of the Dominican Rosary finally has a new religious of local origin among its members. The new deacon Hong Seung Kook returned to ministry in South Korea.

Christopher Chor was born and raised in Hong Kong, in a family converted to Christianity in 1980. He became a Catholic in 2003 and entered the Dominicans in the same year. In 2009 he professed his final vows and was ordained deacon in July 2010. In addition to teaching in the Dominican school, he also carries out pastoral service in the parish. Christopher said, "I am happy to be ordained in the year when the congregation celebrates its 150 years of mission in Hong Kong. In addition, I am the only Dominican from Hong Kong". www.op.org

Dominican Calendar

Jul-13 Bl. James of Voragine (1226-1298) Italian, Archbishop of Genoa, hagiographer, author of the famous *Legenda Aurea* (The Golden Legend).

Jul-17 Bl. Ceslaus Odrowatz (c.1180-1242) Polish, priest, brother of St. Hyacinth, one of first Dominicans, missionary.

Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to archives5@bigpond.com.au – OFTEN!