



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters

Newsletter of the Dominican Family in Australia, New Zealand, Solomons and Papua New Guinea

16th June 2008

To send material, add email addresses, unsubscribe write to archives5@bigpond.com.au

[World Youth Day Sydney 2008!](#)

Tuesday 15th July – Sunday 20th July 2008.

Obtain the latest **Dominican Welcome Newsletters** on www.opeast.org.au; email: wyd@opeast.org.au

For other Dominican Events see
Dominican Friars Assumption Province: www.australia.op.org.

[Dominican Welcome: 13th-14th July, Santa Sabina College, Strathfield NSW](#)

Dominican Cardinal Christoph Schönborn will speak on the topic [All Creation Groans: The Debate over Creation and Evolution](#), at the Sydney University Great Hall on **16 July**. The Cardinal will also preside at 6:00pm Evening Prayer and give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to conclude the Dominican WYD Gathering. **WYD pilgrims are invited to this historic occasion, to which others are warmly welcomed.** For more information, please visit <http://wydop.blogspot.com/>.

[Solomon Islands](#)

Our prayers are requested for the upcoming 8th Assembly of Dominican Sisters, Holy Rosary Vicariate, on 22-25th June.

[Community Development in Philippi, Capetown](#)

[New Beginnings: The Etafeni Playgroup Project](#)

In 1983, there were but one or two pre-schools in the whole of Nyanga and the sprawling informal settlement of Philippi.

Many parents enrolled their children as late as ten years of age for primary school. Early learning by play was virtually unknown in these areas. Rose Mbude, together with Sr Áine (just freed from being Acting Principal at St Mary's Primary School, Nyanga) gathered small children roaming the streets to form a group to learn through play. The group eventually rose to 130 little people and the first activity Rose involved them in was gathering coke tins and half-filling them with pebbles to produce rhythms, accompanied by songs. They were also used for number work.

Rose had trained in Early Learning at the Early Learning Resource Unit and became a household name with women who came to watch and to become involved. She trained the women every week in the principles and practice of early learning. Eventually the project rose to seven groups of children situated in Nyanga, Gugulethu and Philippi. Over the years more than 4,000 children have passed through the Etafeni Playgroup Project. Some have continued their education right up to third level and have now professional careers.

A New Partner... and a centre for children affected by HIV/AIDS

In 2001 the Playgroup Project went into partnership with Lifeline in the building of a Day Care Centre to deal with the needs of children affected/infected by HIV/AIDS. This Centre is flourishing and has won prizes for best model of its kind.

Fakisandla (Only one group has flush toilets and running water...)

The Etafeni Playgroup Project works in collaboration with an organisation known as African Solutions for African Problems (ASAP). The Etafeni Playgroup Project runs a programme named Fakisandla which undertakes the care of families in need of help and child-headed families in need of support. Early in 2006 the two groups of Etafeni at Philippi decided to become independent of the parent group. These two groups are developing along the lines of others in Philippi. They have been given sites and have had them fenced. One group has flush toilets and running water. The other group still awaits this service from the municipality.

Sr Caitriona is busy training them in financial matters, and supports them in learning Computer. Sr Áine helps them in obtaining shipping containers or wendy houses which can be made into classrooms, kitchens or offices. The fees obtained from parents are insufficient for food and salaries for the women working with the children. Any donations will be gratefully received.

Contact: Dominican Sisters of Cabra www.dominicansisters.com

A Dominican Volunteer International

Manuela arrived in East Timor for her mission service: "I am very happy. These first days in Oecussi (East Timor) have been great. This part of the island is really beautiful, with wonderful landscapes and smiling people. I am feeling as if I am home again!"

Sister Marcela (Chilean) and Sister Maria de Jesus (from Spain) are making many efforts to make me feel as comfortable as possible. The children of the College also received me with big smiles. I immediately fell in love with them.

Since I know their language (Tetum), my integration has been relatively easy. We have 32 children who live at the school, from 6 to 18 years old and 6 girls who are in formation with the sisters. At this beginning time, my role is to help with the classes of Portuguese and to give some psychological support for the children and girls.

When we sit together to have meals, the conversations are in Portuguese, Spanish, Tetum, Indonesian, Baiqueno and English. Sometimes there are some misinterpretations but it is very fun.

I already began to teach classes of Portuguese, from Monday to Friday, in the afternoon. I am trying to use music, role plays, and other activities that make them learn Portuguese in an easier way. Sister Maria de Jesus has this dream of placing all the children who speak Portuguese into the daily life of the college. Let's see what I can do! www.dviop.org

Dominican Volunteers International is a Project of the Dominican Family that was launched in the year 2000 during the Assembly of the Dominican Family in Manila, with the objective of linking persons and communities from different parts of the world for the purpose of collaborating in the preaching mission. DVI sends qualified lay volunteers who have a relationship with Dominican communities to those who are already working among people who are poor and excluded.

The objective of DVI is to animate and strengthen the joint participation of nuns, friars, laity and sisters in the mission of preaching the Gospel according to the charism of St. Dominic on the frontiers of society.

In the Dominican fashion, the DVI volunteer is a person who not only acts, but who has a contemplative outlook that is reflective and studious of the reality. For that reason we ask the volunteers to periodically send us their reflection about what they are living in their daily lives as volunteers.

Upon return to their communities of origin, transformed by their participation and immersion in the life and mission of the Order, they can communicate their experience and continue the preaching mission with words and action.

Iraqi Dominican Speaks to UN Groups on Situation of Refugees

By Beth Griffin Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- An Iraqi Dominican nun June 5 described life in her war-torn country as one of suffering, violence and fear of kidnappings and attacks on civilians. Nonetheless, she said, "We can only have faith and hope. I pray and hope that things get better, or else I won't be able to continue my life and my vocation."

Sister Diana, a Dominican Sister of St. Catherine of Siena, spoke at a briefing at the New York headquarters of the pontifical agency Catholic Near East Welfare Association. She did not use her surname for fear of

reprisals against family members in Iraq. Sister Diana's brother and six cousins have been killed there since the war began in 2003.

Before the war, life under sanctions was difficult, she said, but there was little violence and she and others were free to pursue their education and worship openly. Now, violence is rampant and random, medicine and medical care are in short supply, electricity is limited to several hours each day, travel is difficult and students only attend school sporadically.

"People thought (the war) would change Iraq, but it didn't turn out the way they thought," she said. "We thought it would be different. They promised us there would be freedom. Instead, Sister Diana said, "the future of our children is in danger. It's kind of a tragedy when kids grow up seeing car bombs and bodies in the street. This is not normal. It's like a fiction movie."

Sister Diana graduated from the University of Mosul in 2004. She said she studied by candlelight because there was no electricity or gas for generators. She described the presence of soldiers at the university as guards and said she heard explosions while she was in class. She said education is free in Iraq, even through college. "We love education. We love to go to school. We like to study hard," she said.

Some 1,600 students attended the University of Mosul when she was a student. Last year, she said, eight students and three professors were kidnapped and held for ransom. They were tortured and eventually released, but Sister Diana said that no more than 400 students, including her niece, now go to classes. "Sometimes it takes them three hours to get to the university (because of the security situation) and some only go one day a week, so there's not much learning," she said. "Muslims and Christians have the same suffering. The violence in Iraq is perpetrated by different groups, she said, including terrorists, foreigners and opportunistic criminals. Sister Diana said U.S. soldiers "shoot without knowing who's innocent." She said her eye doctor was fatally shot by a U.S. soldier as he left his office one evening. Sister Diana said, "If you knock on doors in any Iraqi city, each family will tell you a different story of violence and loss." She said her brother, the married father of four children, was killed by "masked people" one morning after he left for work. She said his widow asks, "What is his guilt? What did he do? Why is this happening?"

Christians have historically been a tiny minority in Iraq, but their numbers have shrunk dramatically, to about 3 percent of the population, since 2003. Most Iraqi Christians are Catholics and many of the estimated 350,000 Catholics still in Iraq have sought refuge in the northern province of Kurdistan.

Sister Diana said churches in the northern villages are packed, but that "it is hard for Christians in the cities to practice their faith as they used to do before. She said formerly crowded city churches now see 20 to 30 people at a service. Christians were "given a choice of paying a ransom to practice their religion, converting to Islam or leaving their house and all their belongings," she added. Sister Diana said more than half of her congregation's sisters are under age 50 and "vocations keep coming. We have three novices entering in September." She added, "We are a diverse community and we work for everybody in Iraq, not just Christians. We work together for the common good."

Asked what four more years of war would mean for the Iraqi people, Sister Diana said bluntly, "The people will be gone. There are already 2 million dead and 4.5 million refugees or internally displaced." She added that it is hard to imagine a solution to the situation, "because the solution is not in our hands. We can only have faith and hope."

The Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena are an Iraqi religious community dedicated to catechesis, education and health care in Iraq and Jordan. Their members are drawn from Catholic and Orthodox churches. They administer catechetical programs throughout Iraq, staff an orphanage and kindergarten in Mosul, direct a hospital in Baghdad and manage clinics for refugees in Jordan in partnership with the Pontifical Mission, the Middle East operating agency of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Sister Diana has been living with a group of Dominicans in Michigan since 2006. "We're not refugees. We're here for a while and we're going back to build our country," she said. "Our country is suffering and our main concern is how to help (it) come to a new birth."

[Dominican Calendar this week](#)

- | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jun-18 | Bl. Hosanna of Mantua (1449-1505) Italian, celebrated mystic, author, adviser to lawmakers, Lay Dominican. |
| Jun-20 | Bl. Margaret Ebner (1291-1351) German, nun, well-known mystic of the "Golden Age" of German mysticism, friend of Tauler. |
| Jun-23 | Bl. Innocent V (1224-1276) AKA "Peter of Tarentaise", French, pope (1276, first Dominican pope), scholar, administrator, Archbishop of Lyons. |

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