



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;

1st March 2011

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

Dominican Thought for the Week

“It is actually the quality of compassion that enables us to draw more closely to suffering, as Jesus illustrates in the story of the Good Samaritan, and consequently to see the truth better. “Draw closer in order to see better, even if your hearts are broken”, De Couesnongle, advises us. Compassion, because it brings us closer, can make us aware more quickly of the ‘fracture points’ in our society, the places where the homeless, the detained asylum-seekers, the AIDS victims, the abused women, the drug-addicts, the poor are to be found. It was this same quality of compassion for example, that brought Dominic close to the reality of the starving people in Palencia when he was a student, and drove him to sell his precious books to bring them relief. During the recent devastation and immense suffering experienced by the people of New Orleans, during and after hurricane Katrina, one of the Dominican Sisters who was helping out, described how she and others “breathed into the suffering of the poor and the homeless, and were filled with compassion. How can we breathe into others’ suffering? So, truth is our motto. We are called to be seekers, speakers and doers of truth always and everywhere; to preach the word of truth ‘in season and out of season’. And yet, unless we pursue this noble Dominican vocation with compassion in our hearts, we ourselves will not become more Christ—like, and those whom we are trying to influence will not be helped by us.” *Sr Mary O’Driscoll OP*

Congratulations

Congratulations to Sisters Mary Davis, Regina Marupa and Hilda Toosi who made their First Profession last Sunday (28 Feb) at Loga, Solomon Islands. Srs Fabiola and Cecille, from Dominican Sisters International, were able to be present for this important event in the life of our Congregation.

In Solidarity with our New Zealand Brothers and Sisters

We pray for Dominican Family members who have been affected at whatever level by the tragic events that followed the Christchurch earthquake.

Sister Carmel Walsh – Prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Aotearoa New Zealand - wrote the Sisters’ home “was a mess and Sr Margaret Quinn very shaken as she was alone with shambles all around her and liquefaction all outside. All the major Church buildings are damaged and will probably all have to be demolished. There is so much that is quite overwhelming – last night we saw on TV the Police chief swearing in 324 Aussie police men and women who are buddied with kiwis on patrol and in the suburbs and other special work. He thanked them for coming so quickly and enabling some of the locals to check on their own families. The tremors on the first night were constant and terrifying according to Sr Elizabeth Mackie, and this morning there was another big one.

The Chief Coroner spoke at a press conference and said ID would take a long time but they had the best of specialists to do it, and that as a mother and a grandmother she wanted all

families to know that the bodies would be treated with respect and never left alone for a moment....”

Serving at the UN from a New Zealander’s perspective

Kia Ora! Greetings from your Aotearoa-New Zealand Dominican Sister. In greeting you, I have used words from the NZ indigenous Maori language. The meaning of *Kia Ora* can be translated as: *May you have health and well-being*. I pray this is so for you, members of the Dominican Family, and all people of our world.

Thank you, Margaret, (Margaret Mayce, OP (DLC/Amityville) NGO in Special Consultative Status at the United Nations Dominican Leadership Conference) for your warm and generous welcome to the Dominican UN/NGO office. It is abundantly clear that Margaret has real passion and enthusiasm for this ministry which I am happy and grateful to tap into during these nearly four months in New York.

The first major UN meeting for 2011 has been the Commission for Social Development, with its theme of Poverty Eradication. The well-being (human rights) of all peoples must lie at the heart of any agenda to eradicate poverty. As I sat and listened to presentations from member states, UN organizations, international panelists, and speakers at NGO-sponsored side events, the term Social Protection Floor (SPF) was mentioned repeatedly.

While the SPF holds specific meaning, in both economic and social policy terms, it generally includes the provision of basic services to ensure adequate access to: food, water, shelter, sanitation, health, education, decent work/employment, pensions, and where necessary cash transfers to ensure such services can be accessed by the very poor. While the SPF concept is not new to me (NZ is noted as a Welfare State), I was constantly reminded that such access is denied to billions of my fellow world citizens.

At times, it was frustrating to hear “diplomatic speak,” especially in the knowledge that policy changes, if made at all, will be incrementally slow, depriving many more of their basic human rights. As the world develops, economically and technologically, social development must also rank highly on the political agendas of nation states, and the international institutions which underpin economic/fiscal policies/structures. The equitable access of all people to the basic necessities of life and well-being—their human rights—is fundamental.

It has been very encouraging to observe the efforts of the UN/NGOs as they commit themselves, individually and collectively, to focus on advocacy at the international level as a voice for the most vulnerable in our world. The side events associated with the commission were, in many ways, more interesting and “hands-on” in content than the main sessions. Choosing which events to attend was difficult given the plethora of broad-ranging topics and the excellent guest speakers.

One event I attended was sponsored by UNICEF. Titled “Extreme Poverty and Violence Against Children,” the session included input, a film-clip, and panel discussion. It raised the issue of the 200+ million children around the world (excluding China) who are unregistered (i.e. without a birth certificate and therefore do not appear in official country statistics). Such children can be violated (often in multiple ways), trafficked, and at worst killed without trace. Governments and NGOs often find it difficult to strategize on child-centered plans/resources when such large numbers “go under the radar.” One speaker was emphatic: “Violence is not a theme; it is the reality of how people live!” And another commented: “There are over 1.8 billion experts on poverty—the poor themselves!” It seems clear to me that programs and actions must be rooted in human rights; otherwise violence, in its many forms, is likely to continue.

Other side events which I attended included:

“Social Dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD),” presented by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA);

“Poverty, Rights and Access for those affected by or infected with HIV,” presented by the NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS;

“Poverty and Climate Change: Voices from Government, The Grassroots, and NGOs,” presented by the Working Group on Poverty and Climate Change, NGO Committee on Poverty Eradication;

“Promoting Social Integration: Voices from the Grassroots,” presented by the NGO Committee for Social Development and UN Non-Governmental Liaison Services (NGLS).

Hopefully I have provided a flavor of these past 10 days. My deepest desire and prayer is that what has been spoken will be reflected in action: by individuals, NGOs and member states. People are the world’s greatest resource and treasure, yet millions are destined to a life of abject poverty without our collective efforts.

I wish to conclude with a well-known Maori proverb which came to mind during the commission sessions and side events: *Ui mai koe ki ahau he aha te mea nui o te ao, Māku e kī atu he tangata, he tangata, he tangata!* Translation: Ask me what is the greatest thing in the world, I will reply: It is people, It is people, It is people!

Check out the rest of this site: http://www.domlife.org/DLC/NGO_UN

Catholic Digest features article by Sister Margaret Palliser OP

Margaret Palliser, OP, a member of the leadership team of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, has written an article on Dominican spirituality (“Praying with the Dominicans: Tap into a spiritual tradition that can enrich your prayer life”) that appears in the March 2011 issue of Catholic Digest. [http://www.sparkill.org/Public/Praying with the Dominicans 2011.pdf](http://www.sparkill.org/Public/Praying_with_the_Dominicans_2011.pdf)
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Dominican Calendar

There are usually no Dominican Feasts celebrated during Lenten days.

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