



# 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 800<sup>th</sup> celebration in 2016;  
26<sup>th</sup> July 2011*

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

*Our prayers are with the Dominican Family in Oslo as they mourn tragic loss of life*

## **Dominican Thought For the Week**

***“If you are a serious Christian, then you never completely ‘dry off’ from your baptism, to use a wonderful phrase of Gerard Baumbach. The sacrament is a living reality, not merely an unrepeatable event in the past...” Paul Philibert OP in The Priesthood of the Faithful, P.22***

## **News from Iraq**

Sr Trish Madigan OP has returned from Northern Iraq where she and her colleague, Sr Martha Kirk from San Antonio Incarnate Word University, were researching the impact of the Fezalar Schools and Ishik University run by members of the Gülen movement (a Turkish Sufi-inspired movement led by Fetullah Gülen). The research project over three weeks focused on “Three Generations of Iraqi Women.” Over 80 people - young women graduates, their mothers and their grandmothers - were interviewed to discover the impact that education provided by the Fezalar Schools were having on women’s development. She writes:

We arrived in Erbil, the capital and the hub of fast developing social and economic region, at the newly constructed International Airport which in 2009 opened up the country to world possibilities of trade and development. The Citadel situated at the centre of the city of Erbil has a history going back 6000 years. In the newly constructed Erbil Civilization Museum we saw some wonderful artefacts from the pre-Christian era as well as the first Christian centuries, and the Abbasid period (8<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) when Baghdad became a great cultural and intellectual centre. In the course of our interviews we also had the opportunity to visit another large city, Suleimaniya, which contained the prison in which Saddam imprisoned and tortured many of his political opponents, and Halabja, the Kurdish town which was bombed and gassed by Saddam in 1988. We visited the Martyrs Memorial and met some survivors who even to this day have breathing problems. Their children and grandchildren are now students at Fezalar schools where they learn how to turn fear and hatred into forgiveness and the service of others.

Since these schools and the university have very positive pastoral relations with the students and their families, we were warmly welcomed into a variety of homes and gained much insight into the lives of ordinary Iraqis. The research shows that “the Turkish Schools,” as they are known, are fulfilling a great need in providing a high standard of education in a fast-developing part of the world. They are also playing an important role in building bridges between communities which have historically been wary of each other e.g. the Turkish and Kurdish communities. Christians who have fled places that are presently unsafe, such as Mosul and Baghdad in the south of Iraq, are finding a welcome here. Some of the students we interviewed in Erbil from Ishik University were Christian and very appreciative of the education they were able to access.

I visited the Dominican sisters in the small town of Karakosh, and in Erbil where the Iraq government has built them a new convent. Although they have the land they have not yet the resources to build a school in Erbil. Two sisters teach catechetics, and one works as a nurse in a hospital. In Karakosh, I met up again with Sr Huda OP who was in Mosul when I was there in 1999. The novitiate has been relocated from Mosul to Karakosh where there are about 15 sisters. They have two novices. Two sisters teach in the University at Mosul, but for extra safety do not wear the habit. There are also two sisters studying at Mosul University.

Although the region still has many political and economic problems, overall the study showed great progress being made in levels of educational attainment by Iraqi women, a source of great hope for the future.

## **An exercise in preparation for St Dominic's Day**

*Can you find the 'golden thread' that runs among the following Dominicans (all searchable on the net!):*

**Bruno Cadore, Guiliana Cavallini, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Pierre Claverie, Yves Congar, Felicísimo Martínez Diez Henri Didon, Pier Giorgio Frassati, Sheila Flynn, Monica Gabriel, Donald Goergan, Reginald Garrigou-La Grange, Gustavo Gutierrez, Marie Therese Hanna, Mary Catherine Hilker, Kim en Joong, Thomas McGlynn, Vincent McNabb, Chrys McVey, Suzanne Noffke, Albert Nolan, Mary O'Driscoll, Gaston Petit, Paul Philibert, Thomas Philippe, Brian Pierce, Antonieta Potente, Timothy Radcliffe, Eduard Schillebeeckx, Christoph Schonborn, Ann Willits.**

## **Some thoughts on 'Being Dominican in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**July 19, Adrian, Michigan** – On the eve of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the first Dominicans to the Americas, modern-day Dominicans were challenged to “begin again” to live out their vocations to the fullest: through evangelical poverty; humble listening and preaching; silence; contemplation; hearts open to people of other cultures and religions; and detachment from material goods and their own agendas.

The Dominicans – numbering more than 100 registered participants, as well as local Adrian Dominicans who watched broadcasts of the talks – were gathered for a special conference, “Being Dominican in the 21st Century,” held July 8-11<sup>th</sup> in Adrian, Michigan.

Participants were from England, Rome and the Dominican Republic. Represented at the conference were the U.S. women's congregations of Adrian, Amityville, Blauvelt, Grand Rapids, Houston, Mission San Jose, Peace, Racine, San Rafael, Sinsinawa and Sparkill; Sisters from a Congregation in the Philippines currently stationed in Hawaii; Friars from the English Province and the Central and Southern Provinces in the U.S.; and nuns from Our Lady of Mount Thabor Monastery in Ortonville, Michigan and Caterina Benincasa Dominican Monastery in New Castle, Delaware.

Sister Ann Willits, OP (Sinsinawa), kicked off the conference July 8 with her talk, “**The Holy Preaching: Both Inheritance and Invitation.**” Noting that **St. Dominic's death-bed words included the exhortation, “Begin,”** Sister Ann encouraged Dominicans throughout her talk to “begin again” to live out the inheritance of Dominican life left by **St. Dominic.**

“**As Dominicans, we have received three remarkable gifts: paradox, silence and the holy preaching,**” Sister Ann said. **Paradox – confusion, chaos and crisis – is at the very heart of all mysteries, such as the mystery of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and death. Silence – “the doorway to intimacy” – is necessary for preachers before they can share the word of God with others. In a moving story, Sister Ann related how, through silence, she reached a young man who had years before found his parents dead and retreated into silence. Now a high school teacher, his message to the Dominican preachers is that “only silence can heal the pain.”**

Father Timothy Radcliffe, OP, opened July 9 with his morning talk, “**Dominican Preaching and the Imagination.**” He described preaching as more than the words we speak after the Gospel. “It's in our work, our tenderness, our gestures, in what we say and don't say,” he said. As preachers, we don't need to know all of the answers, he said. “Our best preaching is grappling with things we don't know or understand.”

Just as Jesus is “light from light,” imaginative preaching can encompass taking a new slant on an old message. Father Timothy gave the example of Jesus' seven last words. His cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” came from a psalm written some 500 years before Christ, by a psalmist who had also known suffering. Those words inspired a 1786 composition by Joseph Haydn, a book by Timothy himself, and a stage production by a group of young performers. In our preaching, Timothy said, “all we can offer is a little bit of God's creativity.”

That afternoon, in her talk, Sister Anneliese Sinnott, OP (Adrian) spoke on “Being Dominican in a World Church” through the lens of the 2004 Adrian Dominican **Vision**: “Seek Truth, Make Peace,

Reverence Life.” The search for truth requires compassion and openness to ongoing conversion. “How can we pursue truth if we cut ourselves off from other voices?” she asked, emphasizing the need to be open to people of all nations, cultures and religions. In her discussion on peace, Sister Anneliese noted the Jewish view of shalom, which entails more than an absence of war but refers to well-being. Issues of human trafficking, poverty, war and racism deal with reverence for life, Sister Anneliese said. She called on the Dominican preachers to be in solidarity with all of creation, reaching out especially to those who are marginalized and who are not treated with the dignity due to them.

In the opening talk on Sunday, Father Brian Pierce, OP, encouraged his listeners to “preach from the wooden bench” – from the vantage point of those who are poor and suffering – in the humble way practiced by Pedro of Cordova, OP. Pedro was the superior of the first community of Dominicans to serve in the Americas, on the island of Hispaniola, which encompasses the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Author, peace and justice advocate and former Promoter General of the Dominican Nuns, Father Brian related the story of the community of Dominicans on Hispaniola; the community’s prophetic homily denouncing the Spaniards’ treatment of the native people of the Americas; and Pedro’s role in the conversion of [Bartolomeo de las Casas](#) from a slave owner to a Dominican friar and a human rights advocate.

Jesus, Dominic and Pedro all preached from the standpoint of suffering people, Father Brian said. Jesus himself sat down with the woman accused of adultery, looked at her accusers through her eyes, and defended her. Dominic preached to the people not from a position of power – on a horse – but on foot. Pedro spoke humbly from his wooden bench. “We can’t stay in our comfortable, theological air traffic towers,” Father Brian said. “What you see in Christ and in the world and in your neighbor, write it in your heart,” he said. “You cannot preach what you don’t have in your heart.”

In her Sunday afternoon talk, “If Dominic Were Preaching in the USA Today,” Sister Margaret Ormond, OP, Prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, spoke of various ways that St. Dominic might have related to – and challenged – people in the United States today. In response to the starving people around him, Dominic sold his greatest treasure – his books – to make money for the poor. “He responded in the way he could.” Individual Dominicans are also responding to the suffering in today’s world. Sister Margaret cited as examples two Dominican Sisters serving at Centro Santa Catalina in the poor and violent city of Juárez, Mexico, and others involved in such issues as human trafficking.

Sister Margaret challenged the Dominicans to imitate Dominic’s example of humble preaching. In particular, she held up his approach to an innkeeper who tried to convert him to Albigensianism. “Dominic simply listened and listened” throughout the night and, through this gentle stance, won the innkeeper over. She also held up Dominic, “Light of the Church,” as one who remained faithful to the Church while setting an example of needed reforms, such as evangelical poverty.

Father Donald Goergen, OP, of the Central Province, presented the conference’s final talk on Monday morning, “St. Dominic: Contemplative Missionary.” “Contemplation is a dimension of the mission,” he said. “We can’t go forward without it.”

In the past, Father Don said, he had often made the distinction between being and doing. However, he said, as apostolic men and women, “Dominicans are called to do. We are called to *engaged* contemplation,” he said, borrowing the expression from Sister Arlene Flaherty, OP. He now makes the distinction between being and having. “Without evangelical poverty, the Gospel message gets eroded.”

Father Don emphasized the need for detachment – not only from the possession of unneeded material goods but also from self, from our own wills and agendas. “How many of us are addicted to our agenda,” which brings us our sense of identity and meaning, he asked. Many people today are also addicted to a busy-ness that distracts them from contemplation. In the silence of contemplation, one encounters an emptiness that so many fear, he said, yet “God is in the emptiness. God is emptiness. God is no thing. ...Experiencing the emptiness is at the core of religious life.”

Along with the talks, prayer and Sunday Liturgy, planned by Jeanne Wiest, OP with reflections offered by Megan McElroy, OP and Arlene Flaherty, were integral aspects of the conference. Participants also had many opportunities to gather for daily periods of “holy conversations,” during which they were invited to discuss the talks, and informal socials. Saturday night took on a celebratory tone as participants learned peace dances and dances from numerous ethnic and national groups.

*From Adrian Dominicans Website*

## **“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 12<sup>th</sup> August at 6 pm.

**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.

Sydney: 6pm Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August – 26<sup>th</sup> August, 11.00am – 4 pm.

Brisbane: 6.30 pm 29<sup>th</sup> August – 17<sup>th</sup> September, 9.00am – 5 pm weekdays.

## **Dominican Calendar**

Aug-2 Bl. Jane de Aza (+1205) Spanish, mother of our Holy Father Dominic and of Bl. Mannes housewife.

Jul-27 Bl. Robert Nutter Irish Martyr

***Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to [archives5@bigpond.com.au](mailto:archives5@bigpond.com.au) – OFTEN!***