



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; 2010 – “The Mission of Preaching”

28th September 2010

Dominican Thought for the Week

“Perhaps after all the praying, reflecting, listening and agreement which we’ve reached, I would say our commitment to the example of St Dominic, to not only live a life of preaching but to live a life which in itself is a preaching. I sincerely believe that in this moment of our history, the role of community, in which each member feels recognized, valued and encouraged, is a great challenge. This community helps the brother or sister to go out into the world, to listen to people, to make Jesus known among them, in sharing the bread of the Word, Truth and fraternity.”

Sister Maria Fabiola Velasquez Maya OP, International Co-ordinator of Dominican Sisters International - part of an interview conducted on the last day of the General Chapter of the Order in which she took part.

English Language Project: News from Darwin and Adelaide

The English language project in Darwin continues with old and new students, and with graduations. After completing Certificate III in English for Academic Purposes in April, and a further intensive course in Upper Intermediate, Sr Hong Nguyen returned to Vietnam in late June. She has now been appointed to join the Formation team in her Congregation. To prepare further, she will undertake studies in The Philippines in the near future.

Meantime, Sisters The Tran and Duyen Truong both continue to make good progress in Darwin, while in Adelaide, Sr Hieu Tran (in Darwin 2009-early 2010) continues to advance in fluency. In the near future, Hieu hopes to be able to enrol at the University for further studies in education.

Since July, we have been joined in Darwin by another Sister from Indonesia – Sr Albertine Suparmi. Albertine’s work is in the overall administration and management of the several Dominican schools in Indonesia. Her family situation provides a most interesting and inspiring example of interfaith possibilities. Albertine, one of seven siblings, comes from a Muslim family. Together with a sister and a brother, as teenagers they attended a Jesuit-run secondary school in Yogyakarta. During that time, the three of them expressed their wish to become Catholics. Contrary to the customary strictures on such movements, their parents (now deceased) and other siblings supported them in doing so. But they did much more than that! On the occasion of special Christian holy days, sometimes the Eucharist would be celebrated in their home with the entire family prayerfully present, and at times of special Muslim holy days, likewise the entire family would gather at home to be one in Muslim-led prayer. We could learn much from our Indonesian Dominican Sisters in the matter of interfaith relations!

Gabrielle Kelly op, Darwin. 15 September 2010

Book Launch

Sunday Matters: Reflections on the Lectionary Readings for Year A by Mark O'Brien OP at Library, Catholic Institute of Sydney, 99 Albert Rd, Strathfield on 22 October at 4.00pm
RSVP: (08) 83543 2299 by 13 October.
The launch will also take place at St Dominic's East Camberwell, Melbourne on 21st October.

Congratulations and best wishes Mark! We look forward to using your material.

Dominican Nuns in Canada

A Dominican presence is being established in Western Canada. The British Columbia Catholic Newspaper presented a nice article on Queen of Peace Monastery and its recent move to Squamish - the beautiful wilderness region an hour north of Vancouver, and only 30 minutes from Whistler, the famed ski area (and site of recent winter Olympics). After ten years establishing the new Dominican Monastery foundation (sponsored by the Dominican Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills, Detroit, Michigan, USA) this move to temporary housing close to the 80 acre property will allow the nuns to be at hand for the building of their new monastery and chapel, due to start in coming months. The monastery's website has more photos and information <www.dominicannunsbc.ca> Sr Veronica Rosier OP of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia has transferred to this monastery, joining the monastic (or contemplative) branch of the Order. On the feast of the Holy Rosary Ludmilla, postulant, will receive the habit and formally commence her novitiate.

The Dominican friars conduct a parish in downtown Vancouver (4 friars) and the Vietnamese Dominican friars conduct another parish that serves the large Vietnamese population. Both parishes and the nuns have very active Dominican laity. The nearest Dominican Sisters are in the community from Adrian, Michigan, who are in the neighbouring diocese of Prince George (10 hours by car from Vancouver).

Gospel in Action Video Festival

On 17 September 2010 during the General Chapter in Rome there was THE GOSPEL IN ACTION VIDEO FESTIVAL. Eight videos were selected by a committee from the sixteen entries sent for the Gospel in Action project. (For more details click <http://internet.op.org/gospel-in-action>)

Rafto Prize for Human Rights 2010

José Raúl Vera López (65), Dominican bishop of Saltillo, Mexico, has been awarded the Rafto Prize 2010 for his struggle for human rights and social justice. He is an uncompromising critic of power abuse and a fearless defender of migrants, indigenous peoples, and other groups at risk in Mexican society.

The Rafto Foundation has since 1987 awarded, annually, the Rafto Prize for Human Rights to advocates of human rights and democracy. The prize commemorates Thorolf Rafto, professor of economic history at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen. Professor Rafto devoted his life to promoting democracy and respect for human rights, especially in Eastern Europe.

St Edith Stein and her Dominican Companions at Auschwitz

Auschwitz was at that time a small provincial Polish town, which was to give its name to the notorious concentration camp, opened nearby by order of Himmler for political prisoners on April 27, 1940. The first camp was rather small in size and was called, subsequently, Auschwitz I. In October 1941, a far more extensive camp was set up, named after a neighboring village,

Auschwitz II-Birkenau (Encyclopaedia Judaica Vol. 3, Coll. 854-871). From March 1942, Jews were directed to the second camp. ...

From the moment of the arrival of a convoy to the extermination of the victims, no more than an hour and a half would elapse, as a rule. The killing of human beings became a monotonous routine.

Saint Edith, her companions and a thousand other Hebrew Catholics died in the gas-chambers of Auschwitz II-Birkenau on the morning of August 9th from suffocation by prussic acid fumes. She then entered into her glory, accompanied, as we like to believe, by many others.

Saint Edith Stein was accompanied by a group of Hebrew Catholics throughout her ordeal; they lived with her, prayed with her, shared her spiritual sentiments, and died, most of them, together with her in the same gas-chamber. They are the rays of light that scintillate around our Saint's crown of glory. Divine Providence wanted to give the world an example of an ideal Hebrew Catholic Community, though one assembled under duress and for a short period only...

We recall a few names, with Dominican connections....

Dr. Bromberg and his family

The Doctor, his wife, son and daughter travelled in the transport from Amersfoort to Westerbork. They survived the war, as by a miracle. Mrs. Bromberg, who was very close to Edith, left a fine testimony to her bearing during the two days Edith spent in the camp. The son was ordained a priest in the Dominican Order after the war: Fr. Ignatius Bromberg, O.P.

Sister Judith Mendez da Costa

Her family had left Portugal in the 16th century to settle in Amsterdam. She became a Dominican nun and was conventual in Bilthoven from where she was carried off by the Gestapo on August 2nd. Her distant Portuguese origin provided an excuse, so that she was set free for a while and returned to her convent on the 15th August. On the 25th February 1944, she and the entire Portuguese community were transferred from Westerbork to Theresienstadt camp and from there to Auschwitz (16th May) where they were all gassed. Her brother and sister died in the torment. Sister Judith managed to send to her Superior a detailed description of her stay in Westerbork, from August 4th to August 15th, during which time she met Saint Edith.

Dr. Meirowsky

Since 1940, she had been resident in the lodge of the Trappistine Abbey near Tilburg. She was a medical doctor of Polish-Jewish origin, acquainted with our Saint with whom she had exchanged several letters. At Tilburg, she rendered valuable services to the community as doorkeeper and community doctor. She was a member of the Dominican Third Order and was regarded by the Trappistines as one of themselves.

In a letter addressed to her confessor from Westerbork, dated "Transfiguratio, 6, VIII." she expressed the most admirable spiritual sentiments, showing to what extent our Saint was seconded in her intentions by other Hebrew Catholics.

We quote the following passages from her letter:

"I want to send you my last greetings and to tell you that I have complete confidence in God and have surrendered myself entirely to His will. Even more — I regard it as a grace and privilege to be driven along this road under these conditions, a witness to the words of our good Fathers and shepherds in Christ.

"If our sufferings have been increased somewhat then we have received a double portion of grace and a glorious crown is being prepared for us in heaven. Rejoice with me. I am going forward unshaken, confidently and joyfully — like the Sisters who are with me — to testify to Jesus Christ and to bear witness to the Truth in company with our Bishops. We are going as children of Our Holy Mother, the Church; we will unite our sufferings with the sufferings of our King, our Saviour and our Bridegroom, sacrificing ourselves for the conversion, for the Jews, for those who persecute us, so that all may know the peace of Christ and his Kingdom. Join with me in thanking God for this great favor by singing an exultant Magnificat."

The letter was signed, Sister M. Magdalena Dominica (in the world, Dr. Meirowsky).

More inspiring words can be found in the book: Edith Stein and Companions on the Way to Auschwitz. The insanity of the Holocaust is brought into stark relief in this moving book – not for the faint hearted - by Fr Paul Hamans about the lives and fate of the Catholic Jews arrested in Holland on August 2nd 1942. in retaliation against the Dutch Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter

read the previous Sunday condemning the Nazis' persecution and deportation of the Jews in the occupied Netherlands.

Thank you to Fr Peter Lucas OP for drawing my attention initially to Sr Judith's heroic life.

Dominican Calendar

Sep-28 Bl. Lawrence of Ripafratta (1373-1456) Italian, priest, eloquent preacher, spiritual director, novice master of St. Antoninus and Bl. Fra Angelico.

The 16 Martyrs of Nagasaki Saints: Lorenzo Ruiz, husband and father, Protomartyr of the Philippines, member of the Rosary Confraternity (+1637); Dominic Ibañez de Erquicia, Spanish (+1633), and James Kyushei Tomonaga, Japanese, and 7 other Dominican priests; 2 Dominican Cooperator Brothers; 2 Lay Dominicans; 2 parishioners of Dominican missions, canonized 1987.

Oct-3 Bl. Dominic Spadafora (1450-1521) Italian, priest, missionary preacher, teacher.

Oct-4 *OUR HOLY FATHER FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1182-1226) [F] Italian, saint, deacon, founder of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), preacher, stigmatist, friend of St. Dominic, Church appointed patron of ecologists, merchants, Catholic action; co-patron with St. Catherine of Siena of Italy, canonized 1228.*

Oct-5 Bl. Raymond of Capua (c.1330-1399) Italian, priest, 23rd Master of the Order, reformer, confessor and biographer of St. Catherine (April 29).

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