



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”

29th June 2010

Dominican Thought for the Week

Dominic felt such a deep compassion that he ... stayed in the south of France and from that handful of people grown wild who had offered him only rejection and persecution, he began his great adventure along with his first disciples: to make the face of Mercy visible through the preaching of the Word. Dominic was so vulnerable in front of the Word that he changed his project and that of his bishop. He showed no hesitation!!

The origins of our religious families are rooted, by participation, in the grace of Dominic. The grace of compassion is such a deep wound in his heart that it cannot be healed, it rather continues to stay open through us today; we have been entrusted with the responsibility to keep it open, to be the faithful and creative means by which the Father's mercy may reach and intercept the cry of our globalized world, which is shattered, violent, desperate, often wandering in the emptiness of the meaningless. ...

I will share one that is also part of my personal and religious family history, thus one that I lived in the first person. It began a few years ago and it involved 4 feminine congregations, including mine.

The discernment and the consequent decision felt like an important appointment, a call to not be afraid, to go beyond and to have the courage to rely not so much on our own strength but on Someone who, by showing us the needs of the world, came knocking on our door to ask us to go a step further, maybe daring or naive, anyhow a step further and beyond our limited vision.

We therefore made the decision to begin this adventure whose achievement seemed initially truly impossible: TO CREATE A PRESENCE IN KABUL (Afghanistan) through an intercongregational community to provide educational services to children suffering from mental and physical disabilities.

Today, in the heart of Afghanistan, a land tormented by wars, violence, deserts and death, where insecurity is the daily bread because today you cannot tell whether tomorrow you will still be alive, there is a tabernacle, the heart of God beating through real presence in the sacrament and through the living sign of an intercongregational and international community. They live a communion of charism in an essentiality that warms the heart, and they fill the lonely hearts and lonely souls of the first Christians with a mutual love that stems from Jesus, as they are becoming a silent but powerful testimony; they are a force of action and of working presence alongside the smallest and weakest in a society that, having caused indelible wounds in human lives, is ashamed to recognize the wounds of its own children.

These are children who, one way or the other, became victims of the horrors of war and carry visible signs, unfortunately, on their bodies, in their minds, in their psyche. These are children who were often hidden by their families because they were ashamed of them, thus prevented from living a social life like all other children...

I visited the small community in August of 2007. There, I saw the religious life of the future and I understood the meaning of an expression which is widely used and maybe also abused, “the prophecy of religious life”. There, I often wondered what are the characteristics of a prophetic religious life? Instead of thinking of the answer, I actually saw it...

Our sisters have nothing, not even the freedom to move about freely from one place to another, but they have managed to keep a tabernacle in a room, a sign and testimony of the absolute centrality of God for that small community. He is the Lord, He is the only reason for their going and for their staying; for Him, every morning at sunrise these sisters renew the

offer and the sacrifice of all they have and they are in the fullness of a joy that satisfies them, knowing that anything they do to one of those little ones, they have done to Him.

I touched with my own hands, because I lived the experience, the meaning of the original Church, a mystery meditated so many times the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

There are no churches in Afghanistan but the Church lives! It is a very small sprout, a fragile one but that releases robustness because it is fed by the communion and the sharing: a community of little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld has been present in Kabul for over 50 years. He was waiting for us, just as he waited for the woman at the well in Sicar.

One year after our arrival, the sisters of mother Teresa also arrived to Kabul and lastly, a group of Jesuit religious from India. An extraordinary friendship and solidarity is forming and consolidating!

The fraternity of this “Church of the origins” is wonderful and also ecumenical and interreligious. Dialogue is not discussed at a theological level but it is practised in everyday life. In fact, a lively fraternity has begun with the community of Lutheran brothers who are extremely available to help our sisters with any need they may have and with several Muslim teachers in the education and health fields. The path of this adventure which started 7 years ago at the well of Sicar is still very long and it will probably be very exhausting. However, what that small community of sisters is experiencing today is to us a marvellous sign that speaks of hope in the world.

Sr Viviana Ballarin OP at the Dominican Sisters International Conference, Rome June 2010.

From Dominican Sisters International: some other examples of Sisters and their co-workers living the Gospel message:

- In Cameroon – seven congregations of Dominican Sisters have collaborated to establish a health centre in a very poor area of Yaoundé.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo – a Dominican Sister attorney attempts to respond to the needs of desperate prisoners in Kinshasa.
- In Vietnam – Dominican Sisters work secretly to provide safety and shelter to unwed mothers facing government pressure to terminate their pregnancies.
- In Taiwan - Dominican Sisters provide support and services to women who have been trafficked to Taiwan as “mail-order” brides.
- In Italy – Dominican Sisters respond to the needs of desperate refugees who have risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean from northern Africa.
- In Germany – Dominican Sisters have made care for Earth a priority and have taken concrete steps to reduce the impact of their “footprint” on the planet.
- In Haiti – Dominican Sisters struggle with the people devastated by the earthquake to rebuild their lives.
- In Colombia – Dominican Sisters minister to Internally Displaced Persons who are fleeing the violence that plagues their country.
- In Canada – Dominican Sisters minister among the poor of Quebec.
- In the USA – Dominican Sisters continue to be advocates for Iraqi refugees and urge the US government to assure protection for Christians and other minorities in Iraq.
- In Latin America - the Sisters from CODALC sponsor “Peace Education Workshops” that offer training in schools and communities in various locations in Latin America;
- In South Africa - the Dominican Sisters are involved in programs to confront increased human trafficking for purposes of prostitution during the upcoming World Cup in that country;
- The Dominican Sisters in many countries who campaign for the purchase of “Fair Trade” products and who support local farmers and producers.

And there are so many other examples that could be added.

Working for justice is not an option, nor is it simply a dimension of our lives. Rather, it is a dynamic perspective that informs both our being and our doing. .. I urge you to continue to promote ... the understanding that action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world are integral elements of our Dominican vocation. ...Everyone, in every ministry, has the opportunity – and responsibility – to help make the world more just and peaceful. *Sr Toni Harris – Dominican Promoter for Justice and Peace and Care of Creation.*

Shaping our Future with Realism, Daring and Hope – Assembly of Dominican Sisters International, Rome 2010

About one hundred Prioresses of Dominican Congregations, representing 25,423 Dominican Sisters from 111 countries met in Rome in June.

Papers, reports and outcomes of this very significant event can be found on www.dsiop.org

Some Important Gatherings needing our prayers....

“Common Ground”

“Common Ground” is the name given to the gathering usually held every two years for student leaders in schools with a Dominican Tradition. This year, from 2nd-4th July, students and teachers from Auckland, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne will gather at Lake Dewar Lodge near Melbourne to look again at what it means to be Dominican.

Dominican Assembly for Justice and Peace promoters

Dominican Sisters, Friars, Lay Dominicans and others with Dominican affiliation and involved in justice and peace ministry in the Asia-Pacific Region will meet in Indonesia 4th-9th July 2010. The Asia-Pacific region includes Dominican presence in Australia, Arabian Gulf, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nepal, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam – plenty to discuss in the area of justice and peace!

Dominican College Bomana PNG

We were proud to welcome the PM of the Solomon Islands, Rt Hon Derek Sikua, his wife, Madame Doris Sikua, together with the Foreign Minister and various other dignitaries, for afternoon tea at Dominican College. They were in Port Moresby for the opening of the new Chancery of the Solomon Islands high Commission.

Dominican Calendar

Jun-23 BI. Innocent V (1224-1276) AKA "Peter of Tarentaise", French, pope (1276, first Dominican pope), scholar, administrator, Archbishop of Lyons.

Jul-4 BI. Pier-Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925) Italian, as a Tertiary took the name Bro. Jerome after Fra Savonarola, whom he venerated as a saint, popular among his peers, ardent athlete, tireless servant of the poor, apostle to his fellow university students in Turin, he died after 6 days with polio.

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