Stepping into the Future:  
Come Be My Companion and Walk with Me

Previous issues of the Good News have afforded us occasion to glance back at our Dominican past. The strong and healthy roots supply a rich harvest into the present. Such sturdy and robust foundations lure us forward and motivate us to envision a new frontier of the mission we share with you, our partners in this great adventure of the Spirit.

Approaching the conclusion of our 125th Anniversary Year Celebration, we delight in the rich array of communal festivities we have shared, events held around the constitutive dimensions of Dominican life: prayer, study, community and the ministry of preaching. We opened the year at St. Agnes Academy with a large community liturgical celebration of jubilees that included bells, brass, drums, keyboard and full-throated song. We continued with a Study Series that highlighted Dominican speakers, who covered issues from the level of personal faith to the larger world of cosmic faith - to the story of the life and faith of the significant Dominican saint, the “mystic in the marketplace,” Catherine of Siena.

Essentials of the life and mission we share were manifest in the Grand Reunion and regional reunions of friends, family and partners in mission, all reflecting the strength and unity of a common vision and purpose. The prayer events guided by the theme, Pray All Ways, offered opportunities for expressions of prayer of great variety and came to a close with Evensong for Peace, Justice and Care of Creation celebrated in the newly dedicated Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in downtown Houston. Still to come is the Closing Liturgy of the Anniversary Year and Jubilee Celebrations to be held on Sunday, September 28 at St. Pius X High School. If you haven’t been able to come for these events, there is still time for the September closing. See you there!

Rejuvenated by reflection on our past, we stand ready to embrace the future that God inspires in the hearts and minds of all of you who participate with us by sharing in the life and mission we undertake together. Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, in a major address to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, stated that she truly believes that … “though nothing we do changes the past, everything we do changes the future.” At this historical juncture we are pleased to join with you as companions, stepping into a future not yet fully defined, but one that is truly faith-based. Thank you for joining us, for being our partners in mission!

Good News
July, 2008

Mary Grace Peters, OP
Prioress
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Community Retreat June 15 – 21
“May I receive a double portion of your spirit” (2 Kings 2:9) was the theme of the Sisters’ community retreat which brought 55 of them home this summer. Traditionally, the retreat team consists of a Dominican priest and a Dominican Sister. In this 125th anniversary year highlighting the building up of the Dominican family, we “widened the pegs of our tent” by inviting a laywoman, Helen Schiltz, to join Fr. Harry Byrne, OP as co-director. In addition, a layman, Mike Comeaux, ministered as liturgist and musician. Helen is a Pastoral Associate of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa, and Mike is a valuable member of the 125th Anniversary Year Planning Committee and Music Minister of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Hitchcock, Texas.

Off to St. Louis to Contemplate the Word!
We are proud to announce candidate Ginny Braniff will be received as a novice on St. Dominic’s Day (Friday, August 8th) during the community Eucharistic Liturgy at St. Dominic’s Villa. She will leave for the Collaborative Dominican Novitiate in St. Louis in mid-August. We send Ginny with the words of a 13th century Dominican Blessing: “May God, Creator Bless you. May God redeem your heal. And may God the Holy Spirit fill you with light.”

Faith on a Farm
Kelly Biddle, an active Discerner with the Community, who holds a Texas A&M degree in Plant Genetics and two more from Rice University in English and Biochemistry, will leave in early August for an exciting placement with our Mother Congregation, the Columbus Dominicans, to minister both at Shepherd’s Corner Community Farm and the Dominican Learning Center. Best wishes Kelly!

Milestones and Congratulations
The Dominican Sisters want to announce that good friend and partner in mission, Hazel Casey, celebrated her 90th Birthday on July 5 in Houston with her children and grandchildren. Helen is mother of the late Catherine Casey OP, and widow of the late Bob Casey. The Casey family spent many years in Washington, D.C. when Bob was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives, from 1958 to 1976. Happy Birthday Hazel!

Miriam Ulm, OP celebrated her 70th Birthday on June 26 with the Sisters, family and friends. She is in residence at St. Dominic Village. The Sisters send you continued good wishes!

St. Agnes Academy Class of ’58 Celebrates 50 Year Reunion
On June 14, 2008 members of the St. Agnes Class of 1958 gathered for a weekend long celebration of their 50th year reunion. The weekend centered around a luncheon at St. Agnes where the women recalled their Dominican high school education and shared memories of each other and their teachers: Sisters Andrew, Baptista, Beatrice, Mary Catherine, Christopher, Chrysostom, Clarice, Davidica, de Lourdes, DeRicci, Doloretta, Emile, Emily, Heline, Hilary, Marcus, Margaret, James Marie, Monica, Roberta, Simeon, Stephana, Therese, Martine, Marie Therese, Timothy and Trinita.

Here’s what they had to say:
“The dedication of the Dominican Sisters to our spiritual welfare, while upholding the highest educational standards that molded us all together, is what I loved about St. Agnes Academy.” Susie Pyers Safley

“How lucky we were to have the guidance of the Dominican Sisters.” Gail Natale (Dar) Ogle

“I am thankful to my parents and the Dominican Sisters for instilling in me the importance of caring for our world and all human kind.” Nancy Georich Barzat

Emily Bordages, OP was named teacher of the year at Magnolia Catholic High School at the Archdiocesan Annual Teacher of the Year awards dinner in May. Principal Roger Bemis, called Emily the “spirit and heart of Kelly High School.” Congratulations, Sr. Emily.

Linda Gibler, OP has taken a position as the Associate Academic Dean for Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

Lunch at the Villa
James Bordoles was invited for lunch at St. Dominic Villa recently visiting with Mary Alice Carbajal, OP and Theresa Macy, OP, his teachers at St. Mary’s School in Orange. Jim also visited with Leona Castle, OP, former principal at St. Mary’s. He is a NASA contractor and also volunteers at Texas Children’s Hospital.

Wayne Andrews OP, 3rd Order Dominican who relocated to Houston around the time of Katrina, was a guest for lunch at the Villa during July. Wayne is the editor of Luminaria, the quarterly publication by the Lay Dominicans of the Southern Province of St. Martin de Porres.

Good News Contest Winners
Congratulations to Mary Brenda, OP and Mary Magdalen Hanel, OP who will each receive a $50 Barnes and Noble gift card for their words of wisdom that became segment titles for the Good News: Preaching for Purpose, and Look What We’re Doing for Heaven’s Sake. And many thanks to all the sisters who offered reflections for the contest…all are greatly appreciated by the Council!

From the Advancement Office

Well Done My Good and Faithful Servant!
Being a sensible young lady, Florence chose the pathway to reach her destiny by entering the Dominicans in 1903 at the young age of seventeen. With her feet on the ground, she was able to give herself to her ministry with love and common sense. In the early years, Florence was a sister allowed to drive the sole community car, a lovely light pink Chrysler. We just knew she was privy to information we didn’t have and we kept our eyes open.

Florence Fryt, OP for the comings and goings of the pink house.

Florence taught elementary education in Beaumont, California, Houston and sulphur, Louisiana, and was principal at St. Mary’s in Houston and St. Elizabeth’s in Port Neches. Later she was to assist the treasurer at the Motherhouse, manage the Sacred Heart Dominican College Book Store and work as assistant bookkeeper at St. Pius X High School. Her many talents of crochet, sewing, gardening, coloring needle work and making rosaries kept her busy. Her pre-retirement was spent organizing the Christmas Sale and the Arts and Crafts Sale. She was a hard act to follow, as she seemed to do these things with much ease and excitement. In beauty, Florence, until we meet again in the light. You now abide in God’s love. We are happy you have found what you sought for 91+ years.

Reflection by Paula Enders, OP
Charleen Morgan was a dear friend to the Dominican Community. Before her death, she was busy bringing a gourmet touch to the kitchen at St. Dominic’s Villa. When I think of Charleen Morgan, I think of how she was a “gift to others” in endless ways. She always worked behind the scenes to enable the process or program to be a success. She gave of herself by “feeding others” literally. Charleen prepared hundreds of meals for friends and others through her profession and at home. She had a quiet and gentle presence, and was devoted to teaching and to her students at Sherman Elementary in Houston. At her retirement party, many of the other young teachers spoke of how Charleen helped them and encouraged them as teachers. We know she will live on through all the lives and hearts she touched or influenced.

Reflection by Carol Mayes, OP

You are invited to visit www.catholicmusa.org to learn more about the Dominican Sisters’ mission and ministries, and about opportunities for partnering and plans for the future. You will also find photos of 125th Anniversary events you might have missed, and you can order videos of the Study Series.
2008, the second half of our 125th Anniversary year, has been marked by beautiful celebrations of prayer and friendship. Over one thousand people attended our reunions in Houston, Galveston, Taylor the Sabine area; including special guest Houston Mayor Bill White, who acknowledged the powerful contribution made by the Dominican Sisters of Houston to education in Houston. Seven hundred faithful came to celebrate Evensong at Houston’s new Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Thank you to everyone who has made the year such a great success. JoAnn Niehaus OP, in her preaching at Evensong found the perfect words to describe our great appreciation for all our Partners in Mission:

“Just as surely as God’s providence brought us to Texas, so God’s providence placed you in our paths of ministry. You are our friends, our families, our benefactors; you are our Partners in Mission. Together we have sought to love the Lord with all our hearts and strength, holding the Church and her teachings as our dearest treasure and guide, helping to build up parishes and schools and institutions to serve the people of God.”

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Reunion Committee – Ji Rita Lyle, Charlene Bascom, Diane Drummond, Loretta Gary, Mary Gradney, Sue Hubert, Gail Hernandez, Carolyn Martinez, Susie Thompson

January 20, 2008

Sabine Area Reunion

Evensong Prayer Event

Reunion Committee – Renee Boles, Shannon Carroll, Ellen Cennd, Barbara Gisles, Mary Jolie Ann Hutchinson, Denise McLaughlin, Belinda Chase, Carmen Lauren Welch, Pat Parsons and the staff and students of St. Mary’s Catholic School

Evansong Prayer Event

January 20, 2008


January 6, 2008
Jubilarian Biographical Information

Diamond Jubilarian, Jane Abell, OP

Background:
• Graduated from St. Vincent Academy, Shreveport, LA
• Made Final Profession August 15, 1955

Ministry:
• Currently involved in Office of Justice, Peace and Care of Creative Ministry for the Congregation.
• Formerly served as Promoter of Justice and Peace for the Congregation.
• Served as Princess of the Congregation from 1976-1986

Education:
• BS, Sacred Heart Dominican College
• MA, University of Texas
• MA, University of Notre Dame, Indiana
• Theology Studies at Catholic University of America, Washington, DC
• Spanish Studies, O.L.U.L., San Antonio

Diamond Jubilarian, Blanche Goitha, OP

Background:
• Attended St. Mary Grade School and graduated from St. Mary High School, Port Arthur, TX
• Made her final profession on August 15, 1955

Ministry:
• Currently involved in Archives and Library at Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Motherhouse, Houston, TX
• Coordinator of Media at St. Agnes Academy and Libraries at Mount Carmel High School

Education:
• BA, Sacred Heart Dominican College, Houston, TX
• M.S. St. Mary's University, San Antonio, TX

Golden Jubilarian, Julie Marie Greig, OP

Background:
• Attended St. Mary Grade School and graduated from Bishop Byrne (St. Mary Campus), Port Arthur, TX
• Made her Final Profession on June 8, 1965

Ministry:
• Presently, Associate Director of Holy Family Retreat Center in Beaumont, TX
• Her teaching career included teaching first grade and serving as principal at Dominican Elementary School in Galveston, TX and Central Catholic School in Port Arthur, TX

Education:
• B.A. Sacred Heart Dominican College, Houston, TX
• Masters in Pastoral Studies, Aquinas Institute, St. Louis, MO
• Clinical Pastoral Education, Ben Taub Hospital, Houston, TX

Golden Jubilarian, Mary Magdalen Hanel, OP

Background:
• Attended St. Anthony Grade School in Cameron, TX and Assumption Grade School in Houston, TX and graduated from St. Agnes Academy, Houston, TX.
• Made her First Profession on June 8, 1965

Ministry:
• Currently, Archivist for the Dominican Sisters and part-time religion teacher at Our Lady of Fatima School in Leon City and St. Francis Assisi School in Houston, TX.
• Her teaching ministry included primary grades and Montessori education and she served as Principal at St. Patrick School in Lubbock, TX.

Education:
• B.A. Sacred Heart Dominican College
• MRE, Theological, University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX
• Montessori Education, Montessori International Conferences, Mexico and Germany
• Speaking Engagement, Houston, TX

Golden Jubilarian, Carletta LaCouer, OP

Background:
• Attended St. Anne Grade School and graduated from St. Anthony High School in Beaumont, TX.
• Made her Final Profession on June 8, 1965

Ministry:
• Presently, Coordinator of Hospitality at Dominican Sisters Motherhouse and Tai Chi Chi Instructor
• Served as Associate Director of Holy Family Retreat Center from 1984-2002

Education:
• BA, Sacred Heart Dominican College, Houston, TX
• Masters in Pastoral Studies, Aquinas Institute, St. Louis, MO
• Tai Chi Chi training, Glazoe, New York and San Diego, CA
• Spiritual Direction Certification, Cenacle Retreat Center, Houston, TX

Diamond Jubilarian, Therese Marie Morales, OP

Background:
• Attended Sacred Heart High School and graduated from Sacred Heart of Mary High School, Los Angeles, CA.
• Made her Final Profession on August 15, 1955

Ministry:
• Presently a substitute teacher at St. Paul High School, Whittier, California and use the Spanish Teacher at St. Paul High School, California for many years
• Most of her ministry was teaching high school Spanish in several high schools in Texas and California, but in only years taught grade school.

Education:
• BA, Sacred Heart Dominican College, Houston, TX
• Spanish Class University of Texas, Austin, TX
I came to know my God better and realize the gift that I have been given. From the retreat center I came to work at the county hospital and to work with the poor and the needy. I know that I make a difference in people's lives and that they make a difference in mine.

There is a country western song by George Strait, “I Saw God Today.” It is about seeing God in a flower, in the birth of his child, and seeing the world in a different light. Each day when I leave my work I try to think of “how I saw God today.” I know I am at the right place, and doing the right thing because I never wake up and say, “Oh God I have to go to work today.” Instead, I wake up and know that I will be blessed that day in my work.

Julie Marie Greig, OP

When I was first introduced to the gentle movement of T'ai Chi, I had no idea that one day I would be practicing movement with adults. This new ministry is so enriching and stimulating in my daily life. As I set up for a practicing session, I know that my Montessori training comes forth. I like to be in the room an hour or so before the session to prepare the space with a scented candle, calming colors and soft music. My goal is to help the participants to practice the moves in a relaxed atmosphere, releasing stress and enhancing their balance. With encouragement from others, I have been offering a verse from Scripture before we begin the T’ai Chi moves. Recently I was with a new group just for a day, and decided to use several lines from the Sunday readings as the scripture for this Day of Prayer. This became a very meaningful experience when I attended Mass the next day.

Carletta LaCouv, OP

Is it really possible that I have been a Dominican for 60 years? “Tempus fugit!” As I reflect on the experiences of my life, I must express gratitude to God for his great love, care and mercy. Mine has been a wonderful life. Being a member of St. Dominic’s family is a dream come true. The years that have permitted me to teach and to learn from so many students, their parents, and my colleagues, have been incredible and rewarding.

There have been two extra-curricular activities that offered me exceptional opportunities to increase knowledge of other cultures, and to form life-long friendships. One was touring foreign countries, and the other was working with the students’ exchange program sponsored by the Student City Committee. I thank God, our blessed mother, my parents and all my family, my community, priests, sisters, brothers and so many other persons living and deceased who have been such an important part of my life and who have accompanied me to this milestone. I love you!

Therese Marie Morales, OP

Preaching for me has meant living the last 60 years in the Spirit of God. I have been blessed in knowing such wonderful Dominican Sisters who have taught me to preach and teach in the study of prayer and contemplation. Preaching is prayer, and with prayer comes study... but all require love. Love’s requirement is its expression in both word and deed. It is love that makes you a joyful person, and I hope I have been a joyful Dominican Sister.

As a Dominican, I have been an educator in spirituality. I have been taught social justice and I have promoted social justice. I have taught the people in my life to be joyful... to obtain joy through constant prayer, and in all things, ask that the will of God, in Jesus Christ, be done. My life is filling with hope through the Holy Spirit.

For all 60 years, I have been a teacher in every grade from Kindergarten to 12th. I have been a principal and a librarian. Although I have loved all my teaching in the classroom, I always believed the library was the center of a school and it is where I find my joy. I can proudly say that I’ve never forgotten one thing I’ve ever read: Today, I am at Incarnate Word Convent, re-working their library. It is here that each encounter with an individual offers me the chance to preach with love and joy.

Blanche Gothia, OP

Walk with us ... You are invited to join the Dominican Family

We invite you to consider becoming a member of the Dominican Family! Who is the Dominican Family? Today, the word “family” has many meanings. We speak of the nuclear family, the extended family, the blended family, the family of the Church and so on. What each has in common is the quality of “inclusion.” To be part of a family means you are included in that group. Therefore, to be a member of the Dominican Family means you are included as a brother or sister in following the Dominican way of life. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers, an order of men and women about 800 years ago in France. The mission of the Order was to preach the Word of God. Some did this formally and others did it by the way they lived their lives.

The Houston Dominican Sisters are a group of women who began 125 years ago. In the beginning, we were mostly teachers, but today our work occurs in many other different areas; i.e. we work in parishes, as attorneys, as hospital chaplains, perform social work and so on. In order that the great work of Dominic continues, a new form, in this part of the country, will begin. Dominican Life is exciting and enriching. It is necessary, when joining, as with any organization, to have a period of formation, where one learns “the way” of that particular group. You (members of the laity, Catholic or non-Catholic, male or female, married or single) are invited to consider becoming a Dominican by way of the Dominican Family! All are invited to an informational session, in the Fall, where the details of the Dominican Family will be explained.

Interested? If you think you might be interested, or if you would just like to have more information please contact Carol Mayes, OP at 713-440-3718 or email cmayes@domhou.org. Join us for this exciting step into a bright future!
Save the Date!

Thank You for joining the Dominican Sisters of Houston during the many celebrations that have marked a commemoration of the past 125 years. On September 28, 2008 we will gather to properly close the year and embrace the future with a commitment to going forward as Partners in Mission. So please mark your calendars now!

Sunday, September 28, 2008
2:00 p.m. at St. Pius X High School
Closing Mass & Reception
celebrating the
125th Anniversary Year
and honoring 2008 Jubilarians

Golden:
Julie Marie Greig, OP
Mary Magdalen Hanel, OP
Carletta LaCour, OP

Diamond:
Jane Abell, OP
Blanche Gothia, OP
Therese Marie Morales, OP

For information call Barbara Abell at 713-440-3711
or email mmarx@domhou.org

Our Young Partners in Mission
Dominican Sisters Summer Camp July 20 – 26

For information contact Barbara Abell at 713-440-3711
or email babell@domhou.org