MONASTERY BELLS

LIFE WITH THE CLOISTERED DOMINICAN NUNS

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MONASTERY OF THE INFANT JESUS 1501 LOTUS LANE LUFKIN, TX 75904

"In this year of Jubilee ..." (Leviticus 25:13)



When a young woman enters the monastery, it often seems like "forever" before she makes Solemn Vows. But after that momentous occasion, time seems to fly before Jubilees start appearing. This year we celebrated the Silver Jubilee (25 years) of the profession of Sister Mary Magdalene. Sister is originally from Ohio, but she came to us for training from another community in Louisiana. When she was discerning her vocation she definitely did not want to cross to the west of the Mississippi River. But here she is in Texas, "out west" of the Mighty River. Sister Mary Magdalene is an excellent seamstress and has spent many years making our habits and other clothing. We had a lot of fun celebrating her Big day. Sister had hoped for a German Shepherd dog. Although we do not encourage pets, Sister did receive a "toy" version. One of our friends in New York enjoyed the story on the Blog so much that she sent a gift of a puzzle of German Shepherd puppies. It was a great puzzle to put together even though it was not easy to do.



"He made his appearance as a Preacher in the desert." (Matthew 3:1)



Both the universal Canon Law of the Church and our Constitutions for the Nuns of the Order of Preachers stipulate that the nuns should make an annual retreat of eight days. This year it occurred in mid-August. We were blessed to have as our preacher, Fr. Anthony Giambrone, OP, from the Eastern USA Province. Father is originally from Ohio, but for the past nine years he has been assigned to the *École biblique*. This Dominican Institute was founded in 1890 in Jerusalem only a short distance outside the Damascus Gate. In 1956, the École published the famous *Jerusalem Bible* (in French).

Father Giambrone is a professor of New Testament and vice-rector of the Institute. In the photo above, we are enjoying a visit with him just before our retreat began. His reflections during the retreat were enriched by numerous Scriptural and Hebrew insights. Father has already agreed to return for Conferences on Saint Luke next summer.

"The Lord their God shall visit them..." (Zephaniah 2:7)

This spring and summer we were blessed with many visitors to our Monastery. In **April**, Fr. Jordan Turano, OP, *Socius* (Assistant) of the Master of the Order for the US Provinces and the Vietnamese Vicariate in Canada, was in the area and stopped by for an hour. We enjoyed meeting him and hope he will bring the Master General to see us in October when he will be visiting Texas.

In **May**, Fr. John Rooney, OP, a member of the priestly fraternity of St. Dominic and pastor of St. Mary of the Expectation parish in League City, TX, came for a week to fill in for our chaplain, Fr. R.B. Williams, OP while he was away for some personal retreat time. Fr. Peter Asantebwana, a priest from the Diocese of Moshi in Tanzania, East Africa, stayed with us for a few days. He is an old friend and it was good to see him again. Fr. Thomas Aquinas Tran, OP and other Vietnamese Dominican friars brought a *Come and See* group, young men interested in becoming Dominicans, along with the altar servers of Our Lady of Lavang parish in Houston. We were all treated to Zesty Burgers, a local hamburger joint in Lufkin, known for humongous hamburgers complete with jalapeños! A whole hamburger proved too much for most of the Sisters and even for these growing young men.

June brought the confirmation class from St. Augustine Church in San Augustine, TX, for a day of recollection. We were impressed by the discipline of the students, their thoughtful questions, and their concrete career plans after high school, which included many aspiring welders and computer graphic designers along with one who hopes to be a doctor and another, an astronaut. San Augustine holds a special place in the history of Catholicism in East Texas as Spanish Franciscan missionaries founded a mission there in 1716 from which the town takes its name. The six Dominican novices from our Province and their novice master, Fr. Francis Orozco, OP, paid us a visit. Soon-to-be-ordained Br. Carlos Salas, OP brought his parents to meet us. He was taking them on a tour of the Southern Dominican Province. Fr. James Farfaglia, pastor of St. Francis de Paula Church in San Diego, TX, replaced Fr. R.B. for a few days. Fr. James was the founding pastor of St. Andrew Catholic Church here in Lufkin back in 1999. It is always good to see him.

July brought a number of Dominican Student-Brothers. Br. Jerome Masters, OP, stopped by on his way to Nacogdoches, TX, for a wedding. Br. Juan Gabriel Seiglie, OP, came for an overnight stay to see Fr. R.B. and us as well. Fr. John Sica, OP, of the Eastern Province, arrived for some time of personal retreat and to say goodbye. Fr. Sica has been studying at the University of St. Thomas in Houston for the last five years for his Ph.D. in philosophy. He finished his dissertation on the principle of non-contradiction and was returning to the East to teach philosophy at Providence College in Rhode Island. During his sojourn in Texas, Fr. Sica frequently visited our monastery giving us classes, our annual retreat, attending special celebrations, taking personal retreat time and bringing a *Come and See* group. We are proud of him and wish him well, but we will miss him! We gave him a good send-off, awarding him honorary Texas citizenship should he ever wish to visit the country, er state, again. Fr. Armando Ibañez, OP, made an overnight visit to see about serving as chaplain in the future. Br. Peter Pius Chu Hoai Nam, OP, of the Vietnamese Vicariate, spent a few days here in retreat preparing for his Solemn profession of religious vows.

In **August**, two seminarians: Will Robbins from the Beaumont Diocese and Christian Corona from the Tyler Diocese came for a brief visit. Both are currently studying at the North American College in Rome. Will, a former parishioner of our long-time now-deceased friend, Fr. William Manger, has taken up Fr. Manger's mantle arriving laden with ice cream.











"You shall be like a watered garden." (Is 58:11)

A number of years ago a large pine tree in front of our monastery building was struck by lightening. It had to be cut down and a small garden was established. Until... this past Spring a friend of ours offered to fund a "Butterfly Garden". After much consultation with more friends of the monastery who have expertise in landscaping, two new beds were added and the project was finally completed. It has turned out to be a lovely addition. There is even a path to the garden from the parking lot.



"One who studies God's Law masters it." (Sirach 32:15)

Our Association of seven Dominican monasteries provides a Monastic Theological Studies Program for the nuns journeying toward Solemn Vows. It is a 4-year program. The first two-week cycle of classes took place at Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park, CA. We had one Sister ready to participate--our own Sr. Mary Pauline (see the blue star). The sessions this past summer were a big hit and it seems all the Sisters enjoyed it. Now they have begun preparing papers and presentations for next summer.



(Pictured are the Student-Nuns and their professors.)

"A branch among the trees of the forest..." (Ezekiel 32:15)

This summer a tree fell across our bridge, making it impossible for cars to drive up to our buildings. Then, a large branch fell on our roof and front porch at 5:15 AM. The tree removal professionals came out again, but this one was much more difficult to remove. Squirrels had lived in this second tree for years and would sit on the now-fallen branch to eat their acorns. This occurred during our Retreat and our Retreat-Preacher was beginning to think we might be trying to get rid of him.

