MONASTERY BELLS

LIFE WITH THE CLOISTERED DOMINICAN NUNS

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Fall 2025

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

A New Generation Prioress



Sr. Mary Margaret on the left, and our new prioress, Sr. Mary Rose.

On the morning of July 19, our community held our prioral election to choose a new prioress. Our previous prioress, Sister Mary Margaret had just finished serving for two three-year terms, so she was ineligible for a third consecutive term. We take this opportunity to thank her for her many years of community service. All the voting nuns assembled in the Chapel while the non-voting nuns remained in our community room to pray for us. In a short time, we elected Sister Mary Rose Carlin, OP, as our next superior. Sister is our first Lufkin vocation (we pray there will be more). She is the 3rd of 10 children born to Dr. Brian and Virginia Carlin. Their youngest daughter is also a nun in Colorado. Sister Mary Rose attended Magdalen College in New Hampshire and worked a year before entering our Monastery in June 2000. Through the years, Sister has had many assignments such as bursar (treasurer), Novice Director, Sub-Prioress. She was also North American representative to the International Commission of Dominican Nuns for six years, as well as Secretary for the North American Association of Dominican Monasteries, of which she is currently the Vice-President. When there is a new prioress, it is not only she who has a new job, but all of the Sisters are eligible for new work assignments. Our duties changed on August 31, so these Fall months have been a time of learning new skills or brushing up on old ones.



"The Priest stood to bless the People" (2 Chronicles 30:27)



At the end of July, we welcomed our new chaplain, Fr. Thomas Shaefgen, OP, for the coming two years. He is a young priest from our Southern Province who is working on his doctorate in philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in Houston TX. He chose his religious name in honor of St. Thomas the Apostle (not our brother Thomas Aquinas) who is the patron of architects* as our chaplain studied architecture in college. He has a wonderful sense of humor and enjoys bicycling. In 2016, he and another friar walked on pilgrimage from New Orleans to our Dominican shrine of St. Jude in Memphis TN, his hometown. We enjoy his thought-provoking homilies and the Logic classes he is currently teaching us.

*According to tradition, St. Thomas was a skilled carpenter and builder. He is said to have built Christian churches and other structures in the Middle East and India. Once, the King of India sent a delegation to Jerusalem in search of a skilled architect and builder to design and construct a new palace. St Thomas recognized this request as an opportunity to spread the Good News to India. Thomas skillfully designed and oversaw the construction of a new beautiful palace for the King. The King was so pleased with the work he had St. Thomas appear before him so as to personally pay him for his work. When he received this payment, Thomas immediately gave the money to the poor and the sick which angered the King and he had Thomas imprisoned. While in prison, the King's brother visited Thomas and was immediately healed of a deadly illness.

"Withdraw to Pray" (Luke 5:16)



This year, our annual retreat was preached by Fr. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, OP, of the Western Dominican Province. The theme of the retreat was Canon Law and the Religious Life. His reflections were new and inspiring. He is a young aspiring professor in CA. Originally from a small towns in Washington state, he met the Dominicans in college and the "rest is history". He is very joyful and loves puns. Father also asists the nuns with the Monastic Theological Studies Program for the temporary Professed nuns. It was a wonderful retreat and we hope to see him again!

"They must retire from their regular service" (Numbers 8:25)

We had a rare event this summer—a "Retiremant Party" for our long-time *Johannes Factotum* (i.e., Jack-of-all-trades). David Bomer first began working for us as a part-time employee, then he became full time, then back to part-time due to starting Social Security, and finally back to full-time. It has been a great 37 years with David and his wife, Candy; through thick and thin, freezing cold and blistering heat. David has always been available for whatever, whenever an emergency arose. A few Sisters sang him a special song they had composed. Horses have always been an important part of his life since he was "knee-high to a grasshopper". So, as a parting gift, we gave him a new horse! **We thank you, David, and wish you many good years ahead!**











"Ordained to serve as Priests" (Leviticus 16:32)

During the summer, we received several visits from newly ordained priests. Among them were two Dominicans who are from Texas and Louisiana, yet belong to the Eastern Province due to various circumstances. Father Titus Sanchez, OP, from Fort Worth TX, came to offer a First Mass and have a visit with the entire community. A few weeks later Father Bertrand Hebert, OP, from Crowley in the Diocese of Lafayette, LA, also offered a First Mass. Both of these Friars were classmates and ordained together at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Later, Father Will Robins, a diocesan priest from Beaumont, TX came for a visit and First Mass. He is a long-time parishoner of St. Ann's in that city. We know him through Msgr. William Manger who was a friend of our community throughout most of his priesthood. Generations long come and go, and we always need more faithful and good priests. Please pray for these young men as they minister to God's People.



Rev. Titus Sanchez, OP



Rev. Will Robins



Rev. Bertrand Hebert, OP

"Cast lots for my garment." (Psalm 22:18)

Each year our Raffle is a big surprise for us: one year winners are all out-of-state, another all in-state, another relative and friends, strangers, etc. Some people have won more than once. So those of you who are hesitant to enter, be assured it's worth your while. Even if you win something you don't want, we can exchange it or you can use it for a gift to family or friend. This year one of our winners, "just happened to stop by for the first time" and we gave her a ticket. Here are photos of the young surprise winner, Mary!





"Where is the Teacher?" (1 Corinthians 1:20)



The *Constitutions* (laws) for the Dominican Nuns encourages us to study—both privately and as a community. In August, we welcomed theologian and historian, Dr. Alan Fimister. We know him simply as Alan because he is the brother-in-law of one of our Sisters. He gave us an interesting lecture on History. We have known Alan for 11 years, but this was the first time we had a class with him. His most recent book is *The Iron Sceptre of the Son of Man: Romanitas As a Note of the Church.*



"It was fitting to celebrate and be glad" (Luke 15:32)

For most Americans, July 4th is a day for relaxing and enjoying picnics. We are no different. Here are a few shots of the Sisters playing games.









