

The Southern Star

ISSUE #12

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui



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“O Jesus, gentlest love, let Your will be done in us always
as it is in heaven by Your angels and saints.”

St Catherine of Siena

LETTER FROM MOTHER Prioress GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

It is now time to make good the promise I made in the last newsletter to describe for you how the Congregation grew. People do ask me how you found and grow a religious congregation. The only answer I can give is that it must be God's work.

First, it would seem that God waits until the conditions are right. In my case He waited until Father Delsorte, the Prior, had worked a bit of money-magic and had bought me a little house near the Church. He also waited until I had consulted a brilliant doctor who gave me the means of coping with a couple of diseases I had been carrying around. Finally the Lord also gave me back-up by putting me in touch with the wonderful Teaching Dominican Sisters of Fanjeaux, whose Mother-General actually gave me a contact person to help me. Of course, it was also necessary that I be in a Society of Saint Pius X parish. The SSPX has been going now for nearly fifty years and their parishioners have brought up a generation of young ladies who are interested in either good Catholic marriages or the convent.

When I had been living in my little house for about a year a young lady from Australia rang me. She had hoped to join the Fanjeaux Dominicans but they didn't want to take someone from so far away and from a country where they were never likely to make a foundation. This Sister is still with us and still displays the decisiveness she showed on that occasion. Well, she said, there's a nun in New Zealand, I'll go and join her! After consultation with Fr Delsorte I said to come. Almost simultaneously another young lady from Australia rang and asked to come too! Fr Delsorte got permission from Bishop Fellay for us to live as a quasi-religious community and there we were launched, and actually living in another parish-owned house. In the end I had to advise the second of these two Sisters to leave during her novitiate. She was a very lovely person but it came to look as though she was just not strong enough for the stresses of religious life. The first of these two Sisters, however, persevered, was professed, did advanced study, became Head of School in Wanganui, and is now the Prioress in Wanganui. She is an example of the Lord sending someone to help as she has been a wonderful companion to me over the years.

After that Father Delsorte told us that he had found a Librarian who was thinking of coming to join us. We thought that was very nice and we were only a little bit

fazed when a highly-qualified Museum Manager/Curator turned up from Auckland driving her own car. She is now the Novice-Mistress and Local Prioress in Tynong.

There was also a young woman in Wanganui who was thinking of coming to the Convent. The Museum-person said to her that if she didn't come soon they would not be able to receive the habit together. The local girl accelerated her pace and they did receive the habit together, and were professed together. The Wanganui young lady also became a Prioress, a student, and she is now working very successfully on the founding of our Teachers' College in Tynong.

After that we began to get more people as we became better known. Several of our Sisters have found us while looking on the internet for traditional convents. Others have met our Sisters at events like ordinations. Still others have been told about us by word of mouth, either from friends or even by priests whom they consulted about their vocation. One young lady, who has written to me within the last few weeks, visited another convent with a view to a vocation. However, the Superior there told her that if she is interested in teaching she ought to look at the Dominicans! Eventually we think we will get our own ex-pupils joining us. One of them made a very good trial of her vocation but it emerged that the Lord wanted her to do something else.

So, you can see the Lord looked after us over the last fifteen years by sending us candidates of really high quality. Even those who have tried their vocation and found that Convent Life was not for them have been extremely intelligent and they had very lovely personalities. And, of course, nice people attract other nice people!

Now that we have in this letter reached what you might call the present day, I would like to branch out with topics relevant to religious life. Watch out for the next letter!

Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.



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Another Eisteddfod Win

Months of rehearsals. Pitch drills galore. Endless choreography tutorials. Agonies over clapping in time. Finally, the St Thomas Aquinas College Girls' Choir were ready to compete in the Latrobe Valley Eisteddfod's Choral Festival in September this year. They performed in two sections: the Open Age Choir section and the Secondary School Choir section, the latter being colloquially known as the 'Cup Section,' because a large trophy (and a large amount of prize money!) are at stake. The girls sang beautifully in the Open section, performing Mozart's *Laudate Dominium* and a world premiere of the Maori Marian hymn *Mo Maria* arranged by Sr Mary Anna, O.P., and were rewarded with Second Place. In the Secondary School section, the girls followed the poignant *Things That Never Die* (Victor Johnson) with an all-singing, all-dancing number, *Celebrate the Music!* (Patti Brennan), which the audience very warmly received, even with some standing ovations. After all five choirs had performed, the adjudicator approached the stage to deliver his verdict. After a breathless pause...First Place to St Thomas Aquinas College!

ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA



A 'Mini-Camp'

Eager to unroll their sleeping bags and set up their 'camp,' about twenty Year 4 to 6 girls of St Thomas Aquinas College joyfully began their mini-camp with the Sisters on November 6th. Once the sleeping quarters were neatly arranged, the girls went over to the chapel to say the Rosary asking Our Lady for the graces to have a fun night. On returning to the 'camp site,' the hunt was on to find hidden treasures. The girls then enjoyed a barbeque dinner followed by games involving blindfolds, chocolates, funny glasses and crazy hair. After an exciting evening, it was time to quiet down. With night prayers, soft whispers, then lights out, the girls dozed off to dreamland (well, some of them). The sun came up the next day and so did some of our early risers. After morning prayers and Mass, the girls ate breakfast, helped clean up and awaited the prize-giving and results. The winning team was chosen based not only on the outcome of various games, but also good team spirit and good manners. Individuals were also recognized for their excellent display of virtue throughout the camp.



Children of Mary Chronicle

In honour of the Feast of Christ the King, the Children of Mary set up the altar of repose, cleaned and polished candlesticks, arranged flowers and created two intricate sawdust designs for our Eucharistic King. We also celebrated the happy occasion of the consecration of four new members on the first Saturday of December. After Mass and the ceremony of consecration, members gathered for a celebratory breakfast, where the election results for next year's council members were announced, and a photo slideshow remembering all the activities of 2017 was presented.



A South African Adventure



Early on in the month of the Holy Rosary, two nuns ventured across the seas once more, this time to South Africa, in order to promote religious life and support the work of Catholic education there. Unlike the great St Raymond of Peñafort who only had to tie his cappa to his staff in order to travel anywhere, we had to humble ourselves and make do with ordinary means of transport.

The first stop was Johannesburg where we met Reverend Father Peter Scott, Principal of St John the Baptist Catholic School and former Rector of Holy Cross Seminary in Goulburn. We were very impressed with this flourishing missionary school for many reasons. First and foremost, despite the fact that many of the children do not have the benefit of a Catholic home environment, the school was certainly doing its best to make up for this. We were pleased to see many children in attendance at early morning Mass everyday, even taking delight in singing hymns in Zulu to the Blessed Virgin Mary; many of the children knew their Catechism off by heart and eagerly told us what they knew about the Catholic faith; young and old were very respectful and entertained us with ditties which had been prepared for us in advance. We were also very impressed with the fact that the School Principal has gone to every length to ensure a completely Catholic environment, thus echoing the thoughts of Pope Pius XI who said that “the mere fact that a school gives religious instruction does not... make it a fit place for Catholic students. To be this, it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organisation of the school, and its teachers, syllabus and text-books in every branch, be regulated by the Christian spirit” (*Divini Illius Magistri*, §80).

The next stop was Durban where we met a happy duo in the form of Reverend Father Esposito and Reverend Father Claret. Here we gave conferences on the History of the Dominican Order, including the history of our own congregation as well as conferences on femininity and the principles of Catholic education. Being a native of South Africa, one traveller was able to converse fluently in

Afrikaans while the other did her best to learn a few words of Zulu and the art of ‘clicking’ which only served to initiate a number of giggles from the Zulu population.

The final stop on the agenda was the Kruger National Park, organised by the parents of Mother Mary Catherine. Every day we invoked Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Dominic and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and each day we were not disappointed. We saw the ‘big five’ (lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants and buffalo) nearly every day as well as zebras, wild dogs, hyenas, kudu, giraffes, roebucks, crocodiles, hippos etc.

We also experienced a few close encounters. One day we came across a baby rhino with its mother. We were admiring the little one who was having fun running around in circles at top speed when suddenly it ran straight behind our vehicle with Mamma Rhino in hot pursuit. We were told to stay calm and not to do anything in these particular situations however nature kicked in and Sister Driver planted her foot on the accelerator leaving both animals in a cloud of dust. On another occasion we found ourselves confronted with two teenage giraffes having a fight in the middle of the road with their necks and legs. It was really quite fascinating (at first), however no amount of hooting or strategic driving could distract them. After quite a while, they eventually acquiesced to our wishes and moved on.

Now safe back in the cloister we have much to prepare for – liturgical feasts, an upcoming clothing and profession ceremony, Christmas and our annual retreat. There is still work to do on our Teachers’ College, a convent to finish and a chapel to build and the list goes on. Onwards and upwards!

NEW E-SUBSCRIPTION ADDRESS:

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If wish to subscribe by post please send your request to:
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Our Lady - Our Mother

Speech given by Sr Mary Jacinta, O.P., Head of St Dominic's, Prize-giving 2017

At the end of what has been a year of deliberate emphasis on Our Lady, in honour of the anniversary of her apparitions at Fatima, it seems fitting that any address given from the Girls' School should, likewise, make our Blessed Mother the focal point. This evening we acknowledge the academic and school-related achievements of our pupils over the past year; we are tonight emphasising their education. To connect these two focal points, Our Lady and education, we might consider where Mary is in the education of the girls seated before us. If I asked them this question, some might say, "In the Hail Mary we say before class; in Catechism when we study her and Our Lord; in music practice when we sing hymns about her." Perhaps some would even say that she is there in the activities that were arranged in her honour this year: the shrines erected in the classrooms, the sewing competition. All this is true, but it is not sufficient.

As we know, the goal of education is not simply to fill the mind with knowledge, but rather to prepare it for the reception of truth. The object of education is really freedom – not, of course, freedom from all constraint, but the freedom of the children of God, because in education, in which a child is "being formed to a knowledge of the true, a love of the good and an admiration of the beautiful, a man is liberated from the shackles that prevent him from moving towards the achievement of a Christian personality." This is reflected in the word itself – education, from the Latin "*educere*", to lead out; to lead out of captivity, out of moral darkness and into the light of freedom. In other words, the object of education is to form in our pupils the mind of Christ, the Christian perspective on life.

Such a task is peculiarly the role of Mary, by the ordinance of God. Like all mothers, she is meant to educate. She works to instil in the pupil Christ's view of the universe and Christ's values. Thus She must be intrinsically involved in the education of those before us. She is not merely a figure who appears in our girls' education – She is the one educating them; in a sense, she is their education. She holds in her hands the elements that compose school life, which form the minds and hearts of Her girls: the classes, the subjects taught, the activities, the discipline, and, to the extent that She is allowed, She uses them as instruments to bring about this work of education, leading out from darkness to moral freedom.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, the well-known Jesuit and English poet, takes up this idea of Mary's unseen prominence and carries it much farther than we could imagine; such was his regard for Our Lady, so well did he understand the extent of Her influence, the magnitude of Her work, that he went so far as to write his very lengthy poem, (and I promise to spare you a full recital), *The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe*, he calls Her a "wild web", a "wondrous robe" that "mantles the guilty globe". He uniquely compares Our Lady to the all-encompassing, saturating, invisible and seldom thought of yet absolutely essential preserver of life that is the air. His

analogy describes how profound Her role in our lives is. His poem not only beautifully but, more importantly, clearly expresses this ideal towards which St Dominic's College works. She is,

Wild air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere...

(Even, we could add, in the school room.)

...that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life.
This air, which, by life's law,
My lung must draw and draw
Now but to breathe its praise,
Minds me in many ways
Of her who not only
Gave God's infinity
Dwindled to infancy
Welcome in womb and breast,
Birth, milk, and all the rest
But mothers each new grace—
That does now reach our race—
Mary Immaculate...

His point is clear: she is everywhere, influencing souls. Is this really so? Is she even in the Science class? Catechism, perhaps, but Science? Yes, there, in Science, instilling awe and wonder for God's creation, its order, its grandeur and its mysteries.

Is she there, during our lunch times? Yes, there she is also, ensuring that her girls receive a well-rounded education, one which develops not only their mental powers, but also their moral and physical ones – there she is imparting to them a spirit of joy and charity, of cooperation, giving them a taste for community and responsibility, teaching them to devote themselves to making others happy through some leisure and fun, for She knows that such self-devotion is an all-important feminine virtue that they will be imperfect without.

She is everywhere: in the silence of the study sessions which have, over and above the object of consolidating class lessons, the purpose of training the soul to relish silence and reflection; in the lessons which seek above all to impart the knowledge of truth, which is the life of the mind.

Hopkins continues,

And men are meant to share
Her life as life does air.

Certainly we share in this life of Mary's. The many areas of school life are connected to the mysteries of Her life with Our Lord which we contemplate in the Rosary; the joy, the sorrow, and the triumph, which we see tonight especially, are all part of our girls' school lives.

Continued on next page...

In this sense, Mary becomes so much more than just a person; she spreads her spirit to envelope the whole world, the whole of Christian society at least. She becomes a dwelling place, a sanctuary; ideally St. Dominic's College is a sanctuary, a haven, a preparation for the face to face encounter with God and Our Blessed Mother. As Gerard Manley Hopkins would say, she should be as the very air, the atmosphere of the school. She should be the surroundings that our girls enter when they are enrolled in the school, for the school co-operates with the home in forming in the soul of the child the virtues that assure us of heaven. Our pupils would benefit from realising that the routines, the arrangements, the classes, the rules, the orders given to them in school and home originate from a source much deeper than the figure they see – mum, dad or teacher. It is God Who speaks to them, Who teaches, Who helps and provides the necessary discipline. And it is Mary who works with God in doing all this.

At least, this is the ideal towards which the teachers strive. Vessels of clay as we are, we limit her influence no doubt, but willing vessels of clay we wish to be. This ideal must surely help to inspire the girls; thinking of their education in this light, not as an obligatory, gruelling phase that simply has to be “got through”, – but viewed as it truly is meant to be, an interaction with and an exposure to the atmosphere of Mary, our girls would undertake it with confidence and even gratitude, with docility, thus ensuring

success, for only an education which has an element of receptivity can be successful. With such a conviction of Our Lady's influence in the school setting, that is based on our faith and the teachings of the saints, our girls will echo the plea with which Hopkins ends his poem:

Be thou then, O thou dear
 Mother, my atmosphere;
 My happier world, wherein
 To wend and meet no sin;
 Above me, round me lie
 Fronting my froward eye
 With sweet and scarless sky;
 Stir in my ears, speak there
 Of God's love, O live air,
 Of patience, penance, prayer:
 World-mothering air, air wild,
 Wound with thee, in thee isled,
 Fold home, fast fold thy child.

“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us,” says St Paul. Whose work is this glory but Mary's, due to the role God has given her in dispensing His grace, the seed of glory? When it is revealed in us, we shall have her to thank, and the formation that she gave to us in our school years, in our alma mater. 🌸

St Dominic's Convent

Wanganui; NEW ZEALAND



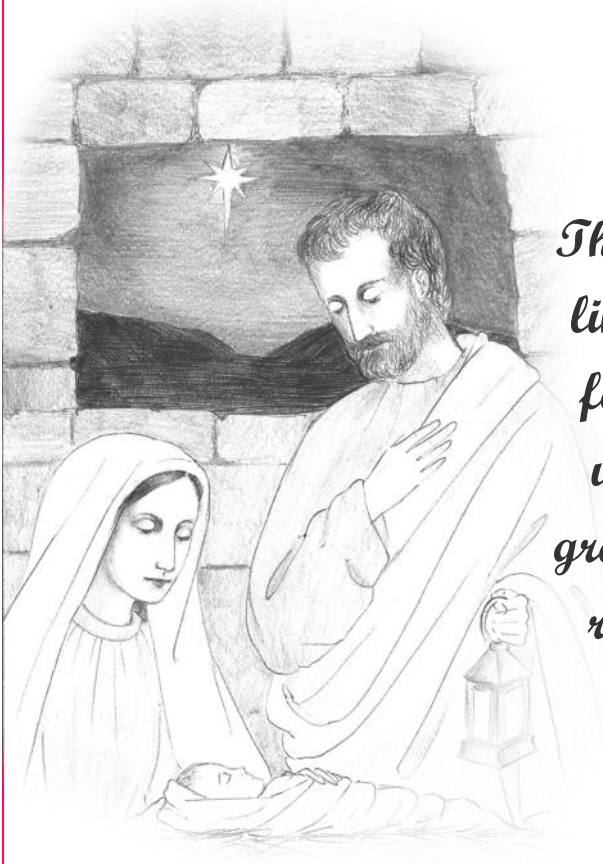
Inter-house Music Competition

In honour of the anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions in Fatima, Saint Dominic's College's music competition this year was dedicated to her. All three houses performed Mozart's *Ave Maria* –K.554, a complex canon which had cost them many a struggle - with Bologna's rendition earning them first place. The girls also honoured the Queen of Peace, the Mother of Fair Love, the Glorious Queen of the World, the Cause of our Joy, with pieces they had chosen to fit the categories of War and Peace, Love and Sacrifice, Marian folk songs, and Joy and Triumph. Some highlights of the evening included Prouille's beautiful *a capella* performance of *Via Dolorosa* by Sandi Patty, Bologna's rollicking *Star of the County Down*, and Calaroga's haunting *Our Lady of the Sea*. Finally, in honour of the Cause of our Joy, members of all the houses combined to present three folk dances from across the world, a fitting close to a memorable evening.

6-Day Centenary Pilgrimage

On Sunday 1 October, representatives of the entire Parish, including Sisters, bravely walked 20km from St Anthony's Church to Fordell by way of the Durie Hill stairs - about 191 steep steps up from the bank of the Wanganui River - accompanied by rain, an additional penance as well as a blessing. With Reverend Fr Palko as chaplain and some Sisters, the younger girls courageously finished the 20km beach walk to Foxton on Day 4 despite strong winds accompanying us all the way and four streams to cross. The pilgrimage concluded on Saturday, Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Amid continually pouring rain, 150-200 pilgrims finished the walk to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in Paraparaumu. The pilgrimage closed with Sung Mass and an inspiring sermon from Fr Fullerton. It was a great opportunity for penance and sacrifice and we hope that many have profited from the graces received.





The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui would like thank all our benefactors, friends and family for the help they have extended to us over the past year. Truly we are very grateful and beg that the Infant Christ will reward you most generously for all that you have done for us.



The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui

warmly invite you to a

Solemn High Mass

in the Dominican Rite

offered by

Reverend Father Albert, O.P.

Saturday, 6th January 2018

9.00 a.m.

and the ceremonies of

Renewal of Vows

Sister Mary Anna, O.P.
Sister Maria Columba, O.P.
Sister Mary Jordan, O.P.
Sister Mary Bernard, O.P.



First Profession

Sister Mary Martin de Porres
Sister Mary Cecilia
Sister Mary Josephine

Reception of the Holy Habit

Miss Destiny Leung-Wai

And thereafter to a lunch reception in the parish hall.
Please bring a plate and come join us on this joyful occasion.

Corpus Christi Church, 15 Granite Lane, Tynong, Victoria 3813

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*May God reward you for your generosity!
 Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!
 We wish all our readers
 a Holy Christmas and Happy New Year.*

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

AUSTRALIA

Our account details in Australia are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
 Westpac Account, BSB: 033-636, A/C #334 277

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui";

Cheques for the Convent Building Project must be made out to "St Thomas Aquinas College Convent Building Fund Account" and sent to: OP Motherhouse Project, P.O. Box 50, Tynong, VIC. 3813, Melbourne, Australia.

All donations for the Building of the Convent qualify for a tax deductible receipt

NEW ZEALAND

Our account details in New Zealand are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui
 Westpac Account, Victoria Ave, Wanganui BSB: 030-791, A/C #0728558

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui" and sent to:
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SINGAPORE

Our account details in Singapore are: Friends of the International Priestly Society of St. Pius X
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 Singapore 819643, Institution Code: 7375; Branch Code: 068; SWIFT: UOVBSGSG

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