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The Southern Star

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Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui

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"Charity to our neighbour for God's sake is the fire that cleanses the soul."
St Catherine of Siena



LETTER FROM MOTHER PRIORESS GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

This month we have a theme for our newsletter, Vocations. I'd like to discuss what a vocation is and then I would like to give some examples from Sisters I have known.

What is a vocation? Obviously, it is a call from God inviting someone to live a special kind of life dedicated to the service of God. Father Richard Butler, O.P., whom Father Albert quoted in his talk on vocations to the students of St Thomas Aquinas College, says that everyone has a vocation. He means that everyone potentially has a call from God. However, he says that in individual cases there may be reasons for the young person not following the vocation. These reasons may include insufficient health, physical or mental, a personality which clashes with community life, or knowing oneself unequal to the demands of a life of chastity. It's good on this question to seek advice from wise priests or nuns who can assist with the discernment of the vocation.

So, having consulted and discerned, what kind of person finishes up in religious life? There are as many different kinds of people as there are people in religious orders. However, people who enter Convents often have some sort of liking for prayer, and go to Mass more often than once a week. They are also loyal to their Rosary and often come from a background of helping the priests or the traditional Catholic School.

A great help for discerning a vocation is a visit to religious orders which the candidate thinks might suit her. One look is worth a thousand words. With us, for example, either the candidate loves the Divine Office or finds it too long and burdensome. A potential candidate once said to me that she wished she knew Compline off by heart so that she could pray to the Lord without the distraction of a book. Lovely girl as she was, in that moment I knew she was not meant to be a Dominican.

The record for speedy discernment with us is held by a young lady who decided on the way in from the Airport that she was not meant for life in our Congregation. Good girl as she was, she stayed for the retreat she had come for and then took herself back to the USA. It seemed to me that in spite of the expense what she had gained was cheap at the price, a definite decision on her life's direction. I should add here that we have a great admiration for the people who come

and look at the Convent and decide against joining. They have remained open to God's invitation and it is God Who has made it clear that he wants them to work out their salvation in another walk of life.

So much for discerning a vocation and visiting convents. What about the people who have vocations, proved by their living community life and being admitted to profession by the votes of the General Council? These young ladies are no better or worse than their counterparts who do not have a vocation. What they have is a vocation from God and the willingness to follow it. One might ask where these "stayers" come from and what makes them settle down in religious life. The answer is that they come from many different places but that there is in them a kind of willingness to co-operate with God which is a free gift from the Almighty and which could be called the grace of a vocation.

Among our Sisters we have an accountant, a qualified museum specialist, a woman who worked in investment broking, a medical doctor with two diplomas in music, trained teachers, a young lady who was working towards an engineering degree, another who was working towards a degree in biochemistry, a Sister with a degree in Marketing, a Sister with degrees in English and theology, a Sister with a qualification in Art-teaching and two Sisters with Masters' degrees in Education. All of these gifts and qualifications can be woven into our community apostolate of teaching.

All that God asks of the candidate for religious life is generosity. He and the Order will shape and educate the candidate. The candidate, on her part, will rejoice when she gets to Final Profession and she is called to place her hands in the hands of the Prioress General and say, "I, Sister so-and-so, promise to God and to Blessed Mary and to Blessed Dominic, and to you Mother, Prioress General of the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui, according to the Rule of St Augustine and Constitutions of this Congregation, that I will be obedient to you and to my other Prioresses until death."

Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.

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ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA

First Holy Communions



On Sunday the third of June we had the joy of seeing 15 children receive their first Holy Communion. Preparation began months beforehand, as the children applied themselves to learning their Catechism and readying themselves for their first confessions. A day of recollection was held at Corpus Christi Church on 2nd June, where the children listened to talks given by Father, had the opportunity to go to confession, and enjoyed a quick game. Sunday dawned bright and sunny, and the faces of the First Communicants matched the weather as they arrived in good time to line up and process into the Church for a beautiful Solemn High Mass. After Mass a little party was held to celebrate the occasion, planned and generously prepared by the mothers of the First Communicants. We hope and pray that God may continue the work that He has begun in the souls of His little ones.

Saint Dominic's Feastday

Celebrations for the Feast of Our Holy Father St Dominic began after lunch on 3rd August with the annual Students-vs-Teachers netball match. The girls were fiercely determined to win the trophy, and the Sisters had to gracefully admit defeat after a gruelling four quarters of intense competition. Sung 1st Vespers and the Rosary at the school chapel that evening was followed by a pizza dinner and games. The evening was made more exciting when two competitive priests took over the dodgeball game, with many of the girls and Sisters being victims to their merciless speed balls! There were prizes for the winners and complimentary sweet bags for all. The night ended with Compline and many a happy but tired "thank-you" for a very entertaining evening. The next morning saw the Sisters heading to Corpus Christi Church to sing the Mass of St Dominic as a Solemn High Mass was graciously offered at the altar by Fr Elias assisted by Fr Stephens and Fr Fox. We were then joined by many of the faithful and Tertiaries for a potluck lunch and get-together in the Parish hall. The Sisters ended the Feast Day with much humble thanksgiving to God for the many blessings and graces received through the prayers of Our Lady and St Dominic. *Ora pro nobis, sancte Pater Dominice!*



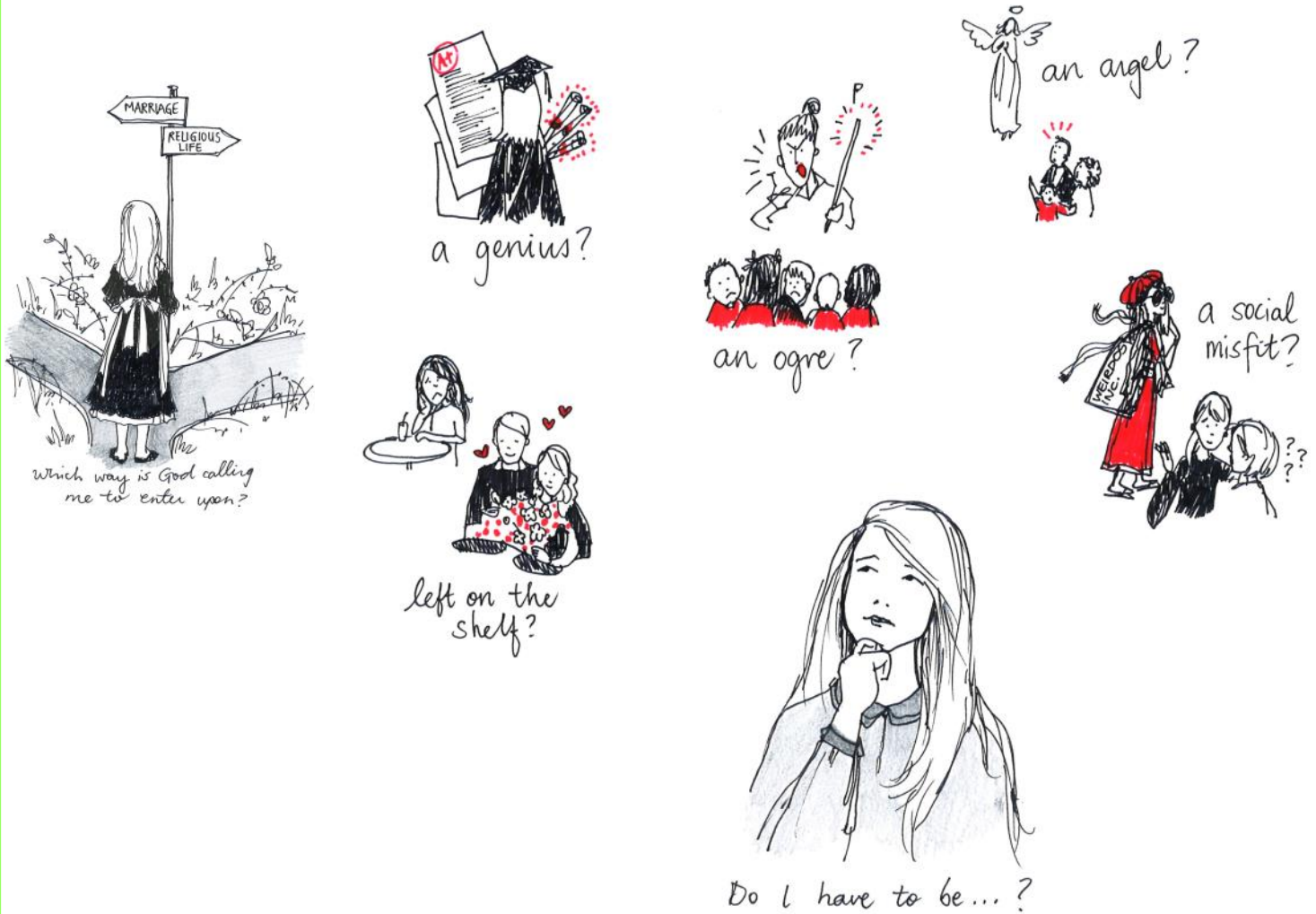
Vocations Day; Samoa Trip

On 17th August, St Thomas Aquinas College hosted several guest speakers for a Vocations Day held specially for the senior boys and girls. The day started with a Mass in the Dominican Rite, with a talk afterwards by Father Albert about vocation discernment. The girls were fortunate to have the SSPX Sisters who flew in from Sydney to talk about their apostolate and charism, followed by our own Mother General and Mother Prioress with a presentation on our Dominican family. Father Todd Stephens, SSPX and Mr Phillip Mugik came to Tynong specially from Holy Cross Seminary for a conference with the boys on life in the Seminary and the Priesthood. The Vocations Day ended with the Way of the Cross in the school chapel and we pray that many of the students, by God's grace, may discern a vocation to the religious life.



Accompanied by Sr Mary Rose, O.P. and Sr Mary Osanna, Father Albert then visited Samoa, a beautiful Polynesian Island where two of our novices hail from. They had a full schedule driving around the Island (sipping coconut juice between breaks!) giving talks to six Catholic schools, Moamoa Theological College and Saint Anthony's Catholic parish. The schools were very hospitable, and for most of the students, it was the first time they had seen a traditional Dominican Friar and Sisters. The missionaries delighted the children with gifts of Rosaries, Holy Cards and the like donated generously by Corpus Christi parishioners and friends of the Sisters, with enough Rosaries to donate to a poor school of 350 students and staff. Father and the Sisters were treated to local songs and an entertaining 'sasa', the unique Samoan art of rhythm-clapping. Mass was sung every morning at the Chapel underneath the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in town with a good number of the faithful attending. Father also did enrolments of the Brown Scapular and managed to fit in a friendly visit to the Carmelites and Little Sisters of the Poor. He then flew back home for a well-deserved rest from his Samoan experience, whilst the travelling Sisters stopped in Sydney to give their last talk to a Samoan Youth Group before heading back to the Convent to recuperate from their Island Trip. Sincere thanks to Vicky and the family for hosting us in Samoa, the generous donors of Rosaries and Scapulars, and to all our guest speakers for the Vocations Day.

Sister... I want to be a Dominican too!



"But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong."

1 Corinthians 1:27

The first quality that a Religious community looks for in candidates is the result of the work of grace in her soul, whereby:

- her intellect is enlightened to understand, to some degree, God's great love of man, and the benefits of Religious life which will enable and help her to return that love in a more perfect degree than if she remained in the world;
- her will is strengthened to take the steps and make the necessary sacrifices to enter the Religious life that she may strive after loving God with all her heart and mind and soul.

Thus, future candidates can be reassured that they need not possess perfect charity on entry, though the firm desire to strive after it must be present.

After ensuring that the candidate possesses a supernatural motive for entering Religious life, the Congregation needs to ensure that the candidate can bear the obligations of the state. She should have sound physical, intellectual, mental and moral health to live in community and

participate in the teaching apostolate. We may mention that "healthy" is a relative term and doesn't automatically exclude people with managed illnesses or disabilities. The best advice is to be upright in your desire and be frank when asked to complete the detailed questionnaire which investigates these aspects of health.

In general, since the Sisters are bound to live in community and teach at school, candidates should be able to live and get along with others, have a generous, docile disposition, and possess the strength and stability of character that does not shrink from unpleasant duties and perseveres through difficulties. Her intelligence need not be above average, and the only requirement is that candidates have finished their secondary schooling.

The call to Religious life is supernatural and when God calls, He prepares the soul by granting the disposition, qualities and health. It only remains that we trust in His goodness to accomplish the work of striving for perfection despite our weakness and complete unworthiness.

Why did you enter the Convent?

Road-to-Damascusesque stories about How I Decided To Join The Convent make very exciting reading. This isn't one of those stories. It took me about 20 years of spiritual listening to hear God's call and then answer it.

I recall wondering where God wanted me when I was six. I was considering the relative merits of the married and religious lives, in between playing 'martyrs' which, in my eyes, outstripped both in terms of glamour factor and the go-straight-to-Heaven guarantee. I took French as my compulsory middle school foreign language when I was nine because I was very interested in religious life at this stage, and thought that the only Traditional convents were in France. I kept my secret to myself, though, as nine-year-olds are wont to do.

I wasn't so sure in my teens, though, and played a prolonged game of mental tennis in which Convent and Marriage were locked in a never-ending deuce. I finished Year 12 when I was 16, and didn't feel mature enough to leave home and everything for the great unknown of the "Big C," so I headed off to university to complete a Bachelor of Science. Three years later, the Convent idea was still there, but so was the prospect of medical school. I thought I would try sitting the entrance exams – just once – and thought that it would be a manifestation of God's Will one way or another: if I got in – He wanted me in medical school; if I didn't – He wanted the Convent. I got in.

Four years and one medical degree later, the Convent idea still hadn't gone away. However, I had to complete a year of internship to achieve full medical registration, so I did. The following year, I applied for a place on the paediatric specialist training programme, once again thinking that if I didn't get accepted it would show that God wanted me elsewhere. I was accepted and was privileged to work with many wonderful doctors, nurses and children.

However, something was missing. Yes, it was amazing to save newborn babies' lives on a daily basis, but what of their souls? Yes, it was rewarding to help children with developmental issues, but how much can you really do if you only see them once every three months? Teachers (*Religious* teachers, my Guardian Angel whispered) see them every day and help set them up, not just for this life, but for the next as well. I wanted a sure answer to this one question that I had been asking since I was six: Where did God want me?

And so I visited the Dominican Sisters in Wanganui who had the multiple attractions of being English-speaking (the French I started learning when I was nine didn't go all that far!) teaching Sisters in the Australasian region. Seven months later I entered as a postulant, and seven years later I am typing out this story, very happy in the knowledge that I have found the answer to my twenty-year-long question.

Sister Mary Anna, O.P.



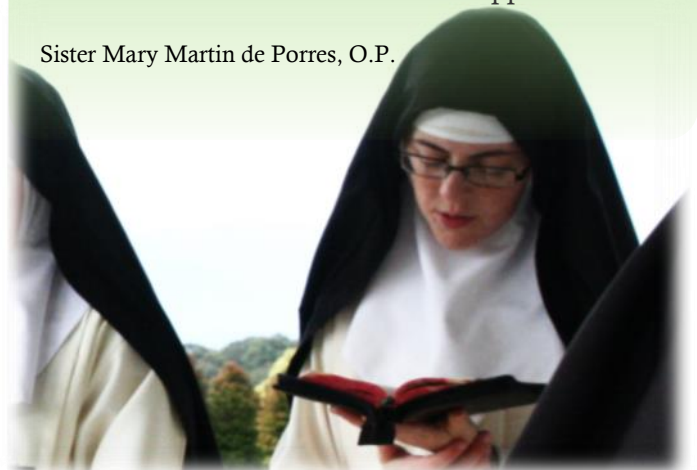
Smiles, congratulations, a bit of confusion and a multitude of "what?", "when?", "where?", "why?" and "how?" Those are typical responses from Catholics and non-Catholics alike when a girl announces she is going to the convent. From working in the Accounting department of a large corporation to flying half-way around the world to teach in a small school in Australia, a desire for some explanation of how this decision came about is understandable.

Growing up, I knew the path that I wanted to take: go to university, travel, get a job and my own place. I was quite content with how my life was turning out; it was exactly how I planned. However, as I found out, God's plans and our plans do not always coincide.

On my way home from work, I would stop by a chapel with all-day Eucharistic Adoration – not with the thought of a possible vocation – but solely to spend some time in peaceful silence with Our Lord. It was in this silence that I became perceptive to what God wanted me to do, and it was in this silence that I gathered up enough strength to do it.

It was an unexpected turn that, although at the time I didn't fully understand, would ultimately lead me to where God intended me to be. For as it is proven true time and time again, God knows better than we do, and it is by uniting our wills to His that we are able to attain true happiness.

Sister Mary Martin de Porres, O.P.



Ascending the Mountain of Perfection...



Postulancy

Postulancy is a period of time which intervenes between the acceptance of a person into religion and the beginning of the novitiate, and during which the young woman is initiated into religious life.

Postulants need to be at least eighteen years of age, be of sound physical and mental

health, and have the capacity to teach and study. A zeal for souls and love for the Truth are also indispensable helps for those interested in pursuing a Dominican vocation.

The entry date for postulants is usually (not necessarily) during January. The postulancy has a duration of between six to twelve months, ending prior to the reception of the habit in January. Postulants do some study as well as taking classes.

A period of pre-postulancy may be required if aspirants are under eighteen years old, if they have language difficulties or if they need extra time to adjust to religious life. Both postulants and pre-postulants wear a simple attire consisting of a black skirt and white blouse.



Novitiate

Novitiate, that period of time given to a candidate so that she can become acquainted with the rule and routine of the congregation and find out for herself if she is capable of observing them faithfully, prior to making vows. It also allows the congregation to assure itself concerning the disposition, habits, intelligence and capacities of the aspirant.

The two-year novitiate begins on the day that the young woman receives the habit of the Order and the white veil. The first year is a canonical year of formation, while in the second year the Sister is permitted to do some part-time teaching.



During the canonical year, the novice concentrates on her own spiritual formation. To use an analogy, if we think of the religious life as being like a magnificent building, then the novitiate is like the time when the strong and sturdy foundations are laid: a good building needs a good foundation.

In the second year of novitiate, the novice enters into the apostolate, teaching some classes in school while continuing with her spiritual formation under the guidance of the Mistress of Novices.



Calling all generations

If you would like to learn more about our Dominican life, come and join us on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.
You will be able to meet with the Sisters and speak to them about the life of the Order.
Do contact Mother General at mother.mica@dominican.org

... with Our Holy Father Saint Dominic

First Profession and Temporary Vows

At the end of the two Novitiate years, if the Novice and the Congregation are still of the same mind, the Novice is accepted for Profession. As other Dominicans do, she makes only a vow of obedience but she understands that she is also binding herself to poverty and chastity.

These vows are made for three years at first, then renewed for another two years.

During this time the Sister wears a black veil, participates actively in the apostolate of teaching and preaching, and continues her studies of both secular and spiritual subjects.

Regular spiritual and theological conferences are given to the Sisters, and the Sister fuels her zeal for souls in the apostolate by spiritual reading, mental prayer, and daily Mass and Holy Communion.



Final Profession

At the end of her temporary vows the Sister makes her Final Profession. At this ceremony, she is given the gold ring of a Sister with permanent vows.

After receiving the ring that symbolises her eternal wedding to the King of Kings, she prostrates herself before the altar in the form of a cross signifying her oblation, while solemn prayers are chanted over her. Together with the heavenly chorus, the Church celebrates this marriage with the singing of the responsory of St Agnes, the *Amo Christum*:

I love Christ, into Whose chamber I shall enter,
Whose Mother is a Virgin,
Whose Father knows not woman,
Whose Voice is sweet to my ears.
When I love Him, I remain chaste;
When I touch Him, I remain pure;
When I possess Him, I remain a virgin.
With His ring He has wedded me
He has adorned me with precious jewels...



rous souls!

of the Epiphany 2019 for the ceremonies of First Profession and renewal of vows.
out the call to the consecrated life as a Dominican Sister.
ela@gmail.com if you are interested.

Do I Have A Vocation?



"My daughter, think of Me, and for My part, I shall think of thee."

— Our Lord to Saint Catherine of Siena

Religious life is a school of perfection open to all. A religious vocation is a calling issued by Christ through His Church. It is the grandest privilege and the greatest honour that Christ can confer upon a young woman to give her the call to serve Him in religion.

Safe from the storms of the world, the religious gives her whole heart to the service and love of God. His rules and obedience make known to her the will of God, protecting her from dangerous temptations. The example of her companions spurs her on to nobler things. There is indeed **no happier state** of life on earth than the holy state of religion, bedewed with the waters of grace!



Dominican life
is the image of St. Dominic,
a mix of contemplation
and action.

"Contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere."



The Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui welcomes enquiries from women interested in a Dominican vocation.

For more information, please contact:

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St Dominic's Convent

Wanganui; NEW ZEALAND

St Dominic's Day

Our preparations for our Holy Father's feast were more than usually pressed for time this year, as they had to compete with preparations for farewelling our Parish Priest, Fr Bochkoltz, who has been transferred back to his native Belgium. What with organising practices for the Sung Mass on August 4th, writing and directing the school skit in Father's honour, planning and sourcing a new outfit for the Children of Mary to wear at Sodality events (and a parody of 'My Favourite Things' for them to perform at Father's farewell, when they first wore it)... the Sisters would have been busy enough, but there were also the St Dominic's Eve festivities with the school girls and the breakfast with Tertiaries, friends and benefactors to be thought of. However, it was all worth it. First Vespers was lovely and we even heard some ex-pupils joining in the antiphons; the games were enjoyed by all, the farewell for Father was a resounding success, the Children of Mary outfit garnered compliments galore and the Mass and Vespers on August 4th were as usual a loving homage to our Holy Father.

Napier and Hawke's Bay

"And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda." (Luke 1: 39)

On 2nd July, the Children of Mary and Sisters celebrated the Feast of the Visitation with a trip to the scenic city of Napier and the surrounding areas of Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. Arriving on Sunday evening, Sung Mass was celebrated in Napier, before they made their way to a Girl Guide's Complex outside the city. The sodality's recollection day followed, with Fr Bochkoltz preaching conferences on various topics, including the importance of self-discipline in the quest for holiness. To paraphrase one of Father's conferences: Life is a journey towards Jesus. Let us persevere and run until we reach the end of the race. The day of recollection ended, the journey to the 'hill country' began. This journey involved a hike through the Kaweka Forest Park to a hut situated on the shore of a picturesque river. The hikers returned from the hut, some hastily, some otherwise, and drove back to Napier. Here, the group was honoured to witness the Baptism of an 86 year old lady. It was the perfect conclusion of the visitation of Our Lady's sodality to the mountainous region of Hawke's Bay.



Visit of Fr Albert, O.P.

Learning about the establishment of religious orders back in the Middle Ages is perhaps, for some, a bit of a dry, dull topic for History class – but not when it comes with the exciting knowledge that a real, live, habit-clad friar is walking your school grounds, and just might happen to pop his tonsured head into your classroom at any moment! These were the sentiments of the Form 1 & 2 girls on Thursday, September 23rd, as they glanced out of the window every few seconds to see if the visiting Dominican friar, Father Albert, O.P., who had come to preach to several groups of the parish, might be strolling by exemplifying for them the important fact that the practices of the Middle Ages are certainly not out of date. During his few days in Wanganui, Father Albert preached three separate recollection days: to the Primary School, Secondary School and parishioners of St Anthony's. Unfortunately his short time here meant that classroom visits were impossible, but several students did manage to way-lay Father in order to get a precious few words with a real friar, and all were impressed by his example, and grateful for his preaching and visit.



Defending Life in Wanganui

"Out of the mouths of babes..."

On the feast of the great St Augustine, one of the boarders of Signadou, from the graduating class of this year, took her place to defend life in front of an official Justice Sub-Committee of New Zealand's Parliament. Submissions were only accepted from those eighteen and over, so only two of our students were old enough to take part officially in this fight for life.

In New Zealand there has been a push to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide and the End of Life Choice Bill had been voted through its first reading by the Parliament. Doctors and religious groups have been some of the strongest opposers of the bill. According to news reports, an estimated two-thirds of doctors and one-third of nurses were opposed to the bill.

Earlier this year, thousands wrote submissions to Parliament, either supporting or opposing this bill. Of the people who took the time to submit, 80 per cent of them were opposed to euthanasia. This was out of step with other surveys gauging public opinion on the topic. Of those who gave written submissions, thousands more offered to make oral submissions later in the year in front of a Parliamentary Justice Sub-Committee, made up of members of Parliament, in order to reinforce in person the views they held. So great was the number of oral submissions to be heard, that the Justice Committee had to be split into groups to go around the country to hear the submissions.

The committee that came to Wanganui was to hear at least four hours of individuals' five-minute submissions. Of those offering submissions in Wanganui, the vast majority were against this bill and many were from our parish of St Anthony's. Our Prior of St Anthony's, Father François Laisney, came himself to give his submission early that day.

He told the members of Parliament that "the foundation of human law is God's law. So if a government gives example of disobedience to God's law, then who is going to obey them?"

In the afternoon, the sole High School student to give her submission in Wanganui finally received her turn to defend life. She argued that many lives, and especially the most vulnerable, would be at great risk if this bill were passed. Further, she pointed out that this bill treated life like something that could be thrown away, whereas, she had been taught that life is a gift from God – a gift is something that should be treasured and not destroyed.

At the end of her submission, the Member of Parliament (MP) began to question her, a situation she was

forewarned was a possibility, that even adults would find intimidating. Remarkably, our student not only did her best to answer the questions but also returned the favour. Let us sneak a peek of the climax of this questioning focused on the necessity of pain:



Student: Don't you agree? That without pain, then there is no success?

MP: I agree that pain is a part of life, but I don't see why pain should have to be at the end of life... there's not a need for it."

Student: Why do you believe there's no need for it?

MP: Because we have the ability to allow people to die in a peaceful way. (i.e. – euthanasia)

Student: But, how do you know that it is peaceful?

MP: ... well...

Student: How can you guarantee that it is peaceful?

(Chuckling, murmur of the audience... and a pause)

MP: Yep... I mean... that's true... There's different philosophical views... anyway, I really appreciate your submission and, good on you, for coming. It's fantastic to see young people involved and... interested and...engaged and giving a very thoughtful submission too. Thank you very much; you should be proud of yourself and so should your teachers and your parents...

Her teachers certainly were proud of her, especially in being able to baffle a Member of Parliament in an entirely earnest, innocent and calm manner.

**Image and excerpt transcribed from the video streamed live online by New Zealand Parliament of the submissions .*

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Thank You Very Much!

The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui would like to thank all our families, friends, and benefactors for their sacrifices, prayers, donations, encouragement and support, especially for these recent fundraisers:

Convent Pantry Day (Tynong, AUS)

Racecourse Gala & Fundraiser (Tynong, AUS)

Bike-A-Thon (Wanganui, NZ)

The Sisters would like especially to thank the priests and faithful from all over the world who offer up rosaries, prayers and Masses for our intentions, and for all those who contribute regularly to the support of our houses in Australia and New Zealand.

May God reward your generosity.

We promise our prayers and commend all your intentions to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, and beg Our Lord to bless all of you most abundantly.



HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP US



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✓
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AND/OR
ASSETS**

✓
**LARGE
REGULAR
PAYMENTS**

*May God reward you for your generosity!
Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!*



HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

AUSTRALIA

Our account details in Australia are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
Westpac Account, BSB: 033-636, A/C #334 285

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

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Westpac Account, Victoria Ave, Wanganui BSB: 030-791, A/C #0728558

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United Overseas Bank (UOB), A/C # 143-300-495-2, Changi Airport Branch

Airport Boulevard #B16-17 Passenger Terminal 2 Building Singapore Changi Airport
Singapore 819643, Institution Code: 7375; Branch Code: 068; SWIFT: UOVBSGSG

Cheques can be made out to "Friends of the International Priestly Society of St. Pius X" and sent to:
OP Motherhouse Project, SSPX, 286 Upper Thomson Road, Singapore 574402.

UNITED STATES

Our account details in the United States are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
Wells Fargo Bank, A/C # 2 015 569 425, Routing # 1210 42882

Cheques can be made out to "The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui" and sent to:
OP Motherhouse Project, Attn: Loren Vaccarezza, 1590 Berryessa Road, San Jose, CA 95133

