



SUMMER 2019

The Southern Star

ISSUE #17

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui

IN THIS ISSUE:

Letter from
Mother Prioress General
Page 2

.....

News from Rosary Convent,
Tynong, Australia
Page 3

.....

When Giving Is Receiving:
Help the Sisters with Their Work
Page 6

.....

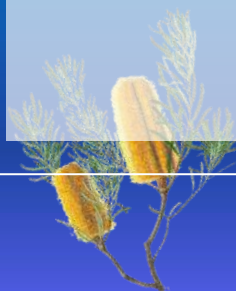
News from St Dominic's
Convent, New Zealand
Page 8

.....

Do I Have a Vocation?
Page 11

.....

We Are True Mendicants Now
Page 12



"Let us fill our souls with virtue that is grounded in love."
St Catherine of Siena

LETTER FROM MOTHER PRIORESS GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

I will be leaving office on 30th April 2019 and a new Prioress General will be taking over. My reasons for retiring are related to advancing age and poor health. I submitted these reasons to Bishop Fellay who accepted them and nominated Mother Mary Madeleine as the new Prioress General. Mother Madeleine will hold office at least until our Congregation is big enough to have a proper canonical election.

Mother Madeleine was born in Victoria but she has lived in other parts of Australia, notably Goulburn and Tynong, as well as spending time in France, before entering the Convent. She was the first person to contact me about trying her vocation and she was one who survived out of the first two novices.

She gained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Massey University and a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching from Bethlehem Tertiary Institute. She has mostly taught French, Catechism, Latin and Physical Education and is well-known for her organisation of the Children of Mary, camps in New Zealand and for leading language-trips to New Caledonia.

During my retirement I will continue to help with the Novices' lectures and I will assist the younger superiors with their work. I know that in leaving the Congregation in Mother Madeleine's care I am leaving it in good hands. It was time for a change and Mother Madeleine's view of the future is fresh and exciting. May she enjoy the challenges of the job as much as I have!

Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.

Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui

1A Tynong Road, Tynong, VIC 3813, Australia

Tel: 00-61-3-5629-2167

Email: mother.micaela@gmail.com

www.dominicansisters.net.nz

ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA

Fire!

Saturday, 2nd March was a Saturday like no other. With a fiery red column of smoke approaching the Convent and amidst the heat of a large bush fire, the Sisters headed off to Hampton Priory in a convoy leaving behind an array of miraculous medals and a prayer to Our Lady to spare the Convent. Father Lavin kindly accommodated all twelve of us in the Hampton Parish Hall. It was the finest evacuation place one could possibly ask for - we had Mass, a place to say the Divine Office, a kitchen, a library and washing facilities. Like good Dominican Religious, we soon settled down to regular religious life. The Hampton parishioners were so very kind and supplied us with food and inflatable beds and sheets as well as much needed funds. On our return to the convent a few days later, we found burnt embers and black leaves littering the verandah and scattered all over the property. Many in the neighbourhood lost their homes and their businesses, but thankfully, as far as we know no one in the Tynong Parish suffered major loss. In fact, there was a positive side as it brought many of the faithful together.



Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord

The Feast of the Epiphany is always a day of rejoicing for our congregation, especially since it is the day on which we hold our ceremonies. This year we had the joy of seeing six of our Sisters imitate the Wise men, bringing their three gifts of poverty, chastity and obedience to Our dear Lord. Two pronounced their vows for the first time, three renewed the vows they had taken three years before, while one Sister generously made her offering "until death." Father Alphonsus C.Ss.R kindly officiated at the ceremonies and Solemn High Mass, while the sermon was preached by Father Hogan, SSPX. The weather was beautiful, and was surprisingly not too hot, a fact which was deeply appreciated by all, particularly those who had to spend a significant portion of the morning enveloped in large black cappas! We would like to thank all those who helped with the smooth running of the day, and assure them of our grateful prayers.

Five-Stars for a Fantastic Retreat

After another busy year, we Sisters packed our spiritual bags and headed to 'a desert place apart' (while we didn't actually go anywhere for retreat, this is not an untruth, because it hasn't rained properly for quite a while here in Australia) for our annual retreat. We were very blessed to have Fr Alphonsus Mary, C.Ss.R., and Fr Gerard Hogan come all the way from the United States (leaving on Christmas Day!) to preach our retreat this summer. Fr Alphonsus' insights into religious life, incorporated into the overall theme of 'the Religious Virtues according to the Mysteries of the Rosary' were wonderfully encouraging and inspiring, and Fr Hogan's master storytelling skills left us uplifted and edified. We are all very grateful to all of those who made our retreat possible, including our wonderful cooks, but most especially to the Fathers who helped us recharge our spiritual batteries for another year of prayer and sacrifice in the service of the One we love best.



The Spirituality of Chanting the Divine Office



Dominicans are, in general, best-known for teaching and preaching for the salvation of souls. It may come as a surprise to some that, of the special means employed by the Dominican Order to achieve this end, the one listed first in the Dominican Constitutions is the solemn Choral Office.

The 'solemn Choral Office' may sound simple enough. The casual observer may see it simply as chanting the obligatory prayers of the Breviary at the same place and at the same time (to make sure, pragmatically, that they 'get said'). A somewhat more aesthetically-minded observer may appreciate the 'nice, monastic feel' it lends to the official prayer of the Church.

However, if one delves more deeply into the meaning of those three words, 'solemn Choral Office,' a whole world - one could argue a whole spirituality - is revealed.

Starting with the last term, 'Office' essentially means 'work.' The daily recitation of the psalms and hymns of the Breviary has been prescribed by Holy Mother Church for her priests and religious with a purpose in mind, not just on a whim. Each soul vowed to the service of God has to contribute her share of work in the grace-giving power station of the Church, which is fuelled only by prayer. How beautiful it is to think that thousands and thousands of souls consecrated to God alone give their time and love to think on and praise Him, not just on Sundays, not just daily, but several times a day!

While the gift of continuous praise to God is certainly a lovely one, the word 'Choral' adds another dimension. To a religious, it means that the Office is to be sung together by all. Why is this worthwhile? Surely not only because it 'feels monastic.' 'Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Mt. 18:20). Humans are, by nature, social beings. When they

cooperate lovingly to praise the Author of their fundamentally social nature, they reflect back to Him His own loving family life in the Blessed Trinity. It requires effort and sacrifice to interrupt one's individual work multiple times a day to make choral worship possible. However, for the one that loves, all sacrifice is joy, and the knowledge that God loves this communal effort truly does make it a joy.

What, then, is the necessity of adding the word 'solemn'? For a religious, 'solemn' means singing or chanting the psalms and hymns in the prescribed manner, with the prescribed actions. The very word 'solemn' carries connotations of dignity and reverence, which presuppose order and regularity - this is where 'the Office' has some of its most profoundly sanctifying effects, not just for oneself, but for all souls.

In order to produce the total gift of not only praise in common, but dignified, reverent, beautiful praise - the very best we can give our God - a religious makes the sacrifice of her whole self. She must bring her individuality, as God made it, to the choir, and self-effacingly adapt it in order to produce the peaceful beauty of unified sound. This unified sound is the 'sweet-smelling incense' of our complete self-offering. We first made it at our Profession, giving ourselves that souls may be saved, and we have the precious opportunity to renew it with each Office, that more souls may be saved.

A truly unified sound is also an outward manifestation of the 'one mind and one heart in God' which a religious Congregation must have if it is to give God what is most precious to Him: love. True love, it must be remembered, is a two-sided coin: if we truly love Him, we also love His creatures in Him. The love we have for our religious family, with whom we intimately share our journey to Heaven, is expressed in our consideration for each other in the Choral Office. To be constantly attuned to each other,

always to blend in with the communal sound, which for us is prescribed to be 'soft and sweet, without harshness or roughness of voice' (*Const. No. 72*): this can only be achieved when all make the collective, generous offering of self, which has such great value for the salvation of souls. There is an old Convent adage that says, 'the House is well if the Office is well'. It is easy to see why this is so true.

For a Dominican, the beauty of a perfectly united sound has an added special significance. A professed seeker and lover of Truth, the Dominican soul sees the whole created world as a beautifully harmonious expression of the First Truth: God. He created an ordered world, reflecting His infinite perfection. The constant effort required to produce the beauty of a unified, dignified, reverent, solemn Choral Office is therefore an expression of the Dominican soul's constant quest for Truth.

The Dominican motto of *Contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere* (to contemplate and to bring to others the fruits of contemplation) is thus encapsulated in the solemn Choral Office: *Contemplari* - it lifts the religious' mind

and heart to God, both through the divinely inspired words that are chanted and through the beauty of the sound that reflects His perfection, however faintly; *Et contemplata aliis tradere* - graces are drawn down from Heaven for the salvation of souls the world over, both through the aspirations of adoration, petition, thanksgiving and reparation, and through the sacrificial effort needed to chant beautifully, as one. The intimacy with God fostered by, and the multitude of graces won through the solemn Choral Office are indispensable if the Dominican apostle's work of teaching and preaching is to be truly effective in bringing souls to God. It is no wonder that St Dominic prescribed it as a 'must' for his religious family from the very beginning.

The solemn Choral Office, then, is a precious source of grace for the individual religious, for religious Communities and Congregations, and for the whole world. May we, to whom the privilege of observing it is entrusted, ever remain faithful to the love and self-sacrifice it asks, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.



The Motherhouse and Novitiate in Tynong Needs Your Help!



The Sisters in Rosary Convent, Tynong, with the approval of Bishop Fellay, are focusing on their primary apostolate of prayer for the spiritual good of the parish and, more widely, the universal Church. In addition to this, they are strengthening the formation and education of the young Sisters as religious and future Catholic educators. For this, they need your support as they are without a regular income. They rely entirely on Divine Providence for their existence and it is only through the generosity of others that they are able to live consecrated to God alone, continually offering Him prayer and sacrifice for the redemption of souls. Your gift, no matter how small, will help us to continue our mission and help us to cover daily living expenses, expenses related to the education and formation of Sisters, and health, immigration, and maintenance costs.



Please help us!
You will receive a
hundredfold in return:

- ◆ Our daily prayers and sacrifices
...these are our greatest gift to you
- ◆ A personal invitation to our exclusive annual Guild dinner - please see the facing page for more information on our Guilds

Make a Gift to us Today!

Regular Monthly Support

Just as little as giving up 2 lattes a month will help us immensely!



Cash or cheque



Other gifts:

- ◆ Supermarket vouchers
- ◆ Petrol vouchers
- ◆ Grocery items



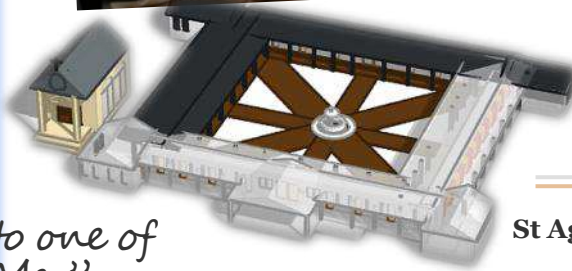
Old is Gold!

Donate the old gold jewellery you never wear and we can turn it into cash. This includes gold rings, bracelets, necklaces, pendants, sovereigns, coins etc.



Long-term offering:

- ◆ Remember us in your will



“Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.”
MATT 25:40

Giving to us is easy!

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” and sent to: Motherhouse and Novitiate, P.O. Box 50, Tynong, VIC. 3813, Melbourne, Australia.

For more information, please email us at caritas@opsisters.org



Scale the ranks with every gift you make

The following guilds have been established to gratefully acknowledge the annual contributions made by individuals and families. From December to November, all contributions will qualify for guild status. At the end of each year, members of each guild will be invited to an **Exclusive Guild Dinner** with the Sisters. The Sisters will host you, thank you, and take the opportunity to fill you in on what has been accomplished during the year thanks to your generous support.

PLATINUM GUILD

Our Lady of the Rosary Guild
\$50,000 and over*

GOLD GUILDS

St Joseph Guild
\$25,000 to \$49,999*

St Dominic Guild
\$20,000 to \$24,999*

St Catherine of Siena Guild
\$15,000 to \$19,999*

SILVER GUILDS

St Thomas Aquinas Guild
\$10,000 to \$14,999*

St Rose of Lima Guild
\$5,000 to \$9,999*

St Pius V Guild
\$2,500 to \$4,999*

BRONZE GUILDS

St Agnes of Montepulciano Guild
\$1,000 to \$2,499*


St Martin de Porres Guild
\$500 to \$999*

St Margaret of Hungary Guild
\$100 to \$499*

*or equivalent



The Hidden Value of Fun and Games



Many of us are familiar with the anecdote of Saint John Berchmans, who, when asked during a game of billiards what he would do if he learnt that the world was about to end, gave the surprising response that he would quite simply continue what he was doing: playing a game and amusing himself. This tale is typically quoted to exemplify his devotion his religious rule and to the duty of the present moment, but the answer of the saint might also demonstrate that he understood the hidden value of games and amusement, and must have been acquainted with the notion behind the common saying, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”.

Our observations of nature also tells us that games are important, for we find them in every culture. Why is this? Why do children – and even adults – need to play? St Thomas Aquinas tells us that “man needs at times the relaxation of play, whether in words or in deeds, for man is liable to weariness of mind and soul, as of body. The body takes its rest not only in quiet inaction, but also in games. And the soul finds an easing of tensions in lighter occupations, among which are games or play of non-athletic type. The pleasure derived from playful actions is directed to the recreation and rest of the soul.” (*Summa Theologica* IIa IIae, qu.168, a.2)

This necessary rest for the soul includes the creativity that is often involved in fun and games. When we play, we frequently invent. Certainly we all must remember our childhood “make believe” games, which had the power of transforming us into other beings, and of giving even inanimate objects another nature. Man experiences a delight in putting to use his creative powers; the positive action that is directed towards man’s perfection results in a feeling of satisfaction. And whether the outcome of that creative act is an accomplished piece of work or only a mediocre one, the act itself is beneficial regardless of the external result. This is why we praise the child for the picture he paints of mum looking like an inelegantly clad giant, taller than the house beside which she stands – the product is mediocre, not to mention very unflattering, but the act of trying to represent reality is laudable.

The educator Mother Janet Erskine Stuart, like the game-loving saint, also understood the value of amusement, and analysed it thoughtfully. During an era of far less sophisticated toys than those which now populate our store shelves, she had this to say: “Mechanical toys are wonderful, but there is very little lasting delight in them for children. Their worst fault is that they do all there is to be done, while the child looks on and has nothing to do. The train rushes round and round, the doll struts about and bleats “mama”, the teddy-bear dances, and the owner has but to wind them up, which is very poor amusement. Probably they are better after they have been over-wound and the mechanical part has given way.” Mother Stuart much preferred objects that were items of real life, which could be played with. “If a distinction may be drawn between toys and playthings, toys are of very little play value; they stand for fancy play, to be fiddled with; while playthings stand as symbols of real life...and all that they do is really done by the child.”

Here she introduces the importance of amusement being designed by the child. Play and play things are indispensable in the development of the child, but Mother Stuart emphasises that “the highest value of all belongs to the things which children make themselves – bows and arrows, catapults, clay marbles, home-made boats and kites. The play value grows in direct proportion to the amount of personal share which children have in the making and in the use of their playthings.” This scale of values can be applied also to games – their value increases in proportion to the amount of personal creativity that has designed them.

G.K. Chesterton was in accord with this idea. He went so far as to say that “To amuse oneself is a mark of gaiety, vitality and love of life. To be amused is a mark of melancholy, surrender and a potential of suicide. The former means that a man’s own thoughts are attractive, artistic and satisfying; the latter means that his own thoughts are ugly, unfruitful and stale. The happiness of a people is not to be judged by the amount of fun provided for them. The happiness of the people is to be

judged by the fun that the people provide. In healthier ages any amount of fun was really provided by the people and not merely for the people." In those "healthier ages" to which he alludes, instead of going to the cinema, people made their own dramas; instead of watching a televised sport, people went and played their own. Chesterton saw that entertainment made locally was entertainment in its organic, purest, and healthiest form.

This is not to say that all store-bought or customary games are valueless; but it does indicate that those which have been invented by the children themselves are the most valuable. Such games encourage the recalling and re-production of concepts and figures that children already know: family, mum and baby, daddy and his work, doctors and nurses, teachers and students, policemen and firefighters, scenes and characters from stories that appeal to them – and these fashion children. They are an expression of their desire to be something other than themselves – something better, nobler, and more dignified. Ideals and desires for greatness are sparked in the soul, even as their imagination is being exercised. For this reason Mother Stuart says, "We cannot lose sight of the fact that every hour of play is telling on the future, deepening the mark of the character, strengthening habits, and guiding the lines of after-life into this or that channel." Who would have thought? Games are no laughing matter; they are not something supplementary. Neither are they all about fun; they are a serious, almost a solemn thing, expressed in a light-hearted manner. The game-loving saint was right to continue his game while death was just around the corner.

Convinced of the importance of healthy games, and most especially of the self-invented ones, how sad it is to consider the plight of the modern child. For the majority of children nowadays do not amuse themselves, since they do not need to – they have strangers like The Wiggles and cartoon characters to do that, and as they grow older, video and computer games provide all the amusement they need. Such children hardly have the chance to give their souls the rest, recreation and stimulation they need; and while our traditional circle generally considers movies and television to be dangerous due to the risk of exposure to indecent content, perhaps a trap just as pernicious is the effect that even harmless viewings have upon a child, who, by watching these "educational programmes" or playing these "harmless computer games" comes away with a stunted imagination and reduced attention span, deprived of adequate literacy skills – and these are just a few of the serious side-effects.

High-quality fun and games are an essential part of education, since they provide not only the rest and

recreation that the body and soul needs, but also because they stimulate the mind and develop the character. Hence, in order that the education that we offer at St Dominic's College be balanced, games and all that comes under the heading of amusement or recreation must be incorporated. The inclusion of house competitions and extra-curricular activities allows us to provide this necessary recreation that is at once a rest from mentally laborious tasks and is also a work in itself. The pupils at our school are able to amuse themselves, to provide entertainment for themselves, as well as for us, the members of their community. In this year alone they have been involved in multiple forms of self-amusement. They began the year in exercising their minds and oral skills, entertaining us and making us think through their debating competition; they demonstrated order and beauty in their inter-house dancing competition and again on camp when they choreographed their own dances; they have exercised their sense of proportion and colour in craft-making and water-colour painting; they have independently chosen, practised and performed music items; and perhaps most impressively of all, they have created their own plays, writing the script, designing the costumes and managing the performances all by their own energy and skill.

Granted, the girls of the College do not belong to a school of performing arts, and will readily admit that they are a long way from becoming professional artists; but they are capable of making their own amusement, and perhaps in this they are becoming professionals. Chesterton would be proud of them because their amusements demonstrate healthy marks of gaiety, vitality, and love of life, and are far removed from the melancholy and emptiness of this world's artificial amusements. He would have rejoiced to have watched their amusements, seeing them to be a sign that their thoughts are attractive, artistic and satisfying – products of minds ordered towards truth and beauty. Mother Stuart would applaud them and be relieved that she would not have to accuse their teachers of giving them activities in which "all there is to be done" has already been done, while the pupils "look on and have nothing to do". They acted, they danced, they sang, drew, painted, invented, created and reflected. They amused themselves, but more than this: they worked towards their perfection, whether the tasks were done perfectly or not.

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If wish to subscribe by post please send your request to:
 The Southern Star, P.O Box 50, Tynong, VIC. Melbourne, Australia

St Dominic's Convent

Wanganui; NEW ZEALAND

2018 Prize Giving

Our annual prize-giving has always been a great joy and a marvellous opportunity to recognise our pupils' academic achievements and their excellent efforts throughout the year. Special awards are also given to the most outstanding pupils in Languages (French and Latin) and extra-curricular awards for netball players and the overall winner of house competitions. This year, we celebrated our prize-giving on 6th December at Rutherford Junior High School – a hall hired especially for the occasion. St Dominic's Girls' School had six graduates this year. Three were our very own Signadou boarders from Asia, of whom two merited the Dux 2018 award. Well done to all our senior girls who have completed their Cambridge certificates in IGCSE and AS levels, especially to those who earned A*, distinctions and merits. Congratulations to all the pupils who toiled hard to earn their awards and we encourage the rest to continue their best efforts. Farewell to our graduates 2018! May you keep your faith, aim with high hopes and fly like an eagle. Lastly, we appeal to your generous help to build a new classroom or rather a new wing for the growing numbers in the Girls' school. May God reward your kindness.



Retreat with Fr Paul Robinson

“Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”
(St Matthew 11:29)

Humility was the theme of the Wanganui Sisters' annual retreat, preached by Fr Paul Robinson, SSPX. The eight days of silence in the days leading up to Christmas were welcomed after the hustle and bustle of the school year. In the small town of Pahiatua, the retreat house provided a quiet atmosphere for contemplation. With the spiritual conferences, readings, meditations and Holy Hours, the words of our Divine Spouse were often contemplated. “Learn of Me...” and, to Saint Catherine of Siena, “You are she who is not, and I am He Who Is.”



New Boarders at Signadou

This year at Signadou Boarding House in New Zealand we have four nations represented by the boarders. New Zealand is being proudly represented by three young ladies, one of whom is our first boarder in the primary school. South Korea continues to be present at Signadou both by a ‘veteran’ in her third year here, who has now been joined by a fellow Korean/compatriot going into Form 1. At the end of 2018, our Filipina boarder graduated, leaving empty the “Filipino space” at Signadou which had for so long been occupied, but this was happily filled by a Form 1 girl from the very same parish as her predecessor. And last, but not least, one of our new boarders in Form 1 has come all the way from beautiful Japan, a new country not represented before in Signadou. The Sisters are very pleased to welcome such lovely girls from a wonderful variety of countries, giving our boarding school a truly multi-cultural tone amidst a Catholic, family atmosphere.



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:

Mother Prioress General
Our Lady of the Rosary Convent

P.O. Box 50

Tynong, VIC 3813

AUSTRALIA

Tel: 00-61-3-5629-2167

mother.micaela@gmail.com

Visit us online at

www.dominicansisters.net.nz



WE ARE TRUE MENDICANTS NOW.

With Rosary Convent now functioning uniquely as a Novitiate and House of Studies, the Sisters in Tynong, Australia, depend entirely on your goodwill and generosity to help us cover our day-to-day expenses while we continue to organise fundraising events for the completion of the construction of the Motherhouse.

Please consider helping us out - whether with gifts of cash or regular monthly donations. In the absence of a regular stipend, we are truly grateful for every little effort and sacrifice that helps us to continue living our traditional Dominican way of life.

We would like to thank those who have already pledged regular donations - these gifts, no matter how small, do make a difference.

May Our Lady of the Rosary reward your generosity and kindness to the Spouses of Her Divine Son. The Sisters pray specially for you during our weekly Chapter.

*Please note
Important
changes*

May Our Lady of the Rosary bless your generosity.

AUSTRALIA

Our account details in Australia are: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui,
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Please note that donations no longer qualify for a tax deductible receipt

NEW ZEALAND

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Motherhouse and Novitiate, 12b York Street, Wanganui, 4501, New Zealand.

SINGAPORE

Our account details in Singapore are: Friends of the International Priestly Society of St. Pius X

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:
Motherhouse and Novitiate, 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

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Motherhouse and Novitiate, Attn: Loren Vaccarezza, 1590 Berryessa Road, San Jose, CA 95133

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