

Spring 2022

# *The Southern Star*

ISSUE #29

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui



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*The Church as the Path to Salvation –  
the “Via Veritatis”*

“ It was for love only, and not because He had to, that He drew us out of Himself. We never asked Him to create us but moved by the fire of His charity He did, so that we might experience and enjoy His supreme eternal beauty.”

- Saint Catherine of Siena



# LETTER FROM MOTHER PRIORESS GENERAL

Mother Mary Madeleine, O.P.



**V**

**ia Veritatis**— This year, our Guild Dinner took place on November 12, the feast of All Dominican Saints. As the twentieth anniversary of our Congregation on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was rapidly approaching, it was a fitting time to contemplate all the saintly Dominicans who have gone before us while thanking our benefactors—present and absent—for all your help, both material and spiritual, in our strivings to imitate them. Thus we decided to focus, that evening, on a painting made at a time when the Order was still young, but which today still gives an accurate picture of the way that every Dominican Saint has trodden. It is called the “*Via Veritatis*”, the “Way of Truth”. It was painted in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century by Andrea da Firenze, and shows the Dominican Order leading souls to heaven through its apostolic labours. Being in a friars’ chapter room it naturally focuses on the work of the friars, but the principles of Dominican life which it illustrates apply equally to Dominican Sisters. We, too, follow the “Way of Truth” indicated by our motto “*Veritas*”, and we, too, must help others to follow it by handing on to them the fruits of our

contemplation, as our other motto says:

“*contemplata aliis tradere*”. Thus, we can use the painting as an outline to sum up the work we have been attempting to do, with your help, this year and over the past twenty years.

At the top of the image, we see our goal, Our Lord enthroned in heavenly glory. At the bottom left, where the road to heaven begins, is a representation of the Church Militant—representatives of the priesthood, religious life and the laity gather around the Pope under the shelter of the Cathedral of Florence. In this corner we find Dominicans surrounded by religious of many different orders, reminding us of the co-operation required among the various groups in the Church in pursuit of our common goal of sanctity. For example, Divine Providence has often chosen Benedictines to aid the spiritual formation of Dominicans. We are blessed in this regard to be following in the footsteps of St Dominic, who probably learnt to serve Mass from the Benedictines in Silos; St Thomas, who was taught by the Benedictines of Monte Cassino; and our own Irish foundresses, some of whom had Abbot Marmion as their chaplain in their Irish novitiate, by having a Benedictine, Fr Elias, for our chaplain. Shoulder to shoulder with the Dominicans in the *Via veritatis*



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are the Franciscans—you will read in this issue how we were able, this year for the first time, to join the Franciscans in celebrating St Francis' day, a tradition which has long roots. Of course, we continue to collaborate with the Society of St Pius X in our apostolate of teaching and formation of youth through the school and sodalities. This apostolate can be represented by the sheep at the Pope's feet, guarded by two black and white *Domini canes*. Through our teaching apostolate, we try to prepare our youth to go through life in fidelity to the Truth, so that God willing, they will never stray far from the "Via Veritatis". Another source of strength for the children are sodalities such as the Crusaders and the Children of Mary, through which they begin to realise that the journey to heaven is not something individualistic, to be achieved by their own strength, but rather a group effort to be achieved with the help of God and our neighbour. In the same spirit, we were able to organize a retreat on motherhood, preached by Fr Elias, for all the mothers of the parish. This unity within parishes, orders, confraternities and sodalities, and within the Church as a whole, is our strength for our journey along the "Via Veritatis."

After St Dominic, who sends out his dogs to fight the foxes of heresy and sin, the painting shows St Peter Martyr and St Thomas Aquinas. The former is disputing with the heretics while the latter reaches Catholics and non-Catholics alike with his written exposition of Catholic Doctrine. You may have read in previous newsletters of our school debates on the feast of St Thomas Aquinas and our rationale for introducing philosophy to our senior pupils—two important elements in preparing them to be apostles in their future life. The three pre-postulants we received this year are likewise beginning their preparation under the guidance of St Thomas and the other spiritual and theological writers of the Order, so that they in their turn will be able to lead others along the *Via Veritatis*.

In the next section of the painting we see the importance of a wise use of leisure. The larger figures show the progress from youth to old age marked by a variety of recreational activities, including indoor and outdoor, mental and physical pursuits, leading in the end to contemplation. In contrast, the smaller figures below spend their whole lives in the superficial pleasure of dancing, never growing in maturity or reaching contemplation. In a 2015 letter to the Children of Mary,

Fr Bochkoltz wrote: "Our greatest challenge today is that the girls become adult children. Children in their heart but adult in their mind; children by their simplicity but strong in their convictions and their actions." A wise use of leisure can help to bring about this result. Over this year the girls have participated in a variety of different activities such as netball, folk dancing, music competition and girls' camp. Such sound recreation can help us to grow in maturity while retaining a childlike spirit. In the painting, the figures with healthy recreation are not only ready for confession but are also gathering the fruits of good works, as represented by the children climbing fruit trees behind them. Beyond, we see St Dominic pointing the way for these souls towards the gate of heaven, where they receive their crowns in reward for perseverance on the "Via Veritatis."



Finally the saints and angels gather in heaven to rejoice in God and to praise Him for all eternity. This vision of our goal reminds us that we must begin that life of contemplation and praise even here below, through the contemplative side of our life. True to his principle that the body and soul must work together in the work of our sanctification, St Dominic chose many exterior means to help train us, his children, in the interior spirit. These included even the buildings in which he wanted us to live: as Mother Francis Raphael Drane writes, "Whilst they begged their bread and lived on alms, the first thing on which those alms were expended was the rude and imperfect conversion of their poor dwellings into a religious shape."

We, too, by your generous help, have been working on converting our dwelling into the religious shape traditional in the Dominican order, intended to help us practise silence, recollection and the other religious virtues—you can see the progress that has been made in the Construction Chronicle.

Looking once again at St Dominic and his hunting dogs in the *Via Veritatis*, we recall the words of Fr Vincent Mc Nabb O.P: "The hunt for God is a tremendously exciting thing. If you want a really exciting time all day and all night, for God's sake, become a Dominican. You will soon regret that there are only twenty-four hours to a day. It is a glorious adventure". Our congregation's adventure along the *Via Veritatis* has already lasted twenty years, and we would like to thank you for the support you have shown us throughout this time.



# Spring: News from St Dominic's Convent

## Motherhood Day of Recollection

On the 1st of October, Rev. Father Elias OSB preached a day of recollection to past pupils, mothers and mothers-to-be of the parish. Even though it was a rainy day, over fifty women participated and were also given the benefit of having three priests available for consultations, if they desired. Also, during breakfast and lunch, there were themed recording for the ladies to listen to, to help keep focused on the spirit of the day. Father Elias preached conferences on both practical and spiritual topics, including: what is a woman, motherhood, raising children, marriage, and temperaments of spouse and children.

## Feast of St Francis

It is an ancient tradition in the Franciscan and Dominican orders to pay one another a visit on their respective founders' feast days. This year, for the first time, the tradition was fully carried out in Wanganui. The Franciscan tertiaries were specially invited to our St Dominic's Day celebrations, and on St Francis' day they invited us to Vespers and the Transitus ceremony (commemorating the holy death of St Francis), and to supper afterwards. It was a great joy to sing for the first time the beautiful antiphon

added to grace after meals on these occasions: "Our Seraphic Father Francis and our Apostolic Father Dominic—these have taught us Thy Law, O Lord."

May this 800-year-old friendship long continue to flourish, in Wanganui and throughout the world!





## Guild Dinner



November 12<sup>th</sup> 2022 was a sort of 'Thanksgiving Day' for our Congregation. Not that we celebrated our arrival in New Zealand (we celebrate that in February), but the juxtaposition of the annual Guild Dinner with the feast of all Dominican Saints did compellingly remind us how blessed we are to have such a splendid array of good friends to whom we owe gratitude. Dominican All Saints Day is a fitting day to say 'thank you' to our older brothers and sisters in Heaven, who help their younger siblings on earth follow the footsteps of our

holy father Saint Dominic. Our dear Dominican Saints take special care of our spiritual interests, thorough their prayers; and our dear Guild Members assist us in our temporal needs, with their kind giving of all manner of good things. All through the year our gratitude for these things percolates like fragrant coffee; and on Guild Dinner night we serve round the coffee cups! So it was that our Guild Dinner, complete with door prizes, musical entertainment, and a game of Dominican trivia, was a very pleasant affair – as the newspapers might say, 'an enjoyable time was had by all' – and we once again had the pleasure of offering a small 'thank you' to all those whom we are privileged to call our benefactors.

## Star of the Sea Camp

The annual Girls' Camp was one whirlwind of the outdoors, art and travelling back in time. The five-day adventure started with a whole morning learning about the fascinating hobby of nature journaling under the tutelage of a Wanganui nature artist. Then it was all aboard to Foxton Bible Camp, a spacious accommodation center complete with large gym (perfect for a chapel; bonus acoustics included), industrial strength dishwasher, flying fox, trampolines, and spacious sleeping quarters. What with a long beach walk, bird-spotting, touring five museums (in one morning) and honing our skills as Dutch Delftware artists, everyone agreed that *Camp Sterre der*



*Zee* was a most successful camp. An outstanding highlight (among many) was climbing up inside Foxton's real working windmill: petite and colourful on the outside and a glory of warm-toned timber technicality within. Father Ladner's inspiring sermons on the lives and virtues of some little-known Dutch saints (including St. Oda, whose personal bodyguard was a pack of magpies) infused a generous and joyful camp spirit into all our campers, and left us rather nostalgic at its close. May Our Lady, Star of the Sea, bless our next camp with just as much adventure and inspiration!







## THE O.P. CORNER

*Dominican Old Pupils' Corner*

For all of  
our readers, too!



## Woman and the world: The criterion of an age

We would like to give some pertinent extracts from the beautiful work of Father Walter Farrell, OP in his *Companion to the Summa*, on the parts relating to our Lady and Womanhood:

THE housewife bustling about her kitchen, the tired shop-girl smilingly meeting the discourtesy of customers, the product of a finishing school stepping into a world that is always glamorous to youth, these may all seem far removed from the abstract philosophies of life which mold the thought and action of an age. Actually, the status of woman, any woman in any age, is a concrete expression of the philosophy of life on which the citizens of that age proceed in the living of life. This statement does not demand mental gymnastics for its comprehension, nor does it ask philosophy to work the modern miracle of standing erect in a careening street-car serenely powdering its nose. It merely demands a consideration of the solid fact that the life of woman is one of the most vivid and accurate of all the norms of judgment of an age and its philosophy.

**Bases of a philosophy of life: animal, rational, divine**

A moment's examination of our age, or any age, will bring out unmistakably the only three bases for human life: the animal, the human, and the divine. The life of every age is physical, human or divine; built up on the basis, that is, of strength, justice, or charity. It is true, of course, that some men of every age have acted like animals; it is also true that in the most debased ages there were some men who were uprightly human, even some who were saints. The question here is not of the exception but of the rule, of the ideal to which an age looks and the things that it condemns or mocks. Considered in that general light, there is nothing in an age that so sharply mirrors its philosophy as the lives of its women.

Perhaps this fact can be brought out most briefly by a short comparison. A sea-plane can stagger through pounding seas for a while, for it has something in common with the sea, some bond of unity; but in a very short time it is pounded to pieces. When it soars above the sea into the air, its flight is swift, accurate, though, often enough, quite rough; the air is its proper medium; that is where it belongs. If it is equipped with superchargers, variable-pitch propellers, and a sealed cabin, it can get above the level of ordinary air to travel in the



stratosphere; there its flight is of such speed and grace as to stagger the imagination.

### Fundamental tests of woman's life

Woman has something in common with the animal level of life, some bond of union with it; but if she is forced to live on that level very long, she must break up. Physically she is no match for a man; in an age whose philosophy is based on strength, she becomes a toy, an instrument of pleasure, an inferior creature, for the principle of such an age is that might makes right. She was made to live on a human level, on that plane she is the equal of the mightiest and the wisest. Yet, because on the purely human plane strength so often usurps the place of justice, the course of her life may often be very rough. On the supernatural, the divine, plane, where she can expect not merely justice but also charity, she reaches her highest perfection; there her life is one of smooth grace for there, above all other planes, is where she belongs.

Every age has had a practical opinion of woman because every age has had a philosophy of life whose expression has thundered ceaselessly on the shores of woman's life. Strangely enough, in the ages most unkind to women it is women themselves who are often the most aggressive champions of the debased philosophy by which that age lives. It may be that such women have actually become convinced of the philosophy of that age; it may be that they have been tricked by the specious promises such an age always holds out to its victims; or it may be that woman's championship of such a philosophy is merely another expression of that subtle, feminine practicality which knows so well how to listen and to say the things that men most willingly hear. The repercussions of a philosophy of life upon women has been so clearly seen that the attempt to dodge them has produced queer results in the history of humanity. In some ages, the nineteenth century for example, the result was an hypocrisy that approached the comic. Apparently the nineteenth century was a romantic age; actually, its romantic glorification of women was fatalism that tried to hold to the Christian respect for women. It found itself helpless to do so except by glorifying the only weapons its philosophy had left for women in a world of brute strength and mechanical inevitability, namely, youth and beauty. Women, trying to live up to the demands of their age, lived in a nightmare of absurdity that found a feeble reflection in the

very clothes they wore. Still other ages attempted to hold to an animal abuse of women in an age of a human philosophy of life by maintaining that woman was something less than a human being.

More frequently, however, there has been a frank application of a definite philosophy of life to the women of that particular age. In an age based on animal philosophy, woman is a toy, a domestic instrument, or a necessary nuisance; in any case, she is to be used and discarded. In a rational age, she will be an equal who could yet be taken advantage of when the need arose. In a divine or supernatural age, she is the daughter of the mother of God, a member of the mystical body of Christ, coming directly from God and going to Him, redeemed by His blood, and cooperating in one of His greatest works, the generation of human beings.



### Sanctity

To discover the status of woman, it is not necessary to carry on extensive researches into the philosophy by which an age lives. No more is necessary than the application to woman's life of the basic tests of human and divine life for a woman. We need only ask a few questions. What value does she, and her contemporaries, place on sanctity; i.e., has the divine any place in her life? What is her estimate of virginity? What is the attitude of her contemporaries and herself to marriage? What part has the consecration of love and the stability of justice in the living of her life? What is a child, what is the evaluation of infant life? In a word, has reason any place in her life?

### Virginity

More concretely, it can be said positively that an age which mocks sanctity, considers virginity a matter of taste or lack of opportunity, declares marriage a legal convenience for the satisfaction of passion, and strips the child of rights, giving it consideration only in accord with parental convenience -- such an age is based on an animal philosophy of life. Its norm of living is purely physical; its yardstick is brute strength.

### Marriage and childbirth; evaluation of the infant

Ultimately, of course, the difference between an animal and a rational age boils down to the difference between the denial and the admission of the spiritual nature of the soul of man. If



the vote of an age goes against the spiritual character of man's soul, then the only basis of judgment is the material; the weaker must, of course, suffer. And the weaker are always the women and children. It may seem fairly safe to deny a child's rights, since the child is, after all, quite helpless; so the thing is promptly done by abortion and its cousins. But once the lie has started, it is hard to stop. If the child presents an opportunity for the expression, in a particularly cowardly way, of materialism's social principle that might is right, why should the principle stop there? It does not stop there. We talk half laughingly today of the battle of the sexes; but it is not a very good joke. There was never such a thing except in a materialistic age; even then, the war has never lasted very long. In such a war, on such a basis, woman always loses.

All this is on the negative side. The positive side can be seen, clear-cut and decisive, by even a hurried glance at womanhood's model, Mary, the mother of God. There we can see not only what woman can be but what she is. This is woman's place and her titles to it.

#### **The exemplar of womanhood -- the mother of God**

The perfection of Mary's womanhood stands out most sharply in the supreme moments of her life: in her divine maternity and her preparation for it. To put the same thing in the words we have been using up to this point, Mary's perfection is brought out from the confused detail of her age by the application of these **basic tests** of any woman's life: *sanctity, virginity, marriage, the evaluation of the infant*. Mary, seen from the vantage point of these basic tests, leaves no room for doubt of the basis upon which woman's life is lived to its fullest. It must, of course, be remembered that Mary is a model in the order of nature as well as in the order of grace. Grace does not destroy but rather perfects nature. Mary, then, is the exemplar for women, not only in so far as she is the holiest of women, but also as the most womanly of women, the most free, winning the highest possible place in the hearts and minds of men.

#### **Preparation for divine maternity: Preparation of soul -- perfect sanctity: Immaculate Conception**

Mary's preparation for her divine maternity began in the first instant of her life in the womb of her mother by that singular privilege which is called the Immaculate Conception. It is

necessary to stop here for a moment and remark on a world-wide instance of that obtuseness which is the despair of teachers. An explanation is given, made very clear, repeated again and again, and every student agrees that he understands perfectly; then a recitation is called for and the student not only have the matter backwards, they give it that way. It has been explained again and again that the Immaculate Conception has nothing to do with Mary's conception of Christ, that it refers to Mary's conception by St. Ann and it has nothing to do with a virgin birth. Yet year after year, it is taken as a statement of the virgin birth of Christ. The Immaculate Conception is not a statement of a miraculous conception; but of a miraculous preservation from sin in the entirely natural conception of Mary by her mother.

In a previous volume, it was explained at great length that all the seed of Adam contract the sin of nature (Original Sin) in receiving nature from nature's head. Christ was not an exception to this general rule; for He was not from the seed of Adam, as will become more clear later on in this chapter. The one solitary exception to the general rule was Mary, and the exception in her case was made in anticipation of the merits of Christ. Though from her natural origin she should have contracted it, she was preserved from Original Sin; and that preserving grace of the merits of Christ freed her from all rebellion of the lower appetites, from every least motion of sense against the regime of reason.



St. Thomas, in his treatment of the original sanctity of Our Lady, insisted on three things: her purity from sin; her

redemption by Christ; and the fact that the grace of her sanctification was also a grace of preservation. On these same principles, Pope Pius IX declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception to be of faith. But there is a serious dispute among theologians as to whether Thomas taught or denied the Immaculate Conception itself. The argument hinges fundamentally on a distinction of priority of time and of nature; in other words, the question at issue is whether Thomas was arguing that we must *think* of Mary as conceived before being sanctified, or whether he maintained that Mary *was*, in time, conceived and later sanctified. The defined doctrine of the Immaculate Conception makes it clear that Mary was preserved from original sin in the very instant of her conception; so that never, even for the shortest period of time, was there a stain of sin on her soul. {to be continued...}



# Photo Nook

...a place for past-pupils to share notable events in your lives...

## 15th September 2022

On the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Juliana McKenna received the postulant's veil with the Society Sisters, at the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Browerville, Minnesota. *Deo Gratias!*



## 15th October 2022

Elizabeth, née Smith, and Jonathan Mauchline welcomed their first child, Timothy Collin, into the world on 15th October & into the Catholic Church on 22nd October.

*Deo Gratias!*



As a regular section of the *O.P. Corner*, we invite you to share with us and your fellow alumni, in the *Photo Nook*, notable events in *your lives* that have taken place recently. Please send photos with captions (eg. date, event, etc.) to [o.p.corner@opsisters.org.nz](mailto:o.p.corner@opsisters.org.nz)





## Photo Chronicle—Spring

### Life in St Dominic's Convent and the Girls' College



{Clockwise from the top} During the annual school fundraiser in September, the sisters walked and the girls jogged to raise money for the school. On the Feast of the Holy Rosary, the pupils and sisters held their annual rosary procession. On the 8th October, the Sisters attended the yearly pilgrimage to our Lady's statue in Paraparaumu, along with most of their students and much of the parish. In November, the junior class and the seniors as well, delighted audiences with their renditions of *The Tempest*, and *Pygmalion*.





## Construction Chronicle— *Spring*



{above left} the widened front deck of Loreto was completed just in time for the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity {above right} The deck outside the library and main convent was laid and the framing for the covering was erected. {left} The deck was added to the path outside the upper level of the convent, so that eventually one will be able to walk in a covered path around the cloister—will be appreciated very much on rainy days. {below} Progress is shown on the construction of the pathways and their coverings, which will eventually be protected with lightweight covering, so that sunlight will still be able to pass through them to the paths below.







## *Please assist us to continue in our Contemplative & Active Apostolates*

Please consider helping us out—whether with gifts of cash or regular monthly donations. The stipend we receive is minimal, so we are truly grateful for every little effort and sacrifice that helps us to continue living our traditional Dominican way of life.

Thank you to 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.

*Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!*

### **AUSTRALIA**

Westpac Account Name: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui  
Westpac Account BSB Number: 033-636  
Account Number: 334285

### **NEW ZEALAND**

Westpac Account Name: Dominican Sisters of Wanganui  
Westpac Account Number: 03-0791-0728558-00

*Please note that the banks in NZ no longer accept cheques. Apologies for the inconvenience.*

**All donations now qualify for a 33% TAX REBATE from the IRD.**

**Please quote our NZ Charities Services Number: CC37884**

### **UNITED STATES**

Account Name: 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:  
Dominican Sisters, Attn: Loren Vaccarezza, 2240 Paragon Drive, San Jose, CA 95131  
**All donations to our U.S. account now qualify for a tax deductible receipt!**

### **OR VIA PAYPAL**

Visit our website at <https://www.opsisters.org.nz/fundraising>

