

# The Southern Star

ISSUE #6

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

.....  
**News from St Dominic's  
Convent, New Zealand**  
Page 5

.....  
**OP Motherhouse  
Building Project**  
Page 7

.....  
**How to Help Us**  
Page 8



"I am joyful and I keep the soul who clothes herself in My Will in supreme joy."

The Dialogue of St Catherine of Siena



# LETTER FROM MOTHER Prioress GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

When I finished the last instalment of the story of my experiences of religious life, I had reached the point where I was a Dominican Novice, enjoying our Priory in Dunedin and particularly the old nuns.

The thing that took our attention with the old nuns was the fact that they were so individual, a good example of the fact that religious life as lived by the Dominicans does not take away the personality. These Sisters were individual in their personalities and in their approach to life, though characteristically Dominican in their forthrightness and humour.

One old Sister, who was supposed to be suffering from dementia, came into the Community Room at Santa Sabina Convent, North East Valley, Dunedin where I was doing my school-work. Her name was Sister St Roch, so-called because she entered the Convent when the 1918 Flu was raging. The Nuns had promised that they would call the next postulant after St Roch if the flu did not come to the Convent, so poor old "Rocky" got the name. She was from the coastal coal-mining town of Kaitangata in South Otago but had worked in the Mill at Milton when a young girl. She had raised her hundred pounds dowry to enter the Convent by tating camisoles for the other girls in the mill at ten pounds a camisole. Coming from Kaitangata she had not had much chance at education and so had been a lay-sister all her life.

Well, "Rocky" came into the Community Room carrying a book and said that she had been reading it for her Spiritual Reading. I responded by saying that it was a nice book, though privately I thought it was not of the highest spiritual calibre. Sister St Roch sat down, sighed, and said, "I think it's a bit sentimental". I laughed to myself. Here I was, humouring a dear old nun thought to have dementia ("I've lost my suitcase"), and there she was with her Dominican instincts for the authentic fully operational. We sat there in the Community Room agreeing on the sentimentality of the book with me marvelling again at the wonderful spirit of the Order.

However, there were serpents in this paradise as I had discovered in Dunedin. Unfortunately, the Prioress-

General had done a course at "Regina Mundi" in Rome, which sowed the seeds of modernism. She had appointed a bunch of young Prioresses, Sisters more susceptible to modernising influences. At first these modernising influences were seen by us in Dunedin mainly when Sisters from Auckland came down, but the modern trends quickly spread.

We used, also, to get in Dominican Friars from the Australia/New Zealand Province as Retreat Priests. In the seventies and eighties we began to get in priests from America and also to have Summer Schools at our country boarding-school at Teschemakers. These Summer Schools were run by Dominican Friars from the USA and even by a team of Friars and a Nun from the Sinsinawa Dominicans who wore a trouser-suit with alternative skirt-option.

For the Congregational Meetings which also occurred at Teschemakers, often in association with these USA guests, we would have "facilitators". (Sister St Roch – "I don't see why we need these felicitators".) These were sometimes female protestant ministers, one time a Dominican Nun from Australia who was an "expert" sociologist and had done a manipulative survey of religious life in Australia. As a result of all this input there was not only a shift towards modernism in thought but also a shift to emotionalism and sentimentality, which Sister St Roch would not have liked. There was also a shift away from the characteristic Dominican practices which kept the whole religious life together.

I well remember the first pair of Bermuda Shorts, unfortunately in a kind of reddish denim, which appeared at breakfast at Teschemakers during the Christmas holidays. I also remember the "liturgy" where we were invited to anoint each other "for mission" with scented oil – I wouldn't and got into trouble for it.

These things happened in the holidays but term-time in Community and in the schools also showed the changes in the Congregation's attitudes and commitment. These I reserve for our next newsletter.

*Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.*

## ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA

### Feast of St Catherine of Siena

On April 30th, the Feast of St Catherine of Siena, we had a feastday celebration for the recently appointed new Prioress and Novice Mistress of Rosary Convent, Mother Mary Catherine, O.P. Mother General organised and participated in a play performed by the Sisters in the Novitiate, the Rustic's Play from the end of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It was a barrel of laughs and both actresses and audience enjoyed themselves immensely. The cooks also created a beautiful cake representative of the analogy of the espousals of the soul with Christ, taking inspiration from "The Dialogue of St Catherine."



### More Graduate Sisters

The ranks of our qualified teachers have been augmented as *three* Sisters have just completed their studies! Sister Mary Augustina and Sister Mary Diana both received their Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) from Eastern College Australia (formerly Tabor College). Both Sisters are now qualified to teach both at primary and secondary levels, which will be a great asset. Sister Mary Anthony received her Masters of Education from Monash University after a gruelling period of studies, juggled with an unremitting workload at St Thomas Aquinas College. The community held a little graduation celebration in honour of the occasion. Sister's degree is another important step towards our dream of having our own Teachers' College – a college which she is now qualified to teach in!



### First Holy Communions

What is a Sacrament? What is the Holy Eucharist? For months, the Year 2 children prepared for one of the greatest moments in their life under the guidance of Sr Mary Vincent. It was with great joy for all that on Sunday, 29th May, following the great feast of Corpus Christi and a day of Recollection, 26 children dressed in white dresses and blue sashes knelt at the Communion rail and received for the first time their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May these little ones continue all their lives to treasure the graces they have received and continue to frequent the sacraments throughout their entire lives. St Pius X, pray for us!



## “Sister, do you ever get tired of wearing *just* black and white?”

My answer at the time was rather black or white - a simple “No.” I must admit to being a little taken aback by the unexpectedness of the question, which may have been prompted by the observation of the bright colours of the eastern rosellas and beautiful arrays of autumn oranges, yellows and reds that start to dress the trees around us during this time of year (if you are lucky enough to live in the land “down under” that is). Being aware of the inadequacy of the initial answer, I now venture to explain why I do not envisage ever growing weary of wearing *just* black and white.

The fact is, our black and white habit is a visible material symbol that points to a reality beyond, and, in a mysterious way, makes that reality present. The Dominican habit is made up of two contrasting “colours” (or as some may argue, non-colours!) of white and black which may be associated with the two seemingly contrasting elements of Dominican life, contemplation and action.

The white stands for purity and represents our mission to be pure in mind, body and soul in union with God through contemplation; the black symbolises penance and mortification which is part of our active work to bring about death to self in order to be able to contemplate and then to bring the fruits of that contemplation to our neighbour. These two seemingly contrasting aspects of contemplation and action do not stand apart but are beautifully blended together in the life of the Dominican, as symbolised in the dual “colours” we wear.

Our Blessed Lady, the special patron of our Order, similarly carries a seemingly paradoxical title of being both Virgin and Mother. During the month of May we can also reflect and draw parallels between the undivided love and purity of the Virgin. By nature, she withdrew from the crowd: this correlates to the contemplative aspect of our Dominican spirituality; the active service to neighbour by teaching corresponds beautifully to her title of being a spiritual mother to all believers. At the core of a mother’s heart lies the willingness to undertake great labours, pains and troubles to raise and educate her children which necessarily requires many acts of self-denial and sacrifice - signified by the black veil worn by the Sisters when they leave the quiet of the Novitiate (and white veil) to partake in the active work of the classroom. The Sisters then become spiritual mothers of the children they teach when they go into the classroom according to our Constitutions to “cultivate, first of all,

the child’s Baptismal Gifts of Faith, Hope and Charity and the moral virtues so that she may, in the Mystical Body of Christ, fulfil the functions His Providence intends”.

During the month of May the Sisters were also fortunate to once again put on their cappas and bear public witness and honour to our patron by participating in the Hampton pilgrimage (including the little added penance of processing in the midst of rain which soaked our habits and hymn sheets but not our spirits)... and to instil in the hearts of the children at school a greater appreciation and love for the Immaculata by encouraging many girls to enrol in the Miraculous Medal.

All of these realities are vivified each day when we don our habit in the morning and say the required prayers as we kiss the white scapular (the principal part of our Habit given by our Lady) with “Monstra te esse Matrem” and the black veil with “Ora pro nobis, beate Pater Dominice”, thus asking their assistance to remain faithful in the love and service of God. In like manner we are required to kiss the black cappa (which we wear from the Feast of St Catherine to that of the Holy Rosary) before putting it on over the white tunic and scapular – as a reminder that we lovingly and freely took upon ourselves this life of penance for the love of God.

The great privilege which a Dominican experiences in being allowed to wear this black and white in the knowledge of what it stands for is beautifully illustrated in the life of Pope Pius V, who being a Dominican himself opted to wear his white habit rather than the “all red attire” as previous popes had. His successor carried on the tradition and it is still done to this day. In like manner I assure you that all postulants eagerly await the day on which they too will receive the black and white habit. All the colours of the world seem to lose their attraction as we continue to learn and appreciate the beauty of the black and white habit given by Our Lady and worn by our Holy Father St Dominic as we make our way through the Novitiate. And yes, we can honestly reply that we will never get tired of wearing *just* black and white.

If you wish to e-subscribe to this newsletter please e-mail:  
[astarinthesouth@gmail.com](mailto:astarinthesouth@gmail.com)

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

## Celebrations in honour of St Thomas

On Monday, 7 June, the Feast of St Thomas Aquinas, the staff, students and guests of St Dominic's College gathered in the Wanganui Hockey Hall to celebrate the feast of the Patron of Catholic Schools with the academic celebrations commanded by Pope Pius XI. The seniors first inspired and entertained the gathering with a series of debates: Had there been no fall, would there be religious? Was it better to be a woman in the Middle Ages, or in the twenty-first century? Is it useful to classify people according to four temperaments? All then repaired to the Church for a sung Mass, and after a break for lunch returned to the Hockey Hall to listen to the juniors reciting the poems they had each written on the life of a Dominican Saint. The girls showed both creativity and craftsmanship in their poems, and we hope to publish more for your enjoyment as the year goes on.



## The Mass and the Passion

On Wednesday of Holy Week, the Priests and Sisters gave a day of recollection to the children to help prepare them for the rest of the Holy Week ceremonies. While the older students were given conferences by the priests about the Passion and its relation to the Mass, the younger pupils benefited from talks given them by three of the Sisters, ranging on topics from our Sorrowful Mother, to the Stations of the Cross (a Sister cleverly bringing props - nails, crown of the thorns, etc. - for the children to see and touch), to the ceremonies of Holy Week.

## On this Day, O Beautiful Mother

On the feast of the Annunciation our little sodality of the Children of Mary in Wanganui received six new aspirants and six members made their consecration to Our Lady. Over the past eleven years we have witnessed 55 young girls making this solemn pledge of their heart and soul to Our Lady before the altar at St Anthony's here in Wanganui. What a beautiful grace for our girls, their families and for our parish! What a moving ceremony to attend! May they be faithful Children of Mary. *Virgo fidelis, ora pro nobis!*



# Monstra Te Esse Matrem



What an unforgettable apostolic adventure we undertook with four of our senior French pupils this past May! Twelve days full of grace, sun and fun in a little piece of the French speaking paradise in the Pacific known as New Caledonia. From beginning to end we can make the comparison between the events of our visit with aspects in the life of Our Blessed Mother. She really did “monstra te esse matrem” (show thyself a Mother) to us as we pleaded each day whilst singing the Ave Maris Stella, the favourite hymn of Our Father, St Dominic. It was evident that her hand was arranging all for her children as a Mother would to remove any obstacles that might lie in our path. She provided us with sunshine, health, the right people to guide us and most importantly daily Mass and the sacraments. Our initial trepidation at the mission set before us of spending time in a foreign land, experiencing a new culture and speaking a different language, soon melted away at the warmth of the people’s welcome.

We began our journey camping on an idyllic, deserted island, while spending time in prayer and contemplation just as Our Lady would have done in preparation for the coming of Our Lord. In Wanganui, rarely do we get the chance to say the rosary whilst admiring the gorgeous sun set, wake up to see the rising of the sun over the sea, look up at the night sky and see the stars twinkle their proof of the greatness of God or during the day to look down at the sea life below. Even a chance encounter with the venomous tricot rayé recalled to mind the Garden of Eden, although unlike Eve, we did not remain in that place to dialogue with the serpent! The devil created the “why”, but Our Lady never questioned the Will of God; she simply said ‘fiat’, Voici la servante de Seigneur. There was an explicit ‘yes’ in her soul, as there must be in each of ours as we go about our daily duty.

Mary was prompt in the service of God and just as Our Blessed Mother left with joy, hastening to her cousin Elizabeth, so we travelled through the rolling red hills and tropical forests to visit the people, the sick and the elderly. Mary visited her cousin whilst carrying with her the Baby Jesus in her womb; we accompanied Father down the

streets of Noumea as he brought the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, like our very own St Francis Xavier! This rare experience was very moving for us. Our Lady was very interior but at the same time not forgetful of the world and saving souls. Her prayers and daily services to her Son and His apostles were all united with her interior life. May she be for each one of us our model in supporting the priests in their apostolate.

The beautiful polyphonic sung Masses which we sang to celebrate the Ascension and a week later at Voh for the 30 people who took the morning off work to assist at and (re) discover the Latin Mass, was only eclipsed by the opportunity of singing another Mass on May 13, Feast of Our Lady of Fatima at the very spot where the first Mass in New Caledonia was performed in the 1800s, deep in the heart of Kanak (natives of New Caledonia) country. This recalled to mind how Our Lady would have been present at the first Masses performed by the Apostles following the Ascension of Our Lord over 2000 - rather than 200 - years ago. Surely Our Blessed Mother would have gathered many around her to benefit from this experience. Likewise, we were able to bring with us our pupils from the girls’ college, to not only immerse them in the French language and culture of New Caledonia, but also to set them an example of missionary spirit in modern times.

Back in New Zealand, our little missionary troop has returned fluent in French and full of tales of island life. Yet while specific details of our adventures fade into rosy coloured memories, what made a lasting impression on us was the simple faith and the implicit contentment of the people of New Caledonia - for although the opportunity to receive Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament may be rare, they eagerly receive the graces of God when they are given. From this we can learn to be happy with very little and also the importance of gratitude for the multitude of things that we have in our corner of the world. Our Lady truly “showed herself a Mother” in bringing us closer to her through the practise of her favourite virtues of humility and charity. We shall continue to follow in her footsteps, treasuring all of these moments and pondering them in our hearts. Our Lady of the Pacific, pray for us.

# OP MOTHERHOUSE BUILDING PROJECT AN URGENT NECESSITY



*Please help us make our new convent a reality!*

## PROGRESS MADE

### On-site:

Pipes have been laid for utility connections.

### Off-site:

Building is progressing well for the cells, kitchen, refectory and community rooms.



## OUR MOST URGENT NEED IS:

To raise the shortfall for the completion of the first phase which includes one-third of the project.

Our deepest thanks and prayers to all those who have helped us in any shape and form so far.

We ask that you continue to pray that we will be able to obtain our goal.

**Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui**  
35 Granite Lane, P.O. Box 50, Tynong, VIC 3813, Australia  
Tel: 00-61-3-5629-2167  
Email: [stdominic@sspx.com](mailto:stdominic@sspx.com)  
[www.dominicansistersofwanganui.blogspot.com](http://www.dominicansistersofwanganui.blogspot.com)

# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP US

✓  
INTEREST FREE  
LOANS

✓  
PROPERTY  
AND/OR ASSETS

✓  
SMALL REGULAR  
PAYMENTS



✓  
DONATIONS

✓  
FUNDRAISERS

✓  
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 #334 277

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:  
OP Motherhouse Project, 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:  
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

Please note new  
address for donations  
via United States