

# The Southern Star

ISSUE #7

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui



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“Zealously do what is in your power, giving honour to God and your best efforts to your neighbours, trusting that the Holy Spirit will do what seems impossible to you.”

- St Catherine of Siena -

# LETTER FROM MOTHER Prioress GENERAL

Mother Mary Micaela O.P.

In finishing my last letter I mentioned that while the most picturesque aberrations in religious life were often to be seen in the holidays, other disturbing signs of the break-up of religious life could be observed in the term-time.

One such sign was the exodus of Sisters from schools and formal convents. From schools Sisters felt a call to go into other paths of life, such as working in Catholic Education Offices, lecturing in the Seminary, working in a Diocesan Pastoral Centre, going on a motor-mission either to the deaf or to Catechists in country areas. What enabled the exodus to go so fast was that the Catholic Schools in New Zealand had been integrated into the State System so that there was now money to pay lay-teachers a state-equivalent wage and to pay lay-principals a state-equivalent principal's wage. Thus the Catholic Schools became a career path for people who would not have thought of taking a job in a Catholic School before. The new breed of lay-teachers and lay-principals brought into the schools a secular mind-set where they did the job for the money and they lacked the vocational attitude of the Sisters who had gone before. Meanwhile the Sisters saw that lay-people could do their jobs and they went running off to the Prioress-General and General Council for permission to further their education or to go to another apostolate to which they felt called.

Two egregious examples come to my mind: when I was sent to Auckland to teach at St Dominic's in Henderson two Sisters of a similar age to mine left the school. One went back to study at the seminary from whence she was sent to Georgetown University in America to get a higher qualification in theology. She returned to lecture at the Seminary at Mosgiel. The most recent news I have heard of this Sister is that she has recently edited a book of essays on the works of Schillebeeckx, who is her favourite theologian. The other Sister who left St Dominic's, Henderson, when I arrived had experienced a call to devote herself to the Maori people. She spent years studying Maori language (she had been a Maths teacher), but when she finished studying and went to devote herself to the Maori apostolate, she found that the Maoris preferred to be evangelised by people of their own race. She occupied the Maori desk at the diocesan centre for a while and the last I saw of her was a photograph of her supporting a mad Dominican friar who was protesting against some social injustice just after he had been arrested for disabling the satellite receiving dishes at an American satellite base in the South Island.

The most interesting workplace of any of our Sisters was a funeral parlour. Sisters were actually being told at that

time that they had to get jobs, with salaries. So this Sister was offered a job at the funeral director's by whom most Catholics in Dunedin were buried. She was, I think, initially expected to be a comfort to the bereaved but, being a whole-hearted kind of person she plunged into all kinds of funeral-work, her most startling exploit, to my mind, was driving about an hour north of Dunedin, all alone, to collect a body from the mental hospital at Cherry Farm. She lived with the General Council in Dunedin at a time when I was living there too, being punished. I used to loathe it at tea-time when she told us racy little anecdotes about the funeral parlour while we were eating. Eventually that Sister got cancer and committed suicide by jumping off a cliff into the sea near Dunedin. They thought that the balance of her mind was disturbed by drugs she was taking for her cancer. Sadly, a young nun from that community was so disturbed by the incident that she left the religious life also.

Another phenomenon from the early eighties onwards was the tendency of Sisters to hear the call to go and live in little houses in the suburbs. They would club up with friends and get permission from the General Council to try living religious life in a small group in a house "among the poor". They would rent a house with, say, four bedrooms, which the poor could have done with and set up house with little frilly curtains in the windows. It was a sort of "playing house". I remember one of these "common vision" communities which broke up because the Sisters could not agree on whether one took the carrots out of the plastic bag before putting them in the fridge or left the carrots in the plastic bag and put them in the fridge as they were. I remember a gruesome circular letter put out by a group of Sisters telling the rest of the Congregation how they had found "a delightfully airy flat" and how they were setting it up. That kind of thing did not go down very well with the few younger Sisters who stayed in the larger houses attached to the schools, because these larger houses lost a lot of their middle-age Sisters to the suburbs and to the more exciting apostolates, and yet they were left with the old, the sick, and the Sisters in need of care and help because of mental problems, or because of inability to cope with life, or because they were "difficult". Meanwhile the Prioress-General's letters to the houses commended the Sisters who were branching out.

I am coming up in this story to the year 1986 when there was held a chapter which wrecked the Congregation in a very short time. I'll continue that story in my next instalment.

*Mother Mary Micaela, O.P.*

# ROSARY CONVENT

Tynong; Melbourne; AUSTRALIA

## St Dominic's Day

The Feast of our Holy Father St Dominic is always an exciting day for both the Secondary girls at St Thomas Aquinas College and the Sisters at Rosary Convent. Celebrations begun with a well-attended sung 1<sup>st</sup> Vespers in the school chapel, followed by a pizza party and games. The Tertiaries had an elegant dinner with the priests and Mother General, and all came together for Compline to conclude the evening. At the traditional Sisters-versus-students netball game on the 4th, the senior girls emerged victorious after an intense and closely fought game that was full of suspense. A large cake had been ordered for morning tea and all the girls had a slice each, receiving at the same time the holy card of a Dominican Saint which was the winner for the Holy Card Design Competition which was held on the Feast of St Mary Magdalene.



### Congratulations!

To Miss Lauren Hovens - our postulant - who passed her AMusA (The Associate in Music, Australia) examination with Distinction.



### Launch of New Website

After months of squinting at computer screens, combing through books for inspiration and even the sad demise of an external hard drive, the Sisters are pleased to announce the launch of a new website for the Congregation. Visit us at [www.dominicansisters.net.nz](http://www.dominicansisters.net.nz) !



### A Grateful Thank You

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our friends and benefactors, particularly those who have helped with food donations over the past few months and also responded to our appeal for books and bookcases. We would also like to kindly acknowledge a grant of \$500 from the Garfield Community Op-Shop for the second year in a row. God will certainly reward you 100-fold!



# HANDS TO THE PLOUGH



*“You have put your hands to the plough, do not look back, but complete your furrow, remembering that it is the end that crowns the work.”*

The sisters Down Under (in true country style living alongside an ever changing number of sheep, cows, horses, ducks and kangaroos) have been working hard on cultivating the “furrows” assigned to them during the three months of cold winter weather which has set in since our last newsletter...

Cultivation included diligent preparation in getting lessons ready for teaching at school, checking up on homework, marking tests, writing reports, celebrating the feast of Our Holy Father St Dominic, a sleep-over night with the Primary School girls, visits of Mother General to the School and a holiday seminar with a focus on the value of discipline in training students to use their liberty progressively and a stern warning not to buy into the modern error of confusing the “maintenance of discipline with tyrannical repression” as our 1929 revised constitution so aptly phrased it.

Since our apostolate of teaching requires generosity and perseverance (souls whom no trial or tribulation can cast down) the Sisters know the importance of maintaining their intimate union with Jesus Christ - the source from which we receive our strength - Whose grace enlivens and sustains our courage. This we faithfully cultivate by meeting in our chapel six times daily for the choral recitation of the Divine Office, mental prayer, spiritual reading, keeping of the mitigated and grand silence and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by which we fortify ourselves and win graces which contribute to the sanctification of our pupils, the happiness of their families, and the betterment of society.

Another field that has been faithfully tilled is that of setting up “Rosary Tertiary Institute”, our very own Teachers College, to train the Sisters for their demanding apostolate of teaching. Once again our constitutions guide our efforts with the command that “...it is plainly part of the Sisters’ duty to achieve and maintain the highest degree of educational competence possible to them” and “most particularly must attention be paid... to the training of the Sisters...” Thus we continue to plunge ourselves even deeper into the required piles of paperwork with the consolation that every truly useful and worthwhile occupation demands effort and sacrifice. We made use of the opportunity of Bishop Fellay’s visit to Australia to call a Board Meeting to discuss legal issues and pass necessary policies and procedures, welcome new members and report on the progress made so far. We have also conducted our first external review of the curriculum or course units with the help of St Mary’s College, Kansas. Economy travel

may not have offered us the shortest route to our destination, but it provided us with an opportunity to visit the faithful in Fiji on our way (the welcome being so warm that some members of the party were tempted to stay behind in the tropics). We also had the good pleasure of visiting the faithful in San Jose for a few days which unfolded in a mosaic of Catechism classes, meetings with the young ladies in the parish and even a visit to the local Jelly Belly Factory. Once we returned to our familiar Convent surroundings again, work commenced to incorporate feedback from the external review and the rewriting of units for the second external review. Our faithful Spouse also chose to show a helping hand by inspiring the hearts of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who were in the process of moving from their seminary in Mulgrave to donate books and library shelving to us – the “catch” being that we had to pack and move the goods within the next three days... and so off we went. It took a combined effort of most of the Novitiate (only those crippled by winter infirmities or university studies escaping) to lend their hands and backs to the task. A kind parishioner with the help of two of the stronger sex also helped to dislodge a most beautiful Sacristy Chest and with a truck on loan – we carted our loot back to the convent... with one small problem – we had nowhere to house our new treasure! St Thomas Aquinas College came to the rescue by providing us with an old administration building to serve as temporary quarters for the Teacher’s College.

After some rest and recovery time for both muscles and minds, we assembled the shelves and moved our library books into neat sections according to the Dewey classification system (a task that caused more than a few headaches) during another intense three-day working bee during the school holidays.

With the second external review under way for the Teachers College and our collection of resources and policies growing by the day – we hope to submit our application during March next year.

The Psalm sung during office, “*Going they wept/ casting their seeds, but... they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves*” remind us of the fact that we are working for a generous Master who not only helps us along the way but repays a hundredfold what we do for Him. We realise that He will reward us, not so much according to our success as according to our efforts. After all, it is to men of good will that He promises peace in this life and a crown of glory in the next, and so we continue to work with much courage on our furrows with loving and joyful hearts.

# St Dominic's Convent

Wanganui; NEW ZEALAND

## Inter-house Competitions

The annual Inter-House Music Competition was held on the same day as the Mediaeval Dress competition, showcasing the girls' talents in multiple areas simultaneously! (We Dominicans know about time management.) The girls each had to make her own version of a medieval dress, called a 'bliaut'. They were judged not only for the construction of their gowns, but also for details such as creativity, historical accuracy and embellishments. For music, the three Houses all had to perform their own interpretations of the test piece, *Alle Psallite*, a three-part, unaccompanied mediaeval vocal work, in keeping with our theme for the year. The Houses chose their own items for each of the other four competition categories: Gregorian, Renaissance, Baroque/Classical, and Romantic/Modern. The girls delighted the audience with their part-singing, ensemble work and solo instrumental performances. The competition was very close, but a strong test piece and a stunning rendition of *Victimae Paschali Laudes* in the Gregorian category won the day for Bologna in the end.



## Veni Sancte Spiritus!

August this year was even busier than usual, with the visit of His Lordship Bishop Fellay from the 22nd to the 25th. The ceremony of Confirmation is always a special occasion, but the one which took place on the 23rd held extra importance for us as five of our boarders and one of our helpers were confirmed. We are sure that the fruits of the Holy Ghost's work within their souls will become ever more prominent. Our Divine Consoler set about His work of sanctification straight away by employing the surest means: Our Lady. The very day after the confirmations, the Holy Ghost provided our college girls with a day of recollection preached by Father Karl Stehlin, District Superior of Asia, on the Militia Immaculatae – the Knighthood of the Immaculate. Father was extremely pleased to have all of the pupils enrol to become "knights", and make their act of consecration to their Queen, whose action is, as Father says, "the very action of the Holy Ghost".

Another August event on a smaller scale proves that the Holy Ghost clearly desired to make a point about the pre-eminence of the supernatural over the merely natural: in the weeks preceding the Confirmations, four of our pupils competed in the Wellington Regional Spelling Bee; but for His own reasons, this "Finger of God's right hand", who teaches little ones "to speak and understand" doesn't always deign to enlighten them with spelling tips or bestow human success – for not one of our girls survived the first (very challenging) written test! Nevertheless, they stayed to watch their peers endure the gruelling oral spelling round, no doubt with mixed feelings of disappointment, but primarily relief and determination for next year's Spelling Bee. May the Holy Ghost ensure that they succeed in their supernatural work, if not in their natural endeavours.

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

# 800th Anniversary Celebrations - 22nd July 2016



*On this happy day, ye Citizens of Cristendom alle, don your medieval finery  
and prepare thyselves for merriment...*

At the hour of seven on the evening of St Mary Magdalene's feast, on the 22nd day of July in the year 2016, a goodly company of fair maidens dressed in medieval attire took their 200+ guests back 810 years to the time of St Dominic in France in his battles with the Albigensians and subsequently through the following few centuries to meet various Dominican Saints. This high festival of singing, dancing and acting performed by the girls of St Dominic's College was held to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the approbation of the Dominican Order by Honorius III in 1216.

The venue was beautifully decorated according to the medieval theme which has been emphasised throughout the year for all of the school activities. Upon entering the Dominican realm our noble guests - many embracing the spirit of the evening by donning their own medieval apparel - were greeted by two Sisters who bestowed upon each a billet of entry, which was then formally presented to the two armed guards keeping watch before the castle gates. These fearsome warriors would then grant them entrance to the royal court by passing under a sabre arch to where the king and queen were awaiting them. In the background medieval music could be heard and a jester and a peasant busily prepared the lights and performed sound checks for the historical drama soon to be staged by the young scholars of St Dominic's College.

Suddenly the lights in the Great Hall dimmed and the music of the lutes faded as the curtains were drawn back to reveal all of the pupils decked out in their medieval finery grace the stage as they burst forth with a beautiful rendition of the medieval Latin motet "*Alle Psallite Cum Luya*". The evening's proceedings had officially commenced and the play was about to begin: the famous, long awaited 800th anniversary production written and directed by two very creative and musical Sisters.

The story opens with the audience discovering a pupil of St Dominic's College (representing a kind of 'Everyman') lying on the ground after being transported back in time. Confused, she rises and picking up a scroll reads that she has apparently fallen into a book following the lives of Dominican Saints through the ages. Her quest is to move from one page to the next by talking to those she encounters and answering the questions asked of her by the particular great Dominican Saint who is the focus of that scene. If she answers correctly she will earn a scroll that will unlock the next chapter of the story, and bring her closer to her end goal - to return to the 21st century, where she is about to celebrate the 800th anniversary with her

fellow pupils. Making her way through the book she encounters St Dominic, Blessed Diana, Blessed Jordan, St Albert, St Thomas and St Catherine of Siena, not to mention many other interesting characters who are intrigued by her sense of dress and the extent of her knowledge - a rarity for a young maiden in medieval times. Each chapter ends with a valuable piece of advice from the saint and a poem about their life.

The play concludes happily with the young maiden finding herself transported back to present day Wanganui where her fellow pupils appear to have been keeping the audience occupied with supper and games whilst awaiting her reappearance. Together, the girls pay their respects to the most noble woman and protectress of the Dominican Order, Our Blessed Mother, by the singing of a polyphonic version of the "Ave Maria", followed by a rousing rendition of the anniversary edition of "Hail St Dominic" and as the guests raised their glasses in a toast to his honour, the pupils held aloft their party poppers. With a burst of sparks and streamers, the evening drew to a close. What a finale!

The evening (and more specifically, the production itself) skilfully incorporated many aspects of the girls' school life and activities: inter-house competitions of poetry writing, debating, dress-making, singing and dancing, as well as the important figures of our Dominican family in keeping with the medieval theme.

Why the 22nd July, you might ask? It was on this day that St Dominic saw the oft-mentioned ball of fire descend from heaven over the church of Prouille whilst he was praying for a sign to know where to establish his first convent. He took it as 'Signadou' (a sign from God) and founded the convent of Our Lady of Prouille, thus laying the first foundations of the Order that would be formally established 10 years later. St Mary Magdalene is also a special patroness of the Order of Preachers because she is known as the "Apostle of the Apostles" since she was the first to announce Our Lord's resurrection to them. This is why the feast of St Mary Magdalene is so dear to every Dominican. For our own congregation, on this day fifteen years ago the first postulant arrived in New Zealand to meet with Mother Micaela with a view to founding a congregation. Thus, we have many reasons to celebrate and give thanks to God on this day for the many graces that we have received since the beginning of our congregation and we were very grateful to share this momentous occasion with the faithful of Wanganui, to whom we are indebted for their continued support over the years since that happy day.

# OP MOTHERHOUSE BUILDING PROJECT PLEASE STORM HEAVEN FOR US



### PROGRESS MADE THIS WINTER

Buildings are close to completion and the plan is that they will be moved onto site during October.

### OUR MOST URGENT NEED IS:

To complete one-third of the project by raising funds for:

✓ **UTILITY CONNECTIONS (AUD\$500,000)**

**Please pray for good weather to allow final preparations to be completed before the buildings can be moved.**

**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: [sr.m.micaela@dominicansisters.net.nz](mailto:sr.m.micaela@dominicansisters.net.nz)  
<https://www.dominicansisters.net.nz>

We have a new email and web address!

# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP US

✓  
**DONATIONS**

✓  
**SMALL REGULAR  
PAYMENTS**

✓  
**PROPERTY  
AND/OR ASSETS**



✓  
**INTEREST FREE  
LOANS**

✓  
**FUNDRAISERS**

✓  
**LARGE REGULAR  
PAYMENTS**

*May God reward you for your generosity!  
Our Lady of the Holy 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