

Summer 2024-2025

# The Southern Star

ISSUE #37

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui



## “O Spem Miram”

Painting of the glorification of Saint Dominic  
by Fra Angelico

fic aperuit os

eius 7 iplent



## LETTER FROM MOTHER PRIORESS



*Spem Miram* - O Wonderful Hope. Thus begins the responsory that Dominicans sing on the feast of St Dominic, and during the monthly procession to the altar of St Dominic. This prayer reminds us of his promise to his weeping brethren that he would help them even more after his death than he had done during his lifetime. Through it we continue to express the deep trust and reliance we have in St Dominic's intercession. In this newsletter we would like to share with you some of the fruits of his fatherly care for us, signs of hope for the future.

This past year saw the final plans submitted to the local City Council for the building of our new chapel. On January 20<sup>th</sup>, the grounds were blessed by the District Superior, Father Themann and we had the first dig. We were honoured to have him, along with our local priests, Father Stafki (visiting with Father Themann to give conferences on education to the school staff), Father MacNamara (visiting from Sydney) and our builder, Patrice Mathey, present for this historic moment. On the back cover of this newsletter, you will find our appeal for help to finance the construction costs through our 'Dominican Dig Deep Drive'. We would like to thank all those who have contributed to our building fund over the years, as well as those who will contribute to this new project.

In early December, we received four SSPX Sisters from Australia for the centenary celebrations of St Anthony's Church here in Wanganui. The SSPX sisters then hosted us in turn when two of our Sisters attended the District Schools meeting in Australia, ending their visit with a presentation on our congregation to the Rockdale parish in Sydney.

After Christmas we followed a Marian retreat preached by Father Stafki, closing with the ceremony of perpetual profession of Sister Maria Alapati, O.P. We were blessed to have a solemn high Mass with the newly ordained Father Hovens, brother to one of our Sisters, as deacon. Father Hovens also gave first Masses and blessings in both the convent and parish during his stay. A month later, one of his confreres, Father Chipperfield, a former catechism pupil of one

of the Sisters, did the same. Father Chipperfield also kindly visited each class in both the primary and secondary schools, since his visit fell during the school term. It gives so much hope for the future to see such young men dedicating their lives to God.

In this jubilee year of hope, we have our own jubilee celebrations to look forward to, as Mother Mary Micaela celebrates her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of profession in Easter Week. Bishop Fellay will be joining us to officiate at the ceremony, in which he will give our Mother Foundress a crown of roses, symbol of the eternal crown of glory promised to the good and faithful servant, and a staff, symbol of the Divine grace which is to be her support and strength in the final stages of her journey to eternity. Since we have chosen 'O Roma Nobilis' as our theme for the school year, the festivities will include a performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* by the schoolgirls. The play presents in vivid terms the dilemma faced by Rome's children when Roman authority seems to be clashing head-to-head with Roman tradition. While even 'the noblest Roman of them all' made poor decisions in those last few years before Christ, leading to a tragic ending for the play, we will be celebrating the fact that with the grace of Our Lord, the current crisis has been combated with better results. You are all most cordially invited on April 25<sup>th</sup>, Easter Friday and ANZAC Day, to join us in commemorating our soldiers' fight for their country and Mother Mary Micaela's long fight for traditional religious life. Please see the invitation on page 11 for more information. We hope that many of you will be able to join us for this special and rare event—*Virgo Fidelis, ora pro nobis!*

With grateful and joyous hearts we will continue to beg Our Holy Father St Dominic's aid, asking that he intercede for you, too, for all that you do for his daughters:

"O wonderful hope which you gave to those who wept for you at the hour of your death, promising that after death you would be helpful to your brethren: Fulfil, O Father, what you have said, and help us by your prayers".



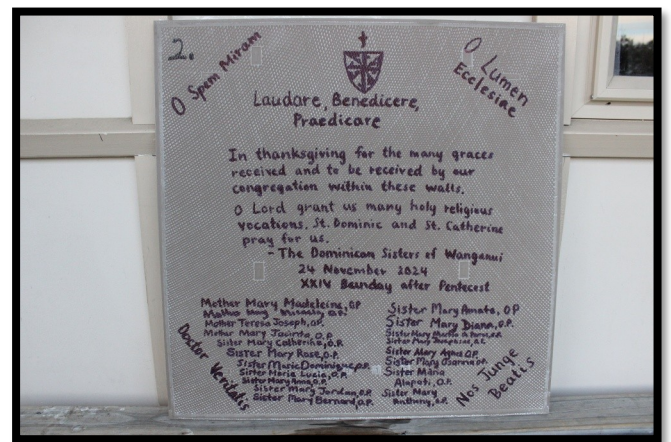
# Summer: News from St Dominic's Convent

## St Anthony's Church Centenary

The Sisters were delighted to participate in the parish festivities in December 2024 for the centenary of the building of St Anthony's Church. Vibrant after extensive renovations, the church now boasted an expanded seating area for its snowballing numbers, as well as a new sanctuary floor of marble tiles, individually purchased and signed by parishioners. (The Sisters have theirs too, laid in the approximate centre.) Celebrations included two Solemn Masses, the blessing of a new Sacred Heart statue, a formal parish dinner, and an outdoor "Extravaganza" – an exciting play about the history of the parish, with a cast and crew of about a hundred.

Visitors from far and near attended. Besides the mayor and his wife, the District Superior was present with some of the Society priests who formerly served in Wanganui, as well as Society Sisters from Australia. The Dominican Sisters were pleased to be able to host the Society Sisters during their visit. Perhaps fraternal charity has many grey areas, but for these few days, it was very much black and white!

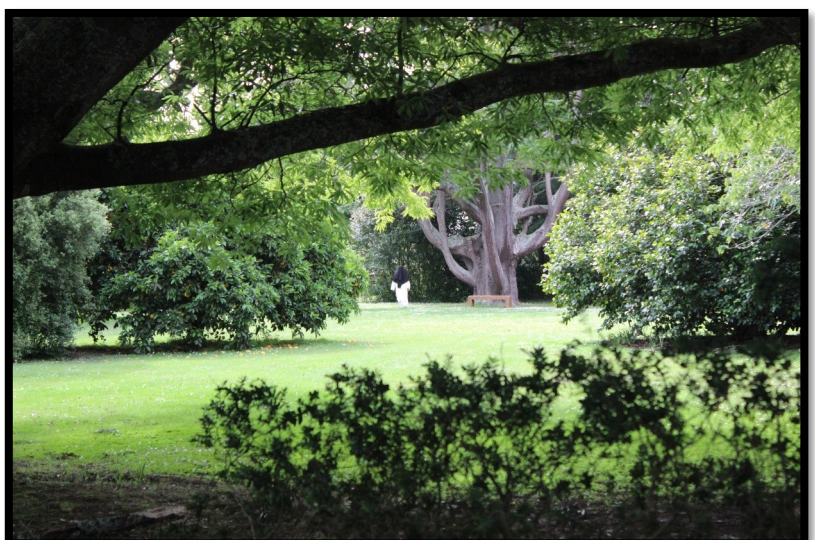
As long as anyone in Wanganui's Gonville suburb can remember, "the church on the hill" has been an icon for locals, many of whom attended its school. Thanks to the Society of St Pius X, which acquired this local parish church in the 1980s, the site continues as a hub of traditional Latin liturgy, true Catholic schooling with religious teachers, and a fervent parish life. For the Sisters, many of our habit-taking and vows ceremonies have taken place within its walls. It is inspiring to think that despite the devastation in the Church at large, the parishioners of a century ago would have felt quite at home if they time-travelled forward to the St Anthony's of today.



## Marian Retreat with Father Stafki

At the close of 2024 the Sisters commenced their annual eight-day retreat, held this year at Masters Hall in Pahiataua. Father Mark Stafki preached this retreat with a Marian theme, weaving the conferences together with doctrine, spiritual insights, practicalities and a good measure of humour. He also encouraged the Sisters to write poems, and this one was produced in gratitude for the beautiful retreat:

**D**ear Father Stafki,  
 Just a little note to say  
 Thank you for spending the last eight days  
 Rekindling our love for our **Mother**  
**Mary** – the **Woman** like no other.  
 With figures, symbols and prophecies,  
 You laid the foundation stones with ease.  
 Then with dogmatic and doctrinal thought  
 You showed us how Marians fought  
 To keep their Mother's name sublime.  
 (We wish that we had had more time.)  
 Yet there were practicalities, too:  
 What we could say and what we could do.  
 With an **Ave** we ask to see  
 The cross, our weakness and its beauty.  
**Fiat** - we say with grace from Mary  
 Accept it all and do not tarry.  
**Stabat** - we carry on strong and bold  
 We have our Mother's hand to hold.  
**Magnificat** – we unite our wills anew  
 "What God wants, I want too."  
 We mustn't forget all the stories and letters,  
 And all the laughs that made us feel better.  
 Unfortunately, we're almost out of room.  
 We hope to see you again soon.  
 Until then may you always be  
 The faithful preacher of the **Mater Dei**.



## Feast of the Purification – Dominican Procession



The Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary is always lovely in a Dominican Convent. As in the Roman Rite, candles, symbolizing Christ, the Light of the world, our great Hope in dark times, feature largely in the liturgy, but there are some interesting differences, which include the following:

1) The candlelit Procession before Mass starts with this beautiful antiphon, not found in the Roman Rite: *Ave gratia plena...* “Hail, full of grace, Virgin Mother of God: for from thee the Sun of justice is risen, illuminating what is in darkness. Rejoice, just old man, receiving in your arms the Liberator of our souls, the One who gives us resurrection.”



2) The Sisters continue to hold their lit candles from the start of Mass, which follows immediately after the Procession, until the *Oremus* of the Offertory (unlike the Roman Rite, in which lit candles are held only during the Gospel, and again during the Canon of the Mass). While the Offertory verse is being sung, (*Felix namque es...* - “Happy are you, holy virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise: for from thee is risen the sun of justice, Christ our



God”), the Sisters process in pairs, seniors first, to the Communion rail, where each Sister hands her lit candle to the sacristan, who extinguishes it and places it in a basket.

Once all the candles have been collected, the basket is placed near the altar for the remainder of the Mass. This ceremony remains largely unchanged from the 13th century, when it was the custom to offer the Candlemas candles to the priest at the Offertory. Blessed James of Voragine, O.P., (ca. 1226-1298) refers to this in his *Golden Legend*, in which he recounts a vision had by a holy woman on the feast of the Purification. Saddened by her inability to attend Mass that day, she was consoled by a vision of the ceremonies. Blessed James writes: “When it was time for the offertory, the Queen of the virgins and the other virgins, together with all those in the choir, genuflected and offered their candles to the priest, as is customary.” We are so grateful to have retained this beautiful custom of imitating our Blessed Mother in offering to God on this day our candles, symbol of our Jesus on the one hand, but also of everything most dear to us, as He truly was to her.





# Dominican Dig Deep Drive



*“Blessed is the city of Jerusalem, known as ‘the vision of peace’, which is built up in the heavens out of living stones...”*

–Hymn for the dedication of a church



Every church is built to be an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, the home where God dwells with His people. Over the next two years, we will be building our own model of the heavenly city, and asking for the help of all our family and friends throughout the world as well as local organisations and individuals here in Wanganui. We would like each cement block of our chapel to represent one of the ‘living stones’ of the heavenly city, an actual person who has helped us to build it.

The structure of the chapel has been designed in cement blocks, which, due to the earthquake risks here in New Zealand, needs to be reinforced with a steel framework. This will enable the chapel, God willing, to last for hundreds of years, so we have also planned it to take up the full available space, with an eye to the future growth of our congregation.



Blessing of the ground for the new chapel by Father Themann & breaking ground by Mother Prioress and Mother Foundress



## What is a convent chapel?

*The hidden room in man’s house where God sits all the year,  
The secret window whence the world seems small and very dear.*

–from *Lepanto* by G.K. Chesterton

The chapel is the heart of a convent and of our religious life. It is the place where, like St Mary Magdalen, the religious sit listening at the feet of Our Lord. It is the powerhouse for their apostolate, where they offer the Divine Office ‘in union with that divine intention’ with which Our Lord Himself praised the Father while on earth: the honour and glory of God in the salvation of souls. And so, at least forty times each day, the Sisters bow low before the Blessed Sacrament while proclaiming: “Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.”



Watercolour of the interior of the future chapel

# HELP US BUILD OUR CONVENT CHAPEL



3-D image of future chapel, by Lucie-Marie Mathey

## What happens in a convent chapel?

- 5:35 Lauds
- 6:00 Prime
- 6:15 Terce
- 6:30 Mental prayer
- 7:00 Mass
- 12:00 Spiritual reading
- 12:15 Sext
- 3:25 None
- p.m./evening Mental prayer (15 minutes)
- 5:00 Vespers
- 5:20 Rosary
- 5:35 Matins (1/3)
- 7:50 Compline

As well as any additional private devotions, meditations, holy hours, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament made by the Sisters, along with their weekly & monthly processions.

## What is the rest of the building?

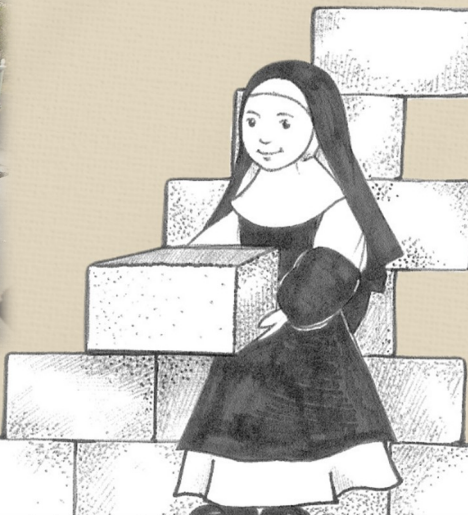
The building also includes sacristies and, on the lower level, a large chapter room, where the Sisters meet weekly to pray for benefactors, hear a discourse on the Rule or religious life from the Prioress, and accuse themselves of their faults against the Rule and Constitutions to receive a penance. Special chapters, including general chapters for elections or to discuss the business of the Congregation, can also be held there.

**PLEASE BUY A BLOCK,  
TWO, THREE  
OR MORE**

**AND BE THE  
LIVING STONES  
TO BUILD GOD'S  
HOUSE FOR US -  
SEE THE  
BACK COVER  
FOR DETAILS**



Initial demolition and clearing to prepare ground for the future chapel



# Photo Chronicle—Summer

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



**{Clockwise, starting at Top Left}** During the summer holidays, much gardening was done, so that the garden seemed transformed by the time school started; One of the Sisters had been busily preparing items for months for the ordination of her brother - embroidered pall, maniturgium, and linens pouch; Rev. Father Hovens was ordained 21 December at the Seminary of La Reja—in this photo of the ceremony his hands are wrapped in the embroidered linen maniturgium which he is going to present to his mother to keep; On January 6th, Father Hovens was able to join us and officiate as deacon for the Perpetual Profession ceremony of one of our sisters; Sister was the first to consecrate herself & profess her final vows in the newly renovated sanctuary—Father Stafki officiated, with Father Hovens and Father Elias OSB as deacon & subdeacon; The blessing of a first mass and first blessings in our chapel from Father Hovens; A double-blessing— Visit in February from Rev. Father Chipperfield who was ordained with Father Hovens in December; With a first mass & first blessings —Many special graces from the visits of these new priests for our community! We pray for these priests with much gratitude!





**THE O.P. CORNER**  
*Dominican Old Pupils' Corner*

For all of  
 our readers, too!

## Join the 15 Tuesdays Devotion In Honour of Saint Dominic

This devotion of the 15 Tuesdays was begun in Florence, in 1631, and rapidly spread throughout Italy. The Dominican friar Father Michael Bruni exhorted the Florentines to pray to the holy patriarch during a visitation of the plague, and bade them promise to receive Holy Communion on the fifteen Tuesdays before his feast, beginning, therefore, in April. The plague ended in Florence, and numerous other miracles and cures have been attributed to this devotion since then.

Tuesdays were chosen for this devotion because on that day of the week in the year 1233, the solemn translation of St Dominic's body took place at Bologna, and was marked with numerous miracles and signs of his sanctity (thus making holy every Tuesday for Dominicans since then) while the number fifteen evidently refers to the mysteries of the Rosary.

The *Raccolta* states: *The faithful who on Tuesday of each week spend some time in devout meditations or prayers in honour of St. Dominic or perform some other act of piety, with the intention of repeating this act of homage for fifteen continuous Tuesdays, may obtain: A plenary Indulgence under the usual circumstances.*

Any prayers may be said according to each person's private devotion. For instance, each of the fifteen Tuesdays is associated with one of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, hence a meditation on that mystery of the Rosary—perhaps uniting it to some aspect of the life or virtues of St Dominic that is reflected there; traditionally, Holy Communion was offered in honour of St Dominic on that day.

**Mark Your  
 Calendar**

APRIL

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



## O Roma Nobilis

**“Queen of the earth, O thou Rome of nobility. Thou the most excellent City of cities”**

With the Pope’s declaration of 2025 as a “Holy Year” and the subsequent pilgrimages setting out for Rome, we decided to take the first lines of a medieval poem, sung by pilgrims as they entered Rome, for our annual school theme, “O Roma Nobilis”. This theme is proposed to help pupils to travel through time and make a sort of spiritual pilgrimage to discover the ancient virtues which not only built Rome and made her the centre of the ancient world, but laid the foundation for her to later become the centre of the Christian world and the promoter of the supernatural virtues we practise today.

Cicero rightly believed that these “virtues” or qualities of life to which each Roman citizen had to aspire, embodied in the old ways and customs, contributed as much to the glory of Rome as the strength of her sons. “On ancient customs and old-fashioned men the state of Rome stands firm” (Cicero quoting the poet Manilius, *The Republic*, V, I). They lay at the heart of the Via Romana—the Roman Way—and Cicero lamented to see them ruined by neglect: “not only do they go unobserved, they are no longer known” (*The Republic*, V, II). If it were not for Christianity which promoted the cardinal virtues (which are little more than a synthesis and purification of Romanitas) practised on a higher supernatural level, Rome’s splendour may never have been restored.

By revisiting examples of both the ancient Via Romana and Christian Rome throughout the year at assemblies, interhouse competitions and our school play in honour of Mother Micaela’s Golden Jubilee, we hope to draw lessons which we can apply to our own time to help ensure our appreciation and adherence to our Faith, Christian traditions and culture which once again are being neglected and even forgotten by many. May we not only remember but practise them to make this a truly Holy Year.

Photo by [Dario Veronesi](https://unsplash.com/photos/photo-of-colosseum-during-golden-hour-IUO-BjCZEA?utm_content=creditShare&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=unsplash) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/photos/photo-of-colosseum-during-golden-hour-IUO-BjCZEA?utm_content=creditShare&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=unsplash); [https://unsplash.com/photos/photo-of-colosseum-during-golden-hour-IUO-BjCZEA?utm\\_content=creditShare&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=unsplash](https://unsplash.com/photos/photo-of-colosseum-during-golden-hour-IUO-BjCZEA?utm_content=creditShare&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=unsplash)

"Not that I loved Caesar less,  
but that I loved Rome more."

Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 2  
William Shakespeare

JULIUS CAESAR



Join us for  
Mother Mary Micaela's

# Golden Jubilee

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PROFESSION

**FRIDAY, APRIL 25TH**



**Anzac Day Ceremony - 10.00am**

Please gather on the grass in front of the Sacred Heart statue by the flagpole.

**Pontifical High Mass and Jubilee Ceremony - 10.30am**

St Anthony's Church.

**Luncheon and performance of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar - after Mass**

Seating in front of the Girls' School.

**Rosary and Benediction - 4.00pm**

Please bring a generous plate to share.

R.S.V.P by Palm Sunday, April 13th, to  
[stdominics@opsisters.org.nz](mailto:stdominics@opsisters.org.nz) or phone (06) 344 2265





## Dominican Dig Deep Drive



**Total Needed: \$3,790,676**

**Phase 1 of 5: Buy a Block**

*(Ends May 31st, 2025)*

*"Blessed City of Jerusalem...is built up in the heavens  
out of living stones..."*

*- Hymn for the Dedication of a Church*

# HELP US BUILD OUR CONVENT CHAPEL



**PLEASE BUY A BLOCK, TWO,  
THREE OR MORE  
FOR YOU & YOUR LOVED ONES,  
AND BE THE LIVING STONES TO BUILD  
GOD'S HOUSE FOR US**

**7,500**

**'living stones'  
needed**

**\$100 each**



**Scan to donate or learn more**

**Donors will be  
remembered in the  
Sisters' prayers**

**Every 5 Blocks  
Purchased**

**gives you a chance to  
win a Dominican Care  
Pack**

**Buy 10 or more  
blocks**

**and have your name  
engraved on a plaque**

**caritas@opsisters.org  
12B York St. Wanganui 4501**

### 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>

**The Dominican Sisters of Wanganui**

12B York Street, Wanganui, 4501, New Zealand

Tel: 00-64-6-344-2265

Email: [stdominics@opsisters.org.nz](mailto:stdominics@opsisters.org.nz)

[www.opsisters.org.nz](http://www.opsisters.org.nz)