

The Southern Star

ISSUE #30—Double Edition

Newsletter for the Dominican Sisters of Wanganui



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Mother Prioress

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“I am the one who provides for everything whatever that may be needed for soul or body.
In the measure that you put your trust in Me,
in that measure will My providence be meted out to you.”

- God to Saint Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*

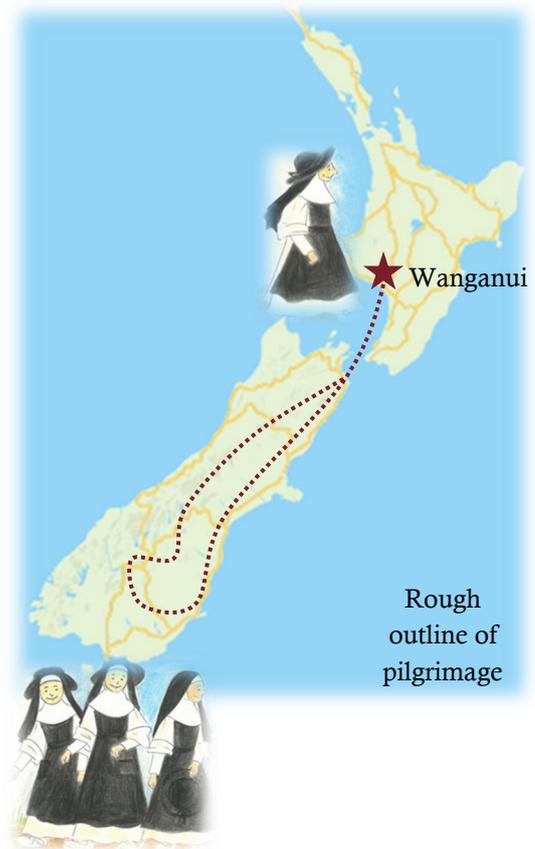


Benedictus Deus in donis Suis:
 “Blessed be God in His gifts.”

In this double edition of the Southern Star, we gratefully acknowledge some of His many gifts to us over the past six months: our thanksgiving pilgrimage for our twentieth anniversary, which we were able to have at last after the COVID restrictions ended, and many hopeful signs of growth for the coming years as will be outlined later.

At the end of another exciting academic year and after many months of planning and preparations we packed the vans (and our chaplain) and headed for the South Island to visit the many churches, convents and schools which were once graced by the presence of Dominicans in days gone by and where our Foundress, Mother Mary Micaela, once lived and taught. Our sisters in the novitiate had the task of taking care of the spiritual side of the journey and the perpetually-professed sisters

arranged everything for the material side in order to provide for both the soul and the body while on pilgrimage. The pre-postulants and junior-

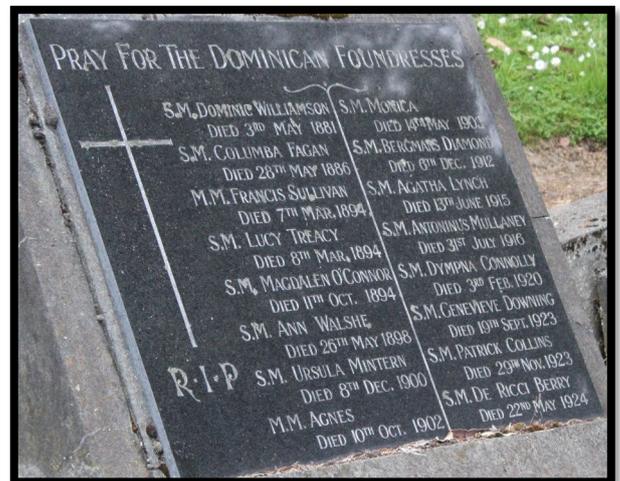


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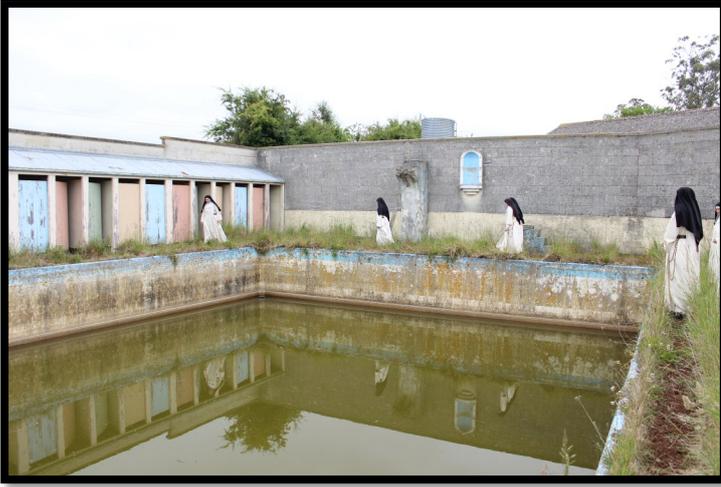
professed spent many hours selecting and recording readings on the history of the Dominican Order in New Zealand, Rosary meditations, and selections from St Catherine’s *Dialogue* for our spiritual nourishment. We listened to and contemplated these attentively while driving through the South Island’s spectacular scenery (and spotting seals and dolphins) in the footsteps of the first Dominican nuns in New Zealand.

The Sisters arrived from Ireland in 1871 with Bishop Moran, the first Bishop of Dunedin, on the *Gothenburg*, of which we were shown a photo when we visited Port Chalmers, their landing place. We had great delight taking photos of each of the Sisters holding it, as a souvenir of the pilgrimage.

In Dunedin we were able to visit the historic motherhouse of the New Zealand Dominican Sisters, which Mother Mary Micaela remembers being held up as a model for Dominican life (“How do they do it at the Priory?”). We also prayed at the graves of Bishop Moran, the Irish Foundresses, and even later Dominicans whom Mother Mary Micaela had known personally. However, one of the greatest highlights of the trip was having the opportunity to sing Mass in the beautiful chapels and churches where these pioneers of Dominican life prayed and sang whilst gleaned ideas for our own chapel (our next building project). What a grace it was for our community to visit nearly every historic Dominican convent in the South Island. It was also very edifying to see the fruits of the Dominican apostolate in meeting a number of Dominican ex-pupils, some of whom are now teachers in the old Dominican schools and are trying their best to pass on the Faith and the Dominican spirit to their pupils. We are very grateful to all those who helped to make our trip the educational and sanctifying experience it was, and hope that this prayer of Mother Mary Gabriel Gill, the Irish prioress who brought Dominican life to New Zealand, may be fulfilled in us:



{Opposite Page:} Sisters in the midst of our monthly Holy Name Procession, while we visited Teschemakers; {Above, at top} Badge made for our 20th Anniversary Pilgrimage showing key milestones of the history of Dominican teaching nuns — the first Dominican Sisters founded at Prouille in France, Dominican Convent school founded at Sion Hill in Ireland, St Dominic’s in Dunedin NZ, and our 20th anniversary pilgrimage from Wanganui; {above} Sisters visit, with a *Libera Me* Procession, to the tombs of the founding Dominican sisters in New Zealand.



{Counter-Clockwise from above} Touring Teschemakers Former Boarding School and Convent, including a visit to the boarders' old private pool which our Mother M. Micaela had the duty of upkeeping many years ago; Mass sung in the Teschemakers Chapel; Visiting Rosary Convent in Oamaru.



“May you ever walk worthy of your holy vocation as true children of our Holy Father Saint Dominic and followers of the first and most illustrious of his daughters. Oh what glory awaits us, if we only persevere for a few short years in the path of perfection, aided by the Holy Rule and constitutions we have professed to observe until death, and encouraged by the remembrance of the glorious Saints of our order who have attained their goal by the observance of the same laws and rules, and by the characteristic spirit of our Order—prayer and penance. May Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine make us all worthy to be one day ranked among their white-robed followers.” – Mother Mary Gabriel Gill, 30 April 1872.

After our return and the celebration of Christmas, Bishop Fellay arrived to preach our annual retreat. In the ceremonies that followed, we received three postulants and one new perpetually professed Sister. Besides the growth of our community, this year has also seen growth in the school, which

received 55 pupils at the start of the school year (including 11 boarders), growth in the Third Order with two new novices and two professions, growth in our buildings (our covered cloister walk was finally completed in January), in our ex-pupils' families, and...in the school's new vegetable garden! You will find details on all this expansion in the rest of this edition.

Benedictus Deus in donis Suis, et sanctus in omnibus operibus Suis. “Blessed be God in His gifts, and holy in all His works.” May the gifts we receive from God, both directly and through you, our benefactors, be ever more fruitful in promoting not only our growth in numbers but in our growth in sanctity, as well as your own and that of all of the souls in our charge. Thank you for your continued support and prayers. Ad multos annos!

Mother Mary Madeleine OP
Mother Prioress



{Clockwise from above} Visiting & touring the old Dominican motherhouse—St Dominic's Prioory in Dunedin—standing outside the convent wall and below the front door, access to which is through a door in the wall to the right (not shown in photo); Singing Mass in St Dominic's Prioory convent chapel; Touring St Dominic's prioory and Boarding School—starting at boarders' entrance by the cathedral; At our visit to Port Chalmers—holding the historical photo of the *Gothenburg* ship which arrived in 1871 bringing the founding sisters to New Zealand; visiting the former Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent and St Joseph church in Queenstown; Visit of old Santa Sabina Convent in North-East Valley, Dunedin.



Summer: News from St Dominic's Convent

Retreat & Ceremonies



“God made Host.” This was the theme of our annual retreat, preached this year by His Lordship Bishop Bernard Fellay. God so loves souls that He gives Himself to them completely in the Eucharist, a gift that should give us total confidence in the love of God for us and His desire for our friendship. This Eucharistic surrender, His Lordship reminded us, should be answered by our *own* loving gift of ourselves to God! At the close of the retreat, we had the great joy of witnessing this self-offering in the reception of three postulants and in the ceremony of temporary and perpetual profession. Mother General accepted three young women as postulants and gave them the postulant’s veil and capelet in a private ceremony in our chapter room on January 5th.

On January 6th, the feast of the Epiphany, two sisters renewed their temporary vows for two years, and one sister made her vows for life. As His Lordship reminded us in his sermon, by making their vows on the day which commemorates Christ’s manifestation as king and Savior of the world, the sisters offer themselves as a witness to this manifestation that the modern world wants desperately to forget. At the end of this beautiful ceremony, we sang the Church’s hymn of thanksgiving, the “Te Deum,” thanking God for the grace He has given these sisters to respond to His invitation of love and to give themselves to Him.



Inter-School Garden Competition

If there's one thing girls are really good at, it's growing! Life at school of course fosters this superpower in both the physical and spiritual spheres, so it is not surprising that we got very excited on learning about an inter-school Vege Growing Challenge run by a local Garden Centre. Twenty-eight girls volunteered to get their green fingers dirty and various benefactors from the parish volunteered their time, energy and funds to help us build raised garden beds filled with good fertile topsoil. We are currently working on cloches and a fence to deter the various forms of bird and insect life which emerged from hiding and started to help themselves to our precious crops!

The primary goal of the Vege Challenge is to offer an introduction to gardening as a life skill, and as such the girls have been growing their knowledge about seeds, the art of thinning, transplanting and companion planting to increase their crop and deter the less determined pests. Indirectly they have been learning patience and their garden activities have encourage care and dedication through watchfulness. They hopefully also experienced the joy of seeing their plants grow and realised what a great form of recreation gardening is while putting food on the table.



Autumn: News from St Dominic's Convent

Saint Thomas Aquinas' Feast

This year is part of a few years of special anniversaries relating to the great St Thomas Aquinas:

2023 – 700 Year Anniversary of Canonization: July 18, 1323

2024 – 750 Year Anniversary of Death: March 7, 1274

2025 – 800 Year Anniversary of Birth: The final anniversary to be celebrated will be Aquinas' birth. It is not certain the exact date of Aquinas' birth, but he was born in 1225.



Over the next 3 years various celebrations will occur around the world in Dominican houses and universities, honouring one of the most influential Dominican saints in history.



As usual, 7 March at St Dominic's saw regular classes suspended as we honoured the Patron of Catholic Schools with more or less scholarly inter-house competitions. Since "Comedy" is our theme this school year, the debate topics for senior pupils were:

- The best humour is spontaneous.
- Verbal humour is funnier than slapstick.
- In verbal humour, delivery matters more than content.



Fr Stephens and Fr Ladner, the adjudicators, gave the girls excellent feedback after the debates, joking that they had hardly expected to hear such meaty arguments for such apparently trivial theses. In the afternoon, junior pupils presented three very entertaining versions of Milne's poem *Bad Sir Brian Botany* through choral speaking and acting.



Last but not least, the Form 4 and 5 girls took part in a new competition: they each presented a *Quaestio disputata*, each on an assigned topic capable of light-hearted treatment in accordance with the year's theme. Highlights included cogent proofs that the 5-second rule is *not* hygienic, that the zoo is *not* the place for hyperactive children, and that it would *not* be better

(despite some most enticing objections) for human beings to walk habitually on their hands.



Getting a Head-start on Heaven

Yes, this is what they are doing! For those who wish to develop a deeper spiritual life and a more authentic apostolic life but are not called to consecrate themselves by the three vows of religion, lay Tertiaries attach themselves to one of the great religious Orders of the Church to benefit from the spirituality and merits of the Order.



On Laetare Sunday, 19th March 2023, two men received the habit [scapular] of the Dominican Tertiaries, taking the names Brother John Massias and Brother Raymond (of Capua). We prayed that *“the patronage of*

blessed Dominic ... [and] the example of the Saints of our Order help and inspire these thy servants to a better life, so that, as they desire to wear their sacred habit of penance, they may also imitate their virtuous actions.”

Two novices made Profession on the same day: Sister Agnes Maria (of Montepulciano) and Sister Jane of Aza – both mothers of pupils at our school. Fr Elias, OSB, received their Profession, reminding them that *“God ... prepares mansions in heaven”* for those who renounce the world, and we prayed that *“their lives may so befit the name of Penance, that their profession may be always sensed in their works.”*

Anyone attracted to the spirituality of the Dominican Order – a love of Truth and a desire for the salvation of souls – can join the Tertiaries if they are willing to fulfill the daily practices. Monthly meetings encourage members in the aims of the Order. The prayers and penance lovingly embraced by Dominican Tertiaries allow them to *get a head-start on heaven* where God *“prepares mansions in heaven”* for their fidelity!



Autumn: News from St Dominic's Convent

Music Competition

Comedy and music are a winning combination. This can be a slight problem if you run a Music Competition for three school houses who can each present high calibre comic musicality, which was the case last Pentecost Monday, when our college houses of Calaroga, Prouille and Bologna competed in our annual Inter-house Music Competition.

The Wanganui Memorial Hall Concert chamber provided a prestigious setting for the performances, which performances themselves were not unworthy of it. At 7pm sharp the night took off to a flying start with a triad of energetic and innovative interpretations of the two test pieces 'Welcome, Welcome Every Guest' and 'Hey, Ho, Nobody Home.'

Then followed a series of stunning instrumental and vocal numbers from every age level in the school. The beauty of this competition being an annual event is that your regular audience member gets the opportunity of remarking the increase in skill, flair and artistic discipline displayed by the regular entrants, who seemingly don't know the meaning of any progress except the exponential type. Such was the enthusiasm and verve displayed on stage that, as Mr Baucke astutely remarked, one almost forgot one was at a music competition – the artistic ambiance married to the side-splitting comic flavour simply transported you to another world.

No one envied the role of our four adjudicators, Father Chrissent, Sister Mary Agnes, Mr Hayden Baucke and Mrs Virginie Petersen, whose meticulous evaluations and excellent feedback were relished and applauded by performers and audience members alike. And though the rankings were tightly contested (and required much careful adjudication from our panel) the applause for each of the winners was resoundingly hearty, and seemed to contain a note of eager anticipation for the next Music Competition.





THE O.P. CORNER

Dominican Old Pupils' Corner

For all of
our readers, too!



Mary and the woman of the modern world

We continue with some pertinent extracts from the beautiful work of Father Walter Farrell, OP in his *Companion to the Summa Volume IV*, relating to our Lady and Womanhood.

As stated earlier, 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.

Freedom from actual sin and the inclinations to it

St Thomas insists... that never in all the course of her life did Mary commit any actual sin, either venial or mortal. She was the mother of God. As the honour of parents reflects on their children, much more does the shame of a mother reflect on her child; Mary would not have been worthy to be God's mother had she been guilty of sin. Then, too, she above all others was so close to Christ, the Holy One; He took flesh from her and dwelt so intimately in her, not only in her womb but in her heart.

Fullness of grace

Mary's proximity to her child and its effects is brought out beautifully in Correggio's "Holy Night" *{see next page}* which, I believe, hung in Dresden before night fell in Germany. In it, Mary is bending over the Child Who, however, does not appear in the picture; over Mary's shoulder, Joseph can be seen standing in the shadow. The Virgin's whole face and body is alight with a brilliant, soft splendour as though she had just put her arms around the

sun. The moving beauty of the picture has solid foundations in the profound truth of the effects on Mary of her divine Son. The farther we take her away from Christ, the less we know about Mary herself; the closer we bring Mary to Christ, the better we understand her. It is this proximity to the source of all grace that makes it so easy for us to understand something of the fullness of the grace of Mary; He was the fountainhead; she was the closest of all men and women to this source of living water.

Perhaps we can get a still further insight into the perfection of Mary's grace through a homely example. An oaken log, lying in the damp underbrush, is only a potential source of the comfort of fire. When it is first exposed to the flames, it undergoes a period of disposition, of drying out. When that is over, the form of the fire invades the log and we see miniature flames, dancing like elves, catching tentatively at its huge sides with fingertips that slip again and again; as they grow bolder and stronger, the flames seem to rush at the log in solid ranks, are repulsed, to try again and again. Finally, the whole log, entirely aflame, is a holocaust worthy of the dignity of an oak. In the perfection of Mary's grace, we can distinguish three somewhat similar stages. The first, the stage of disposition, make her worthy to be the mother of God and called the Immaculate Conception. The form of perfection really took full hold on her soul in the conception of Christ and her constant life with Him. Finally, in the glory of heaven, she is a blazing holocaust of grace, one with God in the beatific vision...



Preparation of body: In relation to God -- absolute virginity

Normally, we speak of virginity in its spiritual sense, meaning the abstention from all voluntary venereal pleasure, whether lawful or unlawful. When we speak of Mary's virginity, over and above this we include that physical integrity which, in other women, may be lost in various ways and which is virtuously surrendered in the consecrated act of marriage. Even in this physical sense, Mary was a perfect virgin though she conceived and bore a son....

Philosophically the possibility of this miraculous virginity represents no difficulty whatever... To put it plainly, God

can do anything which He has put within the power of any of His creatures. We do not expect a worm to jump up and run down to the beach for a swim. We are quite sure the best a worm can do by way of locomotion is to crawl along flat on the ground; that is the only mode of operation open to it, since it is a worm. A man can, of course, crawl along on his stomach if he wants to; but we see no difficulty in admitting that he has several other means of locomotion. After all, he is not a worm, his nature is not limited to one avenue of action as is the material creation which does not enjoy his intellectual knowledge. The critics of the supernatural, in denying to God the power of His creatures, demand that the action of God be as limited as the action of nature, even of irrational or unknowing nature. Since the operation of any being follows the nature of that being, of course the operation of God follows the omnipotently perfect nature of His being. The possibility of the virgin conception and birth of Christ is plain philosophically; the fact of it is something to be accepted by faith.

For us the fact is certain. In the conception of her Son, the power of God entered the womb of Mary as serenely enriching and undamaging as a thought entering the mind. In the birth of Mary's Son, the Son of God left her womb, leaving the seals unbroken, with the same divine ease with which He came to the Apostles after His resurrection, the doors being locked. Ever after, Mary's loyalty to her divine Lover and the humbly unselfish love of Joseph preserved that virginity intact...

Perhaps because those who bow before the altars of the animal are always blind to beauty, this enduring virginity of Mary's is taken today as an unnatural condemnation of marital relations. That mistaken estimate has missed the whole beauty of virginity and the whole meaning for all her daughters of Mary's spotless purity. This is a divine emphasis of the sacred significance of marital relations, not their condemnation. Here it was plainly said that marital relations are not a toy, not a master, not an instrument of pleasure, but a messenger of love, the physical expression of spiritual sublimity. Separated from love, sex is not human but animal. In Mary, that love was a divine love, a love that needed no physical expression; indeed, from the side of the divine Lover a physical expression was an impossibility. To that love, Mary brought purity as every woman should. Her virginity was absolute, to emphasize the high place of purity and the sacredness of divine consecration; in all

other wives, Mary's virginity is paralleled by faithful chastity, that is, by adherence to the human significance of marital relations.

In relation to men: marriage to Joseph

In her preparation for life, Mary could not, of course, slight the virtue of justice which regulates the relations of men to men and men to God. In justice to her Son, to herself, and to society it was necessary that she be married. In that prosaic statement lies a wealth of significant truth: the truth, for example, that the strength of Rome needed the stability of the carpenter's home in Nazareth; that God needed the protection, name, and care of a father; even the strange truth that the devil himself could not penetrate the mystery of this family. There, too, is the truth that the mother so protected by God needed a husband to escape the blundering penalties of men, to preserve her good name, and for the love he would give her, a love that would make care, thoughtfulness, protection completely sure.

Joseph's position as head of that family was necessary for our stumbling hearts centuries later; that, by an added witness to the mystery of the Incarnation, we, who are so slow to believe, might have a confirmation of the word of the mother of God. From Joseph's part in that family life, we are given a divine approbation of virginity for both sexes; and in the vivid language of his action, we see the blessing of God on marriage. Joseph was truly the husband of Mary; this is not to be forgotten. We must remember that Joseph was deeply in love with Mary, and she with him. In their union, there was that complete consecration of soul that is the essence of human love; the mutual surrender of rights which is the essence of marriage, though the exercise of rights was suspended in the name of a greater love which the constant presence of the divine Child would not permit them to forget; here there was even a God-given child to be moulded by a human mother and father.

In the contemplation of Mary's perfection, it would not do to overlook Joseph. A dogged, humble, unquestioning devotion marks all of his recorded life. The uneasiness about his wife's condition as they approached Bethlehem, the shock of the news that every place was taken, the panicky search for quarters, all this was Joseph's worry. The warning of Herod's murderous intent was given directly to Joseph; the hurried flight into Egypt was a matter for him to manage. The long return from Egypt to Nazareth was something for Joseph to plan and carry out. He faced a routine of daily drudgery that hardly brought in a living when he would have liked to lay kingdoms at the feet of his beautiful young wife.

In fact, Mary's entry into the life of Joseph was a signal for unceasing trouble. Before his espousal and marriage to the

mother of God, Joseph's life was one of serene, uneventful peace; he was a humble artisan in a tiny village completely off the trade route which was the artery feeding men's desires for power and wealth. Quite probably nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened to Joseph; his was the serene routine of quiet, daily labour. But that was before Mary came. There was the immediate worry about her miraculous pregnancy, a terrible agony for one who knew Mary as Joseph did and one that well deserved the prompt assurance of the angel to put an end to Joseph's search for an easy way out for Mary. He was rushed to the other end of the land with a wife whose time had almost come, and forced to find lodging where there were no lodgings to be found. Kings visited him and his family who had never thought to come within miles of a king. Kings pursued him and tried to put his Child to death. He was driven into exile and forced to earn substance for his family among strangers. Mary brought trouble to Joseph, plenty of it; and he loved every instant of it. He rejoiced that he had been chosen to protect her, to give her unselfish devotion. In other words, Joseph was in love.

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It is impossible to think of Joseph without loving him; He was indeed a father and we have seen his likeness on earth. For love is always a call to things above ourselves, to unquestioning sacrifice and complete consecration; it is an invitation to heroism which, somehow, we do not hesitate to answer. It is the natural

parallel, in the lives of men and women of every age, of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary.

In relation to the angels: the Annunciation

This was Mary's preparation in the sight of the angels: an unquestioning response to the proposal of God. The Annunciation was an instance in which the human heart most closely imitated the enduring embrace of angelic love. It was right that Mary be told of the mystery beforehand. It was right that she receive the Son of God in her mind and her heart before receiving Him in her body; certainly that faith in Him would bring her more joy and more merit than the mere physical bringing of Him into the world. It was right that she who was to be the principal witness of the mystery should, above all others, be certain; and how could she be certain except by divine instruction?

Mary, it must be understood, was not an ignorant peasant girl pushed into divine things unwittingly. This was the Queen of heaven in her youth. Her offer of herself to God was a willing surrender of youth and beauty made with eyes wide open and heart unwavering; her gesture was regal, majestic, marking one of the heights achieved by human nature, for her acceptance was an "I will" of human nature to a spiritual matrimony with God. The Annunciation was a hushed moment in the history of the universe when the fate of the world hung on the response of the Virgin Mary.



The longer we study the scene of the Annunciation, the deeper it digs into our heart with that quietly mysterious penetration we notice in loving regard of the strange familiarity of a loved face. How thoughtful of God to send an angel! It was in complete accord with His general order of providence which makes angels the leaders of men to divine things as it makes all higher things the leaders of the lower; but it was more than that. It was a gesture of apology from angelic nature for the original betrayal by an angel of that nature through a woman. What a pair they make, the virgin and the angel! How close they approach one another; if St. Jerome was right in maintaining that to live in the flesh but not according to the flesh is not an earthly but a heavenly life, never did human nature approach closer to the angelic.

It was a divinely clever touch to have Gabriel appear in bodily form to announce the visible coming of the invisible God. Mary was to receive the Son of God not only in her mind but also in her womb; it was, then, not only her mind but also her bodily senses that were refreshed by the angelic visitor. This was a story to which the world must hold with certainty, even though for that certitude it be necessary to make tangible an angelic spirit and to record in sound the flashing message of angelic intelligence.

No angel ever did a better job than Gabriel. If he had been told of his mission at the beginning of his long angelic life and had sat down in a corner of heaven in a grim concentration of his angelic mind through the centuries, he could hardly have improved on the composition of that brief message. He was a messenger with a story to tell to a virgin, a story which must win her consent. Really, then, he

had three things to do: he must catch her attention, announce the mystery, and win her consent. Notice that he took no gamble on his angelic beauty and majesty alone riveting the attention of Mary. Maybe he was a particularly humble and modest angel; maybe, knowing Mary's absorption in God, he thought she might sniff at a mere archangel. At any rate, he took no chances; he promptly astonished her beyond measure by his very first words.

To a really humble mind, as Mary's was, nothing is more astonishing than to hear oneself praised. Here was unlimited praise, and from an angelic source: "Hail full of grace"; as if that were not enough, there was a hint of the miraculous conception, "The Lord is with thee"; finally, an indication of the blessings that were to follow on that vaguely hinted privilege, "Blessed art thou among women." This was indeed a cautious angel who took no chances.

With Mary's astonished eyes fixed on him in rapt attention, the first part of his work was done; he went rapidly on, instructing her in

the mystery of the Incarnation: "Behold thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son." Then telling her of the dignity of the Child, the Son of the Most High, he explained to her how it would take place: "The spirit of the Most High shall come upon you." Sweeping on to the convincing conclusion, he cites the example of Elizabeth and states the root of all these wonders, the omnipotence of God, "for no word shall be impossible with God." It is a breathless scene, moving with the rush of love. Who can say how love enters a human heart; how could Mary say what the angels' words had done to her heart? There is no hint of doubt in the Virgin. She did not ask, "how shall I know this," as Joachim did, stating his disbelief; rather, she declared her firm belief, asking, not

Maybe, knowing Mary's absorption in God, he thought she might sniff at a mere archangel. At any rate, he took no chances; he promptly astonished her beyond measure by his very first words...

how she could know, but how it could be done. Whether this question was asked in a moment of anxiety for her cherished virginity or in a thoroughly justified curiosity, it was a question wonderfully becoming her age and her sex.

Her answer put the mystery of love into human words that would resound within the walls of the world until there were no more human hearts to love: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." Complete surrender, complete dedication; unconditional, joyous, eager; words whose garments are faith, hope, humility, absolute trust.

Conclusion:

Mary and the woman of the modern world

In the light of the fundamental tests

The material of this chapter might well be summed up in a comparison of Mary with the woman of the modern world, if it be soundly understood that the modern part of that comparison does not dignify this or that woman, or group of women, but the modern ideal. What is said of modern woman, then, is by no means a wholesale condemnation of the women of the twentieth century; rather, it is an exposition of the position of woman today in the light of the things approved or disapproved, applauded or mocked by the philosophy by which our age directs its life. With this caution well in mind, we may ask: what is the result of the application of the fundamental tests of woman's life to Mary's and the Christian woman's life as against the woman of the pagan world?

We have seen something of Mary's sublime sanctity, her absolute virginity, something of her regard for marriage, and her justice to herself, her Child, to Joseph, and to society. We have seen her response to the high call of love. What of the modern woman?

What chance has she to strive for sanctity when the very existence of the soul is denied, the freedom of her will rejected, and the moral code scoffed at as a mere convention? Virginity? A personal matter of fastidiousness or of social fitness, when it is not something to be tossed away quickly in the name of development of personality. Is marriage thought of in terms of justice to the child, to the husband, to society; or rather in terms of physical beauty and social convenience? The question is, of course, rhetorical. Is there a high, unselfish, even reckless response to love's demand for sacrifice; or a careful reckoning of personal advantages, a clinging to an avenue of escape in love's most sacred acts, with a door left open for a quick retreat at the moment when love's price becomes too high?

From their preparation for life

We have looked at Mary's life as a preparation for divine maternity: a preparation of soul through sanctity, of body through virginity; an enveloping the lives of men in

relation to marriage, and as reaching to the heights of the angels in the Annunciation. What would be the preparation of the woman of our time if she were to follow the ideals of her age? Surely not sanctity. Hardly virginity. For marriage, there would be some physical, financial, emotional, and social reasons considered; but that would pretty well sum it all up. A shorter summary could be made by simply listing the considerations of self.

Fruits of the lives of Mary and the moderns

The fruits of such lives are fruits worthy of the sowing. Mary was blessed among women. In her lifetime she won unselfish love, the joy of caring for her Son, the triumph of Calvary, the sorrows of earth and the glories of heaven. Just such fruits have come to the Christian mother ever since. The pagan earns the scorn of men for her cowardice, her shallowness, her selfishness, her lust or her weakness, though it was at the behest of men that these things were cultivated. She wins indifference from her child who returns what he has received. There is none of the triumph or exquisite joy of sacrifice, for there is no sacrifice. The shallow pleasures of earth will not drown earth's sorrows. In eternity, at least there will be many questions to answer.

After all, a woman was not made to live in a world whose philosophy of life is on an animal basis, where strength alone counts, where might is right. In such a world it is the weak who suffer, the women and children; in such a world, woman has but two strong points, her youth and her beauty. Who shall blame her for clutching so desperately at them; who shall blame her for not exposing others to such a burden, for refusing to weaken her own precarious position by the burden and dependence of children? Certainly not one who embraces the philosophy by which she is asked to live; yet, in the end, it is precisely such as these that give her the bitterest scorn.

The only choice: Madonna, Virgin, Magdalen

Her life was meant to be lived at least on a human basis of justice. *In the divine life of charity*, she attains her fullest development, her fullest happiness; for here justice and love rule, not strength. On such a basis, she has open to her a life of fullest perfection, the kind of life portrayed by the model of women, Mary, the Virgin and Mother. In these two alone a woman can find happiness; she must be either the mother or the virgin, with virginity maintained or, by the bitter path Magdalene walked, regained.

Walter Farrell, O.P., **A Companion to the Summa**,
Volume IV, Chapter VII -- Virgin Mother of God
(IIIa, Q. 27-34)

Photo Nook

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



1st December 2022

Elise, née Nyssen, and Zacariah Tangira welcomed their first child, Luke Aloysius, into the world on 1st December & into the Catholic Church on 11th December, with Ursula Nyssen and Daniel Lavin being godparents.

Deo Gratias!



27th March 2023

Laura, née Palmer, and Kieran McBrydie welcomed their first child, Pia Lucy Elizabeth, into the world on 27th March & into the Mystical Body of Christ on 3rd April, with Renée Blythe and Martin Smith, Jr being godparents.

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



15th April 2023

Jacinta, née Hungerford-Morgan, was united in Holy Matrimony with Regan Baucke at St Anthony's Parish in Wanganui, on the Saturday within the Sacred Octave of Easter by the Reverend Father Erik Ladner.

Deo Gratias!



16th April 2023

Sister Maria Euphrasia (formerly Juliana McKenna) received the habit of the Society Sisters on Low Sunday at the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Browerville, MN, USA.

Deo Gratias!

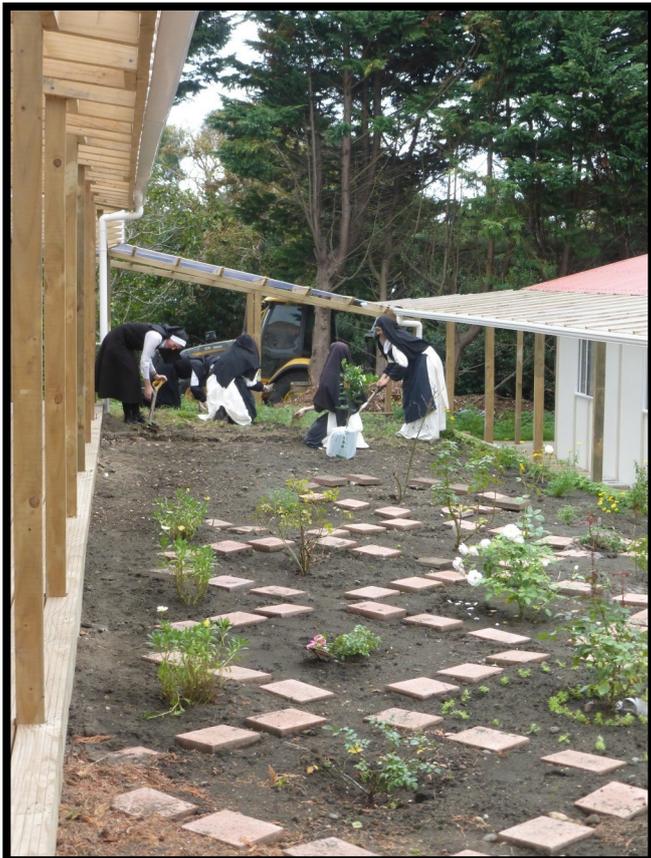


Photo Chronicle—Summer

Life in St Dominic’s Convent and the Girls’ College

{Counter-Clockwise from the top left} **2022 End of Year School Prizegiving and Graduation:** The last time for the graduates of 2022 to line up to receive their prizes and certificates; Photo of the graduates with staff; **Easter Holiday Working Bees:** Sisters divide into two groups: gardening and planting in the cloister quadrangle, including the momentous planting of the *Orange Tree*—in memory of the Orange tree which St Dominic himself planted in Rome at Santa Sabina—and working in the new library to sort and label and shelf books;

2023 Captains and Vice Captains: make their pledges in front of the rest of the school before school Mass at the start of the year.



Construction Chronicle— *Summer & Autumn*

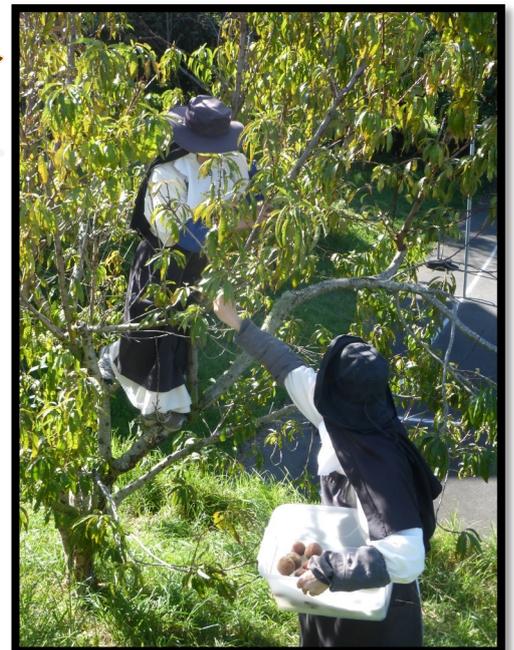


{Above} Final part of construction of the pathways to complete the cloister 'quadrangle'; Final coverings added to all pathways around the quadrangle—for which all the sisters are very grateful, so that they now have dry pathways to walk upon.

{left} New 'grotto' for our Lady, built by our faithful Construction Foreman, for the sisters' use during their *Salve* processions each night at Compline; {below left} Some of the large piles of woodchips for our gardens—provided by the trees cut down on our property by one of our benefactors & by the expertise of other benefactors using a woodchipper; {below right} Sisters harvesting fruit from some of our fruit trees - before the birds eat them all.



Thank You!





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>

To e-subscribe to our newsletter, send us an email at thesouthernstar@opsisters.org.nz

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